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16th February 9:00 PM

Climate Change & Environmental Issues
with Prof. Dr. Pushpesh Pant, Former Dean, SIS, JNU



17th February 9:00 PM

Tackling the Fundamental Questions
with Mr. Akshay Agrawal, IAS (2018)



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NEARBY



Four more bodies found in Chamoli, death toll 55

NEW DELHI
The death toll in the aftermath of an avalanche in Uttarakhand's Chamoli on February 7 has gone up to 55, with the recovery of four more bodies on Monday. Three bodies were recovered from the Tapovan hydel project tunnel, while another was found in Maitha.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Commuters rush to get FASTags as deadline ends

GURUGRAM
The Point of Sale of FASTags near the Kherki Daula toll plaza had an unusual rush of commuters on Monday. People were seen queuing up to get the tag installed on their vehicles as the NHAI has made digital payments though FASTags at toll plazas mandatory from February 16.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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Toolkit case: two seek anticipatory bail

Nikita Jacob,
Shantanu Muluk
on police radar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The Delhi police on Monday said non-bailable warrants (NBWs) had been issued against Mumbai-based advocate Nikita Jacob and her associate Shantanu Muluk who, along with arrested climate activist Disha Ravi, allegedly created and shared the toolkit document being investigated by the police.

Both Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk have sought transit anticipatory bails from the Bombay High Court. They will be heard on Tuesday.

The toolkit, according to



Show of support: Historian Ramachandra Guha protesting against the arrest of Disha Ravi in Bengaluru. ■ MURALI KUMAR K.

the police, is a document that has a section titled 'prior action plan' about digital strikes to be conducted through hashtags on and before January 26 and tweet-

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9

Lawyers flag violation of norms in Disha arrest

MHA guidelines, SC rulings ignored

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU

The Delhi police have claimed that all norms and procedures were followed when they arrested 22-year-old climate activist Disha A. Ravi from her residence in Bengaluru on Saturday.

However, several leading advocates and jurists have raised concerns over reported violations of norms and guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Home Affairs and multiple Delhi High Court

and Supreme Court judgments.

Ms. Ravi was arrested at her residence in north Bengaluru and immediately flown to the nation's capital, where she was produced before the magistrate on Sunday afternoon.

A group of lawyers have petitioned the Bengaluru police on Monday, citing the 2012 guidelines from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Indians concerned about privacy: CJI

SC issues notices to WhatsApp, Facebook



We are telling you what we heard and read – people think that if A sends a WhatsApp message to B and B to C, the circuit of messages is revealed to Facebook

SHARAD A. BOBDE,
CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

revealed to Facebook," he addressed senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Arvind Datar, for the companies.

Companies' denial
Both lawyers vehemently denied this as "misinformation".

Chief Justice Bobde said, "Say that on oath. We are issuing notice. File a response."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the government, stated, "This is an apprehension of the nation... Privacy is part of our fundamental rights. They [WhatsApp and Facebook] cannot compromise our privacy... They cannot differentiate."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Tribunal suspends Gymkhana board, halts new membership

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal on Monday ordered the appointment of a Central government-nominated administrator for the Delhi Gymkhana Club after prima facie finding irregularities in the management of its affairs.

The tribunal also ordered

suspension of the General Committee of the 107-year-old club, located on 27 acres near the Prime Minister's residence, along with a halt on acceptance of new members till further orders. The tribunal said the club has been "converted into a recreational club for a chosen few".

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

China pulls back from Finger 4

Disengagement at Pangong Tso will be over in a week

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Chinese troops have started clearing the Finger 4 area on the North bank of the Pangong Tso lake, and the ongoing disengagement on north and the south banks of the lake by both sides is likely to be completed within a week, a government official

said on Monday.

"The huge map of China, which was engraved on the ground near Finger 5 area by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops, has been cleared by them," the official said. The huge map was seen in satellite images during the height of the standoff.

Chinese troops had built

up heavy defences and structures between Finger 8 and Finger 4, including fortified gun positions on the ridges of Finger 4 overlooking Indian positions. The Indian Army had also set up positions around Finger 4 in end-August 2020.

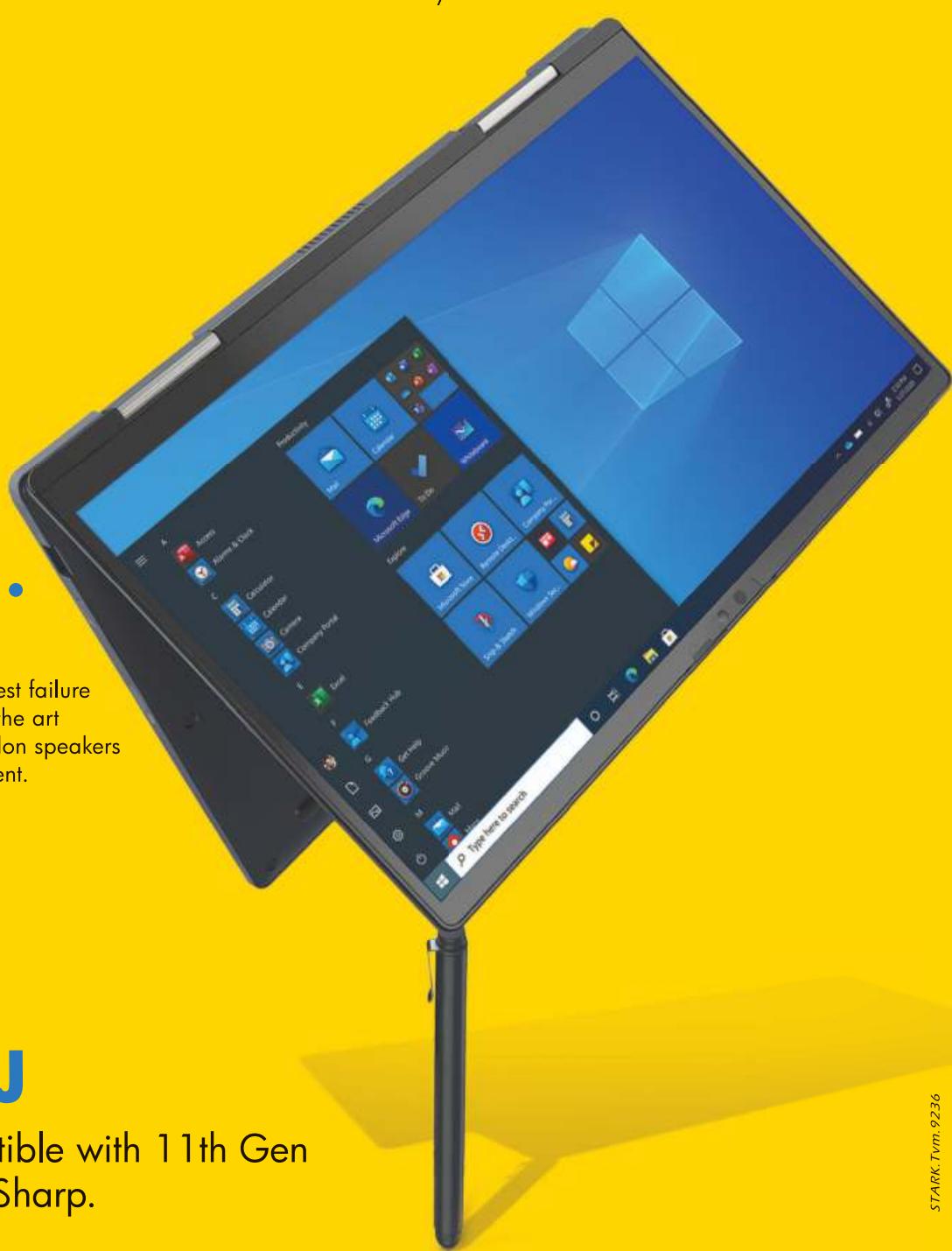
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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CM Arvind Kejriwal said the Supreme Court had recently made it clear to the Centre that playing with the life and liberty of any citizen is against the Constitution. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

CM decries arrest of climate activist

Kejriwal to address mahapanchayat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday condemned the arrest of 21-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi stating that supporting agitating farmers was not a crime.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) later announced that Mr. Kejriwal, in his capacity as the national convener of the party, would address kisan mahapanchayat in Meenooti on February 28.

"The Aam Aadmi Party condemns the arrest of young climate activist Disha Ravi by the Delhi police in the strongest words. I wonder how a government which has a massive majority is scared of a 21-year-old climate activist. The BJP ruled-Central government sent the Delhi police to Bangalore to arrest this young activist," party's national spokesperson Raghav Chadha told a press conference.

"A few days ago, the Supreme Court of India gave a landmark judgment where it observed that deprivation of liberty even for a single day is one day too many. The SC made it very clear to the Central government that

playing with the life and liberty of any citizen is against the law and the Constitution of India," he said.

'Undeclared Emergency'

When former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared Emergency, many of the BJP leaders were arrested. The BJP, he said, "use their arrests as a badge of honour." The BJP government, he alleged, seemed to be setting an "undeclared Emergency" in motion.

"Today, I want to ask the BJP and its leaders that when they oppose the Emergency, then how can they arrest a 21-year-old climate activist, merely for not agreeing with the three farm laws?" he said.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor, reacting to Mr. Chadha's statement, said every nationalist felt sad to see such comments being made. "It's pathetic to see AAP defend misguided youth like Umar Khalid to Disha Ravi. It seems the day is not far when AAP may defend Deep Sidhu or the boy who hoisted a Sikh flag atop the Red Fort," Mr. Kapoor said.

SAURABH TRIVEDI
HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

At the Singhu border protest site, a head constable looks over rows of steel barricades and concrete barriers to lock eyes with his father on the other side. Both stand their ground.

The duo may be on opposite sides of the farm laws issue, but once they return home at the end of the day they coexist amicably, though lively debates do break out once in a while.

"My father is on the other side of the barricades. He comes for the protest sometimes. They are fighting for what they believe in and we are committed to our duty," he said, adding that there are discussions at his house about the protest and he shares his viewpoint that the January 26 incident shouldn't have happened.

Thousands of Delhi police personnel like the Head Constable are deployed at the three borders where farmers are protesting against three controversial agricultural laws, many of them are part-time farmers themselves or have fathers who work the fields.

Before the Red Fort violence, he said, officers were empathetic towards the farmers and also understood their problem, however, feelings changed after the Republic Day incident.

A 51-year-old assistant sub-inspector posted at the border said that back in his village, his family asks him: "Why are you even on duty? You got beaten up?"

He was visibly angry at the protesting farmers even after living with a farmer-father himself.

"We are in uniform right now, so we can't say anything, but after duty, we are free".

Another head constable said that he understands the government's point of view, however, if he says something to his fellow villagers, they criticise him. "They'll say that you are paid by the government so you will obviously side with them," he said.

Constable Prabhat said he comes from a rural background and his father is a farmer.

"We have one acre of land in Shamli, Uttar Pradesh, which was not sufficient for a family of 10. Farming is never a profitable business. In order to give my family

a better life, I prepared for police recruitment and got selected in the Delhi Police force in 2010. I don't know who is right or wrong but the protesters should understand that police personnel come from the same village as protesters," he said.

Another constable, on condition of anonymity, said that after around two months of duty at the Singhu border, he returned to his home district and is now happy. "We were performing 12-hour shifts there [Singhu border] for over two months during extreme weather conditions. I can understand the pain of both sides. However, we are doing our job. Protests, violence in Delhi have become a regular affair for the past two years and every time, the city police bear the wrath of protesters," said the policeman.

He added that farmers can't afford to protest for three months as they have to plan for the next crop and take care of their farms. "I hail from Haryana where farming is an occupation but one can't leave their farms for three months. I pray the issue is resolved at the earliest and the highways can open for normal traffic," said the policeman.

A head constable deployed at



the Ghazipur border said that he has worked in his father's farms in western UP and he knows the pain of farmers. The people who attacked policemen on Republic Day can't be farmers, he said.

Duty versus sentiments

"Most of the lower-rank policemen come from rural background and understand the sufferings of farmers. For the past two years, policemen have been attacked in every protest. It is tough to be a policeman. In past two months I have hardly spent time with my family. On Republic Day, we were on duty since 2 a.m. and it continued till 11 p.m. due to the violence. I don't know what exactly the farmers want and what the Centre is offering them, but I request the protesters to not attack the policemen," said the head constable.

Condition of farmers will never change irrespective of the laws, said another constable.

"We are into agriculture for the past four generations and have always lived on the edge of financial trouble. I am the first one in my entire family who managed to get a sarkari naukri [government job] and shifted to Delhi from Haryana

with my family. I always tell my children to study hard. If required, I will sell off the farm land for their education but never go back to the village," he said.

Lower-rank officers on duty face tough working conditions too. A head constable posted at the Singhu border shared that his duty stretches up to 18 hours.

A head constable, a resident of Sonipat, deployed at Old Police Lines in Kashmere Gate has to go all the way to OPL first and then come back to Singhu border, close home. "Because of traffic diversion, it takes me about two hours to reach OPL and then one hour to reach the protest site," he said.

Extended duty hours is a problem most officers shared. All they have to do during most of the shift is stand around.

Policemen on duty also said that only inspector-rank officers and above are allowed to bring their private vehicles inside the barricaded area.

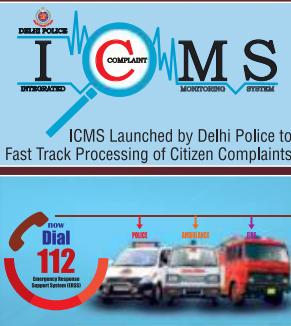
"I live very close to the Singhu border but my son cannot come here to give me lunch. I have to go till the barricades to take it. We come here in police-assigned buses," he said.



■ PHOTOS BY SANDEEP SAXENA AND SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR


DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

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Office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
Department of Forests and Wildlife, GNCT of Delhi,
A-Block, 2nd Floor, Vikas Bhawan, I.P. Estate,
New Delhi

F. No. 3(20)/CF/HQ/Trans. Policy of trees/Part File-B/20-21/1015

Dated: 03/02/21

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Empanelment of agencies with Dept. of Forest and Wildlife
GNCT of Delhi for Tree Transplantation in Delhi

Conservator of Forests, Chairman, Tree Transplantation Cell constituted by GNCT of Delhi for the purpose of empanelment of agencies for Tree Transplantation vide F. No. 3(20)/CF/HQ/transplantation Policy of Tree/Part File-B/2020-2021/6895 dated 08.01.2021 invites online proposals for eligible agencies for carrying out Transplantation work for different agencies / entities within the geographical limits of Delhi. Interested agencies may see the Eligibility Criteria and Scope of Work from the website forest.delhigovt.nic.in. The eligible agencies may submit their Expression of Interest (EoI) through email at the email id dcfpmgnct@gmail.com. Offline expression of interest shall not be accepted. The last date of submission of online EoI is 21 Feb 2021 upto 3:00 pm.

The issues with the approval of the competent authority.

Sh. Vipul Pandey, IFS
DCF (Protection & Monitoring)
Dept of Forests and Wildlife,
DIP/SHADBARTH/0633/20-21
GNCT of Delhi

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RATE CONTRACT FOR LABORATORY MATERIAL FOR STATE FOOD TESTING LABORATORY, RANCHI (JHARKHAND)

The Managing Director, Jharkhand Medical & Health Infrastructure Development & Procurement Corporation Ltd. (JMHDPCL) hereby invites separate Technical and Commercial Bids (Two Cover System) through e-tender from the registered and eligible Manufacturers/their Authorized Dealer /Distributors/Authorized Stockiest for RATE CONTRACT FOR FOOD LABORATORY MATERIALS.

The Blank tender documents with detailed conditions can be obtained through web site <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and should be submitted through e-procurement system only.

RATE CONTRACT FOR LABORATORY MATERIAL FOR STATE FOOD TESTING LABORATORY	
1 Name of Work	As specified.
2 Time of Completion	
3 Date of Publication of Tenders on website	17.02.2021
4 Pre-Bid Meeting Date and Time	19.02.2021 at 3.00 PM in Office of JMHDPCL, GVI Campus, Tata Road, Namkum, Ranchi- 834010
5 Date / time for receipt of bids	From 22.02.2021 to 01.03.2021 up to 3.00 PM
6 Date of Technical Bid opening	02.03.2021 at 3.00 PM
7 Application fee (Non-refundable)	Rs 1000.00 (Rupees One thousand only)
8 EMD	Rs 5,000/- (Rupees five thousand only) for all items.
9 Contact no. of procurement person	7004871564
10 Helpline number of e-procurement cell	7004871564

Note: The above dates may change due to abrupt declaration of holidays.
Detailed tender document can be seen and applied through website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> only, hard copies of Technical bid & Price bid will not be entertained except Tender fee & EMD.

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Namkum, Ranchi

PR 241732 Jharkhand Medical & Health Infrastructure Dev & Procurement Corp Ltd(20-21).D

Protesters' strength dwindles due to Punjab civic elections

'Crowds will increase again soon'

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Protesting farmers at the Singhu border said that the crowd has comparatively lessened because some of them have gone back to Punjab to cast their vote in the municipal elections that are under way.

"Municipal elections were held in Punjab on February 14 and the results are to be declared on February 17 due to which some people have left for their home town. However, the crowd will be as strong as always within two-three days," said Amrik Singh, district president of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Jalandhar) and member of stage management committee.

Another reason, Mr. Amrik said, was that people used to earlier come near the stage at the protest site to participate but have now settled down.

"There are speakers till the end of the site and they can listen in their trolleys as well. Therefore, they prefer to not come near the stage now," he said.

Entry behind the stage has also been restricted as a cautionary measure, Mr. Amrik said.

Sukhdev Singh (57), resident of Haryana, said that

some protesters from the State have gone to attend the mahapanchayats that are being held. "People have to be present for that as well," he said. However, protesters who are staying said that people – for the last few weeks – have been taking turns every week to come at the protest.

"We will not let it slow down. The government will have to agree at some point because we will not go back otherwise. There is no timeline for this protest," said Avtar Singh from Fatehgarh Sahib.

Summer preparations

Summers are approaching, plans are being made about constructing ceilings inside the tractors so ACs can be installed. "Soon, there will be ACs to beat the heat and fans in all of the trolleys, tractors and in the stage area," Mr. Amrik said.

The protesting farmers said that they're ready to face the summers also. "We have managed in biting cold winter. What can the summer do?" said Nirmal Singh (60) from Rohtak.

In a related development, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha has sent ₹2.25 lakh to Tihar jail for expenses of the protesters lodged in jail.



