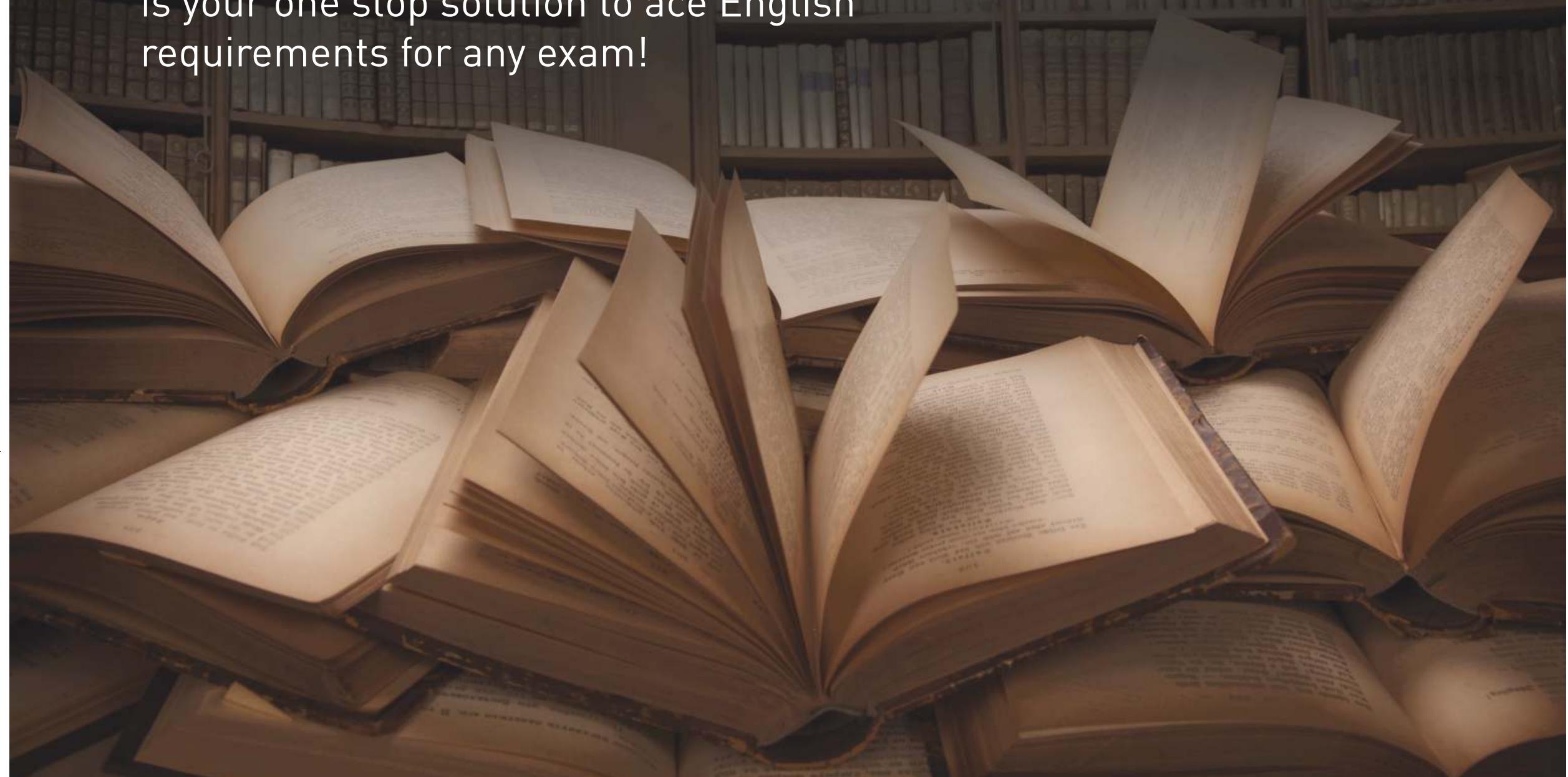




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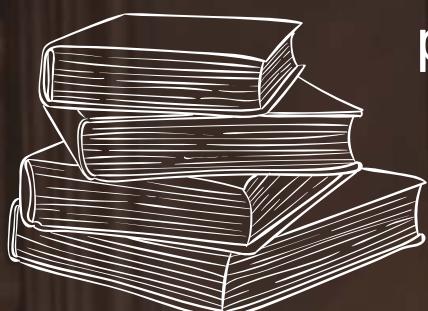
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NEARBY



Tapovan project tunnel clearing hits a hurdle

NEW DELHI
The ongoing rescue operation at the Tapovan hydel project tunnel in Uttarakhand's Chamoli, in which about 35 workers were trapped after a snow avalanche triggered flash floods on Sunday, has hit a major hurdle with sludge continuously oozing out of it.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

2.2% UAPA cases ended in conviction in 3 years

NEW DELHI
Only 2.2 % of cases registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act between 2016 and 2019 ended in convictions by court, according to data presented by the Union Home Ministry in the Rajya Sabha.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10



+ Santosh Kumar

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Both sides disengaging from Pangong lake area, says China

Indian source says some tanks, armoured elements being withdrawn, troops remain

Border stand-off

A timeline of the months-long stand-off between India and China at the Pangong Tso lake



Easing friction: Indian army trucks seen near Pangong lake. ■ FILE PHOTO

May 5, 2020: First major clash reported after Chinese mobilisation at Pangong Tso North bank, several soldiers injured in the scuffle

May 5 to May 15: PLA transgressions, clashes with Army reported at Pangong, Galwan, Depsang, Sikkim, and other points on LAC

June 15: 20 Indian soldiers die in Galwan clash; no word on Chinese casualties

July 1: India and China agree to a five-point resolution

Aug. 29-30: Indian and Chinese troops clash at Pangong Tso South bank; Indian troops dominate peaks

Sept. 3: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meets his Chinese counterpart

Sept. 10: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets Chinese FM Wang Yi, both agree to a five-point resolution

Nov. 6: Officials say a disengagement plan has been agreed upon

Jan. 24, 2021: Ninth round of Corps Commander talks go on for 16 hours

June 19: Prime Minister holds all-party meet, says "no one has transgressed India's borders"

June 24: India and Chinese troops clash at Pangong Tso South bank; Indian troops dominate peaks

June 24: India and Chinese troops clash at Pangong Tso South bank; Indian troops dominate peaks

June 24: India and Chinese troops clash at Pangong Tso South bank; Indian troops dominate peaks

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Deep Sidhu quizzed on foreign links, funding

Republic Day violence was part of a larger conspiracy and not just a random occurrence, say police

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Punjabi actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, allegedly involved in the Red Fort violence case, was questioned by a team of Delhi police and Intelligence Bureau officers for over eight hours at the Crime Branch office in Chanakyapuri on Wednesday.

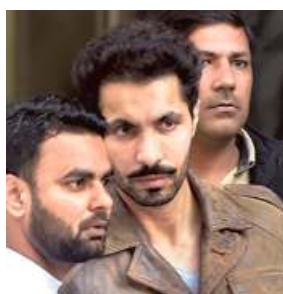
Mr. Sidhu was arrested from Karnal in Haryana on Monday and was sent to seven-day police custody by the Delhi court on Tuesday.

A senior police officer said that Mr. Sidhu was quizzed to find out if the Red Fort violence was part of a

bigger conspiracy. He was questioned about the location where he was hiding for 12 days after the incident, his association with any foreign-based organisation, source of his funding, and about the woman who was uploading his videos on social media on his behalf from the U.S.

Leads in case

"Deep [Sidhu] is one of the main conspirators who took the tractor rally towards the Red Fort and instigated violence. The violence on Republic Day was part of a larger conspiracy and not just a random occurrence. We



Deep Sidhu was questioned for over eight hours on Wednesday. ■ PTI

have many questions and leads in the case that needed to be established during the investigation. If required, he will be confronted with other

people who were arrested in the Red Fort violence case," said the officer.

He added that the tractors leading the mob towards the Red Fort had specially designed iron guards to dodge police barricades and DTC buses placed to stop them.

Uploader from U.S.

When the mob forcibly entered the fort premises, they rushed towards the rampart and a man climbed a pole and hoisted a religious flag. It was no random occurrence. The affiliation of the people behind the violence has to be uncovered, said

the officer. "We have also questioned Mr. Sidhu about the woman who was uploading videos on Facebook. We have got details of the IP address of the video uploader and it was a woman in the U.S. We are scanning his phone call records. He will be taken to Punjab and Haryana, if required, as his mobile phone is still missing," he added.

When asked why he had been hiding after the incident, Mr. Sidhu allegedly claimed that he feared for his life as many protesters were angry with him for the Red Fort violence.

Lawyer runs 'heritage' library to educate protesters at Tikri

He is part of a team providing legal aid to arrested farmers

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

As State lines continue to blur among them, a 35-year-old lawyer from Punjab's Mansa juggles daily virtual court appearances and provide legal aid to those arrested for their alleged role in the Republic Day violence, at the Tikri border.

Representing the first generation from a family of farmers to take up a different occupation, Jagtar Singh Sidhu, from a tent he set up 45 days ago, runs the "Shared Heritage Library" seeking to educate protesting Haryana and Punjab farmers about the common history of their past generations leading up to, and following, the two partitions of Punjab – first in 1947 and then in 1966.

"I have been associated with the protest since July



Jagtar Singh Sidhu in his library set up at Tikri border.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

last year when it was limited to Punjab and have been here for the last 45 days. We have books on history, religion and literature in Hindi, Punjabi and English. Between 20 and 25 books are issued every day," he said.

"True Indianness lies in our diversity, so we should read diverse literature and culture to peacefully coexist.

ist. For me, it is as simple as that. This shared heritage is of India where a movement like this, which is bound to have international repercussions, is taking place right now," said Mr. Sidhu, who is part of a team of 200 lawyers providing legal aid to those arrested in several cases related Republic Day violence.

Mr. Sidhu's library, he said, seeks to bring together not just literary glimpses of the undivided Punjab of yesteryear that lay between Peshawar and Delhi but that of diverse cultures culminating in "Indian-ness". It would be wrong to view the farmers' protests as isolated or limited to the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh as their trajectory would have larger, if not global, consequences, he said.

One more arrested for Red Fort incident

Accused sent to 7-day police custody

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

Another accused wanted in connection with the Red Fort violence on Republic Day has been arrested by the Delhi police.

A court sent Iqbal Singh, from Punjab, to seven days in police custody, said an officer on Wednesday.

DCP (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said that Mr. Singh, who had a bounty of ₹50,000 on his head, was arrested from Hoshiarpur in Punjab on Tuesday night by the northern range of Delhi Police's Special Cell.

Facebook livestream

On January 26, Mr. Singh was allegedly seen instigating the mob. In a video he livestreamed on Facebook, he was heard asking the mob to attack the police if they did not open the Red Fort gate peacefully.

"He is a resident of Lud-

hiana and used to frequently visit the farmers' protest at the Singhu border. He came to the Singhu border on January 22 for the proposed tractor rally and on January 25 he stayed at a gurdwara in Delhi," said a senior police officer.

He had been absconding after the violence. After the arrest, he was handed over to the Crime Branch.

The police said that Mr. Singh is one of the conspirators in the violence that happened at the Red Fort.

They will question him over other people's role in the 'conspiracy'. "We will find out if he and Deep Sidhu were working together.

He will be questioned over his association with a media house that livestreamed the violence, and his connection with any foreign-based outfit. The mobile phone he used at Red Fort is yet to be recovered, said an officer.



Farmers protesting at the Singhu border on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

'Will not leave protest site despite PM appeal'

Elderly, women will stay to ensure stir remains strong; farmers

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI

Protesting farmers at the Singhu border on Wednesday said that despite appeals from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for older farmers to return to their respective villages, they were not ready to leave the protest site till their demands are met.

Farmers from Delhi's neighbouring States have been at the Capital's borders for nearly three months now, demanding the repeal of three agriculture laws passed by the Centre.

Several farmers at the protest site said that women and senior citizens would continue to protest at the borders to ensure that the agitation is not weakened.

'Bid to reduce numbers' Sukhwinder Singh, from Punjab's Taran Tarn district, said: "Why should the elders go back? People have come here in large numbers and nobody will return till the laws are repealed. Appeals

to sections of protesters to go back only shows that the Central government wants the numbers to reduce at the borders, but that is not going to happen."

Jarnail Singh, 60, a farmer from Punjab's Patiala district, said: "The elderly here are the sons of those who have sacrificed a lot for the country. So, how can these same people suddenly go back? We are ready to die here but will not return."

"Our family members and neighbours are taking care of our households and fields back home, and even they do not want us to leave the protest and return," said Mr. Jarnail, whose trolley is parked over seven kilometres away from the main stage at the Singhu border.

Jaspal Singh, a 65-year-old farmer from Punjab's Taran Tarn district, said: "We cannot go home at this point. What will we do by returning? If the laws are implemented then anyway we will have nothing left. There are regular meetings taking

SC stays order asking schools to give gadgets to students

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a Delhi High Court order asking private unaided and government schools to provide gadgets and Internet packages to students from economically weaker section (EWS) or disadvantaged group for online classes initiated during the COVID-19 lockdown.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde decided to examine the Delhi government's appeal against the High Court judgment of September 18 last year.

"Issue notice. In the meantime, there shall be stay of operation of the impugned order of the High Court," it recorded in its order on a petition filed by NGO 'Justice for All'.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the Delhi government, submitted that the High Court order had placed an additional burden on the State.

Poor students The High Court had said the absence of gadgets and Internet packages to poor students for online classes was preventing children from pursuing elementary education.

It said private unaided schools "shall be entitled to claim reimbursement of reasonable cost for procurement of the equipment and Internet package from the State under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, even though the State is not providing the same to its students".

The High Court also directed the constitution of a three-member panel to expedite and streamline the process of identifying and supplying the gadgets to poor and disadvantaged students.

DDA approves green development policy draft

Document will now be placed in the public domain for objections, suggestions

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Wednesday approved the draft 'Green Development Area (GDA) Policy' to provide an integrated framework for development of land falling in designated green belts and low-density residential areas according to the Master Plan for Delhi 2021.

In a meeting chaired by Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal, who is also the DDA chairman, the draft policy, which will now be placed in the public domain for objections and suggestions, was approved. "The policy will encourage green develop-

ment and will ensure seamless development of infrastructure and road network," the urban body stated.

"The policy allows for incentivised development on agglomerated land parcels of bigger sizes. The GDA policy is primarily a green-oriented development characterised by large wooded areas and landscaped areas," it added.

BJP State HQ

Parameters related to green buildings, green infrastructure and zero discharge complexes will have to be adopted while undertaking development of the land by respective landowners, said

DDA officials. The authority also approved the change of land use at DDU Marg for construction of the BJP's State headquarters.

The land-owning agency also cleared a proposal to extend the completion time for plots allotted by the DDA to December 31, 2022.

The Delhi Development Authority budget saw a provision of ₹2,326 crore being allotted for the development of infrastructure facilities such as roads, sewerage, water supply and drainage in Narela, Dwara and Rohini.

The urban body also committed to provide ₹1,000 crore for the Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project.

Editors Guild expresses concern over raids on NewsClick office

Press Club of India calls it an 'unsavoury attack on media'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) on Wednesday expressed concern over raids by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) at the office of the news website NewsClick.in, and the residences of its editor-in-chief and promoter, the editor and senior management.

The EGI said that it is concerned that raids by government agencies are being used as coercive measures to suppress free and independent journalism. "The Guild demands that care be taken

to not undermine the news operations of NewsClick and that its journalists and stakeholders are not harassed under the garb of such measures," the EGI said.

Critical reporting

The EGI added that in the recent past the website has been at the front-line of reporting on the farmers agitation, the anti-CAA protests, and has been critical of various government policies and of a few powerful corporate houses.

The Press Club of India also expressed concern and

called the raid an "unsavoury attack on the media in a bid to intimidate and silence critical journalism".

"A series of attacks on prominent journalists of the country, and also on lesser-known hard-working journalists who report from the ground in far-flung areas of the country, has regrettably become the hallmark of the government," the PCI said.

It asked the government to end "rajd raj" and "false allegations raj" against the media and take visible steps to ensure democratic freedoms.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE	CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / END (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	HVPNL	E-NIT NO. 43/2020-21/XEN/T5 DIV. HVPNL HISAR DATED: 08.02.2021 FOR: - 1. MTC, OF NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AT 132 KV SUB-STATION HVPNL, FATEHABAD, 2. MTC, OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AT 132 KV SUB-STATION HVPNL, FATEHABAD 3. MTC, OF NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AT 220 KV SUB-STATION HVPNL, FATEHABAD (ONLINE TENDER ID-2021_HBC_159086_1)	09.02.2021	15.02.2021	5.66 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in	01722583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
2	HVPNL	PROVIDING 132 KV S/C BAY TO ACCOMMODATE 132 KV S/C LINE FROM KARNAL CO-OP SUGAR MILL LTD. TO SHEKHUPURA JAGIR AT 132 KV S/STN, HVPNL, SHEKHUPURA JAGIR.	08.02.2021	15.02.2021	5.05 LACS	www.hvpn.org.in	01722583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
3	HVPNL	E-NIT NO. 43/2020-21/XEN/T5 DIV. HVPNL HISAR DATED: 08.02.2021 FOR: - 1. PROVIDING AND FIXING TILES IN CONTROL ROOM BUILDING (NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING) AT 132KV S/STN, NARNAUD, 2. PROVIDING AND LAVING INTERLOCKING PAVERS BLOCK FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD CONNECTING MAIN GATE TO CONTROL ROOM BUILDING AT 132KV S/STN, HANSI (ONLINE TENDER ID-2021_HBC_159086_1)	09.02.2021	15.02.2021	7.73 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in	01722583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
4	HVPNL	DEPOSIT WORK FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. 132 KV LINE BAYS (132 KV D/C SHEKHUPURA JAGIR-SUGAR MILL KARNAL LINE) ALONG WITH ALLIED EQUIPMENT IN BAY B-9 AT 132 KV S/STN. SHEKHUPURA JAGIR (CIVIL WORKS.)	09.02.2021	15.02.2021	RS. 19,500.00 FOR GENERAL, RS. 9750.00 FOR REGISTERED SOCIETY	www.hvpn.org.in	01722583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
5	MC PATAUDI	PROVIDING AND FIXING OF TIN SHED IN NEW GOVT. HOSPITAL FOR PARKING, WARD NO. 01, PATAUDI+ 12 OTHER WORKS	05.02.2021	14.02.2021	END 2.18 LACS	https://etenders.hry.ni.cjin.nicgep/app	0124-2672869 secymcpataudi@gmail.com
6	MC PATAUDI	CONST. OF TOILET AND WALL UNDER EXISTING TIN SHED IN SHAMSHEEN GHAT, WARD NO. 01, PATAUDI+ 4 OTHER WORKS	08.02.2021	16.02.2021	58160/-	https://etenders.hry.ni.cjin.nicgep/app	0124-2672869 secymcpataudi@gmail.com
7	HVPNL	MUFFING OF 48 NO. TOWER WALL OF 11 KV NO. 11 KV S/STN. FOR STRENGTHEN THE TOWER OF 66 KV S/C JORIAN-LADWA LINE	08				

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, FEB. 11	RISE 07:03 SET 18:09
	RISE 06:53 SET 17:44
FRIDAY, FEB. 12	
	RISE 07:02 SET 18:09
	RISE 07:35 SET 18:44

SATURDAY, FEB. 13

RISE 07:01 SET 18:10
RISE 08:11 SET 19:42

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Delhi City 30 10
Safdarjung 30 10
Palam 26 13

Delhi Palam Today
27°C Shallow to moderate fog likely during cool morning. Dry comfortable weather with mainly clear sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
26°C Dry comfortable weather during day with partly cloudy sky and cold morning would prevail.

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THE HINDU
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BJP seeks basic steps to control air pollution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Wednesday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asking him to ensure that some basic measures are taken to control pollution in the Capital.

Steps such as seeking the opinion of experts from IIT to know the causes of pollution in Delhi are "commendable", he said.

But, at the same time, steps such as dense carpeting of PWD roads are also required. "These roads have broken at different locations. Dust blowing from these roads is continuously increasing the pollution level. Similarly, for the cleaning of these roads, it is also necessary to deploy the maximum number of road sweeper machines," Mr. Bidhuri wrote.

He also demanded construction of flyovers and underpasses at locations reporting traffic jam.

Healthcare workers await second jab and a return to normal life

Nurse books flight to visit parents in Kerala, hospital staffer makes plans to attend Church; Centre says second dose to roll out from Feb. 13

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

From booking flight tickets to meet parents on the other side of the country to making plans to attend Church with the whole family, healthcare workers who are expected to be the first ones to get the second shot of the COVID-19 vaccine have started making plans to get back to 'normal' life.

The Hindu spoke to three healthcare workers who were the first ones to be inoculated in Delhi on January 16, the day the COVID-19 vaccination drive was rolled out nationwide.

All three said they did not suffer any reaction to the vaccine, not even "mild fever", and they would get their family members vaccinated as soon as possible.

Biji Tomy, 48, a nurse from Kala in Kerala, who was the first to

get the vaccine at Lok Nayak Hospital, said she desperately wanted to meet her parents.

"I have not seen my pappa and mommy in about two years. I cannot wait any longer, so I have booked a flight ticket to Kochi on February 16. The last time I went home was in May 2019," said the mother of two children.

She had volunteered to get the first dose of the vaccine on the first day when many were still skeptical about the jab.

A little anxious'

"Even though I volunteered, I was a little anxious when I was waiting to take the vaccine, but there were no issues. Now, also people are saying we don't know whether the second dose will create any reactions. I am a little anxious but I hope this will also go smoothly,"



The Delhi government is yet to make any announcement about administering the second dose. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Ms. Tomy added.

The second dose of the vaccine will be administered from February 13, according to the Central government, but the Delhi go-

vernment is yet to make any announcement about it.

Ms. Tomy said she was yet to get any message from the government on when she will get her se-

"After getting the vaccine and mandatory period of caution after it, I am safe, but I could still be spreading the virus. So, it doesn't make a difference. I will still maintain caution and wear a mask," said Dr. Dogra.

He, however, said that he wants to get his 63-year-old mother vaccinated as soon as possible.

"I was the nodal officer for COVID-19 at the hospital. In the beginning, I stayed at the hospital and did not go home for more than five months. During the peak of the pandemic, people were asking, 'Why this much time is being taken to develop a vaccine?' But now that the vaccine is out, many are not taking it and saying that 'it was developed too soon'. More people will have to take the vaccine for things to get back to normal," he added.

Nursery admissions from Feb. 18

Govt. lays out fee structure norms, stresses on transparency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) on Wednesday announced that the admission process for entry-level classes in private unaided schools of Delhi for the 2021-22 academic session will begin from February 18 and conclude on March 31.

The first and second list of admitted students will be released on March 20 and March 25, respectively.

The announcement brought relief to many parents worried about securing admission of their wards into a nursery school as the process has been on hold since the last week of November, 2020, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

No classes

Tweeting about the nursery admission schedule, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said: "Congratulations to all parents and children. We have to bring the excitement back in schools after defeating coronavirus. Our schools are waiting for their students [sic]." Mr. Kejriwal had last week assured parents and private schools that the admission schedule would be announced soon.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Feb 18	Commencement of admission process and availability of forms
Mar 4	Last date for submission
Mar 15	Uploading marks under points system criteria
Mar 20	First list
Mar 25	Second list
Mar 31	Closure of admission process

SOURCE: DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

However, schools will not be open for classes.

Fee structure

Detailing the admission procedure, the DoE said that no fee except prescribed registration fee, admission fee, caution fee (if school already charges it) and tuition fee, shall be charged at the time of admission and thereafter, only tuition fee shall be charged from the students till further orders due to the pandemic.

Regarding the age limit for admission to nursery, pre-primary and Class 1, the DoE said the minimum age limit for admission shall be three years, four years, and

five years, respectively, by March 31. The upper age limit, it said is less than four years as on March 31 for nursery, less than five years for pre-primary and less than six years for Class 1.

Schools have been instructed to display the admission schedule on their notice boards and websites, and charge only a non-refundable amount of ₹25 from the parents as admission registration fee.

The purchase of the school prospectus will be optional.

Strict order

Schools have been permitted by the DoE to develop and adopt their own criteria for admission which shall be "fair, reasonable, well defined, equitable, non-discriminatory, unambiguous and transparent".

They have also been asked to refrain from adopting any of the 62 criteria that have been abolished by the department and upheld by the Delhi High Court that were found discriminatory in nature.

A monitoring cell will be in place to ensure that no school adopts any of the unjustified criteria.

Development or corruption, Delhiites will make choice in civic bypolls: AAP

Pathak leads march in support of Shalimar Bagh candidate

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday said that Delhiites have two models of governance before them, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's model of "development" and BJP's model of "corruption", to choose during the municipal corporation by-elections.

The by-elections to five wards are scheduled to be held on February 28.

AAP leader and party in-charge of municipal corporations, Durgesh Pathak, held a march in support of Shalimar Bagh candidate

Sunita Mishra on Wednesday. "People are completely fed up with the corruption of BJP-ruled civic bodies and they have made up their mind to vote against BJP in the upcoming election and elect AAP," Mr. Pathak said.

Model of governance
Kejriwal government has done remarkable work in sectors like education, healthcare, electricity, transport and others. In these years, it has established a new model of governance and discussion on this model is happening across the world. On the other hand, in

Delhi we have the model of the BJP-ruled corporations. The BJP has been ruling the corporations for the last 15 years and their model is rampant corruption and full of lies," the AAP leader said.

The party also alleged that "rattled" by farmers' protest, the BJP has taken a u-turn and has decided that the zilla Panchayat election in Uttar Pradesh will not happen under party symbols. "We all know that in the zilla Panchayat election, the farmers are the key voters and that is why the BJP is rattled," said AAP MP Sanjay Singh.

Reply to plea on dearness allowance: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Kejriwal government to reply to an application seeking stay of its decision to increase dearness allowance (DA) of workers in the Capital.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh asked Delhi government to submit its response on the plea by Delhi Factory Owners' Federation by March 24.

Three-day workshop for child-centric processes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) and Department of Women and Child Development (WCD) of the Delhi government on Wednesday began a three-day training programme for Child Welfare Committees (CWC), Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB) and District Child Protection Officers (DCPO) with a focus to help them do their jobs more efficiently.

Inaugurating the workshop, Women and Child Development Minister Rajaendra Pal Gautam assured participants unwavering support of the government to ensure that justice is delivered to every child.

Anurag Kundu, Chairperson of DCPCR, pointed to large gaps between the expectations drawn from the rights, and the reality. He focused on how the institutions need to redesign their processes to make them truly child-centric.

Delhi to add 82 more vaccination sites today

Record 14,743 beneficiaries get vaccine in single day, city reports 7 adverse events

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Wednesday said it will add 82 more vaccination sites across the city from Thursday, taking the total to 265.

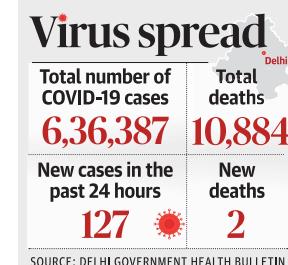
The announcement came on a day when a total of 14,743 beneficiaries – healthcare and front-line workers – took the COVID-19 vaccination in a single day, the highest so far. There were seven Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a government spokesperson.

The number of people vaccinated on Wednesday was 80.5% of the daily target of 18,300. The number of healthcare workers taking



The number of people vaccinated on Wednesday was 80.5% of the daily target. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the vaccine had been dropping, when the government recently decided to start vaccinating front-line workers



too. Since then, vaccination numbers have gone up and many senior officials have also taken the vaccine.

A special drive was recently conducted for the police and a large number of personnel were vaccinated at the current 183 sites.

Some sites were also ear-

marked for police personnel to increase their coverage, officials said.

127 new cases

Delhi witnessed 127 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,36,387, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

Also, two deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,884.

A total of 66,803 tests were done in the past 24 hours. Of the total cases, 6,24,457 people have recovered and there are now only 1,046 active cases.

THE HINDU GROUP



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Farmer unions plan 4-hour 'rail roko' on Feb. 18

Attempts to create division among farmers will not succeed, says Rakesh Tikait

ASHOK KUMAR
NEW DELHI

Agitating farmers' unions on Wednesday announced that they would block rail traffic across the country for four hours on February 18, intensifying their stir against the three contentious farm laws. Toll plazas in Rajasthan would be "made free" from February 12, they said.

In a press statement, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a joint front of farm-

ers' unions, said a meeting of farmer leaders had decided to block rail traffic from 12 noon to 4 p.m. on February 18 as part of the "Rail roko" (stop trains) protest.

On February 14, a candle march, "mashaal juloos" (torchlight procession) and other protests would be organised across the country, remembering the sacrifice of "martyred" soldiers in the Pulwama attack, said the press statement. On February

16, it added, farmers will show solidarity throughout the country on the birth anniversary of Sir Chhotu Ram, a prominent farmer leader.

Earlier, Bharatiya Kisan Union national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait had said the agitation would continue till the time farmers' demands were met. He added that attempts to create division among farmers on the basis of religion and region would not succeed. Mr. Tikait said the

"march" (the coalition of farmer unions) and "panch" (the committee holding talks with the government) would not change.

Addressing a large gathering at the Singhu border, Mr. Tikait said all attempts to divide Sikhs and non-Sikhs, big and small farmers, and the people from Haryana and Punjab, respectively, had failed. He said the SKM was united and there was no division in it.

Corrigendum Notice

Subject: Tender No. OPZ/30/2020-21 – DNT for providing additional 4 x 315 KVA P/M T/F's and augmentation of existing 4 Nos. 200 KVA P/M T/F with 315 KVA P/M T/F at various locations for the improvement of LD System in Ram Darbar Ph-I & Ph-II under the jurisdiction of ElecY. 'OP' Sub Divn. No. 5, U.T. Chandigarh.

Some amendments in the DNIT have been made in the subject cited tender. The same can be seen / downloaded from the website <https://etenders.chd.nic.in>. All the other terms and conditions shall remain the same. The opening date of the tender will remain the same i.e. 10.02.2021 at 16.00 hrs.

—sd—
Executive Engineer,
Electricity (OP) Division No. 2
Chandigarh, U.T.

Government of Jharkhand

Dr. Ram Dayal Munda Tribal Welfare Research Institute
Department of Schedule Tribe, Schedule Caste, Minorities,
and Backward Classes Welfare Department Morabadi, Ranchi - 834008

Tel: 0651-2551824 e-mail: tri.directorate@gmail.com/

Lt. No. 155

Ranchi, Dated: 09/02/2021

Corrigendum

P.R. No. 240881

(Expression of Interest)

There are some minutes changes has been done in this Research Project in the Budget Section of the EoI.

TOPIC :- A Literary studies and Audio-Video Documentation of Folklore and Dance of Munda and Ho Scheduled Tribe communities.

Objective

- Any other important objective, necessary in due course of the project.

EOI Reference No:- I10 , Date : 04/02/2021

S. No.	Reference	As in EOI Document	Amendment
1	Budget	Maximum budget per film shall be 2.0 lakhs only	Maximum budget per film shall be 4.0 lakhs only

*Note:
1. Remaining all other mentioned terms and conditions in EOI will remain unchanged for details can be obtained from the office of the TRD on any working day during office hour to meet concerned Nodal person and the same can also be downloaded from the website www.tridharkhand.gov.in/ (<http://59.145.222.53/trid/tenders.php>) or through E-mail tridirectorate@gmail.com by specifying the topic & details of Institution / Organization Interested.

PR 241231 Schedule Tribe, Schedule Caste, Minority and Backward Class Welfare Department(20-21).D Sd/- Director

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED



General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Name: Nisha @ Aarti** D/o Roopchand RO H. No. D-279, Gali No. 11, D-Block, Ashok Nagar, Delhi has been kidnapped since 30.01.2021 from her house. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 44/21 u/s 363 IPC dated 03.02.2021 has been registered at Police Station Jyoti Nagar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Age : About 16 Years 7 months, **Height:** 5', **Complexion :** Fair, **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Red colour Top & Jarsi and blue colour payjami and red colour plastic chappal in feet. Any person having any information/Clue about this kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, Jyoti Nagar, Delhi. At Email Id - cic@cbi.gov.in or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Phone: SHO 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Jyoti Nagar, Delhi Fax No. 011-24368639 North-East Distt., Delhi DP/565/NE/2021 Ph. No. 011-22810525, 22810524

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that this person **Name: Anand @ Nepali, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 40-45 Years, Sex: Male, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing:** White Colour Shirt, Black Colour Pant and Jacket has been found dead in front of Budh Mandir, Hardhyani Singh Marg, Dev Nagar, Karol Bagh, New Delhi, on 08.02.2021.

In this regard a DD No. 35A, dated 08.02.2021 has been registered at P.S. Prasad Nagar, New Delhi.

Dead Body has been kept preserved in MAMC Mortuary for 72 hours for identification.

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

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following,

SHO P.S. Prasad Nagar, New Delhi Ph.: 011-25749171, 25725652

DP/648/CD/2021

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that one male namely **Unknown S/o Unknown R/o Unknown, Age about 35-40 years, Height about 57", Complexion shallow wearing Mehroon and Black-White colour jacket "JARA MAN" printed, Cream colour shirt, Black colour jeans and Grey colour inner & pajami was found dead near Pipal tree, inside the wall, South side of the Kishanganj Railway station platform, Delhi on 09.02.2021. In this regard a case FIR No. 01/2021 U/s 302/301 IPC dated 09.02.2021 has been registered at PS Sarai Rohilla Railway Station, Delhi.**

Any person having any information or clue about this deceased person may kindly inform to the undersigned at the address or telephone nos. given below.

SHO P.S Sarai Rohilla Rly. Station Delhi Ph. 011-28711697, 8750871308

DP/58/RLY/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING FEMALE



General public is hereby informed that one female **Name: Reena along with her daughter Nayara, W/o Sonu, R/o H. No. A-1/310, Nand Nagri, Delhi, Age: about 31 Years, Height: 5', Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing:** Unknown has been missing since 09.01.2021 from her house.

In this regard a DD No. 100-A, dated 12.01.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this female but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information or clue about this female kindly inform to the following,

E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in **SHO**

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> **P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi**

Fax: 011-24368639 **Ph. 011-22829503, 8750870730**

DP: 011-24368638, 24368641

DP/544/NE/2021

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Age : About 25-30 years, Height : 5'9", Complexion : Wheatish, wearing blue colour track suit and green colour lower, was found dead in train accident on 05.02.2021 at KM Pole No. 6/12-6/14 DN Railway Line, near Azadpur Flyover, Ashok Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 9-A dated 05.02.2021 u/s 174 Cr.P.C. has been lodged at P.S. Subzi Mandi Railway Station, Delhi. The deadbody has been preserved for identification for 72 hours in the mortuary of Subzi Mandi, Delhi.**

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

SHO - P.S. Subzi Mandi Railway Station, Delhi Tel. No. 011-23692455, 9540360600

DP/56/RLY/21

CM YK

M ND-NDE

THE HINDU GROUP



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

Forecast for Thursday: Dense/very dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	28.9	11.3	Kozhikode	—	34.0	23.0
Ahmedabad	—	32.1	12.7	Kurnool	—	33.1	18.3
Aizawl	—	23.0	10.7	Lucknow	—	27.9	11.0
Allahabad	—	29.7	10.5	Madurai	—	31.6	18.5
Bengaluru	—	30.5	14.4	Mangaluru	—	35.2	20.0
Bhopal	—	31.3	11.4	Mumbai	—	31.7	16.6
Bhubaneswar	—	33.6	15.4	Mysuru	—	31.0	15.8
Chandigarh	—	26.6	11.3	New Delhi	—	30.4	10.2
Chennai	—	30.3	22.0	Patna	—	25.6	11.2
Coimbatore	—	31.1	17.0	Port Blair	—	30.6	21.3
Dehradun	—	25.7	9.2	Puducherry	—	30.9	19.6
Gangtok	—	15.6	7.8	Pune	—	32.9	12.4
Goa	—	33.2	19.4	Raipur	—	30.6	10.0
Guwahati	—	29.0	11.8	Ranchi	—	28.6	10.6
Hubballi	—	31.0	16.0	Shillong	—	18.6	8.1
Hyderabad	—	32.2	14.7	Shimla	—	17.0	5.5
Impthal	—	26.2	7.1	Srinagar	—	13.5	—1.6
Jaipur	—	29.7	13.9	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.1	21.3
Kochi	—	31.2	22.8	Tiruchi	—	31.8	17.6
Kohima	—	19.5	5.5	Vijayawada	—	31.6	20.2
Kolkata	—	29.3	13.8	Visakhapatnam	—	29.8	19.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES SO₂ NO_x CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE

Ahmedabad	23	127	.42	222	.225	...■■■
Bengaluru	—	7.117	.28	97	.100	...■■■
Chennai	18	22	.52	108	.100	...■■■
Delhi	31	103	.100	.356	.344	...■■■
Hyderabad	23	86	.36	.215	.—	...■■■
Kolkata	11	81	.38	.204	.237	...■■■
Lucknow	15	97	.82	.318	.348	...■■■
Mumbai	64	139	.33	.193	.222	...■■■
Pune	—	122	.30	.172	.120	...■■■
Visakhapatnam	14	68	.19	.162	.167	...■■■

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

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

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Lahaul-Spiti residents want hydro projects in the region scrapped

'Want to ensure ecology is not disturbed'

VIKAS VASUDEV

CHANDIGARH

In the wake of the Uttarakhand avalanche, there is increased anxiety among the people in the Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh who have been up in arms against the hydropower projects proposed in this tribal region.

Among the projects proposed in Lahaul-Spiti are Tandi (104 Mega Watt), Rashil (102 MW), Bardang (126 MW), Miyar (90 MW) and Jispa (300 MW).

People from at least two Panchayats – Tandi and Goshal – have been strongly opposing the Tandi project. "Our apprehension surrounding the ill-effects of big hydro-projects on environment has only been strengthened after the recent tragedy in Uttarakhand. Locals here are opposing hydro projects on the Chandra-Bhaga River basin. Our Panchayat has also passed a resolution against the Tandi hydro-project," Virender Kumar, vice-pradhan (head) of Tandi, told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Kumar said locals had been voicing their concerns for a long time. "We are against all hydro power projects in Lahaul, and in particular at Tandi. The ecology here is fragile," he said. ad-

ding, "We are not against the government, we want to ensure that our ecology is not disturbed."

He said they were planning to stage protests in the near future. "Since our region is snowbound, it's difficult to stage protests at present. But hopefully by April, we will chalk out a plan, if the need arises."

An association of locals opposing the proposed project – 'Tandi Dam Sangarsh Samiti' – recently submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur. The memorandum says the existence of about a dozen of villages falling in Tandi and Goshal panchayat was at risk. The construction of the dam would impact the tribal rights. The project would bring more losses than benefits, it said.

"We have rejected the proposal and asked the government to scrap the project respecting the sentiments of the local people," said Goshal village head Susheela.

Vikram Katoch, vice-president of 'Save Lahaul-Spiti Society', an NGO, said there were around 56 mini, micro and mega hydro projects in Lahaul-Spiti. "The entire region is fragile and disturbing it will only have catastrophic results. We are fighting to save Lahaul-Spiti," he said.

Bihar youth held for molesting minor Adivasi girl in Mandwa

Accused, victim's family worked as labourers

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

The Mandwa coastal police have arrested a 23-year-old man from Bihar for molesting a 10-year-old Adivasi girl. The accused, Amlesh Umesh Saha, was working as a labourer along with members of the victim's family at a farmhouse in Mandwa.

"On February 3, when most labourers were taking a nap, the accused molested the child," senior

police inspector Dharmaraj Sonke said. Though the other labourers caught him, he managed to flee.

"A team left for Bihar, but did not find him at his house or his in-laws' house. With the help of call detail records, we traced him to a relative's house," Mr. Sonke said.

The accused was arrested on February 6 and brought to Mandwa on February 8. He has been remanded in police custody till February 12.

Beneath 56-inch chest, PM has a small heart, says Priyanka

Cong. general secretary launches 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' campaign in Saharanpur

ANUJ KUMAR
SAHARANPUR

Launching a direct attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra said on Wednesday, "Beneath the 56-inch chest, the Prime Minister has a small heart that beats for his billionaire friends."

Speaking at a kisan mahapanchayat in Saharanpur, Ms. Vadra said if voted to power, her party would repeal the laws.

Questioning the intention of the government, she said the PM was spending ₹20,000 crore on the redevelop-



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in Saharanpur on Wednesday. PTI

vement of the Parliament House and had money to buy two planes worth ₹16,000 crore, but he didn't fulfil his promise of paying the pending ₹15,000 crore of

sugarcane farmers.

She added the PM had visited several countries, but he had no time to visit the borders of the city where he lives in, where thousands of farmers were protesting against farm laws for 78 days.

'Insulted the farmers'

Ms. Vadra also criticised the PM and BJP leaders for insulting the farmers by calling them 'andolan jeevi' and anti-national.

Ms. Vadra launched the party's 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' campaign at the mahapanchayat held in Chilkana Sultanpur in Nakud tehsil of

Saharanpur. The area has a significant Muslim population and the role of local Congress heavyweight Imran Masood in organising the party's show of strength was palpable, both in posters and on the ground.

Earlier, Ms. Vadra landed at the Jolly Grant airport in Dehradun and visited the shrine of Mata Shakumbari Devi and the khanqah of Hazrat Raipuri before addressing the farmers.

The panchayat was held despite the district administration's orders that section 144 of CrPC was in place in the district.

+

BJP wins 6 DDC posts in J&K, PAGD gets 3

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday won two more district chairmen's posts to push its tally to six, while the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD or Gupkar alliance) that won two more districts is now heading in three districts in the first ever polls of the District Developments Councils (DDC) posts in J&K.

BJP's Keshav Dutt Sharma from Samba and Saraf Singh

Nag from Reasi won the top post of chairmanship from these districts.

With this, the BJP has swept the Hindu belt in the Jammu region, by winning the top posts of the district councils in Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur and Doda, besides Samba and Reasi.

However, the BJP has no numerical strength in upcoming chairman posts polls in Poonch, Rajouri and Ramaban, where independent candidates and the Gupkar

alliance hold the key.

Meanwhile, the Gupkar alliance had managed to win 110 sub-district segments, but has failed to win the top posts in most districts after Sajad Lone's Peoples Conference exited from the alliance.

Out of seven districts of the Valley, where the results have been announced so far, the Gupkar alliance has managed to win the chairman posts only in three districts so far. The top council

+

positions of two districts were won on Wednesday in south Kashmir's Pulwama and central Kashmir's Ganderbal.

PDP's Waheed-ur-Rehman Para, who won a seat from Pulwama district, could not cast his vote because he remains in jail since November last.

+

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Twitter congratulated the DDC members for showing 'exemplary character and courage'.

+

Reinstate LGBT member of U.P. Home Guards: HC

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Treating a person's sexual orientation as an offence would be interference in the individual's right of privacy, the Allahabad High Court noted as it directed the Uttar Pradesh Home Guards to reinstate a staff member belonging to the LGBT community whose appointment was cancelled after a video revealing the person's sexual orientation was widely shared.

The court directed the Commandant General of Home Guards, Headquarters, Lucknow, U.P., to take the aggrieved petitioner back in service with immediate effect. The petitioner shall be entitled to all admissible dues and the honorarium shall be paid regularly as and when the same was due, the court noted.

Viral video

Referring to the order dated June 11, 2019, through which the petitioner's appointment was cancelled, the court said it was done on account of "some video of the petitioner which was viral by someone."

The assertion in paragraph No. 8 of the counter affidavit showed the perception of the officer, District Commandant of Home Guards, Bulandshahr, who had passed the order of cancellation, the court said.

"From the reading of the order itself, it is found to be vindictive in nature," Justice Sunita Agarwal noted in an order dated February 2, while quashing the order of cancellation of the appointment of the petitioner which was in the right of the privacy of the person concerned, Justice Agarwal noted.

Any display of affection among the members of the LGBT community towards their partners in public, so long as it did not amount to indecency or had the potentiality to disturb public order, could not be bogged down by majority perception, the court further said referring to the Supreme Court case.

MADURAI CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION "INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMENITIES FUND - 2021"

TENDER NOTIFICATION No. 13/2021

1. On behalf of Madurai Corporation, The Commissioner, Madurai Corporation invites Sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for following works under I&A Fund.