BKU leader Rakesh Tikait teaches children in a makeshift school at the Ghazipur protest site. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Vidarbha. Dense/very dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 29.0	13.4	...	Kozhikode	... 33.5	24.4	...
Ahmedabad	... 31.8	15.6	...	Kurnool	... 34.1	18.4	...
Aizawl	... 23.0	6.7	...	Lucknow	... 29.1	10.6	...
Allahabad	... 30.5	11.4	...	Madurai	... 35.2	21.4	...
Bengaluru	... 32.0	17.9	...	Mangaluru	... 34.5	22.4	...
Bhopal	... 32.3	14.4	...	Mumbai	... 29.2	20.2	...
Bhubaneswar	... 35.6	17.5	...	Mysuru	... 31.2	15.8	...
Chandigarh	... 27.1	10.8	...	New Delhi	... 29.5	9.9	...
Chennai	... 31.1	21.0	...	Patna	... 27.6	13.0	...
Coimbatore	... 33.6	21.0	...	Port Blair	... 28.7	24.5	...
Dehradun	... 26.3	10.2	...	Puducherry	... 30.8	19.8	...
Gangtok	... 16.8	9.5	...	Pune	... 32.7	14.1	...
Goa	... 31.2	20.7	...	Raipur	... 32.1	18.4	...
Guwahati	... 29.2	16.4	...	Ranchi	... 29.2	12.8	...
Hubballi	... 31.0	18.0	...	Shillong	... 17.8	8.1	...
Hyderabad	... 33.2	19.5	...	Shimla	... 17.0	7.9	...
Imphal	... 25.4	6.8	...	Srinagar	... 17.0	0.3	...
Jaipur	... 29.1	14.2	...	Thiruvananthapuram	... 33.7	22.2	...
Kochi	... 32.2	23.4	...	Tiruchi	... 34.7	21.0	...
Kohima	... 20.8	6.0	...	Vijayawada	... 33.2	19.6	...
Kolkata	... 30.4	20.5	...	Visakhapatnam	... 30.3	22.2	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)
Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Charkhi Dadri, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 37/40 rating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 39.

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

FIR against cricketer Yuvraj Singh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

An FIR has been lodged against cricketer Yuvraj Singh for allegedly making offensive remarks against scheduled caste on a social media platform during a live video chat with fellow cricketers eight months ago.

Hansi Superintendent of Police Nitika Gahlaut said the case was lodged under Section 3 of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, on February 14.

"The case was registered on the complaint of Rajat Kansal," she added.

Mr. Kansal, a Dalit rights' activist, told *The Hindu* that Mr. Singh had passed comments against scheduled caste while talking about cricketer Yuvendra Chahal. Mr. Kansal, seeking action against Mr. Singh, said his feelings were hurt as a Dalit due to the remarks.

Mr. Singh had expressed regret for the comments after the controversy in June last year, and apologised for unintentionally hurting public sentiments.

NCLAT suspends Gymkhana's board, halts new membership

Tribunal orders appointment of Centre-nominated administrator to manage club

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Monday ordered the appointment of a Central government-nominated administrator to manage the affairs of the Delhi Gymkhana Club after *prima facie* finding several irregularities.

The tribunal also ordered the suspension of the General Committee of the 107-year-old club, along with a halt on acceptance of new members till further orders.

'Perpetrating apartheid' In a strongly-worded judgment, the tribunal said the club, which was granted government land on perpetual lease primarily for sports related activity, has been "converted into a recreational club for a chosen few with doors virtually shut for an aspirant belonging to the common stock".

"Under the garb of distinctive character of the club



which is a relic of the Imperial past, the doors for membership are virtually limited to people having blue blood thereby perpetrating apartheid and shattering the most cherished Constitutional goal of securing social justice and equality of status and opportunity," the tribunal said.

The number of permanent members of the club is 5,600.

However, the users are stated to be double the number of permanent members.

The club is spread across 27 acres of land near the Prime Minister's residence.

The Ministry of Corporate

Affairs had claimed that new applicants seeking membership, and having paid registration fee, are on a waiting list for more than 37 years in the non-government category and more than 15 years in the government category.

The Ministry said the club virtually barred entry of people who applied for membership as the children of permanent members managed to sneak in as green card holders and finally as UCP (use of club premises) holders.

Public interest

The Ministry further alleged that the money taken from the waitlisted applicants was being utilised by the club by persons coming through various channels, a practice which it claimed was unfair and prejudicial to public interest.

The Ministry opined that there was a "prima facie case demonstrating that the affairs of the club are being conducted in a manner prejudicial to public interest".

"It is abundantly clear that misuse of the club meant for pastime and sports activities and denying access of membership even after accepting the enhanced membership fee... involved public interest," the tribunal said.

creational club.

The club argued that it was entitled to decide membership issue in accordance with the Articles of Association and its action cannot be called into question by the government on the grounds of being prejudicial to public interest.

The total number of active cases in the city has reached 1,036. The positivity rate was recorded at 0.36% and the case fatality rate at 1.71%, with 10,893 total deaths due to the virus so far.

According to Delhi government statistics, the total number of virus cases now stands at 6,37,087, with 6,25,158 patients having been discharged from hospital, it stated.

The tribunal opined that there was a "prima facie case demonstrating that the affairs of the club are being conducted in a manner prejudicial to public interest".

Meanwhile, a total number 14,965 beneficiaries were vaccinated in the national capital on Monday, with 7 instances of Adverse Event Following Immunisation, according to the Delhi government.

Of these, 4,571 health-care workers received their first dose and 2,191 their second dose of the vaccine. As many as 8,203 front-line workers received their first vaccination dose on Monday.

Commuters rush to get FASTags installed as deadline ends

NHAI has ordered double the fee for vehicles without valid tags

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Simi Puri, 37, a Sushant Lok-I resident here, had a FASTag installed on one of her two vehicles. But after the National Highways Authority of India made digital payments through FASTags at its toll plazas mandatory from February 16, she decided to get it

installed on her second car as well. But she was not alone to throng the Point of Sale near the Kherki Daula toll plaza in a bid to beat the NHAI deadline.

The Point of Sale on the roadside near the Kherki Daula toll plaza had an unusual rush of commuters on Monday.

Waiting for the FASTag to be installed, Ms. Puri said her Sports Utility Vehicle already had the FASTag installed, but she now decided to get it fixed on her car as well.

"This car is usually for the

small distance, and the SUV is for long distance travel. But my husband asked me to get the FASTag installed on the car as well after he came to know about the NHAI deadline," said Ms. Puri. The installation process, however, was quick and hassle-free.

"It took just a few minutes," said Ms. Puri.

Rohit, a salesperson at the PoS, said the sale of FASTags had doubled over the past few days. "Earlier we sold 100-odd FASTags a day, but now it is around 200 every day for the past 4-5 days."

He added that the FASTag is activated soon after it is installed with a balance of ₹100. "But the payment is accepted only through digital mode. The customer can recharge it again in another 30 minutes," said Mr. Rohit.

As per the NHAI orders, all lanes of National Highway fee plazas have been declared as "FASTag lanes of Fee Plaza" with effect from 00:00 hours of February 16. The vehicles without valid and functional FASTag will have to pay fee equivalent to two times of the fee applicable to that ca-

tory, as per the orders.

Shashi Bhushan, Project Director, NHAI (Gurugram) said more kiosks to install FASTags were set up and adequate number of marshals were deployed to streamline the traffic in preparation for the roll out.

"Already 80-85% commuters are making payment through FASTags. Besides, we have been conducting trials for 30-60 minutes everyday since December and collecting double the toll fee from those paying in cash," said Mr. Bhushan.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	313	Gurugram	306
Ghaziabad	369	Faridabad	353
Noida	368	Greater Noida	349
Good	■	Satisfactory	■
0-50	51-100	101-200	201-300
Poor	■	Very Poor	■
301-400	>400		
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m., yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB			

IN BRIEF

Court rejects plea for probe against Asthana

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed the plea of a man seeking directions to the Centre, Central Vigilance Commission and CBI to investigate and launch criminal prosecution on his complaint against Narcotics Control Bureau chief Rakesh Asthana. The court also imposed a cost of ₹20,000 on the petitioner.

'Why six out of seven posts in NCM vacant?'

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre to explain why six out of seven posts at the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) are lying vacant since October last. Justice directed the Ministry of Minorities Affairs to submit a status report in 10 days in response to a petition seeking filling up of the vacancies.

DU reopens 4 more libraries

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Monday reopened four more libraries as part of its phased reopening. Research scholars and faculty members will be permitted to access the libraries. Prior online registration will be required for accessing reading rooms and other facilities, DU announced.

After reopening the Central Library on February 4, the university has now opened the Central Science Library, Ratan Tata Library, South Delhi Campus Library and Faculty of Law Library.

NOTICE FOR HOUSEKEEPING & CATERING SERVICES IN JHARKHAND BHAWAN, NEW DELHI

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed parties having relevant experience for "Round the clock Housekeeping, Gardening, Cleaning, Catering and maintenance of Reception Desk, General Pest Control & Rodent Control at Jharkhand Bhawan," guesthouse at Kusumpur Pahari, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi – 110057, from the date of agreement for a period of 2 years. The Jharkhand Bhawan includes 20 standard rooms, 2 Executive suites, 2 VIP suites and the office of the Resident Commissioner, Jharkhand.

Prescribed tender forms along with NIT, terms and conditions, scope of work, qualification criterion, etc can be obtained from the office of the Secretary, Department of Cabinet Secretariat and Vigilance (Co-ordination), Govt. of Jharkhand, Project Building, Jharkhand Sachivalaya, Ranchi, or from the office of the Resident Commissioner, Jharkhand Bhawan, Kusumpur Pahari, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi from the date of publication of this advertisement on all working days during office hours.

Cost of the form is Rs. 100/- and to be paid in cash or through Bank draft drawn in favour of Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Jharkhand payable at New Delhi.

MSEs are exempted from payment of Tender document fee and EMD as per Government policy.

Filled up tender form, along with bank draft of Rs. 50,000/- drawn in favour of Resident

Commissioner, Govt. of Jharkhand towards refundable Earnest Money should be submitted in two separate sealed covers each containing technical bid and financial bid respectively in the office of Chief Administrative Officer, Jharkhand Bhawan, Kusumpur Pahari, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi – 110057 (Tel. No. 26739000) latest by 5 PM on 15.03.2

Timings

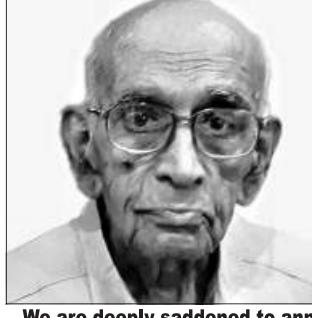
DELHI	
TUESDAY, FEB. 16	
RISE 06:59	SET 18:12
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 17	
RISE 06:58	SET 18:13
RISE 10:14	SET 23:17
THURSDAY, FEB. 18	
RISE 06:57	SET 18:14
RISE 10:45	SET 00:00

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 30 10
Safdarjung 30 10
Palam 27 13

Delhi Palam Today
29°C Moderate fog at many places during morning. Dry comfortable weather during day with mainly sunny sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
28°C Shallow to moderate fog likely during cool morning. A comfortable day with light winds.

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**DEATH**

Sri. V. Sundaresan (IAS)
30-6-1926
to
15-2-2021

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing away of **Sri. V. Sundaresan, IAS** at Hyderabad on 15-2-2021. Starting from humble beginnings you worked hard, persevered through many life challenges, achieved great heights, and helped so many. You did this with total integrity, tirelessness and compassion every step of the way. You always put others first and cared so much about our health, happiness and success. You have done so much for us and inspired us to be our very best. And you have uplifted so many countless others with your generous help. Thank you for all you have done. We will miss you terribly but we know that you will always be with us in spirit and watch over us.

Funeral is at Mahaprasthanam Whisper Valley at 11 AM on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

Due to Covid-19 we kindly request no visitors at our home. Condolences may be sent to hellosunjay@gmail.com or please call 9515860409

Mrs. Jayam Sundaresan (wife), S. Jai Shankar (Son), Sandhya (Daughter), Sakthi Subramanian (Son-in-law), Amrit, Akshay & Ashwin (Grandsons).

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Sr. Tender No.	Short Description	Earnest Money in ₹	Date of Opening	Tender Value (In Lakhs)
1. 216001	CMS Crossing 1 in 12, 60 Kg RDOS Drg. No. T-4220	50,00,000	17.03.2021	16627.09
2. 206015	6.2mm thick Composite GRSP 60 Kg to RDOS Drg. No. T-6618	50,00,000	19.03.2021	14169.48
3. 216003	CMS Crossing 1 in 12, 52Kg RDOS Drg. No. T-4734	50,00,000	23.03.2021	5256.97
4. 216002	CMS Crossing 60 Kg 1 in 8.5 to RDOS Drg. No. T-4967	20,00,000	26.03.2021	4452.08
Total Value				40505.62
The time of closing of E-Tender Box : 11.30 hrs on the date of closing of tender. For detailed tender conditions/ corrigendum please visit www.irops.gov.in 661 Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly				

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED PERSON

General public is here by informed that this person namely Sher Mohammad S/o Suleman R/o Surjana Khurd, P.S. Pakharpur, Distt. Bahrach, U.P. **Age** : 20 years, **Height** : 5'2", **Face** : Round, **Complexion** : Fair, **Built** : Medium, wearing black colour jacket, white and red colour T-shirt, blue colour jeans and sports shoes in feet, has been missing since 07.01.2021 from the area of P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 32-A dated 08.02.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing person may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in SHO : P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Ph. : 011-23261625, 23269777 Tel: 24368639, 24368641

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General Public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male Namely Unknown S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown **Age**: About 45/50 years, **Height**: 5'7", **Complexion**: Wheatish, **Built**: Medium, **Face**: Long, **Wearing**: Black coloured jacket, red coloured shirt, blue coloured Lining shirt and Light Grey Lower, was found dead on 03.02.21 at 70 foata Road, New Seemapuri. In this regard a **DD No.59A, dated 03.02.21** has been lodged at P.S. Seemapuri, Delhi.

If any one having any clue about deceased male may kindly inform the undersigned and contact on following numbers.

SHO
P.S. Seemapuri, Delhi

DP/360/SHD/2021 Ph.: 011-22599394, 22599395

Time to apply vote ki chot: Jayant

'When there is a challenge, people give birth to new movement'

ANUJ KUMAR

"This government should not try to enforce its whims as we were born obstinate," said Rashtriya Lok Dal vice-president Jayant Chaudhary, addressing a massive kisan panchayat against farm laws in Sadabab area of Hathras district on Monday.

He appealed to the farmers to apply "vote ki chot" [cause damage by voting] to teach the BJP a lesson. "After listening to the Prime Minister's address in Parliament, the farmer is feeling insulted and has become more resolute in his stand against the farm laws," he said.

A large number of farmers turned up for the panchayat

yet again. "The protests have emerged from the grassroots, but strangely Mr. Modi is keeping his eyes shut to their [farmers'] demands," Mr. Chaudhary said. "Whenever there is a challenge, people unite and give birth to a new leader, a new movement."

Mr. Chaudhary reminded how his grandfather Chaudhary Charan Singh had argued in his book – *India's Economic Policy: The Gandhian Blueprint*, published in 1978 – that those who were running the country didn't know the social and psychological make-up of the farmers.

"People with urban upbringing make laws for rural

India. Even if they have the farmers' interest in mind, they are not practical. This is proving to be true in 2021," he said.

'Benefit of capitalists'

"The Prime Minister said in Parliament that one should not insult the capitalists. This in a country where there is still inequality, where a large section of the electorate is still poor. It shows the PM knows everything. The laws are made for the benefit of his capitalist friends," said the RLD leader.

He feared that the government would sell the Food Corporation of India as well as it is running losses.

He was speaking at a well-attended Kisan Panchayat in Chandpur tehsil of Bijnor. This was the second such panchayat held by the Congress in western Uttar Pradesh in a week.

Nobody has right to make fun of sacrifices of farmers: Priyanka

'Prime Minister Modi has broken the trust reposed in him by the people'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GHAZIABAD

Continuing with her attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Monday that nobody has the right to make fun of the farmers' sacrifices.

She said the Prime Minister had broken the trust reposed in him by the people by voting him to power for two successive terms.

She was speaking at a well-attended Kisan Panchayat in Chandpur tehsil of Bijnor. This was the second such panchayat held by the Congress in western Uttar Pradesh in a week.



Priyanka Gandhi being welcomed by supporters on her way to Bijnor to address a Kisan Panchayat. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

bond, she underlined that she came from a family of martyrs. "Martyrdom is a big thing. It is the family that suffers the most as it lives the pain and nobody has a right to make fun of the martyrdom. I would like to remind Mr. Modi that the farmer who is standing at your door, his son is standing on the border, guarding our freedom."

Cong. with farmers

She said every worker of the Congress would stand with farmers.

Commenting on the contentious farm laws, she said why was the PM adamant on 'doing' the welfare of the farmers when they didn't want it.

"Is your understanding (of agriculture) better than the understanding of crores of farmers of this country? Do they not know what is good for them," she asked.

Ms. Vadra said the farm laws were not made for the welfare of farmers but to look after the interests of the government's billionaire corporate friends.

Only 27% take the jab in U.P. vaccination drive

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday said that the number of persons who got vaccinated on the first day of the second round of its vaccination drive was below expectation.

Against a target of 2,53,538 beneficiaries, 69,742 front-line workers and health workers, 27.50%, were vaccinated till 8 p.m. on Monday, the State government said.

"The number of beneficiaries who participated in the vaccination was below expectation," the government said in a statement.

Those who got immunised on Monday would get their second dose on March 15.

All beneficiaries are safe and healthy, as per information received, the government added.

As per the government figures, the districts with highest number of vaccinations on Monday were Banda (60%), Shahjahanpur (57.75), Mathura (46.55) and Jaunpur (45.09). Siddharthnagar, Mahoba, Azamgarh and Bulandshahar recorded the lowest figures: 10.13%, 14.30%, 15.32% and 15.60% respectively.

Meanwhile, the State recorded less than 3,000 active COVID-19 cases over 24 hours for the first time since May 30, 2020.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male name & address unknown. Age: 50 Yrs, Height - 158 cm, shallow complexion, Wearing grey kurta-pajama was found near Punjab National Bank, Nizamuddin West, Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi on 05.02.2021 and admitted to Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi during the treatment he got expire on 9.2.2021.

In this regard a DD No. 53-A, dt. 09.02.2021 has been lodged at PS Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi.