Sl. No. Name of work Value Put to Tender EMD



Media as target

There must be no room for suspicion that agencies are being used for curbing dissent

Ordinarily, searches and seizures are the legitimate starting point of an investigation, done on the basis of prior information. But the ED's raids in the office of independent digital news platform NewsClick, and in the residence of its promoter and editor-in-chief, have invited justified condemnation from organisations representing the media. There is every likelihood that this operation is linked to the platform's in-depth coverage of ongoing protests as well as the various struggles of the people and the grassroots organisations that represent them. Ostensibly arising from an FIR registered by the Delhi police some months ago, the ED is said to be investigating alleged money-laundering to the tune of ₹30 crore. Not much is known about the nature of the police case, but the agency is empowered by the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act to investigate if the proceeds of crime related to a 'predicate offence' have been laundered. Whether such a primary offence has been established or not, and if so, whether NewsClick is in any way linked to it, is unclear. However, in the light of the manner in which the central agency is wont to enter the scene to investigate both real and imaginary allegations against anyone vocally critical of the government, it is difficult to brush aside the suspicion that the website is being targeted for its coverage of the farmers' agitation as well as last year's country-wide protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

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. Amidst claims that there are varying kinds of conspiracies against the government and India, it is no surprise that relentless journalistic focus on protests, which are basically steps taken in pursuit of redress for public grievances, is inviting repressive action. Laws that are serious in nature and ought not to be invoked lightly are being used with abandon against those seen to have invited the establishment's wrath. This may explain the frequency with which the offence of sedition is being invoked for speeches and writings, while allegations of anti-national activity peddled by those groomed to build such narratives lead to action under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. In other instances, cases of promoting social enmity or outraging religious sentiments are also slapped selectively to 'discipline' comedians and script-writers. The Supreme Court's intervention has protected prominent journalists from arrest for defamation for tweets that turned out to be incorrect. It no more behoves a responsible and responsive government to dismiss criticism of its treatment of dissenters, including journalists who do not agree with it, as motivated or inspired by foreign elements.

Origin and spread

Identifying the source of SARS-CoV-2 is important for containing fresh outbreaks

By concluding that a virus leak from a laboratory in China's Wuhan, where the SARS-CoV-2 virus first emerged, is "extremely unlikely" and did not require further study, a 17-member WHO team and its Chinese counterparts have put to rest conspiracy theories that emerged early during the pandemic. While many scientists had dismissed the lab-origin theory, in mid-February 2020, a group of 27 prominent scientists from outside China "strongly condemned conspiracy theories" in a letter published in *The Lancet*. The group said scientists who had analysed virus genome sequence data shared by China and multiple countries could "overwhelmingly conclude" that SARS-CoV-2, like emerging pathogens, had originated in wildlife. Even a year since the letter and after nearly half-a-million genome submissions to a public database, scientists have not found any sign of direct human influence. The WHO team's investigation now strongly suggests virus origin to a natural reservoir in bats, but unlikely to have been in Wuhan, which is miles from any natural bat habitat. The virus jumping directly from bats to humans is highly unlikely and initial investigation too suggests the role of an intermediary host species. The team has not been able to confirm the intermediary host.

While early data suggest that the virus could have been circulating in Wuhan for weeks before it was identified in the Chinese city, it asserts that there is no evidence of large outbreaks in Wuhan prior to December 2019. Chinese media reported in early 2020 based on unpublished government data of a Hubei resident infected with the novel virus in mid-November. Also, in a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, scientists from the China CDC found evidence of human-to-human transmission as early as mid-December 2019, which again suggests virus circulation weeks before it was identified in Wuhan. China officially confirmed human-to-human transmission only in mid-January. While the possibility of transmission via frozen food, a theory embraced by Chinese officials, has not been ruled out, the possibility of such a route appears unlikely as instances of live viruses on packaging have been "rare and isolated". The WHO visit is just the beginning of a long endeavour to uncover the origin of the virus. It will succeed only when scientific investigation is allowed to follow its course without being politicised. As in the case of the SARS outbreak in the 2000s, China again failed to be truly transparent during the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak. It can partially undo the damage done by now being more open and cooperative so that future outbreaks of related coronaviruses can be identified and contained early, if not prevented.

Disinformation is a cybersecurity threat

Society needs to be protected from infodemics, to prevent the possibility of a breakdown, interruptions and violence



ASHISH JAIMAN

Cybersecurity focuses on protecting and defending computer systems, networks, and our digital lives from disruption. Nefarious actors use attacks to compromise confidentiality, the integrity and the availability of IT systems for their benefit. Disinformation is, similarly, an attack and compromise of our cognitive being. Nation-state actors, ideological believers, violent extremists, and economically motivated enterprises manipulate the information ecosystem to create social discord, increase polarisation, and in some cases, influence the outcome of an election.

There is a lot of similarity in the strategies, tactics and actions between cybersecurity and disinformation attacks. Cyberattacks are aimed at computer infrastructure while disinformation exploits our inherent cognitive biases and logical fallacies. Cybersecurity attacks are executed using malware, viruses, trojans, botnets, and social engineering. Disinformation attacks use manipulated, miscontextualised, misappropriated information, deep fakes, and cheap fakes. Nefarious actors use both attacks in concert to create more havoc.

Historically, the industry has treated these attacks independently, deployed different countermeasures, and even have separate teams working in silos to protect and defend against these attacks. The lack of coordination between teams leaves a huge gap that is exploited by malicious actors.

Cognitive hacking

Cognitive hacking is a threat from disinformation and computational propaganda. This attack exploits psychological vulnerabilities, perpetuates biases, and eventually compromises logical and critical thinking, giving rise to cognitive dissonance. A cognitive hacking attack attempts to change the tar-

get audience's thoughts and actions, galvanise societies and disrupt harmony using disinformation. It exploits cognitive biases and shapes people by perpetuating their prejudices. The goal is to manipulate the way people perceive reality. The storming of the U.S. Capitol by right-wing groups on January 6, 2021, is a prime example of the effects of cognitive hacking.

The implications of cognitive hacking are more devastating than cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. The damage wrought by disinformation is challenging to repair. Revolutions throughout history have used cognitive hacking techniques to a significant effect to overthrow governments and change society. It is a key tactic to achieve major goals with limited means.

For example, QAnon spread false information claiming that the U.S. 2020 presidential election was fraudulent, and conspiracy theorists (in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, Cyprus and Belgium) burned down 5G towers because they believed it caused the novel coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 disinformation campaigns have prevented people from wearing masks, using potentially dangerous alternative cures, and not getting vaccinated, making it even more challenging to contain the virus.

Spreading disinformation

Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) is a well-coordinated cybersecurity attack achieved by flooding IT networks with superfluous requests to connect and overload the system to prevent legitimate requests being fulfilled. Similarly, a well-coordinated disinformation campaign fills broadcast and social channels with so much false information and noise, thus taking out the system's oxygen and drowning the truth.

The advertisement-centric business modes and attention economy incentivise malicious actors to run a sophisticated disinformation campaign and fill the information channels with noise to drown the truth with unprecedented speed



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

and scale.

Disinformation is used for social engineering threats on a mass scale. Like phishing attacks, to compromise IT systems for data extraction, disinformation campaigns play on emotions, giving cybercriminals another feasible method for scams.

A report (<https://bit.ly/3q97g3B>) released by Neustar International Security Council (NISC) found 48% of cybersecurity professionals regard disinformation as threats, and of the remainder, 49% say that threat is very significant; 91% of the cybersecurity professionals surveyed called for stricter measures on the Internet.

Deep fakes add a whole new level of danger to disinformation campaigns. A few quality and highly targeted disinformation campaigns using deepfakes could widen the divides between peoples in democracies even more and cause unimaginable levels of chaos, with increased levels of violence, damage to property and lives.

Lessons from cybersecurity

Cybersecurity experts have successfully understood and managed the threats posed by viruses, malware, and hackers. IT and Internet systems builders did not think of security till the first set of malicious actors began exploiting security vulnerabilities. The industry learned quickly and invested profoundly in security best practices, making cybersecurity a first design principle. It developed rigorous security frameworks, guidelines, standards, and best practices such as defense-in-depth, threat modelling, secure development lifecycle, and red-team-blue-team (self-attack to find vulnerabilities to fix them) to build cyberse-

curity resilience. ISACs (Information sharing and analysis centers) and global knowledge base of security bugs, vulnerabilities, threats, adversarial tactics, and techniques are published to improve the security posture of IT systems.

We can learn from decades of experience in the cybersecurity domain to defend, protect and respond, and find effective and practical solutions to counter and intervene in computational propaganda and infodemics. We can develop disinformation defence systems by studying strategy and tactics to understand the identities of malicious actors, their activities, and behaviours from the cybersecurity domain to mitigate disinformation threats. By treating disinformation as a cybersecurity threat we can find effective countermeasures to cognitive hacking.

Defense-in-depth is an information assurance strategy that provides multiple, redundant defensive measures if a security control fails. For example, security firewalls are the first line of defence to fend off threats from external systems. Antivirus systems defend against attacks that got through the firewalls. Regular patching helps eliminate any vulnerabilities from the systems. Smart identity protections and education are essential so that users do not fall victim to social engineering attempts.

We need a defense-in-depth strategy for disinformation. The defense-in-depth model identifies disinformation actors and removes them. Authenticity and provenance solutions can intervene before disinformation gets posted. If the disinformation still gets by, detection solutions using humans and artificial intelligence, internal and external fact-checking can label or remove the content.

Today, the response to disinformation is in silos of each platform with little or no coordination. There is no consistent taxonomy, definitions, policy, norms, and response for disinformation campaigns and actors. This inconsistency enables perpetrators to push the boundaries and move around on platforms to achieve

their nefarious goals. A mechanism like ISACs to share the information, context, actions, and behaviours of actors and disinformation across platforms is needed. Information sharing will help disinformation countermeasures to scale better and respond quickly.

Education is key

A critical component of cybersecurity is education. Technology industry, civil society and the government should coordinate to make users aware of cyber threat vectors such as phishing, viruses, and malware. The industry with public-private partnerships must also invest in media literacy efforts to reach out to discerning public. Intervention with media education can make a big difference in understanding context, motivations, and challenging disinformation to reduce damage. The freedom of speech and the freedom of expression are protected rights in most democracies. Balancing the rights of speech with the dangers of disinformation is a challenge for policymakers and regulators. There are laws and regulations for cybersecurity criminals. More than 1,000 entities have signed the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, for stability and security in the information space. Similarly, 52 countries and international bodies have signed the Christchurch Call to Action to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

The disinformation infodemic requires a concerted and coordinated effort by governments, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and other entities to create standards and implement defences. Taking advantage of the frameworks, norms, and tactics that we have already created for cybersecurity is the optimum way to meet this threat. We must protect our society against these threats or face the real possibility of societal breakdown, business interruption, and violence in the streets.

Ashish Jaiman, a technologist and innovator, is the Director of Technology and Operations for the Customer Security and Trust organisation at Microsoft

The portrait of a peacemaker and scholar

The Islam which can co-exist with other religions is the one propagated by the likes of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



NAJMUL HODA

This year's Padma Awards had some surprises. Among the awardees are two prominent Islamic scholars, viz., Maulana Wahiduddin Khan and Maulana Kalbe Sadiq (posthumously), who have been awarded the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan, India's second and third highest civilian honour/awards, respectively. The nonagenarian scholar, Wahiduddin Khan had earlier been conferred the Padma Bhushan in 2000, and the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award in 2009.

To the extent perception shapes reality, the semiotics of these awards is unmistakable – few would have expected Islamic scholars to be honoured this way. Therefore, it can rightly be surmised that the conferment is as much a recognition of the services of these scholars as the signalling of what the government considers of value in national life.

India's template for a good Muslim is the same as its template for a good Hindu, Sikh or Christian, etc. Neither is it any different from the Islamic or the universal model of a good person – that he should be a good citizen who enriches society by service, charity, peace and amity. It is from this vantage that Wahiduddin Khan dives into the vast resources of Islamic traditions to

bring to the surface its universal human values.

The axiom of Islam as a religion whose very name means peace – particularly that which pervades following the submission to the divine will, by subscribing to the universal morality, to make the world an ever better place – could be borne out only if it reflected in the individual and collective behaviour of Muslims. A religion is only as peaceful as the narratives it spawns and the characters it shapes.

Ideology of peace

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is among the very few traditional scholars who undertook to weave a narrative of peace for Muslims. He runs the Centre for Peace and Spirituality at New Delhi with the aim of presenting Islam as a complete ideology of peace. He has authored books such as *The Prophet of Peace*, *The Age of Peace*, and *Islam and World Peace*.

In his system of thought, the defining moment in Muhammad's prophetic career was the Treaty of Hudaibiyya (CE 628). To put an end to the incessant warfare with his Meccan adversaries, the Prophet entered into a treaty with them which, much to the indignation of his followers, had the appearance of abject capitulation.

But he was determined to buy peace irrespective of the cost. The cessation of hostilities brought quick dividends as the resumption of social interaction between the erstwhile foes created avenues for an exchange of ideas in an atmosphere which conducted reflec-



tion on Muhammad's message. Soon, many of his prominent adversaries were to come to his side and a couple of years later, Mecca was won over in what the *Koran* calls Fatal Mubin (the manifest victory). The hermeneutical pivot in Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's interpretation of Islam is verse 41:34 of the *Koran* which says, "Good and evil are not equal. Repel evil with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with will turn as if he were a close friend".

Political narratives

This understanding of Islam flies in the face of the supremacism theology which is at the root of Islamism or Islam as a political ideology. Wahiduddin Khan broke away from Abu Al'Ala Maududi's theo-fascistic interpretation of Islam as a totalitarian ideology which sought to instil in the Muslim psyche a sense of entitlement for the domination of the world. He made a thorough critique of it, and demonstrated its fallacy, in a tract, *The Political Interpretation of Islam*.

Muslim political narratives, predicated as they are on a sense

of entitlement born of an imperial past, have been brimming with grievances and resentments.

Words of counsel

Wahiduddin Khan rightly identified the victimhood syndrome to be at the root of the politics of confrontation and violence. The psychosis of suspecting an anti-Muslim conspiracy in things as diverse as the American foreign policy and the Indian security concerns could have a deleterious impact on both the Muslim community and the world at large. In his book, *Indian Muslims: The Need for a Positive Outlook*, he addressed this problem and argued against the penchant for wallowing in victimhood and regaling in confrontation. He counselled his fellow Muslims to focus on moral uplift and socio-economic development, and on seeking the goodwill of their compatriots.

Thus, on all the contentious issues which have shaped the Muslim identity since the mid-1980s, Wahiduddin Khan, swimming against the current of popular opinion, pleaded for sanity, and advised Muslims to eschew the frightening militancy in their discourse. In face of egregious slander, he reaffirmed the state's jurisdiction to legislate for social reforms in matters pertaining to the Muslim Personal Law. He opposed Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie. The said *fatwa* has since been as good as withdrawn, vindicating the Maulana's position that it was neither good in religion nor in politics, and a mix of the two was an abomination. He

courted vicious calumny when he counselled Muslims to relinquish their claim on the Babri Masjid. Everyone understood that the matter had transcended the technical rights and wrongs of the ordinary situation. But only he had the well-cogitated conviction to tell Muslims to let go of the mosque lest a ferocious maelstrom engulfed them. The Muslim leadership had stretched its stridency to a pitch from where it was impossible to climb down. It could not get off the tiger it was riding, and the rest is history.

Endeavours that must win

In today's plural, multicultural and secular world, the Islam which can co-exist with other religions is the one propagated by the likes of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. His lineage can be traced to the reinterpretation of the Koran done by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. These two scholars tried to update the interpretational tradition of Islam to make it relevant for the contemporary world. They demonstrated that an underlying unity of essence bound Islam with all other religions, and that their different forms were due to their culture-specific idioms. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's endeavours are met with the same cynicism and hostility as his aforementioned predecessors. In due time, he will be similarly vindicated. One can only hope that this happens before it is too late.

Najmul Hoda is an IPS officer. 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.

Praise and politics
It is immensely gratifying that leaders sitting at the opposite ends of the political aisle have had a good working relationship in a political environment characterised by rancour and uncompromising hostility to opponents (Inside pages, February 10). The Prime Minister's emotional farewell to Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, during which he

gratefully recalled the latter's help during a terror attack in Kashmir, comes as a whiff of fresh air. One recalls Opposition leaders in the past such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madhu Limaye who had a personal rapport with late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, despite their trenchant opposition to the Congress government. One hopes that personal tolerance and mutual

respect between political adversaries would translate into building a political culture where consensus-building gets prioritised over unrelenting hostility as a default behaviour.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

No privatisation
The move to privatise the Visakhapatnam steel plant, a Navaratna among public enterprises, is unfair. It is

no white elephant but a golden goose which is starved. It has no own captive mines for supply of raw material. It has been on the path of expansion. It can be turned into a profit-making entity with a little help and political resolve.

Ds. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

The Chennai Test
By ruthless execution, Rohit Sharma still struggles in Tests. The selectors have to

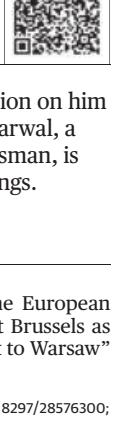
Indians in every phase of the game, at Chennai's Chepauk. The senior Indian batsmen disappointed. Despite his reputation in shorter formats, Rohit Sharma still struggles in Tests. The selectors have to

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
The Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit for the European Union-India summit is set to be in Portugal and not Brussels as mentioned in a report, "Poland pitches for PM's visit to Warsaw" (February 10, 2021).

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take a hard decision on him since Mayank Agarwal, a more proven batsman, is waiting in the wings.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai



Taking the long view with China

Both Asian giants can share prosperity and be independent of each other and of the West



MUKUL SANWAL

In late January, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that while both India and China remained committed to a multipolar world, they should recognise that a "multipolar Asia" was one of its essential constituents. As it moves to becoming the third largest economy in the world, India needs to have a clear-eyed world view and strategy as it makes hard choices. It needs to reject the developing country regional mindset that has hobbled national aims and foreign policy.

The Year End Review of the Ministry of Defence pertinently refers to the "sanctity of our claims in Eastern Ladakh" instead of the term "border" used since 1954, opening space for a settlement. We are now confidently moving out of the predicament that Jawaharlal Nehru placed us in Kashmir, fully integrating it into the Indian Union and consolidating our claim line.

The External Affairs Ministry is also now more forthright. We have a "special and privileged strategic partnership" with Russia, which provides more than three-quarter of India's military equipment, and a "comprehensive global strategic partnership" with the U.S. despite the United States Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, 2018, wishing that India sees the U.S. as its preferred partner on security issues. India's relationship with the U.S.-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), where the others are military allies, has rightly been cautious, as U.S. President Joe Biden sees China as a 'strategic competitor' rather than a 'strategic rival'. Realism dictates that India does not need to compromise on its strategic autonomy.

Diplomatic challenge
The foreign policy challenge for India is really two sides of the China conundrum: defining engagement with its neighbour which is consolidating an expanding Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) while remaining involved



Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar (left), Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in Moscow in 2020. • AP

with the strategic, security and technological concerns of the U.S. located across the vast Pacific Ocean. The U.S. 'Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China' cautions that U.S. aircraft carriers, symbols of the country's military hegemony, may not enjoy unquestioned dominance for much longer. Former President Barack Obama's military pivot to Asia failed to overawe China in the South China Sea and the costs of former President Donald Trump's trade tariffs were borne by American consumers and companies.

In the financial sphere, there is the real possibility of the Chinese renminbi becoming a global reserve currency or e-yuan becoming the digital payments currency. China is the world's largest trading economy. It could soon become the world's largest economy – the Fortune Global 500 list of the world's largest companies by revenue for the first time contains more companies based in China, including Hong Kong, than in the U.S. The BRI countries are using the renminbi in financial transactions with China, and can be expected to use it in transactions with each other. Even the European Union, smarting under Mr. Trump's sanctions, created its own cross-border clearing mechanism for trade. China has stitched together an investment agreement with the EU and with most of Asia. Relative attractiveness will determine when the dollar goes the way of

the sterling and the guilder. China, facing technological sanctions from the U.S., may well put in the hard work to make this happen soon.

Policy elements

Some form of the EU's China policy of seeing the emerging superpower as a partner, competitor, and economic rival depending on the policy area in question is going to be the global norm. The EU's reaching out to China despite misgivings of the U.S. means the West has given up on containing the rise of China. This broad perspective is also reflected in India's participation in both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, led by Beijing and Moscow and designed to resist the spread of Western interests, and in the U.S.-led Quad, with its anti-China stance. Within the United Nations, India's interests have greater congruence with China's interests rather than the U.S.'s and the EU's; sharing the COVID-19 vaccine with other countries distinguishes India, and China, from the rest.

The congruence between India and the U.S. lies in the U.S.'s declared strategic objective of promoting an integrated economic development model in the Indo-Pacific as a credible alternative to the BRI, but with a caveat. China opening new opportunities for countries in the Eurasian landmass means that ASEAN will not easily move out of the BRI infrastructure, digital, finance and trade linkages; Sri Lanka is a recent example. The China-led Asian Infrastructure

Investment Bank has increased its membership to 100 countries. China is now the second-biggest financial contributor to the UN and has published more high-impact research papers than the U.S. did in 23 out of 30 "hot" research fields and enhancing its "soft power" nearly to levels achieved by the U.S. earlier.

Instead of an alternate development model, India should move the Quad towards supplementing the infrastructure push of the BRI in line with other strategic concerns in the region. For example, developing their scientific, technological capacity and digital economy, based on India's digital stack and financial resources of other Quad members, will resonate with Asia and Africa.

Policy evolution

Another area where India can play a "bridging role" is global governance whose principles, institutions and structures now have to accommodate other views for issue-based understandings. President Xi Jinping's "community with shared future for mankind", and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "climate justice" and asking how long India will be excluded from the UN Security Council, challenge the frame of the liberal order without providing specific alternatives. With respect to digital data, the defining issue of the 21st century, India has recently expressed that there must be reciprocity in data sharing, and this is the kind of 'big idea' for sharing prosperity that will gain traction with other countries.

India's recent policies are gaining influence at the expense of China and the West, and both know this trend will accelerate. The steps to a \$5 trillion economy, shift to indigenous capital military equipment, and a new Science, Technology and Innovation Policy underline impact, capacity and interests. ASEAN remains keen India rejoin its trade pact to balance China. It is being recognised that India's software development prowess could shape a sustainable post-industrial state different to the U.S. and China model.

As in the historical past, Asia is big enough for both Asian giants to have complementary roles, share prosperity and be independent of each other and of the West.

Mukul Sanwal is a former UN diplomat

Duverger's curse

The odds are stacked against the Left-Congress alliance in West Bengal



ATANU BISWAS

One of the first major opinion polls conducted in the backdrop of the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections exhibited a dismal 12% vote share for the pre-poll alliance of the Left parties and Congress. While there is no reason to have blind faith in opinion poll results, there is little doubt that the Left-Congress alliance will become a distant third in the elections. The top two spots would be claimed by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in no particular order.