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

**S.H.O.,
P.S. Hazrat Nizamuddin,
New Delhi**
Ph.: 011-24355758, 24359989

DP/33/SE/2021

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DELHI EDUCATION MODEL: A PATHBREAKER FOR STUDENTS

The Delhi education system made history as a record breaking 98% students of Delhi government schools passed 12th board examinations



For the fifth year in a row, Class 12 students of Delhi Government schools outperformed private school students beating their own record. The pass percentage of Delhi government schools improved from 94.2 per cent last year to 98 per cent this year. The overall percentage, including both government and private schools, in CBSE's Class 12 exams improved by 5.38 percentage points. Government school results were 5.9.

A Delhi government school has been ranked No. 1 among all government-run day schools in the country, while two others have made it to the top 10.

Delhi government school students set a benchmark with 53 students having qualified in JEE Advance and 569 students having qualified for NEET.

" Feeling very proud to announce that the CBSE Class 12 result of Delhi government schools this year is 98 percent - highest ever so far. It's historic. Congratulations to my Team Education, all students, teachers, parents and education officers. Proud of you all.

—Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in his tweet

percentage points higher than private schools' in Delhi. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal congratulated the students. "Feeling very proud to announce that the CBSE Class 12 result of Delhi government schools this year is 98 percent - highest ever so far. It's historic. Congratulations to my Team Education, all students, teachers, parents and education officers. Proud of you all," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in his tweet. The Delhi government schools had crossed the 90 per cent pass percentage mark for the first time in 2018. This increased to 94.29 per cent last year, and zoomed up to 97.68 per cent for Delhi East and 97.91 per cent for the newly formed administrative unit of Delhi

West this year. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also lauded the results. "Over the past 5 years, we at #DelhiGovtSchools have been competing with ourselves to break our own record each time. This year is no exception... Congrats to students, parents & Team Education," Deputy Chief Minister had tweeted. The surge in the Delhi government schools pass percentages is largely responsible for the increase in Delhi's overall pass percentage. Private schools have registered a slight increase from 90.68 per cent in 2019 to 91.69 per cent this year for Delhi East, and 92.12 per cent for Delhi West. The number of students who appeared for the examination



CHANGE STARTS WITH A SINGLE 'DOORSTEP'

The Delhi government is transforming the ration system one 'doorstep' at a time

On the eve of Republic Day, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal declared that Delhi government's highly ambitious welfare project 'Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana' will begin by March 2021. The scheme which was announced in July 2020 proposes a complete transformation of the ration system in Delhi. Under this scheme, the beneficiaries will have the option to get neatly wrapped packets of dry ration delivered to their homes. The scheme comes in response to the wide ranging issues in the Public Distribution System such as contamination of ration, less quantity of dry ration provided to people, untimely closing of shops and other such inconveniences. Through this revolutionary approach, the government hopes to ensure all people have the capacity to feed themselves with dignity. While Corona lockdowns began across the world, it became increasingly apparent that the world faced not just a health emergency but a food emergency as well. During lockdown in the month of April, the Delhi government was prompt in declaring an increase in quantity of dry ration by 50% to 70 lakhs ration card holders free of charge.

Delhi government's highly ambitious welfare project 'Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana' will begin by March 2021

percentage points higher than private schools' in Delhi. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal congratulated the students. "Feeling very proud to announce that the CBSE Class 12 result of Delhi government schools this year is 98 percent - highest ever so far. It's historic. Congratulations to my Team Education, all students, teachers, parents and education officers. Proud of you all," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in his tweet. The Delhi government schools had crossed the 90 per cent pass percentage mark for the first time in 2018. This increased to 94.29 per cent last year, and zoomed up to 97.68 per cent for Delhi East and 97.91 per cent for the newly formed administrative unit of Delhi

faced by the public, 26 lakh Chief Minister Corona Relief Kits were distributed once per family to both ration and non-ration card holders. The uniqueness and success of the initiative lay in the fact that beneficiaries could register for e-coupons online and collect ration from a nearby location. In an effort to cover migrant workers temporary coupons were issued to them through public representatives. These coupons made them eligible for 5kg free dry ration. Each MLA/MP was given 2000 coupons each, which were



distributed to migrant workers in need of food. During the pandemic lockdown the government provided ration to nearly one crore people which is nearly half the population of Delhi. These accomplishments show that Delhi is a pioneer state for its commitment in ensuring food security to its people. The welfare schemes initiated during the pandemic have shown the effectiveness of government's reforms towards transforming the Public Distribution System. Delhi government's latest initiative of providing doorstep delivery of ration is another step in making the Public Distribution System more efficient and transparent.

" During the Corona pandemic, the government has decided to distribute free 5kg ration to another three million people. So, in all, our food security scheme will now cover 10 million people, which is more than half of Delhi's population."

- Arvind Kejriwal,
Chief Minister of Delhi

73.54% consumers received zero electricity bills in Delhi

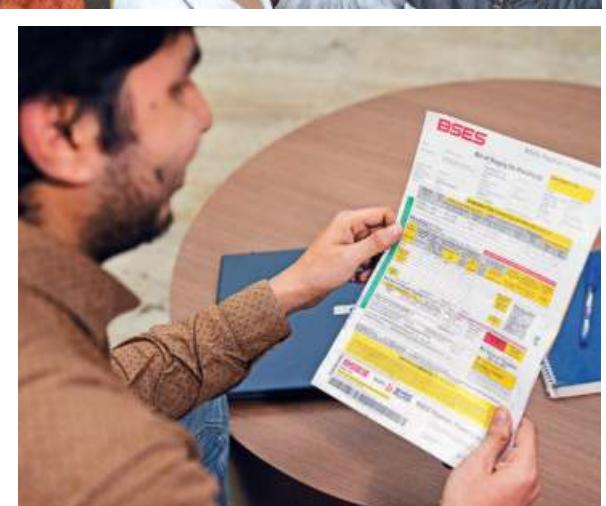
Delhi is the only state in India with no electricity tariff hike in the past six years

The Delhi government's free-electricity scheme is an example of 'smart governance' as it is encouraging Delhites to reduce their power consumption. In August, the Delhi government had announced free-electricity of up to 200 units for domestic consumers and later extended the scheme to tenants residing in the national capital. In December 2020, 38 lakh consumers received Zero Bills for consumption under 200 units. This last one year has been a very tough year, especially in terms of the financial condition of the government. Significantly, despite all the limitations, the Delhi government has maintained all the development schemes for the citizens of Delhi. Lakhs of consumers have received the benefit of zero electricity bill when the pandemic wreaked havoc in their lives, thousands and thousands of people lost their jobs and suffered a lot. Delhi has total of 51,98,533 consumers and 73.54% of these consumers received zero bills which is around 38,23,232. Talking to Twitter, CM Arvind Kejriwal said that residents of the city were trying to consume less than 200 units of electricity to avail the benefit. Under the scheme, people consuming electricity between 201 units and 400 units are eligible to avail up to Rs 800 per month subsidy from the government on their bills.



Under the scheme, people consuming electricity between 201 units and 400 units are eligible to avail upto Rs 800 per month subsidy from the government on their bills

In the last one year, the Delhi government has given an immense focus on the solar power infrastructure. This has the potential to generate a lot of clean electricity



Since the past 6 years - Delhi has the most progressive tariff structure, rewarding low electricity consumption by providing big subsidies. The Delhi government has also announced 'Mukhyamantri Kirayedar Bijli Meter Yojana' under which tenants can also avail the free-electricity scheme. Delhi is the only state in India with no tariff hike in energy charges for domestic consumers

absolutely environment friendly. The Delhi government has developed and installed over 13 megawatts (MW) of solar rooftop plants across 150 Delhi government schools during last one year. These are expected to save about Rs 5 crores on electricity bills cumulatively each year, apart from earning Rs 6 crores from selling power.

Delhi government launched 'Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan' scheme for EWS and slum dwellers

Under the scheme 89,400 flats for EWS and slum dwellers will be built and given to eligible persons as per Mukhyamantri Awaas Yojna

In a bid to provide permanent housing to the poor and the needy, the Delhi government fulfilled its promise and initiated the 'Jahan Jhuggi, Wahin Makaan' policy for eligible persons. To fulfill the needs of the economically weaker section of the society, the Delhi government launched 'Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan' Scheme under which 89,400 flats for EWS and slum dwellers will be built and given to the eligible persons. In meetings held at regular intervals, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has directed

the officials to ensure the allotment of the flats within five km of where their slums were located, for which the land should be allotted. The project will be executed and implemented by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board. Under the flagship policy of the Delhi government, process for the in-situ rehabilitation of the people in EWS Flats has been initiated.

Under the flagship policy of the Delhi government, process for the in-situ rehabilitation of the people in EWS Flats has been initiated. The Delhi government is preparing a detailed rehabilitation and construction plan to provide a respectable life to every resident of Delhi

the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) to check the status of the progress of the policy. The 'Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan' policy is the flagship policy of the Delhi government. The Delhi Government is working relentlessly to ensure the construction of the EWS flats for the in-situ rehabilitation of the people who should be completed in its due timeline. The Delhi government is preparing a detailed rehabilitation and construction plan (and) architect consultants will be appointed for the project.

The Delhi government is preparing a detailed rehabilitation and construction plan to provide a respectable life to every resident of Delhi



Tolerance deficit

Activist's arrest in 'toolkit conspiracy' case is perverse and high-handed

The police in India, and especially forces under the present regime, have a dubious record of effecting needless arrests and filing questionable cases as a tool of harassment. The Delhi Police have outdone all of them by arresting a 22-year-old climate activist in a case that makes the incredible allegation that a social media toolkit for organisers of protests against the farm laws amounted to sedition and incitement to riots. The manner in which a Delhi Police team travelled to Bengaluru and took Disha Ravi into custody, apparently without following the guidelines laid down by the Delhi High Court on inter-State arrests, marks a new low in the display of perversity and high-handedness in law enforcement. Even though Ms. Ravi was produced before a duty magistrate in Delhi within the mandatory 24-hour period, there is no indication whether the Delhi Police informed the local police and if she was properly represented by counsel. It appears that the main charge against her is that she edited a Google document shared among activists, including global climate change icon Greta Thunberg. The toolkit, the prosecution alleges, was prepared by a pro-Khalistani outfit, and based on this, it was concluded that Ms. Ravi was working with separatists to create disaffection against India. It is quite strange that none in the Delhi Police deemed this far-fetched. Such toolkits are common for those organising protests online, and they contain not much more than calls for protests, texts to be tweeted, hashtags to be used, and names of authorities and public functionaries whose handles can be tagged. The possible fact that direct protests were also discussed and planned does not mean there was any incitement to violence, a mandatory requirement to charge someone, as has been done in the case of Ms. Ravi, with sedition.

There is little doubt now that it is not organised protests, online or offline activism in support of the ongoing farmers' protests against the controversial agricultural laws, or the mobilisation of public opinion against government policy, that is adversely affecting the country's reputation and prestige. The regime is more likely to attract international embarrassment and opprobrium by the indiscriminate use of police power against activists, protesters and the media. The state is increasingly resorting to heavy-handed responses to issues that attract a convergence of activism, opposition political activity and adverse media scrutiny. In particular, the farmers' protests, and the violent turn that it took on Republic Day due to some deviant elements, have led the present regime to imagine a global conspiracy where none exists. A government truly worried about its global image would instead seek to address the deficit in tolerance and surfeit in repression that are becoming more obvious with each passing day.

Death trap

Labour reforms and technological advances within the fireworks industry are necessary

Thousands of workers in Tamil Nadu's famed fireworks industry remain trapped in unsafe conditions despite an unending series of accidents that keeps drawing attention to their plight. In the latest accident at a fireworks unit in Virudhunagar, at last count, 20 lives have perished, while 28 workers are in hospital. Such tragedies, caused predominantly by gross violation of norms governing the hazardous industry and human error in handling explosive substances, have occurred with some regularity now. In 11 months, 25 lives were lost in major blazes in three other fireworks factories in Virudhunagar (9), Cuddalore (9), and Madurai (7). Most victims were women. While the dead end up in statistical records, on the ground there is only short-term action: registration of cases, arrests, identification of causes, token inspections, issuance of warnings and safety advisories. The causes are well documented. Unlicensed units that have mushroomed in and outside Sivakasi mostly escape scrutiny till explosions occur. A greater concern is the illegal sub-leasing of contracts for manufacturing crackers by licensed units. Preliminary investigation into the current tragedy has also revealed sub-leasing of works to several persons. The very nature of work in a hazardous industry makes sub-leasing a byword for safety compromise. It leads to conversion of every shed in a manufacturing unit into a 'factory' in itself with inflammable chemicals stored all over. Consequently, the limit on workers to be deployed is violated resulting in crowding in each shed. Supervision of the quantum of chemicals to be mixed or stored – a key task to avoid friction – becomes a casualty.

Untrained workers and the piece-rate system, which induces people to race to produce more units per day, have also caused accidents. Eyewitness accounts suggest that in the latest accident, a worker, possibly fatigued, had hurriedly emptied semi-finished crackers triggering an explosion. While the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation offers training for workers, shortage of labour has prompted the industry to hire new recruits with limited skills. The industry continues to be labour-intensive, although a decade ago Parliament was informed that automation of the hazardous manufacturing process would be undertaken. Periodic inspections at factories, sustained crackdown and stringent penal action against violators are non-negotiable. For this, Central and State governments must provide the needed manpower for enforcement agencies as the industry has grown manifold. A sustained political push for labour reforms and technological innovations within the industry is also essential. After all, there can be no joy during any celebrations using fireworks if those making it lead a life of dangerous uncertainty.

Farm laws and 'taxation' of farmers

To show Indian agriculture as being net taxed to argue for the farm laws has poor conceptual validity



R. RAMAKUMAR

Over the past three decades, a major rationale offered in favour of liberalising Indian agriculture was that farmers were "net taxed". In other words, incomes of farmers were kept artificially lower than what they should have been. It was argued that this "net taxation" existed because protectionist policies deprived farmers of higher international prices, and the administered price system deprived farmers of higher domestic market prices. If there were more liberal domestic markets and freer global trade, prices received by farmers would rise.

These arguments are raised again in the debates around the three farm laws. According to this view, farm laws are necessary to end the net taxation of agriculture. For this purpose, data on Producer Support Estimate (PSE) are used. A recent study found that PSE in Indian agriculture was -6% between 2014-15 and 2016-17. In contrast, PSE was +18.2% in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, +19.6% in the European Union countries and +9.5% in the U.S. The farm laws would weaken restrictive trade and marketing policies in India and "get the markets right". This, in turn, would eliminate negative support and raise farmers' prices.

In these debates, a common example cited is that of milk. There is no Minimum Support Price (MSP) in milk, and a substantial share of milk sales takes place through the private sector, including multinationals like Nestle and Hatsun. Yet,

India's milk sector is growing faster than the foodgrain sector. If the milk sector can grow without MSP and with private corporates, why cannot other agricultural commodities? This article attempts a closer look at these claims.

PSE and its estimation

The PSE is estimated using a methodology advocated by the OECD. The OECD defines the PSE as "the annual monetary value of gross transfers from consumers and taxpayers to agricultural producers, measured at the farm gate level, arising from policies that support agriculture..." The PSE has two components. The first is market price support (MPS). MPS is that part of the gross transfers to producers arising from "a gap between domestic market prices and border prices of a specific agricultural commodity". The second is budgetary transfers (BOT). BOT includes all budgetary expenditures on policies that support agricultural production. PSE is the sum of MPS and BOT, expressed also as a percentage of the value of agricultural production.

The PSE for Indian agriculture in 2019 was ₹1,62,740 crore, or -5.5% of the value of production. Within the PSE, the MPS was negative while BOT was positive. The MPS was ₹4,61,804 crore, or -15.5% of the value of production. The BOT was ₹2,99,064 crore, or +10.1% of the value of production.

The MPS for a commodity is calculated as the product of its annual production and the difference between its international and domestic prices. The problem begins here: the international price is considered a benchmark with no reference to the actual possibilities of domestic producers obtaining that price.

Let us assume a commodity 'A' whose international price is higher than its domestic price. First, 'A'



may be produced in large quantities but may also be essential for domestic food security. Hence, it may not be regularly exported. Yet, its MPS will be negative. Examples are rice and wheat in India. Second, most of the short-term changes in MPS may be illusory if they result from short-term fluctuations of international prices or relative exchange rates, or shocks to global demand or supply. Such fluctuations are more pronounced in agriculture because international agricultural markets are infamously imperfect, narrow and dominated by monopolistic multinational companies.

Third, if a country starts exporting 'A' to benefit from higher international prices, will the differential between international and domestic prices remain? In mainstream trade literature, a "small country assumption" is used where all countries are assumed to be price-takers and no single country is considered capable of triggering a major rise or fall in prices. But this is an unrealistic assumption. The international market for most agricultural commodities is small, while countries like India are large producers. Even if India exports a small additional share of the production of 'A', its impact on the international prices of 'A' will be disproportionately inverse. Consequently, the differential between domestic and international prices would considerably

narrow, if not simply disappear.

Due to such fluctuations in MPS, the PSE also fluctuates widely. The PSE for Indian agriculture was -1.9% in 2000. It fell to -14% in 2004, -20.4% in 2008 and -27.8% in 2013. Afterwards, it rose to -3.8% in 2015 and -5.5% in 2019. These fluctuating PSEs mean nothing in terms of taxation or subsidisation of producers. They only mean that international prices were volatile.

In summary, the MPS is a wrong measure of taxation in agriculture because the international price is no "true price" to be accepted as a benchmark. Further, a negative MPS, by itself, implies neither a government that squeezes revenues out of farmers nor the absence of absolute profitability in agriculture.

The case of milk trade

Proponents of farm laws use the OECD estimates of MPS and PSE to show the perils of restrictive markets. By the same logic then, if the increasing penetration of private companies and the absence of MSP in milk are positive features, we should expect positive and rising MPS and PSE for milk. However, milk had the highest negative MPS among India's major agricultural commodities in 2019. The MPS for milk was ₹2,17,527 crore, which accounted for about 47% of the total MPS in agriculture. As a share of its value of production, the MPS for milk was -37.5%. Thus, if we go by the OECD estimates, milk was one of the most heavily "taxed" agricultural commodities in India.

Consider the period between 2015 and 2019. If the growth of private firms in milk trade was a positive change, the MPS for milk should have increased over this period. In 2015, the MPS for milk was positive at ₹16,190 crore. But in 2016, the MPS turned negative

at ₹57,223 crore and by 2019 it fell further to ₹2.17 lakh crore. In other words, "taxation" of milk producers intensified between 2015 and 2019.

In reality, the MPS for milk turned negative not because of any compression of domestic prices. In fact, the average domestic price for milk rose from ₹25,946/tonne in 2015 to ₹28,988/tonne in 2019. But the average international reference price for milk rose faster from ₹24,905/tonne to ₹39,884/tonne in 2019. This led to a rise in the price differential from ₹1,041/tonne in 2015 to ₹10,896/tonne in 2019.

To argue from the above that India's milk producers were "taxed" is as meaningless as arguing that India's farmers as a whole were "taxed" to the tune of ₹4,61,804 crore in a year. The reason is that the OECD methodology, either for milk or for other commodities, does not offer any realistic assessment of the extent of taxation or subsidisation.

The lack of logic in debates

But these issues do not seem to bother the advocates of farm laws in India. In the debates, it is telling that these advocates (a) use the OECD estimates to highlight the overall negative MPS for agriculture as a problem; (b) but conveniently remain silent on the negative MPS for milk; and (c) yet, argue in the same breath that milk producers have benefited from the growth of private firms. The absence of logic in this line of argument is nothing but appalling.

In fact, what is missed in these debates is the elephant in the room: the BOT. The West's PSEs in agriculture are positive and higher than India's because they have higher BOT than in India.

R. Ramakumar is Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Continuity, not change, is Biden's plan for Palestine

The U.S. has returned to the pre-Trump stance of supporting a two-state solution in principle but is doing little to reach that goal



MOHAMMED AYOOB

Will President Joe Biden change the U.S.'s policy towards the Palestinian issue? The short answer is no. There are many reasons for this gloomy prognosis. The most important is Mr. Biden's track record on Israel and especially on its continued occupation of Palestinian territories. He has been a firm supporter of Israel for decades and relatively unsympathetic to the Palestinian's political concerns despite his support for a two-state solution.

It is true that American relations with the Palestinian Authority had reached a new low under President Donald Trump, who unreservedly supported Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's expansionist policies. In fact, Mr. Trump himself proposed that 30% of the West Bank consisting of the Jordan Valley and settlement blocs be annexed to Israel. He moved the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and endorsed the Israeli annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights, captured in 1967. Mr. Trump also cut off \$360 million annual funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which deals with Palestinian refu-

gees, and shut down the Palestine Liberation Organization office in Washington D.C.

Mr. Biden and his team have said they will resume aid to the Palestinians and the new President has opposed Israel's formal annexation of one-third of the occupied territories. However, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said the U.S. embassy in Israel would remain in Jerusalem as reversing the move "would not make sense practically and politically". So too would Mr. Trump's acceptance of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights.

Living with the status quo

The Biden administration has returned to the long-standing pre-Trump American stance of supporting a two-state solution in principle but doing little to reach that goal. Mr. Blinken declared that "the only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state and to give the Palestinians a state to which they are entitled is through the so-called two-state solution". However, he contradicted himself by adding that "realistically it's hard to see near-term prospects for moving forward on that". This was a clear admission that the Biden administration is willing to live with the status quo that allows Israel to continue its harsh occupation, build settlements, cantonise the West Bank, and eventually fo- close the two-state option leav-



ing the Palestinians stateless in their own land.

Before assuming office, Mr. Blinken had also made a number of statements accusing Palestinians of being responsible for the failure of negotiations. He reminded them "that they can and should do better and deserve better and that requires leadership: leadership to make clear the reality of the Jewish state; leadership to make clear the need to end incitement and violence". This was a classic case of blaming the victims for their woes and skirting the question of Israel's illegal occupation and settlement-building activities.

During the election campaign, the Biden team also made clear that it "firmly reject[s] the BDS [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions] movement, which singles out Israel – home to millions of Jews – and too often veers into anti-Semitism." Above all, the Biden administration has iterated that it will continue to provide Israel with unconditional military support in the amount of \$3.8 billion annually, following the precedent established by Mr. Biden's former

boss, Barack Obama. Therefore, while President Biden, unlike his predecessor, may not act as a cheerleader for the Israeli right wing, his policies will not differ in substantive terms from those of earlier American Presidents. These policies were premised on the notion that Israel was the innocent party to the conflict and the blame for the deadlock lies with the Palestinians who are unwilling and unable to make compromises that in real terms would make a two-state solution dead on arrival.

The Israeli narrative

Thanks to Israeli propaganda, the conventional wisdom in Washington, D.C. has been that Palestinians "never miss the opportunity to miss an opportunity". The U.S. has stuck to this narrative despite evidence to the contrary over decades that Israeli governments through the building of settlements and confiscation of Palestinian lands have negated the possibility of a viable Palestinian state emerging in the occupied territories. There are multiple reasons for the American acceptance of the Israeli narrative. These include the influence of the Israel lobby in Congress and the presence in key positions in successive administrations of people whose sympathies lay with Israel. The Biden administration is no exception in this regard. Although the U.S.'s unquestioning support for Israel has

complicated its relations with the Arab world for decades, the perception of Israel's importance to American strategy in West Asia as the U.S.'s one stable ally persists. Consequently, many in the region believe that American policy towards West Asia is made in Jerusalem and not in Washington.

Mr. Obama, as President was able to partially break this mould in the case of the nuclear agreement with Iran, which Israel opposed stridently. This policy was reversed by Mr. Trump. Now that Mr. Biden seems interested in reviving the nuclear deal, he will have to tread even more carefully in his approach towards Israel, which has been vociferous in its opposition to the U.S. returning to the agreement. The Palestinians are likely to pay the price for this as well since Mr. Biden cannot afford to estrange Israel on both the Iranian and Palestinian fronts for domestic and perceived strategic reasons. Consequently, the changes in Mr. Biden's approach to the Palestinians when compared to Mr. Trump's will be only cosmetic in character. In the final analysis, the status quo will continue to be the default option for the Biden administration to the detriment of the Palestinian cause.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University

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.

Arrest of an activist

It is bizarre that a 22-year-old activist, Disha Ravi, is in police custody for editing the 'toolkit' tweeted by climate activist Greta Thunberg ("22-year-old activist sent to Delhi police custody", Feb. 15). Faith in our police is already low; this act by the Delhi Police, that too allegedly done without following due process, will only worsen it. The Centre seems to be sending a strong signal that it will not spare anyone who is against it or who is a dissenter, be it 83-year-old activist Stan Swamy or 22-year-old Disha Ravi. Only people's power can save Indian democracy.

MELWYN PINTO,
Mangalore

The government seems to be under the illusion that making an example of Disha Ravi will have some chilling effect on prospective dissenters and protesters. But it is unlikely to act as a deterrent to those who are inclined to champion the causes they believe in. People are made of sterner stuff than the ruling elites think. Democracy cannot exist without the basic right of voicing opinions. But the government seems to be averse to contrary opinions. It has perfected the art of equating anything it does not agree with with sedition. It is our duty as citizens to ensure India's continued existence as a robust democracy with

space for the exercise of constitutionally guaranteed rights without the fear of being arrested and jailed.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Showcasing J&K

This is the third official visit by foreign diplomats after the dilution of Article 370 in J&K ("After lifting 4G ban, Centre plans trip of envoys to J&K", Feb. 15). Previous trips of diplomats were described as "personal". The visitors were not allowed to meet political and local leaders as they were under house arrest. Now, again, NC president Farooq Abdullah and vice-president Omar Abdullah have been placed under house arrest. Unlike the

previous trips, the Centre should ensure that the visiting dignitaries have the freedom to meet political and local leaders as well as the people freely, without the government's intervention, so that they are able to make their own assessment of the situation.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

Dangerous precedent

The acquittal of the former U.S. President sets a dangerous precedent ("Senate acquits Trump of incitement", Feb. 15). It shows that even an authoritarian leader can escape punishment if he has considerable support and bullies his party into backing him. There's no

denying that Mr. Trump had put out a stream of falsehoods on losing the presidential polls, and had openly urged his supporters to march to Capitol Hill, endangering his own Vice-President, lawmakers in both parties, and scores of police officers in the process. The failure to convict him highlights not only the dilemma within the Republican Party, but also how divided

the U.S. remains. The U.S., which boasts of being the oldest democracy and preaches lessons to other countries on democratic rights, has not only lost its moral right to do so, but has also emboldened dictators across the globe.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: The photo caption that accompanied the report, "Another brick in the wall" (Magazine, February 14, 2021) should have read Agragame School, Rayagada, Odisha, and not as mentioned. It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-2855263; E-mail:

The intricacies of vaccine science

Questions around emerging COVID-19 vaccines require a careful analysis of available data



GAGANDEEP KANG



India must build platforms to study vaccine performance and not just rely on data from other countries. ■ FILE PHOTO

Vaccine science is crucial for effective decision-making. For COVID-19, there are questions about different vaccines and platforms, their advantages, disadvantages, safety and efficacy, and the only way to address these questions is to consider the data and then make a call, while knowing that more data may lead to a change of practice.

Several news reports on February 13 stated that the government planned to stick to the "28-day gap" plan for the two doses of vaccines in India. This came just days after the World Health Organization (WHO) published its recommendations that for the AstraZeneca product, the gap between doses should be extended for as long as possible within an eight-to-12-week window.

Why did the WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on immunisation make this recommendation? SAGE is generally conservative, relies on data and uses specific criteria for the strength of evidence to make its decision. So, what was the evidence and what should India do? On the other hand, why did Germany and other European countries decide not to use the AstraZeneca vaccine for older adults? And yet again, why are countries like France advising a single dose of vaccine for those who have had the SARS-CoV2 infection? These are just a few questions where the data and the science behind decision-making need to be understood.

The information on AZD1222 vaccine (known as Covishield in India) provided to the WHO had a cut-off date of December 7, 2020. Based on data from 14,380 individuals from the U.K., Brazil and South Africa, who were at least two weeks beyond the second standard dose of vaccine, the vaccine had an efficacy of 63.1% against symptomatic COVID-19 infection (74 cases in the vaccinated group and 197 cases among controls). Two weeks after the second dose, there were eight cases of hospitalisation and three cases of severe infection,

and all were in the unvaccinated group. So, we know that the vaccine works.

WHO's recommendation

However, because of delays in availability of the second dose of the vaccine (and here the data included do not count the individuals who received a half dose of the vaccine), 59% of the people got their second dose between four and eight weeks after the first dose, 22% got the second dose between nine and 12 weeks, and 16% got it more than 12 weeks after the first dose. In these individuals, the vaccine efficacy was 56%, 70% and 78% respectively. The numbers are in the low thousands, but there is a clear trend of increasing efficacy with longer intervals between doses. In addition, when the immune response was measured, it was found that the longer the intervals between the two doses, the better was the immune response. These are the data based on which the WHO made the recommendation of an interval of eight to 12 weeks between two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

What about use in older adults? Immunogenicity data from the AstraZeneca vaccine show that older individuals had an immune response comparable to other age groups. Ho-

wever, among the efficacy trial participants for whom data were available till December 7, 2020, only one in ten were older than 65 years. Among them, there were only 12 cases of symptomatic infection – four among the vaccinated and eight in the unvaccinated, which is a vaccine efficacy of 52%, but with a large range. Of the 12 cases, two needed hospitalisation, and both were unvaccinated. However, again, the numbers are too small for firm conclusions. Based on these data, first Germany, and then other European countries decided not to use the vaccine for older individuals.

But these countries also have supplies of the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine, for which data on a larger number of older individuals are available. Thus, the countries can prioritise that vaccine to protect their elderly. More data from ongoing efficacy vaccine studies will become available to allow for a change of recommendations, if needed, in countries that have decided not to use the vaccine. But the WHO has taken both immunogenicity and available efficacy data into account and recommended the use of vaccines for older individuals.

Why have French experts recommended a single dose for those who have been previously infected with

SARS-CoV-2? There are data from people who have been infected before which show that they make more antibodies with the first dose of vaccine (known as boosting), but not with the second dose. Based on this, immunologists think that an infection and one vaccination dose are together equivalent to two doses of the vaccine and will give equal or better protection.

While this is a rational and evidence-based approach, there are nuanced aspects that need to be addressed. Is vaccination required at all for people who have been infected? We have data to show that natural infection provides 83% protection for at least five months, and the WHO guidance states that individuals who have been infected can wait six months before getting vaccinated. This is an area that needs research to determine the level and duration of protection from infection, or infection and vaccination. If we had a way of measuring who was protected and who was not without waiting for them to be exposed to the virus and get sick, then answering these questions would be easier. But there is no such correlate of protection as yet.

The way forward

What should India do? We need to build platforms to study vaccine performance and not just rely on data that emerges from other countries. The number of vaccines is going to increase, and comparisons will become more important to gain clarity about which vaccines can be used for whom and how.

We have global data at this time that support a longer interval (at least for the Covishield vaccine) to improve efficacy, and we also have the current luxury of a declining trend in cases, which makes it easier for us to consider the longer-interval idea. This also brings the additional benefit of reaching more people in India with the first dose, while we wait for supplies with the ramping up of manufacturing of vaccines in India. There is another benefit of sharing vaccines with the world – the more we distribute vaccines to the rest of the world, the greater the chance that we decrease the import of variant viruses to India.

Gagandeep Kang is a Professor at Christian Medical College, Vellore

Indian investments and BITs

Sri Lanka's pullout from the Colombo port deal calls for rethinking India's approach towards investment treaties



PRABHASH RANJAN

Sri Lanka's decision to renege on a 2019 agreement with India and Japan that aimed to jointly develop the strategic East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo port comes as a rude shock to New Delhi. While international relations experts are busy assessing the diplomatic fallout of this problematic decision for India-Sri Lanka ties, the issue also needs to be looked at through the prism of the India-Sri Lanka bilateral investment treaty (BIT), which forms the bedrock of international law governing foreign investment between the two countries.

In 1997, India and Sri Lanka signed a BIT to promote and protect foreign investment in each other's territories. The defining characteristic of this BIT, as is the case with all BITs, is that it empowers individual foreign investors to directly sue the host state before an international tribunal if the investor believes that the host state has breached its treaty obligations. This is known as investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS).

An important protection provided for foreign investment in the India-Sri Lanka BIT is the fair and equitable treatment (FET) provision given in Article 3(2). This Article provides that investments and returns of investors of each country shall, at all times, be accorded FET in the other country's territory. FET is a ubiquitous provision contained in almost all BITs. The normative content of the FET provision has been fleshed out by scores of ISDS tribunals in the last two decades. The tribunals have persistently held that an important component of the FET provision is that the host state should protect the legitimate expectations of foreign investors. In a case known as *International Thunderbird Gaming Corporation v Mexico*, it was held that the concept of legitimate expectations relates to a situation where the host state's conduct creates reasonable and justifiable expectations on the part of an investor (or investment) to act in reliance on said conduct, such that a failure to honour those expectations could cause the investor (or investment) to suffer damages.

Sri Lanka, by signing the agreement to jointly develop the ECT at the Colombo port, created such expectations on the part of Indian investors. Defaulting on this agreement, without specific and reasonable justification, potentially violates the Indian investor's leg-

itimate expectations, and thus, the FET provision of the BIT.

However, the twist in the tale is that India unilaterally terminated the India-Sri Lanka BIT on March 22, 2017. This termination was part of the mass repudiation of BITs that India undertook in 2017 as a result of several ISDS claims being brought against it. In cases of such unilateral termination, survival clauses in BITs assume significance because they ensure that foreign investment continues to receive protection during the survival period. Article 15(2) of the India-Sri Lanka BIT contains a survival clause, according to which, in case of a unilateral termination of the treaty, the treaty shall continue to be effective for a further period of 15 years from the date of its termination in respect of investments made or acquired before the date of termination.

Thus, the Indian investment in Sri Lanka and vice-versa made or acquired before March 22, 2017, will continue to enjoy treaty protection. But, in the case of the investment in developing the ECT at the Colombo port, this survival clause will be inconsequential, since the agreement was signed in 2019, i.e., after India unilaterally terminated the BIT. Hence, the Indian investor will not be able to sue Sri Lanka before an ISDS tribunal, notwithstanding the merits of the case.

Important lessons

This sordid episode has important lessons for India's overall approach to BITs. As a consequence of the onslaught of ISDS claims in the last few years, India has developed a protectionist approach towards BITs. The motivation appears to be to eliminate or at least minimise future ISDS cases against India. However, an important attribute that perhaps has not received much attention is that BITs are reciprocal. Thus, BITs do not empower merely foreign investors to sue India, but also authorise Indian investors to make use of BITs to safeguard their investment in turbulent foreign markets.

In the post-COVID-19 world, regulatory risks will further exacerbate, subjecting foreign investment to arbitrary and whimsical behaviour of countries. Accordingly, given India's emergence as an exporter, and not just an importer of capital, the government should revisit its stand on BITs.

India needs to adopt a balanced approach towards BITs with an effective ISDS provision. This will facilitate Indian investors in defending their investment under international law should a country, like Sri Lanka, renege on an agreement.

Prabhash Ranjan is a senior assistant professor at South Asian University's faculty of legal studies

Structural reforms for NEP 2020

Governing bodies for universities and colleges must be reframed to make them equitable

P. S. JAYARAMU

With the COVID-19 pandemic easing and normal academic activity being gradually resumed, the Central Government's New Education Policy (NEP) is back in focus. While the policy covers a wide spectrum of issues, including reforms in school and higher education, the emphasis should also be on the need to restructure the governing bodies for universities and autonomous colleges.

First, the system of appointments of vice-chancellors and syndicates, or governing councils, the key authorities for any university, needs to be revised. The appointments are often mired in controversies, with frequent reports in the past of aspirants for the post of vice-chancellors and membership of syndicates indulging in unethical practices to gain favour. Luckily, the NEP talks of creating new structures, such as a Board of Management, to replace the syndicate system. To implement this recommendation, State governments must bring in a slew of bold reforms, some of which are outlined below.

For the Board of Management structure, the existing system of syndicates, consisting of government nominees and those nominated by Governors or chancellors, should be dispensed with. Often, people lacking merit but with an eye on memberships of affiliation, building, and purchase committees, among others, get nominated to these bodies.

Further, with the vice-chancellor as chairman, the Board should consist of former vice-chancellors drawn from other universities, members drawn from industry, the alumni, eminent public intellectuals, principals of affiliated colleges on rotation and members representing the non-teaching staff. The Board's decisions should be taken by consensus or by a majority of the members present. Proceedings should be conducted in virtual mode and made available for stakeholders' viewership.

For the appointment of vice-chancellors of universities, search committees constituted for such purposes must be thoroughly restructured. The government's and chancellors' role in such committees must be

done away with. The practice of having government nominees, chancellor's nominees and university nominees should be stopped and it should be replaced by drawing an eminent former vice-chancellor or academician of proven integrity and administrative capability for the post of chairman.