Duverger's Law

Duverger's Law, theorised by French sociologist Maurice Duverger, states that single-ballot plurality elections (such as first-past-the-post) structured within single-member districts tend to favour a two-party system. In the first-past-the-post system, the candidate winning the highest vote share in a constituency becomes the winner. And the electorates often choose candidates who are most likely to win. This mentality of the voters certainly affects the prospect of the third party/alliance. The electorates often care about the overall winnability of the political parties to form the government as well. For example, it is widely believed that many 'floating' Left voters of West Bengal voted for the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Stanford political scientist Gary W. Cox modernised Duverger's Law and made it more operational in his 2002 book titled *Making Votes Count*. Duverger's Law is criticised by some experts as the first-past-the-post system of voting has no tendency to produce two-party politics outside the U.S. In fact, India is often regarded as an exception to this law at the national level, but not at the district level. In the 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections, the combined vote share of the Left and Congress was 32%; in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it shrank to a mere 12%. And if the opinion poll is any sort of indication, Duverger's Law might affect the poll prospect of the third force in West Bengal. Will the alliance's vote share increase, or will it shrink further?

While analysing voter behaviour with respect to the previous election, voters can be classified into three groups: Stickers, Switchers, and the Undecided. The last two groups constitute the 'swing' voters. While Stickers

vote for the same party as in the previous election, the voting pattern of the swing voters can be explained by Game Theory models. Let's illustrate a situation like West Bengal using a set-up where three major parties/alliances - A, B, C and 'Others' combining the remaining are contesting the election. Let's suppose the vote shares of each of the top two parties are around the 40% mark. C is poised to get 12% support, and the remaining vote share is attributed to the Others. For each party/alliance, a part of their support comes from swing voters who are open to voting for any other party as well. Although the swing voters might care for the 'winnability' of the parties in terms of forming a government, for which more than 50% of the seats are needed, the 'vote to seat conversion' is a complicated non-linear mechanism in our electoral system - more so due to the multiparty set-up. Therefore, 'winnability' is often a perception, and not quite backed by simple calculations or numbers.

Let's suppose the voters believe that neither of the top two parties can form a government of their own even if all the swing votes are pooled in their bag, and it is believed that A and B will not form the government together. If both the top parties are eager to resist the other, in the possibility of a hung assembly, an equilibrium maybe obtained if all the swing voters switch to C, provided it is believed to be open to allying with both A and B, if needed, to form a government. This might do wonders for the electoral prospects of C. For example, in 2018, despite winning only 37 seats in the Assembly, H.D. Kumaraswamy could become the Karnataka Chief Minister through an alliance with the Congress, which had 80 seats.

Disadvantage: C

However, in the possibility of a hung assembly, if the electorate believes that the Left-Congress alliance would be reluctant to ally with the TMC or the BJP, the 2018 Karnataka moment is very unlikely to occur for the Left-Congress alliance in 2021 Bengal. The alliance will not get the swing votes of other parties, and a part of its own swing voters might even go to the TMC and/or the BJP. Duverger's Law would work to shrink the vote share of the alliance further in this case. So, public perception really matters.

Also, if it's believed that the total swing votes are substantial to take the TMC and/or the BJP beyond the halfway mark, the Left-Congress alliance's swing voters might be influenced by the 'bandwagon', and the alliance's own vote share might shrink further.

Atanu Biswas is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

Denying women the right over their bodies

Neither the state nor doctors have any right to deny a woman a safe abortion

THAMIZHACHI THANGAPANDIAN

Recently, Argentina's Congress legalised abortions up to the 14th week of pregnancy. The Indian Parliament too will consider an amendment to our abortion laws this Budget Session but unlike the Argentina law which is touted as being historic, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 (MTP Bill), will not translate into greater autonomy for women over their own bodies.

women control over their own bodies. The proposed amendment still requires one doctor to sign off on termination of pregnancies up to 20 weeks old, and two doctors for pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks old. Thus, it is not based on any request or isn't at the pregnant person's will but on a doctor's opinion.

Personal beliefs

The Bill also mandates the government to set up a medical board in every State and UT. Medical boards can rely on the facts of the case but personal beliefs could impact the medical board's opinion, which is one of the biggest challenges in having a third-party opinion on a decision which is very personal. For instance, the Madhya Pradesh High Court denied permission for terminating a 26-week-old pregnancy to a 13-year-old rape survivor with the psychiatrist on the medical board arguing against the mental health of the woman or if the pregnancy results from a sex crime such as rape or intercourse with a mentally challenged woman.

Therefore, the law is framed not to respect a woman's right over her own body but makes it easier for the state to stake its control over her body through legal and medical debates. Suppose a woman has had voluntary sex and she decides, for personal reasons, to end her pregnancy. If she is 24 weeks pregnant, then this would be a criminal offence. So, she moves the court under the condition that the pregnancy was affecting her mental health. However, here the court can refuse her despite the woman's choice to end it.

In one such case, a State government had argued that there were no grounds for an abortion since the pregnancy was the outcome of a voluntary act and she was "very much aware of the consequence" and the court agreed.

In such circumstances, women usually resort to unsafe methods of abortion. Unsafe abortions are the third largest cause of maternal deaths in India.

The amendment too continues this legacy of hetero-patriarchal population control, which does not give

T. Sumathy aka Thamizhachi Thangapandian is an academic, Tamil poet, an MP (South Chennai constituency), and member of the Standing Committee (Information and Technology)



DATA POINT

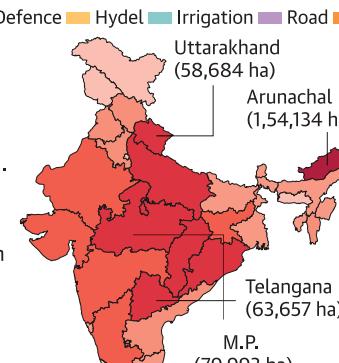
Deforestation drive

On February 7, flash floods in the Alaknanda river system claimed several lives and swept away two major hydropower projects in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. While the cause of the floods is yet to be ascertained, the disaster has highlighted the danger of the numerous hydropower projects that dot the fragile Himalayan State. Uttarakhand diverted over 50,000 hectares of forest land to various development* and defence projects in the past 30 years - the fourth highest among all States. Furthermore, Chamoli district recorded the second-highest forest area diversion among all of Uttarakhand's districts. By Suman Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

*Projects: Mining Defence Hydel Irrigation Road Transmission Line Railway School Others

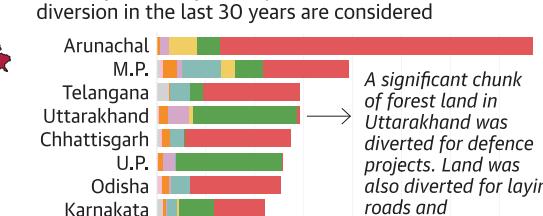
STATE SPLITS

The map shows the total forest area diverted for development* and defence projects between 1991 and 2021. In this period, 58,684 hectares of forest area were diverted in Uttarakhand, the fourth highest among all States. The darker the colour, the higher the diversion of forest land in the period



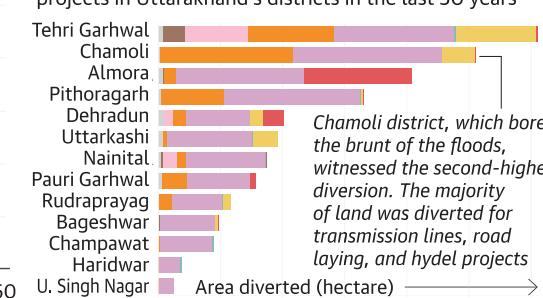
REASONS FOR DIVERSION

The chart shows the various projects for which forest area was diverted in the last 30 years. Only the top 10 States with the maximum diversion in the last 30 years are considered



MOST DIVERTED DISTRICT

The chart shows the amount of forest area diverted for various developmental projects in Uttarakhand's districts in the last 30 years



The similarity between the palm fringed beaches of Kerala and Goa to-day [Panaji, February 10] landed five Pakistanis and 60 Keralites in police custody. The Keralites returning clandestinely from Dubai mistook the moonlit Goa coast to be Kerala and landed at Pernem, the northern-most part of Goa. The mechanised boat ran aground soon after the Keralites had disembarked and the five member Pakistani crew also got down only to discover in the morning they were in Goa. All the 65 persons have been arrested by the Goa police and the boat seized.

On interrogation, the police found each of the Keralites had paid Rs. 300 to the Pakistanis to bring them into India. They left Dubai on January 17.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1921

Bengal Council

When the Bengal Legislative Council reassembled this afternoon, 2 hours were devoted to the discussion of a resolution commanding stoppage of export of rice from India except for surplus remaining after the country's demands had been met. To this there was an amendment substituting "Bengal" for "India". But attention was confined almost exclusively to the main resolution and the amendment was eventually defeated without division. Mr. Kerr pointed out with regard to the main resolution that the matter was really one for the Government of India and quoted the Central Government's pronouncement on the subject in December last, which he submitted was in accord with the mover's intention. He added that the Government had no objection to accepting the resolution, but they were not prepared to accept the amendment. Before they could ask for re-imposition of provincial prohibition of export they must be able to show that the removal of control last year had disastrous results or that such were likely to follow if control were again imposed now. Mr. Kerr added that the record of discussion would be submitted to the Government for consideration.

The debate was, however, continued with fewer than 15 speakers taking part. Interest in the matter seemed to be dying and the House thinned out considerably. After interval to allow the Muhammeden members time for prayers the House divided and the resolution was carried 63 votes to 31.

CM YK

FROM PAGE ONE

Both sides disengaging from Pangong lake area'

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in a statement: "According to the consensus reached at the Chinese and Indian Foreign Ministers' meeting in Moscow and the ninth round of commander-level talks between the two sides, the frontline troops of the Chinese and Indian militaries began to conduct simultaneous and planned disengagement in the Pangong lake area on February 10. We hope the Indian side will work with China to meet each other halfway, strictly implement the consensus reached between the two sides and ensure the smooth implementation of the disengagement process."

Indian government sources said verification after each step would be the key for the process to go forward.

While aerial monitoring, using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), would be done, on the ground, verification at each step would also be done to ensure that the Chinese fully honour the understanding.

On the south bank, both sides had deployed tanks and armoured vehicles in close proximity, within few hundred metres, after ten-

sions went up end of August.

During the ninth round of talks held on January 24, both sides were discussing a broad disengagement plan that had been worked out but held up over some specific issues. The talks took place after a long delay with the previous round held on November 6 last.

While China had insisted on a focus on the south bank (where India in late August moved to occupy strategic heights in response to the PLA's transgressions in May north of the lake), India had stressed the need for a comprehensive disengagement plan covering all friction points in eastern Ladakh.

The focus of the Corps Commander talks has been on the north and south banks, which has seen tensions with warning shots also fired in the south last year, the first firing incidents along the border since 1975.

As part of the first phase of disengagement last June, both sides had pulled back troops by equal distance from Patrolling Points (PP) 14 in the Galwan valley and PP15 in Gogra-Hot Springs. It was during the disengagement at Galwan that violent clashes occurred.

Twitter must follow Indian laws, says Centre

The firm has been under fire over non-compliance to block 250 accounts using hashtags related to "farmer genocide", and about 1,178 accounts that security agencies suspect are backed by Khalistani sympathisers and Pakistan.

In a detailed blog post, Twitter said it had taken a range of enforcement actions, including permanent suspension of accounts in certain cases, against more than 500 accounts escalated across all Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) orders for clear violations of

Twitter's Rules. The Ministry statement added that the Secretary had told Twitter representatives that while India had a robust mechanism for protection of freedom of speech and expression, "freedom of expression is not absolute and it is subject to reasonable restrictions as mentioned in Article 19 (2) of the Constitution of India".

On the issue of the use of the hashtag related to "farmer genocide" on Twitter, the Secretary expressed strong displeasure on the way Twitter acted.

'Rona Wilson's computer was compromised'

A copy of the report is with *The Hindu*. It is part of the writ petition filed by Mr. Wilson in the Bombay High Court that explains how a hacker exploited the IP addresses provided by one 'Host Sailor' and used proxy servers to plant a "trojan horse NetWire". This initially subjected Mr. Wilson to surveillance, and later on, remotely through the malware, delivered various files, including the incriminating correspondence with the other accused.

The same were stored in a folder which was set to a "hidden mode", and over a period of 22 months, from time-to-time, various letters and material came to be planted on Mr. Wilson's system without his knowledge, mentions the plea seeking the quashing of the FIR and chargesheet against him.

The report further states that the folders and documents were never opened by Mr. Wilson or anyone else and their existence was unknown to him. The hacker also synchronised these documents in such a way

that they would get planted in any external memory device connected to the laptop.

The report demonstrates that Mr. Wilson's computer was compromised through a mail sent to his email account, which carried an attachment in the form of a document ("another victory.rar"). Since it appeared to be innocuous, Mr. Wilson tried opening it but did not succeed in opening it. But because he had clicked on the attachment, it helped the attacker install the malware in his laptop. It is stated in the report that the attachment was enveloped in a decoy file, namely "another victory.rar", and clicking the same resulted in a chain of events that led to the installation of the malware on his device. The attacker retained access to Mr. Wilson's computer for over 22 months, starting June 13, 2016, and used a remote access facility for planting the incriminating letters, while conducting surveillance on his activities without Mr. Wilson getting a hint of it.

U.P. police gun down man after constable's killing

The other accused managed to flee taking advantage of the dark, the police said.

While sub-inspector Ashok Kumar, who was held hostage by the miscreants, was found in an injured condition, constable Devendra died due to assault, officials said.

Two personnel were seen

carrying the sub-inspector from what appeared to be a field. He did not have his uniform on when found.

Kasganj District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh said the guilty would not be spared.

"I would visit villages almost on a daily basis along with my wife, searching for any *appe midi* variety," he

Furnace oil from Titanium factory spills into sea

Clean-up work begins along the coast near Kerala capital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An emergency clean-up was launched along the coast on Wednesday to mitigate the fallout of furnace oil leak into the sea from the Kerala government undertaking Travancore Titanium Products Ltd. (TTP) at Kochuveli, near the State capital.

TTP officials put the spillage, caused by a rupture in a pipeline carrying the oil, at roughly 5,000 litres.

After the alarm was raised in the morning, the district administration declared the coastal stretches along Shangumugham, Vetticau and Veli off-limits to the public and tourists for two days.

Fishing banned
Fishing activities along these regions also stand banned as



Cause for concern: Furnace oil that leaked from Travancore Titanium Products deposited on the adjoining beach, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. ■ S. MAHINSHA

a precautionary measure, District Collector Navjot Khosa said.

Locals, largely comprising the fishing community, expressed outrage over the oil leak, blaming the TTP for ne-

gligence. They alleged that the oil leak would have a prolonged impact on marine resources, and consequently, their livelihood.

The leakage occurred around 7 a.m., but it went

unnoticed at the time. The oil spilled out into a drain that opens out into the nearby beach, contaminating the beach and coastal waters.

The leak was promptly plugged once the alarm was

raised around 8 a.m., TTP officials said.

Probe ordered
Dr. Khosa, who visited TTP and the affected coastal stretch, said the situation

Kerala unit of NCP on the verge of split

Kappan to announce exit from LDF

STAFF REPORTER
KOTTAYAM

With a faction led by Pala MLA Mani C. Kappan slated to join the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Kerala unit of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) appears to be on the verge of an irreversible split ahead of the Assembly elections.

According to NCP sources, Mr. Kappan is expected to announce his decision to exit the Left Democratic Front (LDF) after a meeting with NCP supremo Sharad Pawar, which is expected to take place on Thursday. Besides Mr. Kappan, NCP State president T.P. Peethambaram too has been called to New Delhi for the discussion.

The meeting in New Delhi comes amid reports that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had expressed the LDF's unwillingness to allot the Pala seat to the NCP and instead suggested Mr. Kappan to contest from Kutta-



Mani C. Kappan

nad.

"While pressing the case for a coalition change, Mr. Kappan will also look to seize on the general sentiment against the high-handedness of the CPI(M) within the LDF. To back this, he will also highlight the denial of seats in Pala during the recent local body elections and the unilateral decision to hand over Pala to the Kerala Congress (M) among other things," said a party leader.

JD(S) will not contest in byelections'

STAFF REPORTER
YADGIR

Former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda has expressed dissatisfaction with the Centre for trying to implement farm laws in a hurry and opined that "Centre could have given two months' time to discuss the laws."

He was speaking to reporters at Yermarus IB on the outskirts of Raichur city on Wednesday.

He ruled out merger of JD(S) with other parties and said that he will work to strengthen the JD(S), concentrating on the next Karnataka Assembly election.

"The State government has not completely waived off the farm loans and I hope it will do so in the coming days. We will not contest in bypolls. The JD(S) will not try to topple the government. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has got trust from the voters in the last byelections."

Finally, it is a festival of films in Kerala

IFFK begins in Thiruvananthapuram

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Braving odds, the 25th edition of the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) began here on Wednesday. Recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award this year, legendary French filmmaker Jean Luc Godard, who greeted the Kerala audience from his home, was the toast of the inaugural function held at the Nishagandhi auditorium.

Inaugurating the festival through videoconferencing, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the IFFK stood apart from many other festivals due to its strong political and progressive standpoint.

"In these 25 years, the IFFK has, through the quality of the films and people's participation, raised Kerala's stature in the international arena," he said.

Lauding Godard for using cinema as a political tool, Mr. Vijayan recollected the filmmaker's part in raising his voice against the Vietnam war, the attacks on Palestine and in lending support to the May 1968 protests in Paris.

Receiving the honour on Godard's behalf, filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan said that the filmmaker was a genius who, even at the age of 91, was still expanding his boundaries and exploring new ways to express himself on film.

"That we are honouring Godard at the 25th edition of the IFFK is an honour for the festival, more than it is for him," said Mr. Gopalakrishnan.

Culture Minister A.K. Balan said the festival was decentralised this year into four cities across Kerala.

IN BRIEF



Do not arrest Sunny Leone: Kerala High Court

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court on Wednesday directed the police not to arrest Bollywood actor Sunny Leone, her husband Daniel Weber, and Sunil Rajani, chief executive officer of their production house, in a cheating case registered in connection with stage shows that failed to take off.

BRD Group MD held in money laundering case

NEW DELHI
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested C.C. William Verghese, chairman-cum-managing director of BRD Group in Thrissur, Kerala, in connection with money laundering. It has got his seven-day custody.

'A.P. government will stop steel plant privatisation'

VISAKHAPATNAM
YSRCP general secretary and Rajya Sabha member V. Vijaya Sai Reddy has said that the Andhra Pradesh government will leave no stone unturned to stop the proposed privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

Transgender woman who contested polls ends life

KANNUR
A transgender woman, Sneha, the only one to have contested the recently held local body election as an independent candidate in Kerala, died after she reportedly set herself afire in Kannur on Tuesday. Though the primary investigation concluded it as suicide, details would be revealed only after further probe, the police said.

To overcome suicidal thoughts, call Maithri at 0484 2540530.

'School closure led to loss in foundational abilities'

Study says 92% of students from Classes II to VI have lost at least one specific ability in languages

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

they had learnt in previous year.

According to the study, on an average, 92% of students from Classes II to VI have lost at least one specific foundational ability in languages that they may have acquired in previous years. The corresponding figure for mathematics is 82%.

A field study by Azim Premji University paints a grim picture. Children not only missed out on the regular curricular learning they would have acquired had schools remained open, but are also 'forgetting' what

Learning during the Pandemic'.

Two thousand teachers and 400 members of the Azim Premji Foundation conducted a comparative field study.

Foundational abilities are those that form the basis for further learning. The researchers noted that a grasp of concepts in language and mathematics during primary school years forms the basis of a student's further learn-

ing in all subjects. Some examples of foundational abilities include reading a paragraph with comprehension, addition and subtraction.

In mathematics, foundation abilities include identifying single and two-digit numbers; performing arithmetic operations; using basic arithmetic operations to solve problems; and reading and drawing inferences from data, among others.

Anurag Behar, Vice-Chancellor of the university, in a press release said, "When schools reopen, teachers have to be given time to cover this deficit and be provided with other support. A carefully synchronised set of measures across States will be required."

Some of the suggestions included eliminating vacations, extending the academic year well into 2021 and perhaps beyond depending on when schools open and reconfiguring the syllabus.

An 84-year-old on a mission to conserve rare mango varieties

He has visited more than 100 villages in the last 12 years to source 'appe midi' mango varieties on the verge of extinction

B.S. SATISH KUMAR
BENGALURU

Age is no barrier for 84-year-old Beluru Subbanna Hegde (B.V. Subba Rao) who has collected more than 100 *appe midi* varieties of mango, which were on the verge of extinction. He has preserved these mangoes, used for pickling as whole fruit, by growing them on his premises in Belur of Sagar taluk in Shivamogga district.

He has travelled to every nook and corner of Western Ghats over the last 12 years and visited more than 100 villages to source *appe midi* mango varieties. "I would visit villages almost on a daily basis along with my wife, searching for any *appe midi* variety," he



Rare feat: Subbanna Hegde has been honoured by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research. ■ SATISH KUMAR B.S.

recalled in a chat with *The Hindu*. "Since I cannot climb trees, I would plead with someone for help. My wife would then make pickle out of them. If they were good, we would go back and get the scion from the tree for grafting."

Space constraint
He said it used to take multiple visits to get a single variety.

Mr. Hegde does not have a big space to grow these varieties. All he has is one acre of areca plantation, from which he makes a living, and a house. "I have developed a park around my house where *appe midi* trees are grown. Due to space constraint, my wife has grafted four to five different varieties on each tree so that we can accommodate more plants in a small space," he said.

"I have grown up eating *appe midi*, which are very popular in Malnad region of Karnataka. But it is sad that

we are losing most of the *appe midi* mango varieties. This prompted me to take up this conservation exercise," explained Mr. Hegde.

Premium varieties

His collection includes some 10 rare and premium varieties such as *Dombesara Jeerege*, *Genasinakudi Jeerege*, *Cheene thota Jeerege*, *Baagi jeerege*, *Barige jeerege*. "They have a distinct taste and aroma. Also, they have a shelf life ranging from three to five years," he pointed out.

He does not do it for commercial purpose, he gives away scions free of cost to whoever shows interest in growing them. "I want others to continue this

exercise," said Mr. Hegde. The Indian Institute of Horticultural Research honoured Mr. Hegde for his conservation efforts at its ongoing national horticultural fair in Hesaraghatta on Wednesday.