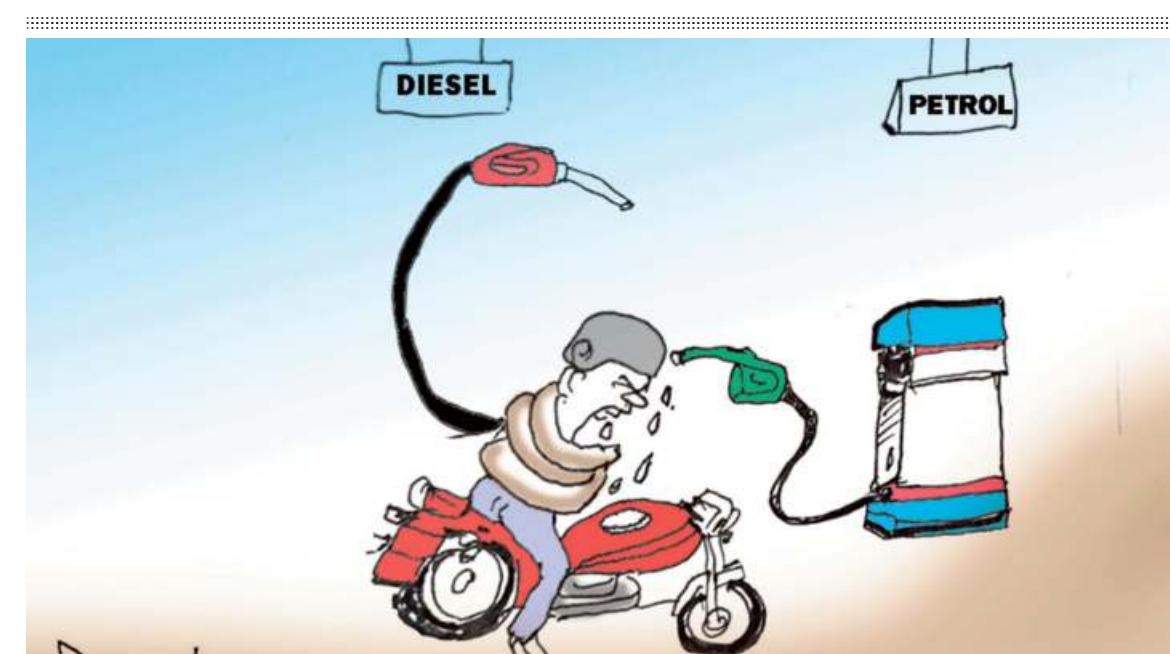
Transparent procedures

Applications for the post of vice-chancellors can be invited through advertisements on the university website and through newspapers. Biodata of candidates must also be published on the websites. The committee may then allot marks to candidates' scholarship in terms of teaching and research, administrative capabilities, and capacity for fundraising. The scores obtained by candidates should be consolidated and the names of shortlisted candidates then submitted in the order of merit to chancellors for deciding on formal appointments.

Another important issue is accountability of faculty, and the best way to ensure that is to put in place an institutional structure of 'academic audit'. Faculty members must mandatorily upload on university websites their annual plans for research and innovative modes of teaching. Their annual self-appraisal reports can be evaluated by external peers and their recommendations should be strictly implemented. There is an urgent need to overcome faculty shortage by recruiting teachers in order to overcome the existing trend of higher educational institutions relying on guest faculty.

Finally, in order to improve the higher education ecosystem, excellence in teaching, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and social contribution must be encouraged. The NEP's recommendations, like the introduction of four-year courses that have the option of re-entry and exit, one- or two-year postgraduate courses, and setting up of an Academic Bank of Credit for credit transfers, may be helpful.

The author is former Dean, Faculty of Arts, Bangalore University and former Senior Fellow, ICSSR, New Delhi.



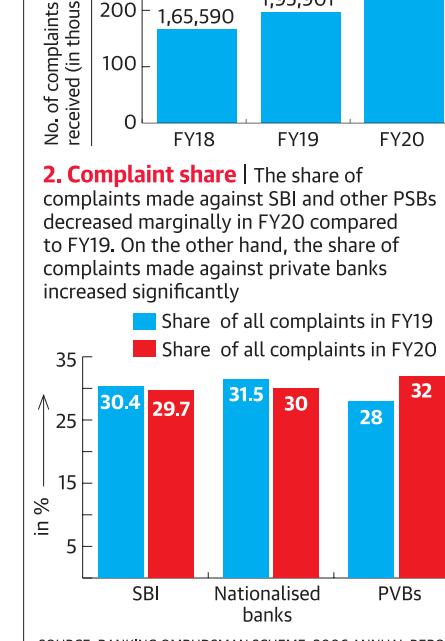
DATA POINT

Banking and its discontents

1. Total complaints | As many as 3,08,630 complaints against banks were received by the ombudsman in FY20, a 57.5% increase over FY19. The chart shows the number of complaints received from FY18 to FY20.

2. Complaint share | The share of complaints made against SBI and other PSBs decreased marginally in FY20 compared to FY19. On the other hand, the share of complaints made against private banks increased significantly.

■ Share of all complaints in FY19
■ Share of all complaints in FY20



Over 3 lakh complaints were made against banks to the RBI's banking ombudsman in FY20, over 50% more than in FY19. While the share of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in the total complaints reduced in FY20, that of Private Banks (PVBs) increased. Nevertheless, the highest number of such grievances in FY20 were against the PSB behemoth State Bank of India (SBI). Notably, 44.5% of complaints in FY20 were related to digital services, a significant increase from 33% in FY19 – a consequence of rising digital transactions. By Sumanth Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

3. Digital risk | About 45% of complaints in FY20 were related to digital services such as ATM/debit/credit cards and mobile/electronic transactions. The chart shows the top ten categories under which complaints were made in FY20. Nearly 22% of all complaints were related to ATM/debit cards – the highest among all categories.

■ ATM/Debit cards 67,800 (Total complaints)
■ Non-observance of Fair Practices Code 36,215 (11.73%)

■ Credit cards 28,713 (8.11%)
■ Failure to meet commitments 25,036 (8.11%)

■ Non-adherence to BCSBI Codes 14,194 (4.60%)
■ Levy of charges without prior notice 18,558 (6.01%)

■ Deposit Accounts-related 8,778 (2.84%)
■ Loans and advances 16,437 (5.33%)

■ Pension payments 6,307 (2.04%)

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FROM PAGE ONE

Toolkit case: activists seek anticipatory bail

This was to be followed by physical action on January 26, and joining the farmers' march into Delhi and back to the borders. Police said the unfolding of events, including the violence of January 26, was a copycat execution of the action plan.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Cyber Crime) of the Delhi Police, Prem Nath, said NBWs have been issued against advocate Ms. Jacob, a resident of Goregaon, and Mr. Muluk, a native of Maharashtra's Beed district who resides in Pune and an engineer by profession.

Police claimed that evidence so far revealed that the toolkit was created by Ms. Jacob, Mr. Muluk and Ms. Ravi. The Special Cell is investigating.

Mr. Nath said that after the case was registered to investigate the toolkit, it was found that it was created by alleged pro-Khalistani group 'Poetic Justice Foundation' (PJF) and people associated with it. During the probe, screenshots of the toolkit

document, available on open source, were investigated and subsequently, a search warrant was obtained on February 9 against Ms. Jacob, one of the alleged editors of the toolkit. "A team had gone to Mumbai and searches were conducted at her residence on February 11. Two laptops and one phone were found and several incriminating evidence was retrieved," he said, adding that Ms. Jacob was then asked to remain available the next day but she wasn't found when the police went.

According to the police, on January 11, Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk attended a Zoom meeting organised by PJF, in which the modalities of the "global day of action" were worked out, and based on the course of action decided during this meeting, "Nikita, Disha, Shantanu and others collaborated towards the drafts of the toolkit".

Police claimed that a team was also sent to Beed but Mr. Muluk wasn't found.

Lawyers flag violation of norms in Disha arrest

The practice of police arresting a person outside the State, but bringing them back and producing them before a magistrate in their own jurisdiction is not in accordance with law, the MHA guidelines said. Further, Section 80 of CrPC stipulates that the arrested person must be produced before the magistrate within the jurisdiction of arrest, which must be followed in every case, the guidelines said. However, this has not been followed in this case, the lawyers claim.

"Being 'arrested' from Bengaluru, she should have been produced before the competent court in Bengaluru itself for obtaining transit remand since she is being moved between States, but

Indians concerned about privacy, says CJI

The hearing concerned the new privacy policy introduced by WhatsApp on January 4. The allegation is that it scraps users' 'opt-out policy'. The user would have to, according to the policy, compulsorily consent to share their data with Facebook and its group, the petitioners have alleged. The policy deadline was February 8 initially, but it was extended to May 15.

Mr. Sibal denied allegations that WhatsApp was treating Europeans and Indians differently. "Europe has a special law [General Data Protection Regulations], India doesn't. As soon as India has the special law, we will follow. We will follow the law of Parliament," he submitted. The new privacy policy was applicable to the rest of the

world except Europe. Mr. Datar said the General Data Protection Regulations was followed by probably 20 countries in the world. Allegations of differential treatment being accorded to Indians were unfounded.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for petitioner Karmanya Singh Sareen and others challenging the new privacy policy, said they were not on whether WhatsApp was encrypting messages or not. "We are on the point of sharing of meta data for profit," he submitted. "There is a different set of rules for Europeans and different for Indians... Even the government has taken serious note and issued notices to the companies," he said. He urged the court to ensure that no data is leaked.

China pulls back from Finger 4 heights

This took place amid action on the South bank, to gain tactical advantage.

Stating that disengagement is going at a good pace and could be complete by end of this week, the official said it was a huge logistical task to transport all the equipment, the stocking that was done and dismantling the structures that were built as part of the massive build up by both sides.

Once disengagement at Pangong lake is complete, Corps Commander talks would be held within 48 hours, which is likely to happen next week to discuss the next phase which would fo-

cus on the friction points at Gogra and Hot Springs.

Two government officials observed that some disengagement has already been undertaken at Patrolling Points (PP) 15 and 17A and so it wouldn't take much time to work out and complete the disengagement here.

The bigger issue of contention between the two sides would be Depsang, especially as there have been developments there for several years now much before the standoff last year, one of the official added. Chinese troops have been blocking Indian Army patrols from patrolling up to the PP 10 to 13 in the Depsang Plains.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said the court would take up the case again for hearing on the Monday after a fortnight.

Kerala journalist gets 5-day bail

SC allows Siddique Kappan, now under detention in U.P., to visit his ailing mother

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday gave Kerala Union of Working Journalists secretary Siddique Kappan, charged with sedition and jailed in Uttar Pradesh since October, five days to visit his mother on her deathbed in Kerala.

Mr. Kappan was detained while travelling with some others to Hathras district in U.P., where a Dalit girl had died following alleged gang-rape.

The Supreme Court said Mr. Kappan would be escorted by the U.P. police while visiting Kerala. The court barred Mr. Kappan from giving interviews, including on social media. He would not meet any members of the public except his relatives, doctors or others connected to his mother's health. He would be back in prison by the end of the fifth day.

According to the police, on January 11, Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk attended a Zoom meeting organised by PJF, in which the modalities of the "global day of action" were worked out, and based on the course of action decided during this meeting, "Nikita, Disha, Shantanu and others collaborated towards the drafts of the toolkit".

Police claimed that a team was also sent to Beed but Mr. Muluk wasn't found.

Yediurappa's family taking bribes, alleges MLA Yatnal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BELAGAVI

BJP MLA and former Union Minister Basanagouda Patil Yatnal has yet again launched an attack on Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and his son B.Y. Vijayendra.

Ahead of the State visit of BJP national general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Arun Singh, which is scheduled on Wednesday, Mr. Yatnal alleged that Mr. Yediyurappa's family members were engaged in "large-scale corruption".

"They are bringing a bad name to the State government and the BJP," he said in Vijayapura on Monday.

"Around 30 members of Yediyurappa's family are living in Kaveri, the Chief Minister's official residence. These relatives include his children and grandchildren. They are taking bribes to sanction projects and to transfer officials. The main person behind all this is B.Y. Vijayendra. Yediyurappa is helpless as he is old and weak. These relatives were nowhere to be seen when Yediyurappa was the Opposition leader and at other times. There was only a cook and an assistant with him in those days. These relatives have gathered around him only for power," he said.

Criticises CM's son

Responding to a statement by Mr. Vijayendra that the Chief Minister was working in an environment surrounded by "snakes and scorpions", Mr. Yatnal said such venomous creatures were in the Chief Minister's house itself.

"Vijayendra is running the government virtually. MLAs who have met him complain that they have to stand before him as there is no second chair in his chamber. They are all keeping quiet as they are after power," he said.

State wanted stay of order on Thiruvananthapuram facility

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday adjourned the hearing of a Kerala government petition against the Centre's "illegal" move to handover the Thiruvananthapuram airport to the Adani group.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said the court would take up the case again for hearing on the Monday after a fortnight.

The court disagreed when



Brief respite: A file photo of a protest by journalists in New Delhi seeking the release of Siddique Kappan • PTI

The court instructed that Mr. Kappan's police guard should not remain present when he meets his mother at their home. They would only guard the house. The Bench directed the Kerala police to cooperate with its U.P. counterpart.

'Magical emergency'

The U.P. government strongly opposed the decision. It termed Mr. Kappan's plea to meet his 90-year-old mother

a "magical emergency" projected to circumvent the law.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for U.P., said the ground given by Mr. Kappan for a five-day furlough was "tempting" and it would be "unfair" to the State to allow him his plea.

"This is not a question of temptation. It is about seeing his mother for the last time... We are willing to commit the error... If she is going to die, what will you do? We are al-

lowing this on humanitarian grounds," Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde replied.

Mr. Mehta said Mr. Kappan had been arrested carrying material to incite caste violence. "He has the worst case on merits and he has nothing to do with journalism... He is a PFI [Popular Front of India] activist," he said.

Mr. Mehta submitted: "He was given half-hour to chat with his mother on video-conferencing. She could not recognise him... There is no medical certificate to show his mother's condition."

The CJI told Mr. Mehta, "We take it that, whoever the man, will not lie about the condition of his mother..."

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for the Kerala Union of Working Journalists, said the hospital had "given up" on the mother's health and she may have only a few days more.

local chit fund operator, at the Nedunkandam police station purportedly to recover money he had received as deposits from the public. The financier died on June 21 at the Peerumedu taluk hospital during treatment.

After a public outcry, the State government appointed the judicial commission to look into the case. Justice Kurup ordered exhuming of the body and a postmortem examination as he found several lapses in the first autopsy report. The second autopsy revealed new injuries.

The CBI, probing the case, said nine police personnel subjected Rajkumar to prolonged torture and harsh questioning on the station house's first floor.

Accused in custodial death case sacked

Man died of torture in Kerala in 2019

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Monday decided to dismiss from service the police personnel responsible for the custodial death of a 49-year-old remand prisoner at a police station in Idukki district in July 2019.

The government said it had accepted the K. Narayana Kurup Commission inquiry report on the custodial death of the prisoner, K. Rajkumar. It was the commission's recommendation that the accused police personnel be dismissed.

The Cabinet on Monday ordered their discharge from service as per Article 311(2) of the Constitution.

The case related to the alleged torture of Rajkumar, a

metowns in Kerala, the residents of the apartment may have contracted it at a social gathering where protocols were not followed, he added.

An order, as per the recommendation of the State's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), will be issued making it mandatory for anyone from Kerala coming into the city to possess a negative RT-PCR test report that is not older than 72 hours. Those who do not possess this will be made to undergo quarantine and allowed to move out only after they have been tested negative.

While nearly 200 primary and secondary contacts of the nursing students had been identified, officials were identifying contacts of those who had tested positive in Bilekahalli. The contacts have been isolated and placed under quarantine.

IN BRIEF



Best novel award for S. Hareesh's 'Meesa'

THIRISSUR
The Kerala Sahitya Akademi fellowships and awards for 2019 were announced on Monday. S. Hareesh's 'Meesa' won the award for best novel. 'Rathri Panthranda-koru Tharat' by P. Ramam and 'Kothiyam' by M.R. Renukumar won the best poetry award.

TTD to expand Veda Patasala at Keesaragutta

TIRUMALA
TTD executive officer K.S. Jawahar Reddy on Monday urged officials to prepare estimates for expanding the Veda Patasala at Keesaragutta in Telangana. Patasala principal Malikarjun Avadhani apprised Mr. Reddy on the need for additional classrooms and hostels.

Door delivery of rations can continue, says HC

VIJAYAWADA
The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday suspended the State Election Commission's order against the door delivery of rations in rural areas till March 15. The HC directed the SEC not to restrain the government from delivering ration goods till the above date.

PSC rankers' strike intensifies in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The statewide protest by PSC rankers in Kerala for government jobs intensified on Monday. The agitators stood on their knees in front of the Secretariat here. Their compatriots in Kannur and Kozhikode protested with begging bowls.

Sharmila holds talks with YSR loyalists

Multiple interactions planned in Telangana to seek feedback on party launch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Ahead of her proposed political entry in Telangana, Y.S. Sharmila, daughter of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, began her second round of consultations with her father's admirers on Monday.

Sources said former MLC Magam Ranga Reddy, a veteran editor of a vernacular daily, a large number of admirers of the late Chief Minister from Khammam district were among those who held discussions with Ms. Sharmila.

On February 20, Ms. Sharmila is scheduled to interact with leaders from Ranga Reddy and Hyderabad districts.

According to the leaders who interacted with her, Ms. Sharmila intends to complete all the consultations before April 15 so that she can get a feedback on her proposed new political party.

Even if she announces

her intention to float a new party, it would take at least 45 days for her to formally launch it with fanfare at a public meeting, sources said.

Her close confidants, it is understood, are now drawing an action plan on how to

reach out to the people of Telangana. They are also listing out the issues that could be highlighted when she tours the districts. Leaders do not rule out Ms. Sharmila undertaking a padayatra in the near future. She might also call on the families of farmers, hold select meetings in the districts and spend at least 20 days in a month in the districts to meet people.

Sources maintain that there is only a difference of opinion between Ms. Sharmila and her brother and A.P. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, but no rift in the family. She is very clear about pursuing a political career in Telangana on her own, sources said.

Polls to A.P. urban local bodies on March 10

STAFF REPORTER
GUNTUR

The Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission issued a notification on Monday to 'continue the election process', from the 'stage of withdrawal', in respect of 12 municipal corporations and 75 municipalities/ nagara panchayats in Andhra Pradesh.

According to the election schedule released by the SEC, elections will be held for all urban local bodies (ULBs) on March 10.