Dr. K.V. Ravishankar, Principal scientist at the IIRR's Division of Biotechnology and Basic Sciences, who identified Mr. Hegde's work, along with Institute Director Dr. M. R. Dinesh, says the Institute has taken about 30 *appe midi* varieties from him.

In all, the Institute now has about 200 *appe midi* varieties of mango. Of them, four to five

'India, China agree to return to pre-April 2020 positions'

Official says reduction of troops will be visible in the next two or three days

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

China and India have agreed to return to the pre-April 2020 positions in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), according to the latest disengagement plan being implemented on the ground, *The Hindu* has learned.

A senior official said the agreement effectively means that China will vacate the Finger area on the north bank of Pangong Tso (lake) and India will have to climb down from the advantageous position it has taken on the southern side of the lake. Depsang and Charding Ninglung Nallah (CNN) junction in Demchok sector are not part of the current disengagement plan and will be discussed in the next meeting.

The official said efforts to implement the consensus reached after the ninth round of the Corps Commander level talks on Janu-



In tandem: There is to be simultaneous withdrawal by China and India on both banks of the Pangong lake. ■ FILE PHOTO

ary 24 have picked up in the past two days.

"The ground commanders are meeting twice a day and we are hopeful of achieving a pre-April 2020 status in all sectors," the official said. The official said reduction of troops will be visible on the ground in the next two or three days.

"After the Corps Commanders meeting, the disengagement plan was approved by the government. There will be simultaneous

withdrawal on both the banks of Pangong Tso. In the north bank, India will move back to DS Post where the troops had earlier started their patrols. But a little caution is required and whether China matches words with actions is to be seen," the official said.

Dismantling camps

Not only troops but mechanised armoured elements and temporary structures, such as tents and camps, will also

be removed. Explaining the details, the official said, "If the troops have to move from point A to B, then preparations have to be made at point B where the troops will retrace. We are synchronising the plan with the Chinese troops. The Southern bank, where Indian troops are in a dominant position since August 2020, is a big pressure point for the Chinese."

India and China have been engaged in a face-off in various pockets in eastern Ladakh since April last year after China stopped Indian patrols in the Finger area of Pangong Tso.

The troops have not been able to patrol beyond Finger 4 since the last week of April 2020 after China had ingressed about 8 km. Earlier, the troops could patrol up to Finger 8.

The other areas where the buildup continues are the Depsang plains, Galwan, Gogra-Hot Springs and the south bank of Pangong.

V.K. Singh's remark raised in House again

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Congress legislative party in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Wednesday again raised the issue of the controversy after a statement made by Union Minister of State General V.K. Singh that India may have transgressed the LAC more number of times than China.

"Our forces are facing the Chinese under very tough conditions and with great bravery. Therefore no one, either in the Treasury or the Opposition benches, should say anything to jeopardise their position. Our former Army chief and Minister V.K. Singh made some statements that are at odds with our official position. Why are we giving the Chinese the opportunity to weaken our diplomatic position?" he asked.

He asked whether Defence Minister Rajnath Singh could clarify the correct position and the official line vis-a-vis what General Singh had said.

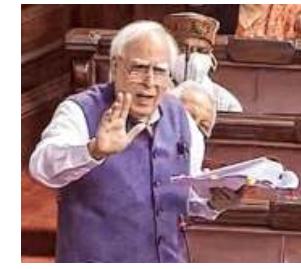
"In 2020, American farmers were saddled with bank-

'Govt. speaks *Mann Ki Baat* but won't hear *Kisan ki Baat*'

Congress leader says protesters are asking for MSP law

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday took up the discussion on the Budget with Congress leader Kapil Sibal leading the attack from the Opposition. He hit out at the government saying they want to speak only their "Mann ki Baat" and not listen to "Kisan ki Baat".



Kapil Sibal

ruptcy of more than ₹425 billion. This is corporatisation of farming and the result of corporatisation. In fact, the rate of suicide in rural America is about 45% higher than that in urban America. Small farm lands have disappeared," he said.

The agricultural reforms that the Modi government has brought in have already been tested in America and Europe, which resulted in corporatisation of farming killing the small farmers, he said.

"In 2020, American farmers were saddled with bank-

law..." Mr. Sibal said.

When corporations ask for tax relief and exemptions, the government gives them. "But when farmers ask for MSP, you are not ready to give. Poor farmers are asking minimum, you give maximum to corporates..." he said.

He also slammed the government for what it called "perpetuating a rigged economic system" and data juggling. He said the Budget was bereft of any thought for the poor and the unemployed.

Mr. Sibal said, "There are four-five big boys who own almost all assets in this country, and one very big boy is everywhere. No; I will not name anybody. He is everywhere – ports, airports, city gas distribution centres, railways, everywhere."

He added, "After all you have to give airports to the person in whose airplanes you flew. This despite the reservations of the NITI Aayog."

Centre has great respect for farmers: PM

Modi says a status quo mentality will destroy the country and govt. must have a progressive attitude

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the government had great respect for farmers and hence it had been holding talks with them on the three farm laws.

"Even now I say, if they have specific clauses that they have a problem with and a way can be found, the laws can be amended," Mr. Modi said in his reply in the Lok Sabha to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address.

Mr. Modi went on about the nature of the three laws which, he said, were not

"coercive" or seeking to deny access to resources, but a way of providing alternatives to farmers in terms of market access. "Ever since the laws were cleared, not one single 'mandi' has shut down, we have allocated funds for 'mandi' modernisation, minimum support prices (MSPs) have been hiked and record government procurement was done," he said.

The Opposition was questioning the need for the laws since "nobody had asked for the reforms". "That is a very feudal attitude of doing things only after citizens be-

come supplicants. Citizens should not supplicants, they must be empowered. My government is a forward looking progressive one. Passing the triple 'talaq' law wasn't asked for but we did it for the benefit of our sisters, anti-dowry laws as well, no one demanded the Kisan Samman Nidhi, or free gas connections, or toilets. The government must have a progressive attitude," he stated.

The status quo mentality will destroy the country. Agriculture is the basis of much of our economy and culture, our festivals are tied

to agricultural cycles. We cannot neglect the sector and must do something now. As our population rises, land fragmentation will increase. We must, therefore, reform the sector and ensure that our farmers have the options to sell and grow their crops. Our 'annadata' [food providers] should be prosperous and its our responsibility to give them the opportunity to be so," he stated.

Defends private sector
Responding to criticism by the Opposition that the reforms and government's policies will only benefit crony

capitalists, he said that the private sector was an important part of the economy and Opposition leaders should not abuse them without basis.

"Do you want to hand over the country to bureaucrats, an IAS to run a pharma company? India has made great strides in mobile manufacturing, we have the cheapest data rates in the world, the pharma industry supplying COVID-19 vaccines and other medicines to the world is also largely private. We must learn to trust our youth, wealth creators are also important," he observed.

BJP MP issues breach of privilege notice against Mahua Moitra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP P.P. Chaudhary on Wednesday issued a breach of privilege notice against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra in the Lok Sabha for the her remarks against a former Chief Justice of India.

"While speaking on the

Motion of Thanks on the President's address, she has cast some aspersions with respect to the conduct of a judge. So the question is whether the conduct of a judge can be discussed on the floor of the House or not," Mr. Chaudhary said, adding that Article 121 of the Constitution does not allow allegations to be levelled

against a sitting or a former judge.

Supporting him, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey demanded that Ms. Moitra's membership be cancelled.

Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) MP N. K. Prema-chandran, who was in the Chair, said that the notice was under the consideration of the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Two killed as SAD, Congress supporters clash in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Ahead of the local body elections in Punjab on February 14, two persons were killed amid a clash between Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Congress members in Moga town. The police on Wednesday said three persons, including the main accused, had been arrested and they would be produced in court.

"The incident happened on Tuesday night when a group of Congress and Akali Dal workers and leaders, who were campaigning for municipal polls, got involved in heated arguments resulting in a clash. Following the clash, the accused started to flee in a vehicle, running over two persons," Barjinder Singh Bhullar, Deputy Superintendent of Police, told *The Hindu*.

"One person died on the spot while the other succumbed to injuries at a hospital in Ludhiana. We have registered a case under Section 302 [murder] of the IPC against Narinderpal Singh Sidhu, husband of Congress candidate from ward number 9 in Moga," he said.

MPs squabble over Budget proposals

Opposition criticises allocations

The aam aadmi has been let down in the last seven years ... and the Budget has betrayed his most fundamental aspirations

SHASHI THAROOR
Congress MP

complimented the Modi government for steering the country out of the "fragile five" economies.

After saving lives during the pandemic, Ms. Lekhi said the focus was now on promoting livelihood and asserted that the allocations for most of the sectors had been doubled including health and sanitation.

Saugato Roy of the Trinamool Congress described it as a cruel government, referred to Ms. Sitharaman as "the great dismantler" who is dismantling the edifice of public sector undertakings (PSUs).

Some Opposition members raised the issue of disinvestment of profit-making PSUs. DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran demanded a White Paper on the effectiveness of the fiscal stimulus package and a forensic audit on the expenditure of ₹35,000 crore on vaccines.

TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD. NOTICE INVITING TENDERS (E-TENDERING PROCESS)

Sl. No	Tender Inviting Authority	Specification No.	Total
1	CE/MM	M.43	1

For details of works/Procurement/Due date of submission/opening, viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit websites: www.tangedco.gov.in, www.tnebnet.org, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, <https://ntenders.gov.in/nicgapp/>

DIPR/979/Tender/2021

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
PATNA - 801507
(An Autonomous body under MoHFW, Govt. of India)

INSTITUTE LEVEL SPOT COUNSELLING (SESSION- JANUARY 2021) FOR THE ADMISSION IN POST-GRADUATE SYLLABUS (MD/MS) IN AIIMS, PATNA

Admission to Vacant PG Seats (MD/MS) in AIIMS Patna, for the session Jan 2021 will be held on 18th February 2021 from 12:00 noon onwards. The seats will be filled as per the post-Graduate Entrance Examination conducted by AIIMS New Delhi on 20th November 2020 on the basis of Merit List.

The Eligible and Desirous candidates for participating in the Institute level Spot Counselling has to report in person latest by 9:30 am for the registration and document verification.

The details of the vacant PG Seats available for this spot counselling is available on AIIMS, New Delhi website i.e. www.aiimsexam.org and AIIMS Patna website i.e. www.aiimspatna.org

For any queries/information regarding Institute level Spot Counselling, please contact Mr. Padam Pratap Singh Yadav, JAA, Dean Office, AIIMS Patna Mobile No. 9097773477, Email ID: padamp@aiimspatna.org

Venue for above counsellings: - E-Classroom, Medical College Building, AIIMS Patna.

Dean, AIIMS, Patna



GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION DIVISION PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.3830/PW/EE/ID/JE(P)-33/2020-2021

Puducherry, the 09.02.2021

PRESS NOTICE FOR e-Tender

On behalf of the President of India e-Tenders are invited from the eligible contractors/firms by the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division, Public Works Department, Puducherry for the following works.

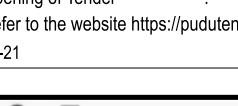
Sl. No.	Tender No	Name of Work
1	Tender No.48/PW/IRRN/2020-2021	Sub Work-1 Construction of RCC U drain along Olandai surplus course and North of Olandai tank, Strengthening bunds of Olandai tank including construction of box culvert, Puducherry for Rs.7,13,81,514/-
	Tender No.49/PW/IRRN/2020-2021	Sub Work-2 Construction of pump house, RCC sump, Genset room, Staff room with toilet facilities including installing pumps, Genset at Olandai and Murungapakkam tanks, Puducherry. for Rs.4,33,86,174/-

- (i) Availability of NIT in the website from 10.00 A.M on 12.02.2021 to 4.00 P.M. on 23.02.2021
- (ii) Closing time for submission of Tender : 23.02.2021 4.00 P.M.
- (iii) Date & Time of Opening of Tender : 24.02.2021 10.30 A.M.

For further details please refer to the website [https://pudutenders.gov.in](http://pudutenders.gov.in)

No.411/DIP/AD/Press/2020-21

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C) IDCO, IDCO TOWER, Bhubaneswar

Tender Call Notice No. H.O./P&C/EST-E-73/04/2018 - 2512

Dated : 08.02.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER THROUGH e-Procurement

Name of the Work : Construction of Approach road, R.C.C. drain & single cell box culvert for Indian Oil at Textile Park, Dhamnagar, Bhubaneswar.

Estimated Cost : Rs.294.43 Lakh (approx.)

Period of Completion : 04 (four) calendar months.

<tr

Bid to clear Tapovan tunnel hits a hurdle

More slush and water coming from inside, ITBP tweets

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The ongoing rescue operation at the Tapovan hydel project tunnel in Uttarakhand's Chamoli, in which about 35 workers were trapped after a snow avalanche triggered flash floods on Sunday, has hit a major hurdle with sludge continuously oozing out of it. The total death toll stands at 34.

"...The tunnel is still approachable till about 120 metres. More slush and water coming from inside the tunnel," the ITBP had tweeted on Wednesday morning. Armed with cutting and drilling equipment, the team could move barely 20 metres ahead in the entire day and was yet to reach the T-point junction where the workers were earlier suspected to be trapped.

"NTPC officials have said that there is another tunnel about 12 metres underneath where the workers may be located. We may have to create an access route by drilling, which will consume more time," said the official deployed at the project site for the past four days.

A total of 170 persons, including the trapped workers, are still untraced. "After the mishap, 206 people were said to be missing from different places. Two of them informed the authorities on Tuesday that they



Trying their best: Search and rescue operations under way at Tapovan tunnel in Joshimath on Wednesday. ■ ANI

were safe. Search teams have so far recovered 34 bodies. Therefore, the total number of missing persons is now 170," said the police officer posted in Chamoli.

Among the missing persons, 70 are from different parts of Uttarakhand, 66 from Uttar Pradesh, 13 from Jharkhand, 11 from Nepal, nine each from Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, six each

from Punjab and West Bengal, four from Madhya Pradesh, three from Assam, two each from Delhi and Odisha, and one each from Haryana and J&K.

The identities of 10 of the 34 deceased have been established so far. Two of them were Uttarakhand Police Head Constable Manoj Choudhary and Constable Balbir Singh Gadhia.

INTERVIEW | KALACHAND SAIN

'Himalayas host to complex processes'

Our knowledge of glaciers is limited and inadequate, says scientist

JACOB KOSHY

On February 7, a flash flood hurtled down in Chamoli, Uttarakhand killing many and destroying two hydro-power projects. The trigger for the floods is believed to be either a glacial lake being breached or a broken mountain peak falling on a glacier. Scientists from the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG), Dehradun were among the first teams of experts to leave for an examination of the causes of the disaster. Kalachand Sain, Director, WIHG, says it was large rock falling on a hanging glacier that precipitated the avalanche and flood. He also highlighted the challenges of accessing the glacier because of which it could be months before the exact cause that triggered the rockfall could be determined.

The Wadia Institute has sent a team of scientists to explore the causes of the flash flood. What have they found so far?

■ A team of five immediately flew for the spot. They have made some measurements of the topography near the locations but access is difficult. They also undertook an aerial survey. What we know so far is almost entirely based on an analysis of satellite imagery, with some ground observations. Ground-based measure-

ments are critical to supplement this but the prevailing conditions aren't conducive. These are glaciers at an elevation of 5,000-6,000 metres. Himachal Pradesh has 10,000 glaciers, Uttarakhand has 1,000 glaciers – and all are in extremely inhospitable locations. Normally, access to these regions is only possible in the summer, and it's not easy even then. That's why our knowledge of glaciers is limited and this is inadequate. That makes satellite analysis or aerial surveys critical but they have their limitations.

What does your preliminary analysis suggest?

■ We are about 90% certain that this was caused by a combination of a large piece of rock, possibly from a mountain peak, breaking off. This was probably part of the Raunthi/Mrigudhani mountain. It fell on a hanging glacier, probably perched off a cliff. The impact from the falling rock broke it [the glacier] and this mass of rock and ice debris avalanched over a nearly 40 degree slope for two kilometres before falling onto the Raunthi Gadhera stream floor. There was thus a huge mass of rock, ice and other debris that stayed that way for a while. It looks like it stayed that way for three days and the ice and snow started to melt from the heat. It was a clear sky. Even-



Normally, access to these regions is only possible in the summer, and it's not easy even then

tually, the pressure created by the volume of water and other debris forced its way down the valley and led to the flooding and deluge. This was different from a situation like Kedarnath in 2013. There, multiple cloudbursts in June led to a torrent of snow and water that resulted in a flash flood. (This resulted in widespread destruction in Uttarakhand and the loss of nearly 5,700 lives, along with damaged hydro-power tunnels as well as destruction of livestock and property.)

What made the mountain peak break?

■ This is still to be determined. What is likely is that this is a result of decades of freezing and thawing that would have led to weaknesses and cracks forming in those mountain structures.

It was not a sudden event, and this underlines the reasons of why we need to keep monitoring the Himalayas. They are fragile and host to several complex processes that need to be monitored. Global warming contributes to the weakening of the glaciers and we need several organisations and specialists working on these aspects to monitor, make models and thereby make predictive forecasts that can warn of such occurrences in the future.

We need some ground-based measurements and we have already made a scientific plan to be able to access these mountains in the summer. We will have to investigate if there was some tectonic activity, or a blast from somewhere higher up that triggered fault-lines. We don't know yet and it will take some time to establish that. But imagine a heap of rice. If the base is not strong and grains accumulate, there will at some point be single rice grain, that when added to the heap, will cause it to crumble. So we have to determine structural weaknesses too.

Do such accidents show that it's foolhardy to construct hydropower projects in Uttarakhand beyond a certain elevation? Ideally, before projects are conceived, there are expert assessments done and these are expected to be followed.

Three firms to chalk out plan for Ayodhya

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

A Canada-based firm and a firm from Delhi are among the three selected to chalk out the blueprint of the master plan for Ayodhya.

CP Kukreja Architects, with Canada-based infrastructure consultants Lea Associates and the L&T, will work out the blueprint of town planning, transport, traffic, infrastructure, finance, economy, heritage, tourism, urban design and renewable resources, said Vishal Singh, vice-chairman, Ayodhya Development Authority.

Heart ailment cannot be a disability: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said a heart ailment cannot be included as a disability under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.

The judgment came on an appeal filed by a sailor for disability compensation. The Bench upheld a judgment of the Patna High Court, which had concluded that the dilated cardiomyopathy condition suffered by the seaman would not facilitate any benefit to the appellant under Section 47 of the Act.

IN BRIEF



Shah may meet 'exiled' Bengal leader in Assam

GUWAHATI Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to address a rally in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district on Thursday after reportedly meeting an "exiled" Koch-Rajbongshi leader of the State in western Assam's Bongaigaon district. The Koch-Rajbongshis comprise a sizeable chunk of voters in western Assam and northern West Bengal. The "exiled" leader, Ananta Rai, claims to be a member of the Koch royal family.

Assam to discontinue mandatory virus testing

GUWAHATI The Assam government has decided to discontinue mandatory COVID-19 testing at airports, railway stations and land routes from March 1 following a decline in new cases, State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday. It is, however, expected that people will adhere to "Covid appropriate behaviour", he said. PTI

Kangana to apply for regularisation of flats

MUMBAI Actor Kangana Ranaut on Wednesday withdrew her plea before the Bombay High Court after a lower court dismissed her suit challenging the BMC orders for merging three flats. She said she would apply for regularisation before the civic body. Senior advocate Birendra Saraf for Ms. Ranaut told a single Bench of Justice P.K. Chavan that he would like to withdraw the suit and sought permission to apply for regularisation of the flats.

'States, Centre responsible for fuel prices'

Pradhan says it's wrong to campaign that the rates are at an all-time high

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Wednesday it was wrong to campaign that fuel prices are at an all-time high as petrol and diesel prices are governed by an international price mechanism.

K.C. Venugopal of the Congress said petrol price was about ₹100 a litre in his village, and asked why the prices were at an all-time high when the international crude price was not so. Responding to this, Mr. Pradhan said, "Today, the price of crude oil is \$61 a barrel. He belongs to Kerala where a lot of people stay in Gulf area. Before coming to the House, he should at least check with some of his close friends from that area what the price is... States are responsible;



the Union government is also responsible for this tax issue. He has asked me how many times we have raised the price and the excise duty. The States too have raised the VAT. So, both the States and the Central government are raising taxes according to their developmental needs."

"Sometimes, the Government of India has reduced the excise duty. In the last three years, we have done

so. In the last 300 days, the increase in the price was for 60 days. For around seven days in respect of petrol and for 21 days in respect of diesel, we have decreased the price. Almost for 250 days, we have neither increased nor decreased the price. So, it is a misnomer to campaign that prices are all-time high."

Asked by Vishambhar Prasad Nishad of the Samajwadi Party why the petrol price was high in Ram's India when it was low in Sita's Ne-

pal, the Minister said India could not be compared to countries where petrol was not for the consumption of the masses.

"Do we compare ourselves with big economies or such small economy. Let me give you an example of kerosene that is priced at ₹32 in India but there [Nepal, Bangladesh] it is priced at ₹57-59. Kerosene is an item of mass consumption in those countries."

He said to give relief to the consumers, the Centre reduced the excise duty on both petrol and diesel by ₹2 a litre with effect from October 4, 2017. It reduced the excise duty on both by ₹1.5 a litre with effect from October 5, 2018 and the public sector oil marketing companies also reduced ₹1 a litre to bring down overall prices.

Goa Speaker to hear pleas against MLAs

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that the Goa Assembly Speaker is 'hearing' disqualification petitions against 10 former Congress MLAs, who 'merged' with the BJP in 2019, on February 26.

"The Speaker has fixed the hearing on February 26. The merger is also pending before the Speaker," Mr. Mehta submitted. A Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde said in its order that the Speaker has listed the petitions for "disposal" on that date.

Tigress Avni killing: SC notice to forest officials

Contempt petition filed by activist

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday *prima facie* said "celebrations" after the killing of tigress Avni in November 2018 "clearly violated" the law.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde issued notice to Vikas Kharge, Principal Secretary, Department of Revenue and Forests, Mumbai, and other Maharashtra Forest Department officials on a contempt petition filed by activist and petitioner-in-person Sanjeeta Dogra.

"They should be no cele-

brations or rewards... On this, we issue notice," Chief Justice Bobde orally observed. The court also decided to examine the claim that the tigress was really a man-eater.