According to a release by State Election Commission

er Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, the election process set in motion on March 9, 2020 for conduct of ordinary elections to ULBs, had been completed up to the stage of scrutiny of nominations on March 14, 2020.

The commission had stopped the process midway due to the threat of COVID-19 for a period of six weeks and issued further orders on May 6, 2020 postponing the process until further orders. The latest notification is for resuming the process from the stage where it was stopped.

EPFO Board to meet in Srinagar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's (EPFO) Central Board of Trustees was scheduled to meet in Srinagar on March 4, according to an invitation sent to Board members by the EPFO on Monday.

The Board members were informed that the 228th meeting of the EPF's Central Board of Trustees was scheduled to be held in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir on March 4, and the exact time and venue would be decided later. The agenda for the meeting would be sent to the members soon, it said.

DYFI member injured during march dies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

A 31-year-old member of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), youth wing of the CPI(M), who sustained injuries during the march to the Secretariat on February 11, died on Monday at a health facility here.

Leaders of the Left parties alleged that Maidul Islam Siddha, resident of Bankura district, died of injuries sustained during police action.

CPI(M) leader Fuad Halim said the activist's condition started deteriorating on February 13 and the reason for the death could be "kidney failure following excessive assault on muscles".

Dr. Halim said there was "little doubt that he died because of the injuries sustained in the police action".

'Grave implications for free speech'

Opposition leaders condemn booking of 22-year-old activist and others on toolkit issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Political leaders opposed to the ruling BJP have condemned the arrest of 22-year-old climate change activist Disha Ravi, saying it has grave implications for free speech and democracy.

"Arrest of 21 yr old Disha Ravi is an unprecedented attack on Democracy. Supporting our farmers is not a crime," said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a tweet on Monday morning.

DMK MP Kanimozhi tweeted with the hashtags #FreeDishaRavi and #IndiaBeingSilenced. "Arresting a young woman for retweeting a tweet supporting the farmers is undemocratic. I stand with Disha Ravi against this onslaught on freedom of expression," she said.

Posting news articles on Ms. Ravi's arrest, as well as threats against journalists and Twitter employees, Congress leader and MP Rahul Gandhi tweeted a couplet in Hindi. "Your lips are free to speak/Say that the truth is still alive!" it said.



Loud and clear: Members of the All India Students' Association protesting against the arrest of Disha Ravi in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ MURALI KUMAR

"They are scared, not the country! India won't be silenced."

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also tweeted a Hindi couplet. "Those with arms are scared of an unarmed girl/The light of courage has been spread by this unarmed girl," she said.

Rajya Sabha member and former Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh tweeted a news report on the non-bailable warrant issued against

another activist as well. "Delhi Police on the rampage. After Disha Ravi, it is now the turn of another young woman, Nikita Jacob. More will no doubt follow...This is Tanashaahi [which means, dictatorship] in New India called Amit Shah!" he said.

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau issued an official statement condemning the arrest as an "atrocious action". It noted that the charges of sedition

and criminal conspiracy were made on the "absurd grounds" of forwarding a toolkit. "The paranoid Modi government has to forthwith end this persecution of young activists. The charges against Disha Ravi should be withdrawn and she has to be released from custody," she tweeted.

Late on Sunday, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor tweeted a British newspaper's article on Ms. Ravi's arrest and

warned of the international fallout. "DishaRavi's arrest is the latest escalation in India's crackdown on free expression & political dissent as it seeks [to] stifle the farmers' mass protests, says the @dailymail UK. Doesn't Goli care about the damage it's doing to its own global image?" he tweeted.

Act of suppression

British MP Claudia Webbe was one of the first international figures to comment on the arrest. "A climate activist from India, she campaigns for clean air, clean water and a liveable planet. She is now facing state sanctioned violence for peacefully supporting farmers. Silence is not an option we must all condemn this act of suppression," she tweeted.

American lawyer Meena Harris, who is the niece of U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris, tweeted in support of both Ms. Ravi, and Nodeep Kaur, a 23-year-old labour rights activist, who was arrested last month. She urged her followers to "ask why activists are being targeted and silenced by the government."

Twitter keeps off Minister's account

Complaint filed over Anil Vij's tweet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij on Monday said anyone who nurtured the thought of opposing the country should be eradicated completely.

He was commenting on the arrest of 22-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi.

Having investigated a complaint against the Minister's tweet on the subject, Twitter decided not to remove it.



Anil Vij

MP compares Disha to Kasab, sparks row

BENGALURU A tweet from BJP MP from Bengaluru Central P.C.

Mohan, comparing arrested climate activist Disha Ravi to terrorists Ajmal Kasab and Burhan Wani, sparked widespread criticism in the city. "Burhan Wani was a 21-year-old. Ajmal Kasab was a 21-year-old. Age is just a number! No one is above the law. Law will take its own course. A crime is a crime is a crime is a crime," Mr. Mohan tweeted on Sunday night.

of manipulating young activists like Ms. Ravi.

The Left has been using young impressionable minds as cannon fodder for their deranged politics. From JNU to Jamia, AMU to Nadwa and now Disha Ravi, are all part of their sinister plot... Unfortunately they are abandoned soon after they have served their purpose!" he tweeted.

Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat took a dig at those pointing out Ms. Ravi's young age.

"If age is the criteria then Param Veer Chakra Second Lt Arun Khetarpal, martyred at 21 is who I am proud of. Not some #toolkit propagandists!" he tweeted.

Farmers, politicians and public join hands

It is sad that young people with ideas and passion are being persecuted for their views, says historian

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Several hundred people including farmers' leaders, politicians and ordinary citizens took part in protests in support of environmental activist Disha A. Ravi, who was arrested on Saturday by the Delhi police in connection with the Greta Thunberg toolkit case. Hundreds gathered at the iconic Mysore Bank Circle on Monday de-

manding that she be released.

Among the protesters was historian Ramachandra Guha, who held a placard 'Free Disha Ravi'.

Stating that it was sad that young people with ideas and passion were being persecuted for their views, Mr. Guha compared the situation to the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975.

"I have lived through the

Emergency – as a student and as a historian – and we are reaching that pass today. It is deeply disturbing," Mr. Guha said.

Farmers leader Badaglura Nagendra of the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha strongly condemned Ms. Ravi's arrest and saw it as a continuation of crackdown on protesting farmers.

"We stand with Disha Ravi who has been fighting for us

farmers. The moment we spoke up for our rights, even we have become anti-nationalists," he said.

Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah tweeted: "The arrest of Disha Ravi has exposed the cracks in Indian democracy under Narendra Modi. How can the act of supporting farmers be charged under sedition?"

The Congress leader added that the arrest was a "politi-

cally motivated act".

Meanwhile, Ms. Ravi's friends launched a digital campaign #fingeronyourlips. Hundreds of users posted pictures with fingers on their lips, condemning her arrest and the persecution of two other activists, Nikita Jacob and Shantanu.

Student-led organisations said the arrest was an attempt by the authorities to silence them.

RLD regains currency in U.P.

Jayant Chaudhary, who has backed the farmers, sees revival of old ties

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) has thrown its force behind the ongoing farmers' agitation over the three contentious farm laws, with its leader, former MP Jayant Chaudhary, declaring an extended programme of *mahapanchayats* across western Uttar Pradesh till the first week of March.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Chaudhary said the farmers' agitation had legitimate grievances and the coming together of all communities in the area was also repairing some of the breaches in the social fabric that occurred during the 2013 communal riots in the districts of western U.P.

"These are questions of livelihood that are bringing people together now, the strongest glue that keeps society together. The social fabric that was rent in 2013, is repairing over these more fundamental questions," he said.



Jayant Chaudhary addressing a kisan panchayat in Hathras on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"In all the *mahapanchayats* and public meetings that are being held, people are turning up on their own. Elections are still a year away, there is no candidate hiring buses for crowds to be brought in. People are turning up because the issue affects them fundamentally," he said.

Mr. Chaudhary's party, founded by his grandfather and former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, had traditionally found its support base among both the Jat and Muslim peasantry in

western U.P., with its politics hinging on agrarian issues. The 2013 communal riots in the area, however, polarised the two communities, with the RLD's political fortunes being wiped out in the process. The BJP did well in western Uttar Pradesh in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections as well as the 2017 Assembly election as it managed to capture the Jat vote.

In the 2017 Assembly elections in fact, the BJP got 117 seats, with the Samajwadi Party (SP) getting just 20, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which also had a traditional support base there, got three seats and the RLD just one.

The farmers' agitation has also been strong in western U.P., recalling the old socio-political alliances. With that of course has also risen the recall value of the iconic farm leader Chaudhary Charan Singh with even Prime Minister Modi quoting him in his speech in Parliament in the just-concluded first part of the Budget session.

"I'm glad that Chaudhary Charan Singh's legacy is being talked about. I would have preferred it if the government would walk that talk, and really do something to alleviate the situation of Indian farmers," said Mr. Chaudhary.

Whether the farmers' agitation will prove a political inflection point in India's most politically significant State, will, however, have to wait till the 2022 Assembly polls.

Geospatial data policy liberalised

Move will help drive innovations and build scalable solutions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

In sweeping changes to the country's mapping policy, the government on Monday announced liberalisation of norms governing the acquisition and production of geospatial data, a move to help boost innovation in the sector and create a level playing field for public and private entities.

Under the new guidelines, the sector will be deregulated and aspects such as prior approvals for surveying, mapping and building applications

based on that have been done away with, Department of Science and Technology Secretary Ashutosh Sharma said.

For Indian entities, there will be complete deregulation with no prior approvals, security clearances and licences for the acquisition and production of geospatial data and geospatial data services, including maps, he said.

Generate employment Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan in a press conference said the easing of norms will greatly help in several sectors that were suf-

ferring because of non-availability of high quality maps.

The move will unlock tremendous opportunities for the country's start-ups, private sector, public sector, and research institutions, to drive innovations and build scalable solutions, he said.

"India's farmers will also be benefited by leveraging the potential of geospatial and remote sensing data," he said.

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CM YK

Leatherback nesting sites could be overrun by Andamans development project

Proposed intensive growth in islands contradicts National Marine Turtle Action Plan released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

PANKAJ SEKHARIA

Proposals for tourism and port development in the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands have conservationists worried over the fate of some of the most important nesting populations of the Giant Leatherback turtle in this part of the Indian Ocean.

The largest of the seven species of sea turtles on the planet and also the most long-ranging, Leatherbacks are found in all oceans except the Arctic and the Antarctic. Within the Indian Ocean, they nest only in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and are also listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, according it the highest legal protection.

Surveys conducted in the A&N Islands over the past three decades have shown that the populations here could be among the most important colonies of the Leatherback globally. There is concern now, however, that at least three key nest-

ing beaches – two on Little Andaman Island and one on Great Nicobar Island – are under threat due to mega "development" plans announced in recent months. These include NITI Aayog's ambitious tourism vision for Little Andaman and the proposal for a mega-shipment port at Galathea Bay on Great Nicobar Island.

Little Andaman in focus
The Little Andaman plan, which proposes phased growth of tourism on this virtually untouched island, has sought the de-reservation of over 200 sq km of pristine rainforest and also of about 140 sq km of the Ongole Tribal Reserve. Two sites where key components of the tourism plan are to be implemented are both Leatherback nesting sites – South Bay along the southern coast of the island and West Bay along its western coast. South Bay is proposed to be part of the "Leisure Zone" where a film city, a residential district and a tourism special economic zone are to come up. West Bay is

to be part of West Bay Nature Retreat with theme resorts, underwater resorts, beach hotels and high-end residential villas.

The roughly 7-km-long beach at West Bay has been the site of ongoing marine turtle research projects. Set up post-2004 by the Andaman and Nicobar Environment Team (ANET), Dakshin Foundation, the Indian Institute of Science and the A&N Forest Department to monitor how turtle populations have responded after the devastating earthquake and tsunami, it has thrown up new information on turtles and their behaviour. Not only are the numbers of females nesting here significant, satellite telemetry has revealed hitherto unknown migration patterns. Satellite-tagged female turtles have been tracked swimming up to 13,000 km after nesting on West Bay, towards the western coast of Australia and southwest towards the eastern coast of Africa. One of the tagged turtles travelled to Madagascar, covering 12,328 km in 395 days



Gentle giant: A Leatherback nesting at West Bay, Little Andaman. ■ ADHITH SWAMINATHAN

while another travelled 13,237 km in 266 days to the Mozambique coast.

Waning protection

For the Leatherback, perhaps even more important is Great Nicobar Island, the southernmost of the A&N group. Large numbers have been recorded nesting here – mainly on the long and wide beaches at the mouth of the Dagmar and Alexan-

dria rivers on the west coast and at the mouth of the Galathea river along its south eastern coast. Galathea Bay was, in fact, proposed as a wildlife sanctuary in 1997 for the protection of turtles and was also the site of a long-term monitoring programme. The monitoring was stopped after the tsunami devastation of 2004, but it provided the first systematic evidence of numbers

and importance of these beaches.

The A&N Islands are prominent in the National Marine Turtle Action Plan released on February 1, 2021, by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The plan notes that "India has identified all its important sea turtle nesting habitats as 'Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas' and included them in

the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) - 1". South Bay and West Bay on Little Andaman and Galathea on Great Nicobar, along with other nesting beaches in the islands, find a specific mention here as "Important Marine Turtle Habitats in India" and the largest Leatherback nesting grounds in India.

The plan identifies coastal development, including construction of ports, jetties, resorts and industries, as major threats to turtle populations. It also asks for assessments of the environmental impact of marine and coastal development that may affect marine turtle populations and their habitats.

Developments in the A&N Islands indicate, however, that even as the action plan was being finalised, decisions were being made in violation of its basic concerns and premises. Not only has the mega-tourism plan in Little Andaman been pushed in spite of serious objections by the A&N Forest Department, a major decision was also made recent-

(Pankaj Sekhsaria has been researching issues of the A&N Islands for more than two decades and has authored five books on the islands.)

IN BRIEF



Mamata launches 'Maa Canteens'

KOLKATA
With an eye on the upcoming Assembly poll, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday launched 'Maa Canteens' for providing subsidised cooked meals for the poor and the destitute at a nominal cost of ₹5. "This new initiative is for the common people. Though we give free rations, there is still a huge demand for cooked food. Therefore, we are starting these community kitchens," she said.

Prof. Saibaba is back in solitary confinement

MUMBAI
Wheelchair-bound Prof. G.N. Saibaba, who is 90% physically disabled and has tested positive for COVID-19, has been sent back to the 'anda cell' (solitary confinement) at the Nagpur Central Jail after being taken to the Government Medical College, Nagpur. His brother Ramdevudu said the family had sought his medical reports and permission to speak to him.

Gujarat CM tests positive for COVID-19

AHMEDABAD
Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday, a day after he fainted on stage while addressing a municipal election rally in Vadodara. In a health bulletin, U.N. Mehta Hospital, where Mr. Rupani has been admitted, stated that his RT-PCR test had come back positive. He has mild symptoms. His health parameters were said to be normal.

HQ quashes FIR against one of Sushant's sisters

MUMBAI
The Bombay High Court on Monday refused to quash the FIR against Priyanka, sister of the late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, but granted relief to Meetu Singh, another sister, in the case of alleged abetment to suicide. A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing a plea seeking to quash the FIR filed by actor Rhea Chakraborty.

MDL delivers Scorpene submarine to Navy

NEW DELHI
Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) on Monday delivered the third Scorpene class conventional submarine, which will subsequently be commissioned into service as INS Karanj, to the Navy. The acceptance document was signed by Vice-Admiral Narayan Prasad (retd.), who is the Chairman of MDL, and Rear Admiral B. Sivakumar from the Western Naval Command.

New COVID-19 vaccines in 90 days, says Minister

Many candidates are under development'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

In the coming two to three months, India would be all set to roll out more COVID-19 vaccines other than the two in use now, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Monday. The country had not seen a single vaccine-related death so far and negligible rate of hospitalisation following vaccination, he added.

At a press conference on Budget allocation for the health sector, he said ₹35,000 crore had been allocated for vaccination.

"We have anywhere between 18 and 19 vaccination candidates currently under various stages of development, and we are hopeful that we will be able to offer newer vaccines to India and the people of the world. India is also set to start vacci-



First doses: So far, two vaccines – Covishield and Covaxin – have been approved for use in India. ■ PTI

nation for those over 50 years of age soon," he said.

So far, 80-85% health and front line workers have been vaccinated but now more than ever before it was crucial that people continued to follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour, "which I call social vaccine, along with real vaccines", the Minister said.

In the Budget, provision had been made to ensure that India invested in preventive and promotive health care and remained prepared for unexpected health calamities.

"COVID-19 has strengthened the country's health potential. We turned a crisis into opportunity. From one lab, India has grown to 2,500 diagnostic labs, and genome sequencing, which is being talked about now, has been in Indian labs since May-June last year," he noted. "Through this Budget, we have brought in the dream of 'Health for All'. Our holistic approach, ancient medical wisdom, other health facilities and systems collectively will be a model for the world," he added.

Relief work is also being carried out by various agencies in the villages.

Four more bodies found in Chamoli

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The death toll in the aftermath of a snow avalanche in Uttarakhand's Chamoli on February 7 has gone up to 55, with the recovery of four more bodies on Monday.

Three bodies were recovered from the Tapovan hydel project tunnel, while another body was found in Maithana. The search teams have also recovered 22 body parts from different places so far.

According to the Chamoli police, the identities of 29 bodies had been established. The DNA samples of unidentified bodies and 56 family members of missing persons have been stored for matching.

"The Vice-President and her family will uphold the highest ethical standards and it's the White House's policy that the Vice-President's name should not be used in connection with any commercial activities to suggest an endorsement.

The Jaislamer police station has registered a total of 179 missing persons. The operation of removing slush from the Tapovan tunnel is still under way and about 140 metres have been cleared.

Relief work is also being carried out by various agencies in the villages.

'Harris, family will uphold highest ethical standards'

White House statement on row over niece's use of her name

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN WASHINGTON DC

Reacting to news reports including in the *Los Angeles Times* of growing concern over Vice-President Kamala Harris' niece Meena Harris using her aunt's name to promote her business and brand, the White House said the Vice-President and her family will uphold "the highest ethical standards", adding that her name should not be used in any commercial activities to suggest an endorsement.

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Kamala Harris

White House official (whose name was withheld) was "taken aback" after watching a Meena Harris interview with former first daughter Jenna Bush Hager.

"Something can't be undone" but "behaviour needs to change," the official is quoted as saying.

The interview, aired five days before the presidential inauguration, featured photos of the Harris family and Meena Harris' children's book *Ambitious Girl* as well as T-shirts from her clothing brand, Phenomenal.

Ms. Meena Harris, a 36-

year-old Harvard educated lawyer and businesswoman, has used themes connected with her aunt, including a T-shirt that says, "I'm Speaking" – a reference to what Ms. Harris had said when interrupted by her opponent, former Vice-President Mike Pence during a pre-election debate.

The *LA Times* story said the conflicts "do not rival" entanglements in the Trump presidency.

Ms. Meena Harris has been in the news more recently after she tweeted in support of the farmers' protests.

On Monday, she retweeted an article on the arrest of 21-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi.

"The White House does not have standing to interfere in what Ms. Harris says about the farmers' protests. Ms. Harris has been in the news more recently after she tweeted in support of the farmers' protests.

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Justice Sawant, former SC judge, passes away

He was dedicated to social causes'

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE PUNE



Justice P.B. Sawant

was unflagging, and he remained active and tireless to the very end. His strict sense of justice and conduct of public affairs was inspirational and an example to all of us," he said.

Justice Sawant, who started practising in the Bombay High Court in 1973, was appointed judge in the Supreme Court in 1989.

In 2002, he, along with retired Bombay High Court Judge Hosbet Suresh, served on an Indian People's Tribunal headed by Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer to investigate the 2002 Gujarat riots.

In 2003, Justice Sawant chaired a commission formed to investigate corruption charges against four Ministers in the then Congress-Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) government in Maharashtra.

More students getting back to school

Classes 10, 12 in Kendriya Vidyalayas register two-thirds physical attendance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Two out of three Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV) students in Classes 10 and 12 are now attending physical classes, four months after their schools started gradually reopening their doors. However, Education Ministry data show that the attendance levels of Classes 9 and Class 11 students are still below the 50% mark.

With the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) announcing its schedule for Board examinations starting in May, and practical examinations kicking off from March 1, students in Classes 10 and 12 have faced the most urgency in returning to

a face-to-face teaching and learning process.

According to data compiled from all KVs on February 11, an average of 65% of Class 10 and 67% of Class 12 students are attending physical classes. With regards to Class 11 students, 48% have returned to the classroom, while the attendance rate is 42% for those in Class 9.

cooking gas by ₹50 per cylinder. "Loot from the public. And development for only two," tweeted Mr. Gandhi. He tagged a news report on how LPG prices had been hiked twice in a span of 10 days as the cost of a cylinder was increased by ₹25 on February 4.

Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala tweeted a throwback picture of June 2011 in which Union Minister Smriti Irani was seen protesting over a ₹50 hike in LPG prices. "Prices of cylinders have gone up ₹175 per cylinder. Will you say something now or prefer to keep quiet to enjoy the perks of power?" tweeted Mr. Surjewala.

At the party's official briefing, spokesperson Supriya Shrimate placed two cy-



Getting set: The CBSE has announced that the Board examinations will start in May. ■ FILE PHOTO

linders on the podium during her press conference and called the repeated hikes in fuel and LPG prices as "proof of the Narendra Modi government's insensitivity".

"If you look at the two increases of ₹50 each on LPG cylinders during the month of December, then the government has increased ₹175 per cylinder in the past two months," Ms. Shrimate said.

Truck mishap kills 15 in Maharashtra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUNE

Fifteen persons were killed and two others injured when a fruit-laden truck they were travelling in overturned in Jalgaon district in north Maharashtra early on Monday.

According to the Jalgaon police, the accident occurred sometime after Sunday midnight when a paddy-laden tempo truck coming from neighbouring Dhule district overturned near Kingaon village.

REVIEW

The Sony PlayStation 5 lives up to the fan fervour circling it before its February launch in India. Here is why

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Some say it looks like a high-tech sandwich, others say it looks like a school folder – the PlayStation 5 console and digital editions are a statement from Sony Interactive Entertainment on their confidence about next-gen gaming. The PS5 is a pretty add-on for your home's display thanks to the futuristic blue, white and yellow lights varying with its mode. You can choose which orientation to place the unit, attaching the base accordingly so that the curvatures of the design do not have it tilting awkwardly. The attachable base is also helpful in keeping the off-white surfaces of the console scuff-free.

Reviewing the base console edition, it comes with the comfortably ergonomic DualSense controller. Sony has kept this as familiar as possible for those upgrading from the Dualshock 4, but with a few add-ons such as more responsive thumbsticks, with better grip. The triggers are also slightly more resistant for better control.

DualSense comes with Sony's new Tempest 3D AudioTech, which comes into full effect if you plug compatible headsets into the AUX jack in the controller itself. This lived up to Sony's promise of providing highly accurate audio positioning to facilitate a new level of immersion... and is ideal if you want to game quietly. Games such as Spider-Man: Miles Morales, which have a lot of verticality, were enhanced by Tempest 3D AudioTech as it helped me gauge situational awareness better when travelling through the city or fighting enemies. I am not a community gamer so the micro-

Let the games begin



phone was not put to that test just yet, but the voice command tool was effective in the times I was too lazy to navigate.

I got a lot of pull from the DualSense's battery life, which you can monitor through the PS5's user interface. I love that you can recharge this instead of relying on rechargeable batteries as one does with the Xbox controller. In games that often employ adaptive triggers, I got at least eight straight hours of gameplay before it reached one bar. Households with multiple gamers can opt for the charging dock.

Back to the console...

Setting up the PS5 is very easy. Clearly Sony wanted users to daily less on set-up and more on gameplay and experience. You have to agree only to two of the three terms: the software license agreement and having a PlayStation Network account. Sharing usage data with Sony is optional. I had teamed the console with a Sony Bravia 65-inch 4K Ultra HD television and a

SPECIFICATIONS

Dimensions: Base: 390 mm x 260 mm x 104 mm (15.4 in x 10.2 in x 4.1 in)

Weight: 4.5 kg (9.9 lb)

CPU: Custom 8-core AMD Zen 2, variable frequency, up to 3.5 GHz

Memory: 16 GB GDDR6 SDRAM

Storage: Custom 825 GB SSD

Removable storage:

Internal (user upgradeable) NVMe M.2 SSD, or external USB-based HDD

Display: HDMI: 720p, 1080i, 1080p, 4K UHD, 8K UHD

Graphics: Custom AMD RDNA 2, 36 CU @ variable frequency up to 2.23 GHz

Sound: Custom Tempest Engine 3D Audio, Dolby Atmos & DTS:X (Blu-ray video & UHD Blu-ray video), 7.1 surround sound

Controller input: DualSense, DualShock 4, PlayStation Move

Connectivity: Wi-Fi IEEE 802.11ax, Bluetooth 5.1, Gigabit Ethernet, 2x USB 3.2 Gen 2x1, 1x USB 2.0, 1x USB-C with USB 3.2 Gen 2x1, 1x HDMI 2.1

home theatre set-up.

The boot-up time for games is significantly faster on the PS5, thanks to the

ultra-high speed SSD created for the console.

The device only audibly whirred when there was a massive loading stage within a game and this happened only a couple of times. This also meant I could switch between games easily on the fluid and clear UX of the PlayStation home page. Here, you can also keep easy track of updates and downloads as well as game progress, without needing to back out of a game completely to view these.

I tested three games – Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Assassin's Creed Valhalla and Watch Dogs: Legion – over the past two weeks; each game is incredibly unique from the others, in terms of play, graphics, audio and more. Assassin's Creed Valhalla plays beautifully here especially after the PS5 update; open-world exploration game is more vivid, and loading of distant horizons is seamless. Watch Dogs: Legion, a sandbox game with strong exploration elements was a treat and the PS5 is snappy in making sure the environment is responsive to the player, rather than the other way around.

The test for the console's quick wit came to light with Spider-Man: Miles Morales which plays at 60 frames per second. Webbing through the city and taking out baddies in a speedy manner highlighted how quickly the DualSense channels your responses

and reactions into the game. It is a rewarding experience for any gamer when you are in this much control.

Sony dives right into next gen gaming here while also taking heed of backward compatibility. Updates are quick, too. PlayStation 4 games such as Assassin's Creed Valhalla and Watch Dogs: Legion enjoyed higher or smoother frame rates but there were unexpected issues during gameplay, such as the rare bug and/or error. Those with hefty game libraries who want to save space on the latest console or are keen on the PS5 digital edition (₹39,990) can opt for compatible external hard drives that support SuperSpeed USB.

The fervour around the console was the Gold Rush of gaming. Compounding the desperation, some came up with an Augmented Reality filter on Instagram, which placed a PS5 box virtually in the user's home, and pranks of PS5 as gifts – which were just the empty boxes – took the Internet

The boot-up time for games is significantly faster on the PS5, thanks to the 'ultra-high speed SSD' created for the console.

by storm. Then came the scalping; sellers on OLX can be found selling the PS5 for as much as ₹90,000 – unfortunately, there are no strict laws against scalping but consumers have been advised not to buy these and to wait for a restock. We advise the same, do not give into temptation; buy from an authorised seller.

The PlayStation 5 console edition – though not a must-have – is a treasure trove if you manage to get your hands on one. The gameplay on the console are so smooth that it is addictive. The ₹49,990 price tag is good value for money, given consoles tend to keep for years to come, especially when they are a good mix of high-performance and easy-on-the-eye.

TECH-A-BYTE



A buddy for your browsing

Cyber-bullying, peer pressure, misinformation all make the Internet a contentious place to hang out. Imagine, however, a browser extension that told you the comment you are about to post may not have the appropriate tone or language. Enter, Mindful Extension, developed by teenager Mitchell Mark-George in Ottawa, Canada. It is already making waves on discovery and curation platform ProductHunt. It uses the power of sentiment analysis and Machine Learning, allowing users to see the emotional value of what they type online as it happens.

"The advanced analysis is done on a server. However, we respect people's privacy, and do not store this text – after the analysis is done, the text is removed from memory," says the creator in a ProductHunt forum. "Mindful uses a variety of tools to give users real-time feedback about the sentiment of what they are saying."



Original only, please

Instagram's recommendation software will start downplaying Reels that are recycled from other apps such as TikTok with visible logos or watermarks. The Facebook-owned company is getting better at using ranking signals that help in predicting whether people will find a reel entertaining and whether the platform should recommend it, the report noted.

A recent Instagram post on its creators' account highlighted new best practices for users when posting Reels. It suggested users not post a Reel that is blurry, visibly recycled, uploaded with a border, or covered mostly by text. "These types of reels won't be recommended as often to people who don't yet follow you in places like Reels tab," the post said.

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

The timing of OnePlus Band's release was well-judged – just 10 days into January. It is that time of the year when resolutions, especially fitness-related ones, blossom. It had been over three months since Xiaomi launched Mi Smart Band 5, which, like OnePlus Band, falls under the ₹2500-₹3000 price range. There were no major releases in between. And, OnePlus, especially in India, are highly regarded for their smartphones.

The band was One Plus' first wearable device. And,

going by their lofty standards, it was a slightly disappointing debut.

OnePlus talk a lot about their products' aesthetics. Most of them, are, indeed elegant. The ribbed black and grey strap (also available in orange-grey and Navy blue colours) and the rounded rectangular display were pleasing at first sight.

As with most fit-

ness bands, there aren't any physical buttons for navigation. You can tap and swipe on the 1.1-inch AMOLED display. The display also comes alive when you twist the wrist towards your face. You can turn on/off the screen by covering and uncovering the screen with your palm – this, however, did not work all the time. I also wished for more user interfaces with numbers of calories burnt, steps covered, etcetera.

Otherwise, there is not much to complain about the device per se. It offers to track 13 different activities, includ-

REVIEW

Snap on the wrist The OnePlus band has a savvy design

▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Work in progress

The OnePlus Band is a solid fitness tracker but comes with an app that still needs some shaping up

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The sleep tracker is harder to assess, but the amount of sleep is almost correct. You get a breakdown of your sleeping pattern as well – the duration of deep sleep, light sleep and being awake. It is tough to test this. I noticed, however, the tracker missing at least a couple of times I woke up in the middle of the night to get a glass of water. Sleep interruptions showed zero.

Still ahead

The band requires the OnePlus Health app, compatible with only Android phones with Android 6.0 Marshmallow and up, to function. Minimalism has been a trademark of OnePlus design. But the interface looks unfinished – like a building that has not been painted. My main grouse with the app, shared by users on Google Play and OnePlus forum, is you cannot sync it with Google Fit and other health apps, like HealthyMe.

The battery, if you switch on all the features, lasts for about nine to 10 days. Unlike the Mi Band 5, which comes with a magnetic charger, you need to remove the tracker from its strap and fix it to the charger. As OnePlus Band came after the Mi Band 5, one expected it to have more features. The Mi band, for instance, had exclusive features for women like a period tracker, which were missing in OnePlus Band. One hopes the second iteration of the Band is a much-improved one.



Scared by a HISS? These apps can help

ATHIRA M

Many of us have ophidiophobia, the fear of snakes. In fact, it is the most commonly reported phobia among humans, making the availability of facts about this misunderstood creature very important. Help is at hand in the form of four Android-only apps, dedicated to snakes, launched in Kerala – SARPA, SnakeHub, Snake Lens and Snakepedia.

Kerala is home to over 100 species of snakes that belong to 12 families. Of these, the most common venomous ones are known as the big four: spectacled cobra, Indian krait, Russell's viper and saw-scaled viper.

The apps, besides featuring scientific facts about snakes, species found in Kerala and their habitat within the state, also include information about dangerous and harmless varieties, dos and don'ts for snakebite, treatment and misconceptions, contact numbers of snake rescuers, as well as hospitals where anti-venom is available. There is also a segment to seek the help of experts. Here are a few highlights:

Snakepedia

Launched early this month, Snakepedia has a team of doctors, snake researchers, photographers and environmentalists behind it.

Says Dr Jinesh PS, who specialises in forensic medicine and is a part of the 20-member core team of Snakepedia, "People die due to snakebite, mainly because they don't go for proper treatment on time. At the same time, harmless snakes are getting killed. So we started a Facebook group, Kerala Pambukal Snakes of Kerala in 2015, to create awareness about various aspects related to snakes. It now has over 31,000 members. We also have two WhatsApp groups for doctors working in the casualty wing of hospitals to help them attend to snakebite cases. Snakepedia is an extension of what we have been doing till now. It took a year to fine-tune the whole thing, especially to create content in English and Malayalam."

In addition to 700-odd images, infographics and articles, the Android-based application has podcasts as well. "We have images provided by 130 photographers and some of them are rare shots. As for the list of hospitals, we have 170 of



SARPA, SnakeHub, Snake Lens and Snakepedia not only put users in touch with snake rescuers and experts, but also include realms of data about local species

them, including private hospitals," says Jinesh, adding that they are exploring the possibility of using Artificial Intelligence in the future.

SARPA

Snake Awareness, Rescue and Protection App (SARPA) is a venture of Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department in association with Wildlife Trust of India. It is intended to streamline rescue of snakes, to minimise human-snake conflict and create awareness about the reptile.

Muhammed Anvar, deputy director, State Forest Training Institute, Arippu, says the Forest Department trained officers and volunteers to handle snakes. "Of the 1,150 people who attended the training, 850 got certification, and 290 have registered in the app. Some of them don't have smartphones while a few are adept at using mobile applications. So we are giving them weekly online training," Anvar says. He adds that the list of rescuers, published on the Department's website, is used by other apps as well.

When a snake is spotted, a photograph is taken and uploaded onto the app. Forest officers and the handlers/rescuers then get an alert. "A picture of the snake's burrow is enough to identify the location. If a handler doesn't accept the alert within stipulated time, our staff can assign it to another handler," Anvar explains.

SnakeHub

The "comprehensive database on snakes", introduced in October, has been developed by Indriyam Biologics, a startup incubated at SSTMST-TIMed, the technology business incubator at the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology in Thiruvananthapuram. "It is an education app that has in-depth information of different species of snakes in English and Malayalam. The free data can be used as reference material," says Dileep Kumar R, director of the startup.

In order to understand the toxicity of various species, colour codes have been provided: green for non-venomous, yellow for mildly venomous, orange for venomous (usually non-fatal) and red for venomous (potentially fatal).

"This is a preliminary version of the Android app. We plan to include information about species in other states in respective regional languages. We want to make it an interactive platform. Awareness

Slithery stars (From top) A Gunther's vine snake; snake rescue training; the Snakepedia app ■ SANDEEP DAS AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

campaigns about snakes are also being done through the app," Dileep explains.

Snake Lens

An initiative of MVR Snake Park and Zoo at Parassinikkadavu in Kannur district, the app was made available in October. It has the technical support of Lares.AI, a Kochi-based startup, and COSTECH (Kerala State Cooperative Institute of Information Technology Electronics and Communications).

"The park was started in the 1980s as an offshoot of the snake bite treatment centre at Pappinissery. Earlier, those who brought victims of snakebites to the Centre also used to bring the snake, dead, alive or hurt. Even though such instances have come down, not many people know that all snakes are not poisonous. This app will act as a tool to educate people," says E Kunhiraman, director of the park.

The app is an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Android application. "We have uploaded images of common snakes as of now.

Once you upload a picture in the app, you will get details about the snake. The app has on-edge processing, which means that Internet connection is not needed for identification of snakes," says Mohamed Zakeer, CEO of Larus.AI. Queries can be directed to experts at the Snake Park.

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is also being done through the app," Dileep explains.

"I wanted the medium to be as real as possible." But having said that, Tyler believes that it is also important to keep their reactions simple in terms of details and embellishments, since "there are bigger problems in the world than me right now."

In street art, the placement is perhaps as important as the subject, according to Tyler. On the streets, Tyler has always chosen the most ignored walls as canvases. And so, do they think that a gallery space confines the scope of their works? There are two sides to this coin.

"When you look at street art, you are not there to buy it. When it comes to a gallery, there is a lot to keep in mind in terms of the aesthetic since I am putting the work up for sale. The viewers are essentially looking at it from different angles," says the artist, whose Walk of Shame series on the streets of Mumbai, featuring many Bollywood names, journalists and politicians, created a furore that led to his Instagram account being deactivated for a day.

The primary intent of the artist who prefers walls over canvases still remains the same. "In this country, there is no concept of free art. I want to give the people that opportunity. They can choose to admire it or spit on it, but at least there is accessibility," says Tyler. "It doesn't matter if I don't see a particular work of mine on a wall, a year later, it only makes me want to do it more. It's like maintaining a little library of my own works."

Tyler's works will be on display at Method Art Space, Bandra and Kala Ghoda, Mumbai till March 7

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Straight from the underground

Subverting the belief that graffiti does not belong in galleries, anonymous artist Tyler gets their first solo show in Mumbai

GOWRI S

A Valentine's Day special: on a wooden frame are stencilled the letters I and U. Between them where one would expect a heart stands an exploded spray paint can, its metal body contorted to an amorphous shape. Is that a broken heart? It is hard to say.