Ms. Dogra had submitted that human nails, hair and teeth were not found inside the animal during the autopsy. The court asked Ms. Dogra to establish her claim. It also asked for the autopsy report. "We want to see a clear finding that human hair, nails, teeth do not disintegrate within six months," Chief Justice Bobde said.

ED continues searches on news platform

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Searches by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on the premises linked to digital media platform *NewssClick*, in connection with an alleged money laundering probe into receipt of funds to the tune of ₹30 crore from abroad, continued on Wednesday.

The news portal released a statement, confirming that the searches at its office and the residential premises of its senior representatives were still under way. "If the ED and the government are truthful and follow the course of law, no wrong-doing will be found and this unfortunate event will be closed. *NewssClick* has nothing to hide," it said.

A senior ED official on Tuesday said the probe was based on an FIR registered by the Delhi police a few months ago and that the company running the platform had allegedly received funds from a U.S.-based firm, which had been liquidated. On Wednesday, the ED also started recording statements of the persons concerned. It enquired about certain transactions.

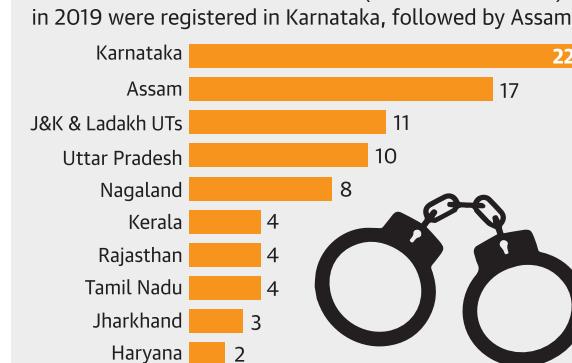
2.2% UAPA cases from 2016 to 2019 ended in conviction

Home Ministry presents data in the Rajya Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Cracking down

The most cases under sedition law (Section 124A of IPC) in 2019 were registered in Karnataka, followed by Assam



the 93 cases of sedition, the chargesheet was filed in 40 cases the same year.

When asked about the steps taken to strengthen the sedition law in the country, the Minister stated, "Amendment of laws is an ongoing process."

India to better its disaster management'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the World Sustainable Development Summit, 2021, organised by The Energy Resources Institute, in Delhi, on Wednesday.

"We must enhance our disaster management capabilities. The way to do this is to improve our human resources as well as technology," he said in a mediated video conference address that had delegations and heads of States listening in. On Sunday, India saw an avalanche cause a flood in Chamoli, Uttarakhand, which killed at least 30 people, destroyed two hydropower plants, and caused damage to livestock and property.

"India is part of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. We are working in this direction. We are working towards whatever needs to be done to achieve this. Our human centric approach could act as a force multiplier to achieve this," the PM said.

'165 lakh doses of vaccine procured at ₹350.25 cr.'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government did not enter into any pre-procurement agreement with either of the COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers in the country before starting the vaccination drive and it had so far procured 165 lakh doses at a cost of ₹350.25 crore, according to information submitted by the Health Ministry in Parliament.

States/UTs regarding the announcement to supply vaccine to the public free of cost.

Giving State-wise details of the distribution of the two vaccines, the Ministry noted that while Oxford/AstraZeneca's Covishield has been distributed to all 37 States/UTs, 19 States/UTs have been given both Covaxin and Covishield. Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar,

Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are among the States/UTs which have brought in both vaccines currently.

The Ministry has specified that the prioritised group comprises healthcare and front line workers, persons above the age of 50 and those below 50 with associated co-morbidities.



PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Marie Kondo may be trending on social media but here is a little secret. Did you know, there is a percentage that de-clutters their homes, then stashes away their excesses – memorabilia, collectibles or just about any object they are attached to – in storage facilities? "People are attached to material things that they do not want to dispose," says Ameya Davda who started Space Valet in Mumbai in 2017, along with his cousin Devak Davda. This sentiment was what the Davda's business hinged on before the pandemic set in.

When lockdown began and offices shut, working professionals headed back to their hometowns to work from home. Many realised it would be economical to give up their rented accommodations for the duration they were away.

But what about their furniture, appliances and other household goods? "This is where the self storage facilities come in handy. It is a \$50 billion industry in the US and is picking up in India now. A number of such storage facilities have opened during the lockdown," says Ameya who has four units (two each in Bhivandi and Sewri) in Mumbai. The largest, at 25,000 square feet, came up in the middle of the pandemic, in response to

Dump your physical and emotional baggage here

market demands.

Stownest Storage, started in December 2018 in Bengaluru, also saw an unprecedented increase in demand during the lockdown: It went from 100 clients in a month to 800.

The founders – Sudhindra Subbarao, Amit Kumar, Srinivas Murthy and Ramesh Chincholi – had a goal of opening in two cities by the end of 2020. Fuelled by demand they launched their services in Hyderabad in August and in Chennai by November.

"We started getting calls from all over India and quickly needed to replicate our workforce and vendors," says Sudhindra, adding that Pune is their latest

market. To facilitate faster service they started an estimation system online along with bookings through the app/website.

Across the country

This industry was growing at a predictable pattern – this included luggage from people relocating abroad for six months, families renovating houses, students and professionals migrating within the country – till the pandemic hit, says Sudhindra.

Bengaluru houses their biggest store house at 1.5 lakh square feet. In Hyderabad it is 35,000 square feet and 12,000 square feet in Chennai.

"We will be adding 15,000 square feet in Chennai every 75

days," adds Sudhindra. Four hundred to 500 enquiries pour in everyday. These are from companies (who need a place to keep their office equipment as they are giving up their physical space) as well as working professionals.

"Even though the vaccine has come, and a few people are back at work, most are still working from home because

Most storage services also offer insurance to their clients, the amount is usually included in the rent

As the work from home brigade continues to function out of their native towns, storage units come to their rescue, housing their precious belongings while they give up their rented accommodations in their cities of work



Lock and leave (Clockwise from left) Neatly assigned storage booths at Space Valet; (below) an employee of Stownest Storage taking stock of their client's belongings

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND B JOTHI RAMALINGAM

companies want their employees to be safe. Plus some offices are opting for smaller offices to reduce their costs. So our unit is still at 85% occupancy and we expect it to remain this way till December," says Ameya.

After the pandemic too he is confident about business in Mumbai as the city has space issues and people live in houses as small as 400 square feet but have lots of belongings that they need to store somewhere. The monthly rent starts at ₹1,700 and can go up depending on the client's requirements. "The idea is that clients pay only 10% to 15% of what they would as home rent," explains Ameya.

A huge saving

Sure enough, this works as a competitive saving option. Aarika Banerjee, a legal professional with a multi-national audit firm in Hyderabad, says, thanks to these storage services, he would have saved almost ₹2.7 lakh on rent, by the time he goes back in June, when his office is tentatively scheduled to reopen physically.

In early September, he left his rented accommodation in Hyderabad and moved back to his family home in Kolkata. "I was paying ₹30,000 as rent for a two BHK. Now I just pay ₹3,000 per month to the stor-

age unit," says Aarika.

There was also the option of carting his belongings back with him. With prices inflated because of the pandemic, that would have cost him around ₹45,000 both ways.

It helps that personnel from Seacon Traders, where his worldly possessions are currently housed, call every month with updates about his belongings. "It was safe even during the heavy rains in October," says Aarika.

Most storage services also offer insurance to their clients, the amount is usually included in the rent. Some people store expensive items such as art, while some keep things that are of emotional value like old photographs or artefacts belonging to their parents. Drones, Dussehra idols, a replica of a football ground with players on it are some of the unusual things that clients store, says Sudhindra. Ameya adds that one of his US-based clients, a middle-aged gentleman, keeps his collection of action figures at Space Valet.

"While we accommodate most things we do not allow cash, jewellery and perishable items," says Neha Sharma, assistant manager at Self Storage, with units in Gurugram and Noida.

Given the popularity of this segment, quite a few people have also started fly-by-night versions of this service. These include people renting out a room in their house as a storage space.

"If only it were that simple," says Neha adding that at their warehouses everything is stored on top of pallets to protect from moisture. "In addition we do checks for fire hazard every fortnight and pest control every month. We have a duty manager who is present at the site 24/7."

She mentions that the items are neatly packed in three layers to maintain their original quality.

"That is why it was hardly a surprise when one of our clients, who lives abroad, landed in Delhi, came to our storage unit, took out one of his festive garments, got dressed and went straight for a wedding!" says Neha, laughing.



Powerful strokes
(Clockwise from right)
Rawail Singh and his daughter; a painting in progress; co-founders Omaid Sharif, Kabir Mokamel and Lima Ahmad
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SUNALINI MATHEW

"When I put up the first mural, the wall disappeared, because I was looking at the image," says Kabir Mokamel who is visiting Delhi. It was 2014 when Artlords, the organisation he had co-founded, made its first move into the streets of Kabul. Through a slow process of connecting with the community in the conflict-ridden capital, it began painting the blast walls to make a political point.

After the US intervention in 2001, thick grey concrete walls came up to shield government buildings, embassies and private residences for the wealthy, turning the city into a fortress.

Mokamel and his team's first work showed the magnified eyes of co-founder, Rawail Singh's daughter, with the words, "I can see you. Corruption cannot be hidden from God and from the eyes of the people", written in Pashto and Dari scripts. Four years later, Singh would be killed along with 12 other Afghan Sikh activists. This time, another mural would go up, of the father and daughter.

Artlords, a take-off on the druglords and warlords of Afghanistan, believes in activism, a portmanteau that puts out social and political messaging through painting. Mokamel has been deeply influenced by the 'masked' British artist, Banksy. The difference is that there is nothing secretive about the group, and their work is not done covertly. Permission is sought from the owners of the walls – usually the government – with a brief about the mural. The artwork, created on a computer, is projected onto a wall, with numbers for colours.

To date, they have done about 2,000 paintings, the smallest 3x5 metres, the largest 6x18 metres. "We talk to people on the street, we see what people think," he says of the process of inviting passersby to come and paint. "Once there was a young girl, about 13 or 14, very disturbed; she was critical of what

When walls disappear



we were doing, so I asked her to come and paint. She said no, but I handed her a brush. She stood and painted for two or three hours," he says, adding that the act helped calm her down. It is something Mokamel would like to take up in the future – art for mental health, for a country disturbed by over 40 years of turmoil. "It's a bubble in the corridor of suicide bombing," he says.

A place for all He was lucky enough to have experienced the 'old Kabul', when it was "a very beautiful city, a cultured city, with very nice people". At 17, he was conscripted into the army. After three-and-a-half years he fled to Pakistan, where many others went for refuge.

In 1989, he moved to Germany and then Australia to study art and graphic design, working there as well. "While I

was in Afghanistan, the war was taking place outside of me, but when I moved outside, the war moved inside me, so it was a horrible thing," says Mokamel, referring to the turmoil that people in war-torn areas feel. In the time he spent abroad, he would return often to Kabul, the mountains calling him; his connection with them unbroken.

He came back in 2010, because it was home and also because he felt there was "something that we can solve, something that we can make, a place to live together, but it takes some time not to be selfish." He began to work in the media as a creative director, until the idea of Artlords came about with Omaid Sharif, Rawail Singh, and Lima Ahmad. It was only in 2018 that this work turned full time for him.

Some campaigns that have done well internationally are themes that appeal

to all: a portrait of George Floyd, murdered on the streets by Minneapolis police, for instance. Some mark pieces of history, like the signing of the US-Taliban peace deal last year. Many are reactions to life in Afghanistan: a portrait of Tetsu Nakamura, the head of a Japanese aid agency killed by gunmen; that of law professor and activist Hamida Barmaki, also killed by militants with her husband and four children. There is a series that celebrates the Heroes of My City that depicted municipal workers, teachers, and nurses. Each mural goes up with a message.

Only one has ever been taken down, that of Barmaki, painted in front of the residence of a powerful warlord said to be held responsible for her death. "The American University took it down as it was on their wall."

Driven by more than angst
Many of the artworks are borne of the anger at what Kabul has become, at losing close family and friends to suicide bombers or having them just disappear. When 27-year-old Farkhunda Malikzada was publicly lynched beside a mosque, wrongly accused of having burned the Koran, there was public outrage. The Artlords donated blood and poured the samples on the wall, rather than use red paint. "It was the blood of everyone who was spilled there," says Mokamel.

Of late though, he is looking at approaching the murals through a prism of positivity, beauty and poetry, taking the rough edges off activism. "Beauty inspires, not negativity," says the 53-year-old, who hopes to create "a new visual language" that people across the world will resonate with. Something that appeals "not to the political mind, but to our emotional core".

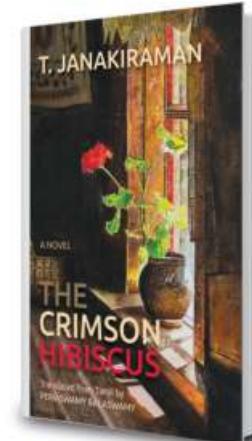
Ask any Tamil reader, and they will have a list of must-read gems to share with the non-Tamil speaking world. But very few of these titles have well-written and well-edited translated versions. Also, a lot of valuable books published long ago have gone out of print and face the danger of becoming extinct. This is where the Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation's translation initiative comes in. With help from a select group of experts, including writers and those with decades of experience in translation, the initiative aims to give a leg-up to Tamil to English translations.

From the heart of Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation's translation initiative hopes to bring gems from the State to non-Tamil readers

AKILA KANNADASAN

The Artlords of Afghanistan paint on thick concrete barricades hoping to turn Kabul back into the city of culture that it once was from the fortress it has now become



Lingual bridge *The Crimson Hibiscus*, a translation of T Janakiraman's *Sembaruthi* ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ed; there are so many good Tamil writers whose work needs to be promoted in a similar way," he feels.

Another important target audience, is students. Mini Krishnan, coordinating editor of the project and member of its execution team, hopes that by collaborating with publishers across India, the books may reach college students who would otherwise not have access to them.

She explains that there are three kinds of readership for translations in English. "One: within the country, particularly in the large cities; two: in culture-study courses run for non-Indians outside the country, forming an exotic addition to the subject of Indology; and a third which meets the nostalgia of Indians who lost their mother tongues when they left their country but not memories of their culture and origin."

There are interesting books on the anvil: for 2021, the team plans to bring out three books every four months. Among them is *Tamilnaatil Gandhi* by A Ramasamy. "It speaks about events that occurred during Gandhi's visits to Tamil Nadu," says Ramakrishnan. He is thrilled that once it is out in English, the book will gain a whole new readership.

Writer S Ramakrishnan, who is part of the committee, recalls the long exchanges over email during lockdown to finalise titles. "It was a big challenge," he says. "We wanted to take the best of Tamil literature and present it to those outside the State, to help them better understand Tamil culture, the people, and the language."

Ramakrishnan is glad that the Tamil Nadu Government has come forward to support such an initiative. "Several great Kannada and Malayalam writers have gone places because of their works being translat-

ed."

Filmmaker PS Vinothraj discusses *Koozhangal*, his début film which won the prestigious Tiger Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2021

SRIVATSAN S

An alcoholic, abusive father Ganapathy and his son, Velu, are on their way to the neighbouring village to bring back the wife-mother, who has fled the home. A scuffle breaks out between Ganapathy and his in-laws, forcing Velu to tear up a wad of cash to get back at his father. They trudge their way back in the midst of scorching heat.

Vinothraj admits that the film came from a place of anger. Mined out of what happened to his younger sister, whose alcoholic husband shut the doors on her, making her walk back over 13 kilometres to her village with a toddler in arms, Vinothraj calls such incidents "an everyday occurrence" in his village.

"She knew that I was making her story. I was conscious not to hurt anybody involved because I knew my sister and her husband would end up together again. She has seen the film and she really liked it. When I showed the rough cut to the old women in our village, they reacted in a way that gave me the most satisfaction. I am not sure if folks at Rotterdam got the film, but those grannies did," says the filmmaker.

Edited excerpts:

What are your earliest memories of cinema?

• I remember visiting film shoots in Madurai in the 2000s – from *Ghilli* to *Paruthiveran*. At that age, what fascinated me the most was the jimmy-jib camera that was carrying the cinematographer. I would say the shooting atmosphere was what drew me into cinema.

You get to see a lot of images around Madurai that tell you a certain story. Its vastness can be divided into three: the barren landscape that you see in *Koozhangal*, the main city, and the part that leads to the Western Ghats. Now when I look back, I think these images kindled an interest to try and pursue cinematography, which I couldn't afford to.

You seem to have learned the craft of cinema by



Faces, places

watching films when you worked in a DVD shop in Chennai. Is that a fair assumption?

• Yes. I used to watch random films; sometimes by suggestion. That is how I discovered filmmakers like Majid Majidi, Abbas Kiarostami and Nuri Bilge Ceylan [of *Three Monkeys*].

Apart from watching films, I began sharing my resume with filmmakers who dropped by the shop. Later, I worked in A Sargunam's [of *Vaagai Sooda Vaal*

production venture, *Manjapai*, which was a lesson on the other side of cinema.

Was *Koozhangal* supposed to be your début work?

• No. I was trying to make another film, which had three landscapes. I like to tell stories through landscapes, but I couldn't convince producers. I made a short, *Subway*, to convince people that I had talent. Four years back, my sister had to face a similar experience like in *Koozhangal*. I finished the first draft in nine days.

The filmmaking standard is world-class for someone who never went to a film school...

• Maybe because I approach everything with emotion. What truly was transformative was when I worked in a theatre group called Manal Magudi in Kovilpatti. It is a post-modern troupe and Muruga Boopathy is the director.

There was one particular play that they staged across the country. It had no dialogues and everything was communicated through action. I was fascinated by the way they used the space and

Landscapes of resistance A still from *Koozhangal*; (inset) PS Vinothraj ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

their body movements.
My knowledge on the film language came from there, I believe.

At what point did Nayanthara and Vignesh Shivan step in to present the film?

• We were initially associated with Learn and Teach, a production company. But the pandemic kept delaying the project.

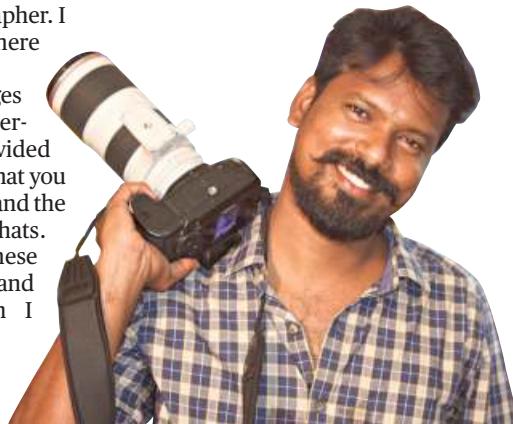
Seventy percent of the film was done and we were looking for a co-producer. That is how we approached NFDC Film Bazaar by showing a rough cut. We couldn't get the desired support.

And that is where we met Ram sir. I told my assistant that Karuppusamy [a deity] has come in the form of Ram and that we have to make use of him. The moment he saw the trailer, Ram sir got involved and gave us hope. He believed in the project more than anybody.

When can we expect *Koozhangal* in theatres?

• Now that the film had its world première at the Rotterdam Film Festival, it has to travel across Europe. We are trying to see if we can monetise from the festival.

All things said, it should arrive sometime in July/August. When I met Soori [actor], one of the well-wishers of this film, he told me that we should book a special show for grannies and women of our village, excluding men. I concur. After all, this film was made for them.



Students and trainers at K Gokulnath's flow arts academy in Chennai are claiming Guinness World Records by the dozen, and they are not about to stop soon

One for the RECORD BOOKS



PRADEEP KUMAR

When K Gokulnath points his finger at her, 10-year-old Andrea Varghese walks to the corner where gymnasias mattresses have been piled. She picks one out and proceeds to contort her body in ways unimaginable.

One among the students at Gokulnath Unique Talent Academy (GUTA), a flow arts school, who has yet to set a Guinness World Record, Andrea's father Varghese Joseph informs us she is practising daily to change the status quo and set one of her own: the maximum times one can roll over backwards whilst staying contorted!

GUTA is the brainchild of Gokulnath, who is an actor-performer-filmmaker-dance and stunt choreographer all rolled into one. Since March 2020, Gokul, his team of trainers at GUTA (which he operates in Arumbakkam and Virugambakkam) and their students have together set 16 Guinness World Records.

"You could say this [records] is becoming a USP for us," he smiles.

His academy in Arumbakkam is on the first floor of a commercial building on Valluvar Street, a few paces down the road from Jai Nagar Park near CMBC bus terminus. The students include a four-year-old girl who Gokul points to and says, "She can give us 30 push-ups easily." The world records the students have set range from 'Most rotations of a hula hoop on one foot whilst in head stand position in one minute' to 'Most juggling catches on a balance board in one minute'.

Developing interest
The 36-year-old Gokul started GUTA in 2018, and for a while had aligned it with that of choreographer Kalai's dance studio in Anna Nagar. In February 2020, he moved to the space in Arumbakkam. Lockdown began soon after.

"A student pitched the idea [of attempting world records] during lockdown. I found that there were several categories in flow arts that could be attempted and completed within a minute. These were also part of their lessons, and so doing this was helpful in retaining the students' interest [during lockdown]," says Gokul, a prominent face in television who has appeared in shows such as *Kalakka Povathu Yaaru* and *Maana-*

da Mayilada to name a few. With 16 records in the kitty, GUTA is planning to recruit parents as well in their pursuits. Last week, Gokul enlisted the help of parents in a bid to attempt to pass a hula hoop along a human chain of 100 people in under five minutes; an attempt which was unsuccessful. He, however, insists he will redo the attempt until he gets the desired result. Says Indu Sukumar, whose son Adhav attempted to set a record by climbing a fleet of 50 stairs whilst hula-hooping, "The children are more interested in such activities. My son is now into juggling as well. He is also preparing to give the (aforementioned) record attempt a second try."

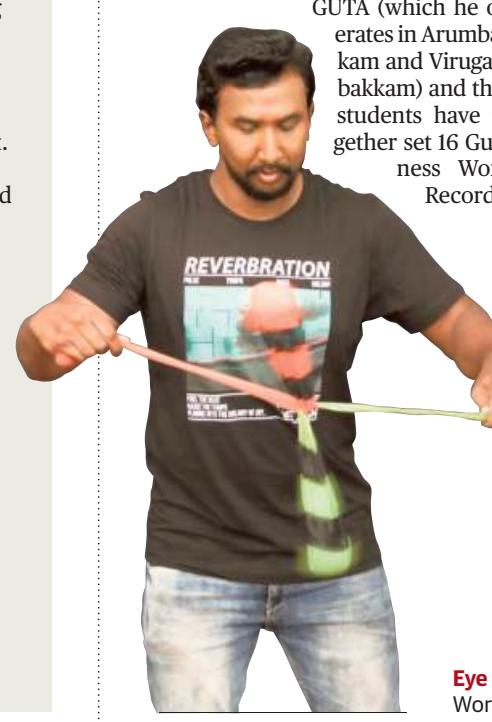
For the children, flow arts has earned them recognition – among classmates and teachers in school. The ones with records to their name are afforded the long end of the rope when it comes to academics, if it helps with their practice. For Gokul, this is becoming a way of life.

He says, "My next record will be with my wife. We will be making the largest origami heart for Valentine's Day."

On February 4, however, the Guinness World Records certified Gokulnath and his partner as the new record holders in the aforementioned category, having made an origami heart that measures 3.82 metres x 3.35 metres.

Gokulnath can be contacted at 7338827800.

Eye for talent (Clockwise from left) K Gokulnath; with students and their Guinness World Record certificates; and a student on a rolla bolla with a hoop ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



How to train your dragon

The Champion Woman Life Leadership Programme by the Global Adjustments Foundation aims to help control mind and actions and achieve a work-life balance



Breathe in, breathe out Snapshot from a session; (below) Ranjini Manian ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Ranjini Manian likens the mind to a puppy. "You just have to train it. It will listen to you," says the founder-chair of Global Adjustments Foundation. A self-confessed frenetic person in the past, she says ever since she started meditation three decades ago, it has made her life a million times better. And so she advocates meditating everyday, at least for 10 minutes (beginners), within 45 minutes of waking up. This simple practice can help one go from having a mind full to being mindful, explains Ranjini. Her series of webinars titled The Champion Woman Life Leadership Programme aims to incorporate this while training people in life leadership skills.

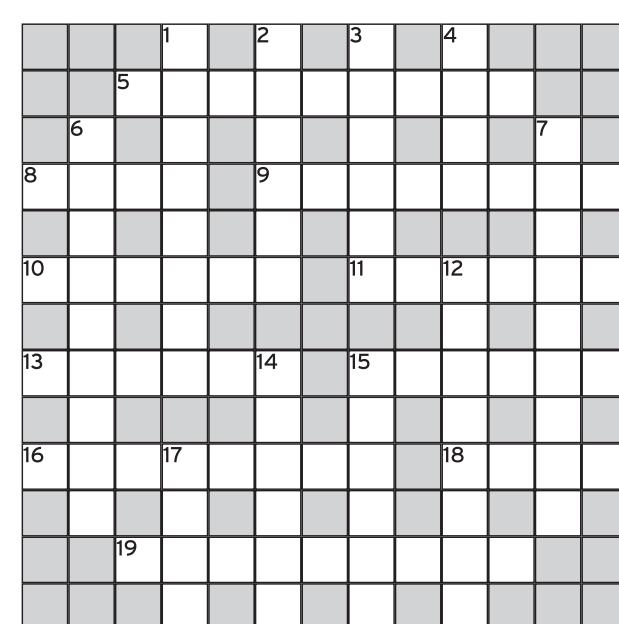
This free-of-cost programme was started five years ago by the Global Adjustments Foundation. "The goal is to help women and girls live out their potential. During my tenure with Global Adjustments, I worked with 450 multinationals and noticed that even with the companies offering a lot of facilities, there weren't enough résumés from women. It was clear they needed to be told that they are tremendous. So, we built a programme for resilience, and for resilience you need to have mindfulness," says Ranjini. Over the years, The Champion Woman Life Leadership Programme took her to schools, colleges, medical institutions, corporates and even to the Officers Training Academy, Chennai where she worked with lady cadets of the Afghanistan army.

"The goal is to help people respond to situations than react," says Ranjini. There is a difference between the two. Reaction is immediate, instantaneous. It is when your emotion translates to your lips and, inevitably, leads to regret. Respond-

Global Adjustments Foundation organises an open session on YouTube titled *Mindfull to Mindful*. The 30-minute live session will be held on February 12 at 5 pm on www.youtube.com/c/championwoman. For details, log on to www.championwoman.org



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13399



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■ Across

- 5 Tactic to gain an advantage (9)
- 8 Sunny – penalty (4)
- 9 Group meeting (to choose a pope?) (8)
- 10 Bird with no nest of its own (6)
- 11 Scottish dish (6)
- 13 Scamper (6)
- 15 Part of a shirt (6)
- 16 Standard post (8)
- 18 Island of the Inner Hebrides – think long and deeply (4)
- 19 Small puff pastry case with savoury filling (3-2-4)

■ Down

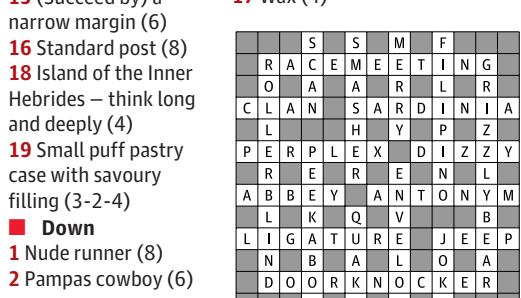
- 1 Nude runner (8)
- 2 Pampas cowboy (6)



To play the *Guardian Quick Crossword*, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

The solution will appear on February 18, 2021

Solution No. 13398



Thousands defy Myanmar protest ban

Demonstrations demanding release of Suu Kyi enter fifth day; military moves to tighten its grip

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Myanmar's biggest city for a fifth consecutive day on Wednesday, defying a ban on protests as the military moved to tighten its grip on the country.

Crowds swarmed through Yangon demanding the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, facing down police a day after officers dispersed crowds elsewhere with tear gas and rubber bullets, and ramped up their harassment of the ousted leader's party.

The sudden escalation of force against the demonstrations sweeping the country since last week's coup prompted a fresh chorus of international condemnation after officers fired live rounds at one rally in the capital Naypyidaw.

Two people were critically



Taking a stand: Protesters participating in a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon on Wednesday. ■ AFP

wounded in the incident – including one woman who was shot in the head. Images depicting her in the moments after she was shot were by Wednesday appearing on a huge protest banner and had been widely shared online alongside expressions

of grief and fury.

"They can shoot a young woman but they can't steal the hope and resolve of a determined people," United Nations Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews said on Wednesday.

Massive crowds returned

to the streets of Yangon on Wednesday, where the day before they had faced off against a phalanx of riot police standing alongside water cannon trucks near Ms. Suu Kyi's residence.

More detained

More politicians from Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) were detained on Tuesday, along with 30 others – including a journalist from local broadcaster DVB – at a protest in Mandalay, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group said.

Their arrests came as police fired tear gas at protesters in the city who were waving red NLD flags.

State media claimed that the crowd had used "obscene language" and thrown objects at police, injuring four officers, in its first direct mention of the protests since

they began on the weekend.

"Therefore, the police members dispersed in accordance with the methods and laws," the state-run *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper reported, without mentioning other police confrontations elsewhere in the country.

But elsewhere, the discipline of security forces appeared to be breaking down, with four officers defecting from their lines in the eastern town of Loikaw to join the anti-coup protests, according to local media reports.

The military justified last week's power grab by claiming widespread voter fraud in the November polls, which saw a landslide for Ms. Suu Kyi's party.

The UN Human Rights Council said it would hold a special session on Friday to discuss the crisis.

India is an important partner in the Indo-Pacific region, says U.S.

'We welcome its emergence as a leading global power'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON

Describing India as one of the most important partners of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region, the Joe Biden administration on Tuesday said it welcomes India's emergence as a leading global power.

But elsewhere, the discipline of security forces appeared to be breaking down, with four officers defecting from their lines in the eastern town of Loikaw to join the anti-coup protests, according to local media reports.

"India is one of the most important partners in the Indo-Pacific region for us. We welcome India's emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the region," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters at his daily news conference.

Earlier in the day, Secretary of State Tony Blinken spoke with his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, for the second time in less than a fortnight, Mr. Price added.

During the call, the two leaders reaffirmed the strength of the U.S.-India partnership and discussed issues of mutual concern, including the situation in Myanmar.

Mr. Blinken expressed concern over the military coup and the importance of the democratic process in Myanmar.

Regional developments

They also discussed regional developments, including the value of U.S.-India cooperation across the Indo-Pacific.

"Both sides look forward to expanded regional cooperation,

including through the Quad, and to address the challenges related to COVID-19 and climate change," he said.

Responding to a question, Mr. Price said the U.S.-India

Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership is both broad as well as multifaceted. "We'll continue to engage at the highest levels of our government to deepen cooperation on many fronts, and we are confident that the strong and upward trajectory of our partnership will, in fact, continue," he said.

"We welcome India joining the Security Council in the last month of this year for a two-year term," Mr. Price added.

The U.S., he said, also remains India's largest and most important trading partner, with the total bilateral trade increasing to \$146 billion in 2019. U.S. companies are a large source of India's foreign direct investment, he added.

Houthi target Saudi airport, plane catches fire '4 bomb-laden drones used in attack'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI

Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted the Abha International Airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, causing a civilian plane to catch fire, the kingdom's state television reported.

Firefighters brought the blaze under control, Saudi state-owned Al-Ekhbariya TV said, without offering word on possible casualties from the assault. The Iran-backed Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack soon afterward, with military spokesperson Yehia Sareai saying the group used

four bomb-laden drones to target Abha airport. "This comes in response to the continued aerial bombardment and the brutal siege on our country," Mr. Sareai said, noting that the Houthis consider the airport a military and not a civilian target. Col. Turki al-Maliki, the spokesperson for the Saudi-led military coalition fighting in Yemen, said the forces intercepted two bomb-laden drones launched by the Houthis toward the kingdom. He condemned the assault as a "deliberate attempt to target civilians in the southern region" of the country.

His remarks come amid reports – both in local and foreign media – that linked Colombo's sudden decision

to renege on a 2019 agreement with India and Japan, to jointly develop the terminal at the Colombo Port, to Chinese interests in the island nation. India's Adani Group was to invest in the ECT. Adjoining the ECT, China holds 85% stakes in the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), which is under a 35-year "Build Operate and Transfer" agreement with the Sri Lanka Port Authority (SLPA).

The Indian High Commissioner expressed displeasure that we [Sri Lanka] had not conveyed the decision to them properly. He told me that India is not happy with our decision," Mr. Gunawardena

dena said. A day after Sri Lanka pulled out of the tripartite agreement – amid prolonged agitations by port workers' trade unions opposing a foreign role – Indian Envoy Gopal Baglay held three separate meetings with President Gotabaya Ra-

japaksa, Prime Minister Ma-hinda Rajapaksa and Mr. Gu-nawarden, *The Hindu* reported on February 2.

"I explained our [Sri Lanka's] point of view to the High Commissioner, and appealed to India to view this keeping in mind the long-term relationship between the two countries," Mr. Gu-nawarden said, expressing confidence that India would take a "broad view" of the matter, and "rightly understand" Colombo's position.

"This would not in any way damage the strong ties we have with India," he added.

Following Sri Lanka's February 1 Cabinet decision – India and Japan reportedly

knew of the change only then – both countries expressed disappointment at Colombo's "unilateral decision".

Colombo had given a very different signal when External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited in January. It was further validated by President Rajapaksa's statement on January 13 telling port workers that the Adani Group would invest in the ECT, with the SLPA holding 51% stakes.

The Sri Lankan side has now said the West Container Terminal would be offered as an alternative, with 85% stakes for India and Japan. Neither country has commented on the offer that,

sources said, was yet to be made directly.

Amid the apparent diplomatic strain, Prime Minister Rajapaksa told local presspersons that India is Sri Lanka's "closest friend". "We can resolve any issue through discussion," he said.

The Cabinet's clearing of the revised ECT deal, dropping India and Japan, was not the first blow to New Delhi at the beginning of this year.

Two weeks prior to that, Sri Lanka approved a Chinese energy project in three small islands off the Jaffna peninsula in the north, about 50 km off the Tamil Nadu coast.

IN BRIEF



UAE's Hope Probe enters Mars orbit

DUBAI

The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) first mission to Mars reached the red planet and entered orbit on Tuesday after a seven-month, 494 million km journey, allowing it to start sending data about the Martian atmosphere. "Contact with #HopeProbe has been established again. The Mars Orbit Insertion is now complete," the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) said. REUTERS

Eight sentenced to death in Bangladesh

DHAKA

Eight Islamic extremists were on Wednesday sentenced to death in Bangladesh for the murder of a publisher, as the Muslim-majority nation grapples with tensions between religious hardliners and secularists. Faisel Arefin Dipan, 43, the owner of a publishing house that had released several atheist books, was hacked to death in October 2015 by men suspected to be members of a local jihadist group. AFP

Trump's trial begins with footage of siege

Republicans signal likely acquittal

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Former U.S. President Donald Trump's second impeachment trial began on Tuesday with harrowing video footage of his supporters' assault on Congress, but Republican Senators made clear how difficult it will be to win a conviction.

Senators voted 56-44 in favour of the constitutionality of the historic trial, rejecting a bid by Mr. Trump's lawyers to throw it out on grounds that a former President cannot be tried by lawmakers. The vote, held before the main part of the trial was to get underway on Wednesday, saw six Republicans join all 50 Democrats in the evenly-divided Senate. Despite this modest show of bipartisanship, the result highlighted the nearly impossible task of getting the two-thirds majority – requiring 17 Republicans – that would be needed to convict Mr. Trump of inciting insurrection.

Earlier, both sides presented their opening cases,



with Democrats arguing that Mr. Trump broke his oath in a naked bid to retain power after losing the November election to Joe Biden.

"If Congress were to just

stand completely aside in

the face of such an extraordinary crime against the Republic, it would invite future Presidents to use their power without any fear of accountability," Democratic impeachment manager Joe Neguse said.

Probe opened into Trump's election bid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA

A Georgia prosecutor on Wednesday said that she has opened a criminal investigation into "attempts to influence" last year's U.S. elections, a step that comes just weeks after former President Donald Trump asked a top official to find enough votes to overturn Joe Biden's victory in the state.

In a January 2 call to Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, Mr. Trump argued that the official could change the certified results of the presidential election, an assertion the Secretary of State firmly rejected. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, a Democrat elected to the job in November, did not specifically mention Mr. Trump in the letters announcing her investigation. The letters, sent to Mr. Raffensperger, Governor Brian Kemp, the Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General, instruct the four Republican officials to preserve all records related to the election.

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पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका, पिपरी पुणे - १८ पायथ्यापेट - पीजीआय, स्टेशनरी भाडार, ई-निविदा सुचना क्र. ०६/०२०२०-२०२१ ०६/०२०२०-२०२१ शुद्धपत्रक क्र. ९

पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका वायपीएसएच - पीजीआय येथे २, नवीन जिलागारा समाजाच्या - पिपरी व नवीन भोसली रुग्यांच्या येथे प्रयोगी १ अशा एकूण ४ मॉडेलुल ओटी (with turnkey project) विंचवड कामी प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेल्या ई-निविदा सुचना क्र. ०६/०२०२०-२१ ला दि. १५/०२/२०२१ पर्यंत तुळत वाढ घेण्यात येत आहे.

सारी - जाहिरात क्रमांक - ७४३५

पिच्युम्ह/आय/ए/काली/१७/२०२१ दि. ०९/०२/२०२१

पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका पिपरी - ४१९०१८

पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका कोर्ट क्रमांक - २४ वार्षिक विंचवड कामी प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेल्या ई-निविदा सुचना क्र. ०६/०२०२०-२१ ला दि. १५/०२/२०२१ पर्यंत तुळत वाढ घेण्यात येत आहे.

सारी - अपायुक्त (२)

पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका विंचवड कामी प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेल्या ई-निविदा सुचना क्र. ०६/०२०२०-२१ ला दि. १५/०२/२०२१ पर्यंत तुळत वाढ घेण्यात येत आहे.

सारी - अपायुक्त (२)

पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका कोर्ट क्रमांक - २४ वार्षिक विंचवड कामी प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेल्या ई-निविदा सुचना क्र. ०६/०२०२०-२१ ला दि. १५/०२/२०२१ पर्यंत तुळत वाढ घेण्यात येत आहे.

सारी - अपायुक्त (२)

पिपरी विंचवड महानगरपालिका कोर्ट क्रमांक - २४ वार्षिक विंचवड कामी प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आ

MARKET WATCH

	10-02-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51309	-0.04
US Dollar	72.84	0.04
Gold	47576	0.03
Brent oil	61.11	1.3

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	576.85	-5.10
Asian Paints	2510.60	3.75
Axisc Bank	734.80	-7.70
Bajaj Auto	4151.55	-3.35
Bajaj Finserv	10227.95	286.30
Bajaj Finance	5475.90	75.60
Bharti Airtel	590.20	-8.75
BPCL	415.80	-3.55
Britannia Ind	3424.85	-37.55
Cipla	863.40	21.65
Coal India	138.30	-0.95
Divis Lab	3750.35	27.60
Dr Reddys Lab	4824.05	-20.05
Eicher Motors	2901.30	-46.35
GAIL (India)	133.60	2.55
Grasim Ind	1231.40	13.45
HCL Tech.	959.45	7.85
HDFC	2767.10	20.05
HDFC Bank	1581.75	-30.10
HDFC Life	719.05	14.15
Hero MotoCorp	3538.95	39.50
Hindalco	279.40	1.35
Hind Unilever	2235.50	19.25
ICICI Bank	632.15	-1.20
IndusInd Bank	1022.80	-3.00
Infosys	1296.50	-9.05
Indian Oil Corp	96.75	-0.95
ITC	227.55	-1.45
JSW Steel	410.75	4.30
Kotak Bank	1952.05	2.90
L&T	1552.85	-13.60
M&M	914.15	19.15
Maruti Suzuki	7621.70	-5.35
Nestle India Ltd.	17177.35	-141.60
NTPC	99.85	-0.10
ONGC	100.00	-1.00
PowerGrid Corp	210.45	-0.30
Reliance Ind	1974.30	18.15
SBI Life	911.35	22.65
State Bank	392.25	-2.55
Shree Cement	28293.75	127.95
Sun Pharma	627.10	3.50
Tata Motors	328.90	3.85
Tata Steel	690.25	-8.95
TCS	3213.30	36.40
Tech Mahindra	974.90	-0.20
Titan	1563.15	3.25
UltraTech Cement	6392.15	-28.25
UPL	534.40	-4.20
Wipro	439.00	-0.35

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.64	72.96
Euro	88.08	88.47
British Pound	100.56	101.04
Japanese Yen (100)	69.33	69.66
Chinese Yuan	11.27	11.32
Swiss Franc	81.48	81.88
Singapore Dollar	54.78	55.03
Canadian Dollar	57.18	57.46
Malaysian Ringgit	17.97	18.06

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Eicher Motors' net profit stayed flat in Q3

CHENNAI Eicher Motors Ltd. reported standalone net profit for the third quarter ended December remained almost unchanged at ₹488 crore from a year earlier. Total revenue from operations rose 19% to ₹2,804 crore. The firm's subsidiary Royal Enfield sold 1.99 lakh motorcycles, marking a 5% increase from a year earlier.

NABARD eyes 22% rise in balance sheet size

COIMBATORE National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is eyeing a 22% growth in balance sheet size this financial year. Chairman G.R. Chinthala told the media here the total size of its balance sheet is expected to be ₹6.5 lakh crore this financial year. It had already reached ₹6.2 lakh crore. The economy is reviving and infrastructure funding has seen good traction, he added.

Shanthi Gears Q3 profit climbs 26% to ₹7.7 cr.

CHENNAI Shanthi Gears Ltd. reported standalone net profit rose 26% to ₹7.7 crore for the third quarter ended December. Revenue from operations grew almost 12% to ₹65 crore, said the arm of Tube Investments of India Ltd. in a filing. Profit before tax rose 32% to ₹10.2 crore. Order book rose 96% to ₹104 crore, its highest ever. The board declared an interim dividend of ₹1.5 per share.

Builders finding excuse to raise prices: SICMA

CHENNAI South India Cement Manufacturers Association (SICMA) has strongly condemned a strike call given by the Builders Association of India (BAI) against rising input costs, including that of cement. A SICMA spokesman said BAI was not only spreading misinformation among the public but also took advantage of a growing economy to further increase the already-unaffordable realty prices.

Exporters send an SOS after Budget jolt

Moves to disallow IGST refunds, allow confiscation of goods will hurt India's image as supplier: FIEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's exporters have red-flagged proposals in the Budget that aim to disallow IGST refunds for exports and empower customs officials to confiscate goods for making a 'wrongful claim', warning that these changes would severely hurt exports and could impact India's image as a reliable global supplier.

Asserting that exporters were flush with orders and in a position to deliver high growth provided working conditions were easier, the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said the proposals had come on the back of other 'missteps' that were taking the system towards 'Inspector Raj'.

More than 2,000 exporters had recently been served notices by the Department of Revenue Intelli-



In a fix: About 5,000 exporters continue to be tagged risky, leading to shipment and tax refund delays. ■ JOTHI RAMALINGAM

gence (DRI) and the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGII) for what exporters contend are 'revenue-neutral' issues. About 5,000 exporters continued to be tagged as 'risky', which was leading to delays in their

shipments and tax refunds, said the FIEO's top officials.

"As per a new sub-section inserted in Section 113 of the Customs Act, the government has provided for confiscation of goods for wrongful claim of remission or

refund," said FIEO Director General Ajai Sahai. "Now, for a number of products, the drawback rate is 1%, and the remission rate is 2% – even if you say it was unintended, for a benefit of 3%, the entire 100% of the goods will be confiscated," he added.

Disproportionate cost'

"Now how do you interpret the wrongful claim. If I have put zero wrongly or claimed 1.5% instead of 1%, it becomes a wrongful claim," he said, adding that this would give huge powers to officials at the field level who would interpret the law. "You are imposing a cost that is hugely disproportionate... The bigger question is by confiscation of goods, you are not only harming the exporter but also the country as a reliable supplier. If the goods don't reach on time, it is not just

the exporters who lose face," Mr. Sahai said. He also questioned the 'sudden' withdrawal of IGST refunds and said almost two-thirds of all exporters by value would be affected.

FIEO had written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagging the Budget proposals' adverse effects, and plan to also discuss their concerns with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday.

"Let exporters do their job. Give them enough time to perform," said FIEO president Sharad Saraf. "Today, 80% of the time is going on the compliance... MSMEs are the worst sufferers because they cannot afford to employ multiple company secretaries or auditors. With all humility, I appeal to the government to have faith, trust and confidence in us."



airline to raise new loans for its working capital requirements.

The national carrier also incurred a loss of ₹2,570 crore in the first quarter of the current fiscal, when there was a nationwide lockdown and flights were grounded, against a loss of ₹785 crore in the comparable period of the previous fiscal, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri told the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

The government helped the debt-laden carrier in multiple ways to sail through the year, which included a guarantee support of ₹964 crore to enable the

airline to raise new loans for its working capital requirements.

Aurobindo net rises fourfold on U.S. sale

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Aurobindo Pharma on Wednesday reported a fourfold jump in third-quarter consolidated profit to ₹2,946.3 crore, boosted mainly by one-time gains from the sale of a step-down subsidiary in the U.S.

Excluding exceptional items (net of tax), the consolidated net profit after JV share and minority interest was ₹836.6 crore, an almost 17% increase, the drugmaker said.

Revenue from operations rose 8% to ₹6,364.9 crore, the company said.

The board had approved an interim dividend of 150% or ₹1.50 per share, Aurobindo added.

Hindalco net jumps to ₹1,877 cr.

Novelis sees record shipments on demand surge: MD Pai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Hindalco Industries Ltd. reported third-quarter consolidated net profit surged 77% to ₹1,877 crore from the year-earlier period on better volumes and product mix.

Consolidated business EBITDA of the Aditya Birla Group firm rose 40% YoY to ₹5,242 crore. India Business PAT rose 90% to ₹495 crore.

Revenue from operations increased by almost 20% to ₹34,958 crore.

Cost savings

"The results were driven by a strong performance by Novelis and India aluminium business, supported by higher volumes and better product mix, lower input costs, stability in operations and



Satish Pai

cost-saving actions," the company said in a filing.

"Our Q3 results flag a return to business at pre-COVID19 levels with resurgent demand globally," said Satish Pai, MD.

"Novelis achieved record shipments, driven by strong demand across product end markets. The India business

delivered an excellent performance with aluminium value-added products continuing to record higher volumes," he added.

"Along with market performance, we have strengthened our balance sheet which shows in a significant improvement in the consolidated net debt to EBITDA ratio," he said.

Positive impact
He said the inclusion of the Aleris business has positively impacted the overall top-line and EBITDA, with realisation of synergies at \$54 million on a run-rate basis in Q3.

"Our performance is a reflection of our sustainability-led approach to business," he added.

SpiceJet posts ₹57 crore Q3 net loss

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Low-cost carrier SpiceJet on Wednesday reported a net loss of ₹57 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2020, which was narrower than the loss reported in the preceding quarter.

The airline reported a loss of ₹112.6 crore in the second quarter of the current financial year.

However, the airline has assumed earnings of ₹220 crore in the quarter from a compensation it is yet to receive from aerospace manufacturer Boeing for the 13 Boeing 737 MAXs forced to remain grounded following a global ban in March 2019.

Despite a massive setback to the real estate sector triggered by pandemic-induced lockdown, this vertical registered unparalleled growth in the home-loan business, it added.

SBI eyes 40% increase in home loans to ₹7-lakh cr.

Segment grew 5 times in 10 years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

State Bank of India (SBI) plans to build home-loan business worth ₹7 lakh crore by FY2024.

The bank crossed the ₹5 lakh-crore mark on Wednesday.

"The real estate and housing business unit of the SBI has grown five times in the last 10 years with AUM (assets under management) of ₹89,000 crore in 2011 to ₹5 trillion in 2021," SBI said.

Despite a massive setback to the real estate sector triggered by pandemic-induced lockdown, this vertical registered unparalleled growth in the home-loan business, it added.

Jungo TV bets on free content

To unveil video streaming app Jungo+ in India this month

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

American media and entertainment firm Jungo TV, which

India would do well to opt for sporting tracks

Must for the team to get out of the spinner-friendly-pitches mindset for home Tests

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

The first Test is history and India will need to regroup for the second.

Actually, India would be better off with a sporting pitch with consistent bounce and carry rather than the abrasive surface that was offered to them in the first Test. Too much hinged on the toss.

It was on sporting tracks that India exceeded expectations in Australia.

In Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah India has two potent pacemen who can exploit bounce and seam movement.

R. Ashwin too is a bigger threat when the track possesses bounce.

If the pitch is not abrasive in nature, there is less chance of the SG ball going soft and losing its sting.

And India's stroke-makers would be able to play their shots.

India has to get out of this spinner-friendly pitches mindset for home Tests since they now have a capable pace attack and batsmen who can blossom on sporting wickets.

Toss factor

The moment India lost the toss in the first Test, the host was up against it.

England's strategy was to bat big and its skipper Joe Root, a complete batsman with exemplary footwork and ability to pick length, ensured that with an iridescent 218 in his 100th Test.

India could have done better with its bowling strategy. The middle-and-leg line for the spinners with a leg-side cordon worked in Australia because the pitches Down Under had bounce.

Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem not just lacked control, he also was the worst of

to keep the ball down.

The same line here is fodder for the English batsmen. There is little in terms of bounce and the English batsmen, led by Root, are prolific with the sweep shot.

The line of attack in the Indian conditions for off-spinners should be two stumps outside off, if the bowler wants to spin the ball in, or the off-stump, if the bowler decides to bowl one that holds its line or drifts away.

The slip and the short-leg are critical positions here. Not the leg-slip.

Issue of no balls

And this tendency of the spinners to deliver no balls has to be arrested. India sent down 20 no-balls in the first innings here and seven in the second.

Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem not just lacked control, he also was the worst of

fender with no balls; unpardonable for spinners.

While the left-handed Washington Sundar batted beautifully in the first innings – he lends depth to the side at the crucial No. 7 slot – the manner he was overlooked with the ball in the second innings was surprising.

With his height and flat, fastish trajectory, he could have been a handful to the England batting.

But then, Washington sent down just one over at the flag end of the innings.

The slip and the short-leg are critical positions here. Not the leg-slip.

Need to play Kuldeep

India should play Kuldeep Yadav for Nadeem in the second Test because the Chinaman bowler's variation is the delivery that leaves the right-hander and the Englishmen have struggled against wrist spinners in the past.

It would be an attacking option too.



Potent duo: Bumrah and Sharma have it in them to exploit bounce and seam movement even on sporting pitches. ■ AFP

Kohli down to fifth, Root moves to third

TEST RANKINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

India skipper Virat Kohli was on Wednesday pushed to the fifth spot by his English counterpart Joe Root, who rose two runs to third in the latest ICC Test rankings for batsmen, even as Jasprit Bumrah and R. Ashwin moved up in the bowlers' chart.

Kohli, who had had scores of 11 and 72 in the opening Test against England, has 852 points and down one spot in the latest chart issued on Wednesday.

Veteran spinner Ashwin and pacer Bumrah have moved a place up each to be seventh and eighth respectively.

Root has reached 883 rating points. It is his highest position since September 2017 after a fabulous run in the subcontinent saw him



Joe Root. ■ PTI

accumulate 684 runs in three Tests.

Pant at 13th spot

Rishabh Pant's knock of 91 in the first innings has helped him become the first full-time wicketkeeper from India to reach 700 rating points as he retained the 13th position among batsmen.

James Anderson is up to third from sixth, four points behind compatriot Stuart Broad.

Djokovic puts it past Tiafoe; Osaka has it easy

Halep survives, Serena cruises but Andreeescu exits; Wawrinka loses the plot

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Eight-time champion Novak Djokovic was made to sweat at the Australian Open on Wednesday as Serena Williams made serene progress with a 6-3, 6-0 win over Serbian Nina Stojanovic as she bids for a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam title.

Naomi Osaka also charged through but fellow Major winners Stan Wawrinka, Bianca Andreescu and Petra Kvitova were all second-round casualties.

Earlier, Djokovic was given a stern examination by American Frances Tiafoe and dropped his first set of the tournament before recovering to win 6-3, 6-7(3), 7-6(2), 6-3.

The 2014 champion Wawrinka blew three match points in the fifth-set tie-breaker of his four-hour epic with Marton Fucsovics, who won 7-5, 6-1, 4-6, 2-6, 7-6(9).

Second seed Simona Halep survived a scare when she reeled off five third-set games in a row to avoid defeat by Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic. Serena's elder sister Venus painfully rolled her ankle in the first set against Sara Errani before hobbling through a 6-1, 6-0 defeat.

And Andreeescu, the 2019 US Open champion who missed the entire 2020 season with a knee injury, saw her comeback come to an abrupt end 6-3, 6-2 against Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei.

Bopanna ousted
Meanwhile in men's doubles, Rohan Bopanna and Ben McLachlan bowed out in the opening round, losing 4-6, 6-7(0) to the Korean pair of Ji Sung Nam and Min-Kyu.

The day in numbers

1 An injured Venus Williams won just one game against Errani, the least in her 350 matches at Grand Slam level

4 Marton Fucsovics has beaten four top-20 players in the last four Majors – Shapovalov (Aus Open 2020), Dimitrov (US Open), Medvedev (French Open), Wawrinka (Aus Open)

4 Hsieh Su-wei has won four out of her last seven matches against top-10 players at Slams

9 French Open winner Iga Swiatek's ninth successive straight sets victory at Majors, starting from the first round at Roland Garros 2020

26 Number of aces Djokovic served in his second-round win

When you win a lot on Rod Laver Arena, you feel comfortable. Feels like my living room, although I'm not sitting on my couch. I'm running all over the place. This is the quickest court conditions in the 15 years that I've played here.

DJOKOVIC AFTER HIS WIN OVER TIAFOE

I was talking nonstop and I was talking negative. I have to apologise to my team. But it happens. Darren (coach) said I looked like old Simo. HALEP AFTER HER THREE-SET WIN OVER TOMLJANOVIC

THURSDAY'S PICKS

MEN: 2-Nadal v Mmoh | 4-Medvedev v Carballes Baena | 5-Tsitsipas v Kokkinakis | 7-Rublev v Monteiro | 9-Berrettini v Machac | 16-Fognini v Caruso

WOMEN: 1-Barty v Gavrilova | 4-Kenin v Kanepi | 5-Svitolina v Gauff | 6-Pliskova v Collins | 11-Bencic v Kuznetsova | 18-Mertens v Zhu

DOUBLES: Ankita Raina (Ind) & Buzarnescu (Rou) vs. Woolcock & Gadecki (Aus)

FALLEN SEEDS
Men: 17-Wawrinka, 29-Humbert
Women: 8-Andreeescu, 9-Kvitova, 17-Rybalkina

IMPORTANT RESULTS

Men: Second round: 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-3, 6-7(3), 7-6 (2), 6-3; 27-Taylor Fritz (USA) bt Reilly Opelka (USA) 4-6, 7-6(6), 6-7 (4), 7-6(5), 6-2; Marton Fucsovics (Hung) bt 17-Stanislas Wawrinka (Sui) 7-5, 6-1, 4-6, 2-6, 7-6(9); 14-Milos Raonic (Can) bt Corentin Moutet (Fra) 6-7(1), 6-1, 6-1, 6-4; 23-Dusan Lajovic (Srb) bt Alexander Bublik (Kaz) 6-4, 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-3; 6-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt Maxime Cressy (USA) 7-5, 6-4, 6-3; 3-Dominic Thiem (Aut) bt Dominik Koepfer (Ger) 6-4, 6-0, 6-2; Nick Kyrgios (Aus) bt 29-Ugo Humbert (Fra) 5-7, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6(2), 6-4; 18-Grigor Dimitrov (Bul) bt Alex Bolt (Aus) 6-7(1), 6-1, 6-2; 15-Pablo Carreno Busta (Esp) bt Jiri Vesely (Cze) 6-4, 1-6, 6-1; 14-Garbine Muguruza (Esp) bt Liudmila Samsonova (Rus) 6-3, 6-1; 27-Ondrej Soubek (Cze) bt Anna Karolina Schmiedlova (Svk) 6-3, 6-2; 3-Naomi Osaka (Jpn) bt Caroline Garcia (Fra) 6-2, 6-3; 7-Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt Darya Kasatkina (Rus) 7-6(5), 6-3; Anastasia Potapova (Rus) bt Timea Babos (Hung) 6-2, 6-4; 10-Serena Williams (USA) bt Nina Stojanovic (Srb) 6-3, 6-0; 15-Iga Swiatek (Pol) bt Camila Giorgi (Ita) 6-2, 6-4; Fiona Ferro (FRA) bt 17-Elena Rybakina (Kaz) 6-4, 6-4; 32-Veronika Kudermetova (Rus) bt Varvara Gracheva (Rus) 5-7, 6-2, 6-2; 2-Simona Halep (Rou) bt Ajla Tomljanovic (Aus) 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Doles: First round: Ji Sung Nam (Kor) & Min-Kyu Song (Kor) bt Rohan Bopanna (Ind) & Ben McLachlan (Jpn) 6-4, 7-6(0).
Women: Second round: Hsieh Su-wei (Tpe) bt 8-Bianca Andreescu (Can) 6-3, 6-2; Sara Errani (Ita) bt Venus Williams (USA) 6-1, 6-0; 19-Marketa Vondrousova (Cze) bt Rebecca Marino (Can) 6-1, 7-5; Sorana Cirstea (Rou) bt 9-Petra Kvitova (Cze) 6-4, 6-1, 6-2; 23-Halep (Rou) bt Ajla Tomljanovic (Aus) 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Men: Second round: 1-Enes Sipovic (Srb) bt 17-Changchuan Li (Chi) 6-3, 6-1; 28-Jonny Hill (Eng) bt 18-Subhashish Chanda (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 29-Praveen Kumar (Ind) bt 19-Abhishek Verma (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 30-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 20-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 31-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 21-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 32-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 22-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 33-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 23-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 34-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 24-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 35-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 25-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 36-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 26-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 37-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 27-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 38-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 28-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 39-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 29-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 40-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 30-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 41-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 31-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 42-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 32-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 43-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 33-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 44-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 34-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 45-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 35-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 46-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 36-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 47-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 37-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 48-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 38-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 49-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 39-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 50-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 40-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 51-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 41-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 52-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 42-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 53-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 43-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 54-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 44-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 55-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 45-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 56-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 46-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 57-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 47-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 58-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 48-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 59-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 49-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 60-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 50-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 61-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 51-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 62-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 52-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 63-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 53-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 64-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 54-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 65-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 55-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 66-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 56-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 67-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 57-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 68-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 58-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 69-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 59-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 70-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 60-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 71-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 61-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 72-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 62-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 73-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 63-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 74-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 64-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 75-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 65-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 76-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 66-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 77-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 67-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 78-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 68-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 79-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 69-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 80-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 70-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 81-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 71-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 82-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 72-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 83-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 73-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 84-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 74-Siddharth Jayaram (Ind) 6-3, 6-2; 85-Sandeep Chaudhary (Ind) bt 75-Siddhar

TV PICKS

Australian Open: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. & 1.30 p.m.; Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.

Pakistan v South Africa: First T20I, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.

ISL: Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF

Tsegay sets new 1500m indoor world record

LIEVIN (FRANCE)
Gudaf Tsegay set a new women's 1,500m indoor world record of 3:53.09s, two seconds less than Genzebe Dibaba in Karlsruhe in 2014, at a meet in northern France. AP

Jazz extends Western Conference lead

LOS ANGELES
Utah Jazz extended its Western Conference lead on Tuesday with a 122-108 defeat of the Boston Celtics.

The results: Detroit bt Brooklyn 122-111, Miami bt New York 98-96; New Orleans bt Houston 130-101, Golden State bt San Antonio 114-91; Utah bt Boston 122-108, Portland bt Orlando 106-97, Philadelphia bt Sacramento 119-111.

Chinki Yadav on top

Manu is fifth; Rahi Sarnobat misses final

SHOOTING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Focused: Chinki Yadav was consistent right through the final to beat Tejaswani by four points. ■ FILE PHOTO: A.M. FARUKI

0.3-point margin over Sarabjit Singh.

Divyansh was third best in qualification with 629.7 and prevailed over Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar by 0.5 point in the final, thanks to a perfect 10.9 last shot.

In men's air pistol and air rifle, Saurabh Chaudhary and Divyansh Singh Panwar reached the top in the final.

Saurabh qualified with 582, six points short of top-tier Omprakash Mitharval who was placed seventh subsequently, but pulled through in the final with a perfect 10.9 last shot.

Anjum Moudgil shot 1165

The results: Men: 10m air pistol: 1. Saurabh Chaudhary 243.1 (582); 2. Sarabjit Singh 242.8 (581); 3. Ravinder Singh 222.1 (586).

10m air rifle: 1. Divyansh Singh Panwar 253.1 (629.7); 2. Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar 252.6 (628.7); 3. Yash Vardhan 231.6 (629.8).

Women: 25m sports pistol: 1. Chinki Yadav 37 (584); 2. Tejaswani 33 (580); 3. Abhidnya Patil 29 (579).

50m rifle 3-position: 1. Tejaswini Sawant 456.7 (1169); 2. Lajja Gauswami 455.0 (1160); 3. Shreya Saksena 443.6 (1159).

Jaffer refutes allegations of bias

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Two days after resigning as the head coach of Uttarakhand Ranji Trophy team, citing interference in selection by the State association administrators, former India batsman Wasim Jaffer has refuted the Cricket Association of Uttarakhand's (CAU's) allegations of him being communally biased.

"I am deeply saddened to have been accused of being communally or religiously biased after being involved in cricket for all these years," Jaffer said while addressing the media on Wednesday.

"These are serious allegations. I will have to put forward my side. I have explained all the reasons of my resignation in the email sent to the association and I stand by it, but it's very sad that I have to speak about these issues. You all know me, so you all know how I am."

Atletico-Chelsea CL clash moved to Romania

NYON

The Champions League match between Atletico Madrid and Chelsea will take place in Romania this month because of pandemic-related restrictions on travel from England. The first leg of the last-16 matchup will be played in Bucharest on Feb. 23 instead of in Madrid on the same day, UEFA said. AP

N.I.T. No. 04 (2020-21)							
S. No.	Name of Work	Amount Put to Tender	Earliest Money (Rs.) (non-refundable)	Tender Fees (Rs.) (non-refundable)	Date of Release of Tender in e-procurement solution	Last date / time of submission of tender through e-procurement solution	Tender ID
1	Replacement of raw water mains from raw water pump house, Haidarpur WTP-I to bifurcation chamber and further to channels of clarifiers in Haidarpur WTP Complex.	7,31,84,226/-	NIL Due to Covid guidelines dated 23.12.20	Rs. 1500/-	10.02.2021	10.03.2021 upto 03:00 PM	2021_DJB_199863_1

Note: Any further amendment / corrigendum made in this NIT will be uploaded and can only be seen on website <http://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)

Advt. No. J.S.V.400(2020-21)

EE(P)W-JX

Teams making fewer mistakes will win: Baptista

Says situation complicated as teams have lost players due to COVID

LA LIGA

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI



Julio Baptista.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

crippled club revenues leading to a "big deficit" which in turn came in the way of clubs "signing up more experienced players".

The Messi question
When queried about Lionel Messi's intention to move out of Barcelona, Baptista said that it was up to the player and that it would be interesting to see "whether he goes elsewhere", to a big club like Manchester City, to win more trophies.

When asked to compare Messi with Neymar, Baptista observed that Messi had a much better perspective of the game on field, while Ney-

mar was more dangerous close to the goal.

On Neymar parting ways with Messi at Barcelona, despite being good friends with him, and moving to PSG, Baptista said that it was not about more money, but to face a different challenge, become a better player and possibly win the World Cup.

Brazil's prospects

Looking at Brazil's World Cup prospects, Baptista said that players need to understand that "football is quick, and you have to play quick a lot". He said that Brazil chief coach Tite had done "very satisfactory work till now".

KERALA STATE TRANSPORT PROJECT

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Extension of INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)/Tender Notice

E-Procurement Notice (Item Rate Contract), following Two Envelope Bidding Process

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Dated: 11.02.2021

KW Project No.43894

BMZ No. 201865286

- The Government of India has received financing as German Financial Cooperation with India Climate -Resilient Reconstruction after Flooding in Kerala (Loan) from the KfW Bank towards the cost of rebuilding climate resilient infrastructures in Kerala and Government of Kerala (GoK) intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contract for construction of works as detailed below.
- Bidding will be conducted through bidding procedures as per the KfW Bank & GoK guidelines. Bidding is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the KfW Bank's Guidelines for the Procurement of Consulting Services, Works, Goods, and Non-Consulting Services in Financial Cooperation with Partner Countries.
- The Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project, Public Works Department, Government of Kerala, invited online bids vide tender notice dated 04.11.2020, through admeasurement (Item Rate) mode of execution for the construction of works detailed below:

State	Bid No.	Name of work	Length Km	Completion Period	Maintenance Period
Kerala	KSTP II/RKI-Pkg III Work/Rd 8	Rehabilitation and Up gradation of Vazhakkoddu-Plazhy (SH-74) Road in Trissur District	22.72	18 Months	5 Years

4. The publish date is hereby further extended to 12.02.2021. The complete bid document may be viewed/downloaded from the e-procurement portal of Kerala Government <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> from 12.02.2021 to 29.03.2021 (upto 15:00 Hrs IST). Bids received online shall be opened on 29.03.2021 (at 15:30 hrs, IST)

5. Bids received through any other mode shall not be entertained. However, EMD, tender fee, Power of Attorney, joint bidding agreement, etc. need to be submitted physically by the Bidder. Please note that the Authority reserves the right to accept or reject all or any of the bids without assigning any reason whatsoever.

6. A pre-bid meeting will be held on 09-03-2021 at 11:00 am at the office of Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP) to clarify the issues and to answer questions on any matter that may be raised at that stage as stated in ITB Clause 7 of 'Instructions to Bidders' of the bidding document. Bidders are advised to download the bidding document prior to the pre-bid meeting in order for bidders to have a good understanding of the scope of work under this contract for discussion and clarification at the pre-bid meeting. Pre-bid meeting may be held via video conferencing also. In such a case, the bidders will be informed in timely manner through procurement portal.

7. The address for communication is as under:

Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project, Project Management Team, T.C.11/339, SreeBala Building, Keston Road, Nanthancode, Kowdiar P.O., Thiruvananthapuram-695003, www.kstp.org.in, e-mail:pdktsp@gmail.com, ceptmkstp@gmail.com

Sd/- Project Director, KSTP

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Gurgaon 7557323232	Gurgaon 865758907	Gurgaon 7290023171	Gurgaon, MG Road 0124-4680000	Gurgaon, Sector-18 9643320215	Faridabad 0124-4609400	Noida 9891474100	Ace Honda Noida 0120						