This canvas is one of the latest additions in Method Art Space, a gallery with branches in Kala Ghoda and Bandra, that currently holds Mumbai-based anonymous street artist Tyler's much-talked-about, often political works. The artist's first solo show brings their wide repertoire straight from the walls into the white cube space: a welcome change that subverts the belief that street art and graffiti do not fit the 'fine art' ideal.

"I paint what I am," opens Tyler, who believes that a lot of their own personality reflects in their work, which is largely mischievous, tongue-in-cheek takes on what happens around them. "Everything that I had done as a mischievous child reflects on my art, when I look at it now," they add. Further, the medium they have chosen only aids this need to remain "simple and approachable".

The artist adds, "I shouldn't have to explain my art to anyone. I don't have any art education and never wanted to be an artist. All I wanted to do was express myself." A lot of things that didn't make sense in the society, ultimately became the starting point of Tyler's vast body of reactionary work that comments on political and societal happenings, on an almost daily basis; many of them are



The spy couple, rebooted

Amazon Studios announced over the weekend that award-winning actors Donald Glover (*Atlanta*) and Phoebe Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag*) will create and star in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, a new series based on the 2005 film produced by New Regency. There are so far no updates on who else the series will be casting. This is not Glover and Waller-Bridge's first time collaboration; in 2018, they co-starred in *Solo: A Star Wars Story*. Glover and Waller-Bridge will also serve as executive producers, with co-creator and executive producer Francesca Sloane (*Atlanta*, *Fargo*), who will serve as showrunner. *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie grossed US \$487 million worldwide when it released in 2005. It followed a husband and wife struggling to keep their marriage alive until they realise they are both secretly working as assassins. Their assignments require them to kill each other. The new *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* will be released exclusively on Amazon Prime Video in more than 240 countries.

POOCH CAFE



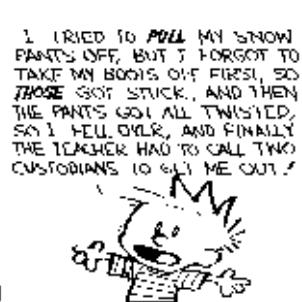
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



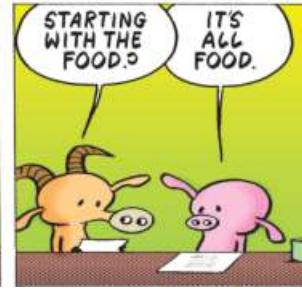
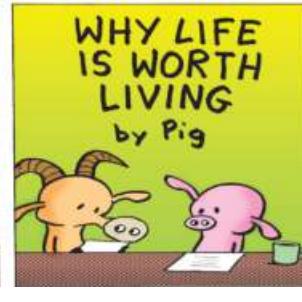
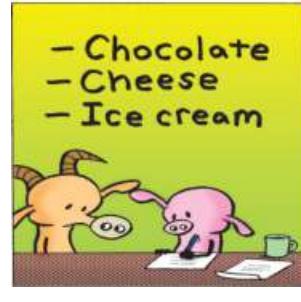
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Suu Kyi to face court this week: lawyer

Deposed leader will appear via videoconference over charges brought against her by the military

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
NAYPYIDAW

Myanmar's deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi will appear in court via videoconference this week over charges brought against her by the new military junta, her lawyer said on Monday.

Army Chief General Min Aung Hlaing has justified the February 1 coup by alleging widespread voter fraud in November's elections, which Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party swept.

Two days after the putsch, the 75-year-old Nobel laureate was hit with the unusual charge of violating Myanmar's import and export law, after a search of her house found walkie-talkies.

President Win Myint – who, like Ms. Suu Kyi, was detained in a dawn raid on February 1 – was charged with violating COVID-19 res-

trictions when he took part in a campaign event last September that drew hundreds.

Both are expected to be questioned on Tuesday and Wednesday, said lawyer Khin Maung Zaw outside a court in Naypyidaw, Myanmar's capital, after a meeting with a judge.

"When they are brought to the court on both February 16 and 17, they will be questioned via videoconferencing," he said.

Neither has been publicly seen since the coup, though Ms. Suu Kyi's party has heard that she is "in good health".

Their detention period was set to end on Wednesday, said the lawyer – though it was likely to be extended. He added that he would also be expected to represent Win Htein, a top NLD executive who was arrested after the coup.

Ms. Suu Kyi's right-hand man and confidant, Mr. Win



Protest music: A group taking part in an anti-coup themed hip-hop performance in Yangon on Sunday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Htein, was interviewed by local media post-coup, calling on the people of Myanmar to "oppose [the coup] as much as they can".

The 79-year-old NLD stalwart has been charged with defamation, said Mr. Khin Maung Zaw.

Since the coup, about 400 people have been detained, according to the Assistance

Association of Political Prisoners monitoring group. While many arrested were political supporters of Ms. Suu Kyi, authorities are also stepping up detentions of civilians taking part in nationwide protests against the military junta.

Protesters continued to gather across Myanmar on Monday, following a night in

which authorities cut the country's internet access and increased the security presence in major cities seeking to curtail demonstrations.

More than 1,000 protesters were rallying in front of the Myanmar Economic Bank in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, when at least 10 trucks full of soldiers and police arrived and started firing slingshots toward the protesters before they even got out of the trucks, according to a photographer who witnessed the events.

The soldiers and police then attacked the protesters with sticks and slingshots, and police could be seen aiming long guns into the air amid sounds that resembled gunfire. Local media reported that rubber bullets were also fired into the crowd, and that a few people were injured.

After impeachment acquittal, Trump looks to reassert himself

Ex-President tells supporters 'the movement has just begun'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump took in the win at Mar-a-Lago, surrounded by friends and family. His lawyers celebrated with hugs and smiles. One joked, "We're going to Disney World!"

Now acquitted in his second Senate impeachment trial, Mr. Trump is preparing for the next phase of his post-presidency life. He is expected to re-emerge from a self-imposed hibernation at his club in Palm Beach, Florida, and is eyeing ways to reassert his power.

But after being barred from Twitter, the former President lacks the social media bullhorn that fuelled his political rise. And he's confronting a Republican Party deeply divided over the legacy of his jarring final



Donald Trump

days in office, culminating in the January 6 storming of the Capitol.

Mr. Trump remains popular among the GOP base, but many Republicans in Washington have cooled to him. Never before have so many members of a President's party – seven GOP Senators, in his case – voted for his re-election in a Senate trial.

Friends and allies expect Mr. Trump to resume friend-

ly media interviews after weeks of silence. He has met with political aides to discuss efforts to help Republicans try to take control of the House and Senate in the 2022 midterms elections. He remains fixated on exacting revenge on Republicans who supported his impeachment or resisted his efforts to overturn the results of the November election won by Democrat Joe Biden. "I imagine you'll probably be hearing a lot more from him in the coming days," Senior Advisor Jason Miller said.

In a statement after the vote, Mr. Trump told supporters their movement "has just begun".

"I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people," he said.

Landslip kills nine in Indonesia, say officials

Hundreds forced to flee their homes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JAKARTA

At least nine people have died and 10 are missing after a landslip caused by torrential rain swept away several homes in Indonesia, officials said on Monday, with hundreds forced to flee their flooded homes.

Twenty-one people were initially reported missing after the disaster struck on Sunday evening in a rural part of East Java.

Search on
Indonesia's Search and Rescue Agency said it had found nine bodies, but was still searching for 10 others.

The other two people had been rescued. "We cannot bring heavy equipment to

the site of the landslips currently. However, we are currently trying to make our way," the East Java Search and Rescue Agency said in a written statement. The landslip also seriously damaged eight houses, the agency said.

Pasuruan, a town in the province, was also flooded after a river overflowed due to the heavy rain, forcing more than 350 people to flee their homes, the agency added.

Fatal landslides and flash floods are common across the Indonesian archipelago, where seasonal downpours are frequent and relentless.

In January, at least 21 people died and more than 60,000 fled the area after a series of major floods hit South Kalimantan.

Israeli missile strikes in Syria kill 9'

Attacks near Damascus killed pro-regime militia fighters, says war monitor

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIRUT

Israeli missile strikes against several targets near Syria's capital Damascus killed at least nine pro-regime militia fighters early on Monday, a Britain-based war monitor said.

"Nine Iran-backed militia fighters were killed" in Israeli strikes targeting arms depots, including missile stores, around Damascus, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Pro-govt. forces
The Observatory said all the fighters killed were non-Arab "pro-government" forces, but it said it could not determine if they were Afghan, Pakistani or Iranian.

"Syrian air defences inter-



Israeli jets at an air show in 2019. Israel has routinely carried out raids in Syria.

cepted a sizeable number of the missiles, but many hit their targets and caused material damage," added the monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria for its reports.

The attack began shortly after midnight and lasted for nearly half an hour, it said.

Syrian state media also re-

ported the strikes, but said that air defences had intercepted "most" of the missiles. An Israeli army spokesperson said, "We cannot comment on these reports."

Since the outbreak of Syria's civil war in 2011, Israel has routinely carried out raids in the country, mostly targeting Iranian forces and Lebanese Hezbollah fighters as well as government troops.

Iran and Hezbollah have backed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime in the near-decade-long war.

About 50 targets'

Israel rarely confirms strikes in Syria, but the Jewish state's Army said it hit about 50 targets in the war-torn country in 2020, without

providing details.

It has consistently vowed to prevent its arch-enemy Iran from gaining a foothold in Syria.

'Surprise exercise'

On Sunday, the Israeli Army started a four-day drill along its northern border with Lebanon, a country with which it is still technically at war.

The "surprise exercise" was "designed to improve Air Force readiness for combat" in the border region, the Army said in a statement.

During the exercise, which will end on Wednesday, Israeli aircraft, jets and helicopter traffic will be felt across the country, and a number of explosions may be heard in northern Israel", it added.

Nigeria's Okonjo-Iweala appointed WTO head

She is first woman and first African head

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was appointed on Monday as the first female and first African head of the beleaguered World Trade Organization (WTO), saying a stronger WTO would be vital for the global COVID-19 recovery.

The WTO called a virtual special General Council meeting at which member states officially selected the former Nigerian Finance Minister and World Bank veteran as the global trade body's new Director-General.

She will take up her post on March 1 and her term, which is renewable, will run until August 31, 2025.

The near-paralysed insti-

tution desperately needs a kick-start – something Ms. Okonjo-Iweala immediately addressed after being confirmed in the job.

"A strong WTO is vital if we are to recover fully and rapidly from the devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic," the 66-year-old economist said in a statement.

+

From clashes between troops on the LAC to disengagement

The agreement seeks to cease forward deployments in a 'phased manner'

DINAKAR PERI

Starting in April 2020, China amassed a large number of troops and armaments along the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh and other areas along the 3,488 km LAC, leading to stand-offs and skirmishes at Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso (lake), Gogra-Hot Springs and other areas. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) moved into Indian territory and built fortified structures and defences, changing the status quo on the ground.

While there are differences in perception on the alignment of the LAC, over the years, both sides concluded a series of agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity on the border, while talks continued to resolve the dispute. At Pangong Tso, PLA troops moved up to Finger 4 from Finger 8, and then a major clash occurred on the night of May 5, which resulted in injuries to over 70 Indian soldiers. On the north bank, India's perception of the LAC lies at Finger 8 and the Army regularly carries out patrols till there, which were blocked as a result of the Chinese ingress.

On the night of May 9, clashes were reported at Nakula La in North Sikkim. India responded by mobilising additional troops and equipment to match the Chinese build-up. Since then, several friction points emerged in eastern Ladakh and both sides initiated diplomatic and military talks aimed at disengagement and de-escalation, with India pushing for the restoration of status quo ante of pre-April.

India and China earlier reached an understanding for phased disengagement

from all friction points followed by de-escalation from the depth areas along the LAC. It was during this initial process of disengagement that the violent clash occurred on June 15 at Patroll-

ing Point (PP) 14 in Galwan Valley, resulting in the death of 20 Indian soldiers, including a Commanding Officer, and an unknown number of PLA casualties. This marked the biggest clash since 1967.

EXPLAINER
Several incidents of firing of warning shots also occurred, the first firing since 1975. This stalled the earlier disengagement process. Both sides amassed around 50,000 troops and heavy equipment in eastern Ladakh and undertook preparations to remain deployed through the harsh winters in the high altitude region. On September 10, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow where they agreed on a five-point resolution to take forward the talks.

Partial disengagement
Despite that, disengagement continued at PP14 and PP15 in the Hot Springs area, and partial disengagement was undertaken at Hot Springs and on the north bank of Pangong Tso.

The aim was to create a buffer at these locations with a small group of soldiers retained and the rest moving back to their permanent locations. However, PLA troops continued to sit on the ridgelines of Finger 4 overlooking Indian positions, which was a matter of

significant concern to India as it would alter the status quo on the ground.

Fresh tensions occurred in the end of August on the south bank of Pangong Tso, as the Indian Army preempted Chinese moves and occupied several dominating peaks on the Kailash range on the Indian side of the LAC, which gave tactical advantage to India. This resulted in a massive deployment of troops and tanks in very close proximity a couple of hundred metres of each other, at some locations.

The agreement also entails that any structures that had been built by both sides since April 2020 in both north and south bank area will be removed and the landforms will be restored. There is also a moratorium on patrolling in this area until a resumption is discussed by both sides through diplomatic and military talks.

As per the agreement, the Chinese side will move back its troops on the north bank to east of Finger 8 while Indian troops will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. "A similar action would be taken in the south bank area by both sides," Mr. Singh said in the Rajya Sabha.

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Way forward
The Defence Ministry said last week that Mr. Singh's statement made clear there were outstanding problems to be addressed, including at Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang, and these issues would be taken up within 48 hours of the completion of the Pangong Tso disengagement, which could take two weeks or longer.

Once complete disengagement is achieved at all friction areas, both sides will undertake de-escalation along the LAC.

Significant concern to India as it would alter the status quo on the ground.

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Nigeria's head calls for unity after clashes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ABUJA

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has vowed to protect all religious and ethnic groups after clashes erupted between different communities in the southwest over the weekend.

At least one person was killed after a dispute erupted on Friday in Ibadan. Mr. Buhari on Sunday condemned such violence".

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Notice Inviting e-Tender

for the Purchase of 15 Nos. of Skill Lab Equipments for use in the Indira Gandhi Medical College & Research Institute, Puducherry

Bidders should submit their tender online at the Government Website <https://puducherrymcr.gov.in>. The tender details, specifications, terms and conditions and time schedule may also be downloaded from the website

MARKET WATCH

	15-02-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,154	-1.18
US Dollar	72.68	0.10
Gold	46,826	-0.04
Brent oil	63.30	2.81

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	627.75	11.15
Asian Paints	2456.75	-29.35
Axis Bank	749.00	43.60
Bajaj Auto	4122.30	-13.75
Bajaj Finserv	10537.70	258.90
Bajaj Finance	5779.85	202.40
Bharti Airtel	593.70	7.45
BPCL	419.00	0.90
Britannia Ind	3417.00	-4.25
Cipla	844.30	-4.25
Coal India	132.25	-1.60
Divis Lab	3711.05	-8.35
Drd Reddys Lab	4709.85	-82.15
Eicher Motors	2770.05	-11.20
GAIL (India)	133.80	0.90
Grasim Ind	1227.95	-14.15
HCL Tech.	954.65	-5.75
HDFC	2860.45	68.95
HDFC Bank	1616.60	34.65
HDFC Life	695.25	-15.70
Hero MotoCorp	3465.40	-50.35
Hindalco	291.40	0.60
Hind Unilever	2215.20	-26.35
ICICI Bank	673.95	26.35
IndusInd Bank	1057.60	30.20
Infosys	1309.65	-0.15
Indian Oil Corp	94.15	-0.95
ITC	218.60	1.15
JSW Steel	403.70	-0.10
Kotak Bank	1985.95	34.90
L&T	1537.65	16.30
M&M	911.85	3.30
Maruti Suzuki	7596.65	28.15
Nestle India Ltd.	17479.85	185.55
NTPC	95.20	-0.75
ONGC	98.45	1.45
PowerGrid Corp	212.45	-0.20
Reliance Ind	2032.60	-9.00
SBI Life	877.25	-19.60
State Bank	406.95	13.80
Shree Cement	28653.25	687.40
Sun Pharma	627.50	0.35
Tata Motors	333.35	7.95
Tata Steel	672.15	-8.35
TCS	3139.85	-50.95
Tech Mahindra	979.20	-12.00
Titan	1484.75	-9.45
UltraTech Cement	6407.75	10.50
UPL	537.45	1.65
Wipro	439.70	-2.30

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.49	72.81
Euro	87.93	88.32
British Pound	100.78	101.26
Japanese Yen (100)	68.83	69.16
Chinese Yuan	11.22	11.27
Swiss Franc	81.39	81.76
Singapore Dollar	54.79	55.04
Canadian Dollar	57.25	57.51
Malaysian Ringgit	17.96	18.05

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Renault prices Kiger B-SUV at ₹5.45 lakh

CHENNAI French automaker Renault has announced the pricing of its B-SUV segment vehicle Kiger at an introductory price of ₹5.45 lakh (ex-showroom, all India) and commenced bookings at its dealership network and through the company's website. The top variant is priced at ₹9.55 lakh, the company said in a statement.

FRL says to defend deal after Amazon moves SC

NEW DELHI Future Retail on Monday said Amazon had approached the Supreme Court against a Delhi HC order that vacated the status quo on Future Group's proposed ₹24,713 crore-deal with Reliance Industries. In a filing, FRL said it "shall defend the proceedings through its legal counsels". PTI

Exports surge 6.2%, imports rise 2%

Outbound trade records growth second month in a row; cumulative exports as of Jan. still 10% lower

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI India recorded a 6.2% surge in exports in January 2021, marking the second month in a row that outbound trade recorded positive growth after the COVID-19 pandemic and global lockdowns damped global trade through most of 2020.

Imports also grew for the second successive month in January, rising 2% as per quick estimates released by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce on Monday.

Non-oil and non-gold imports recorded a sharper growth of 7.5%.

"Exports in January 2021 were ₹27,45 billion, as compared to ₹25,85 billion in January 2020, exhibiting a positive growth of 6.16%", the Ministry said.

The Ministry added that the trade deficit was estimat-



Deficit narrows: Trade deficit was estimated at \$14.54 bn, or 5% lower than the \$15.3 bn recorded in Jan. '20. • BIJOY GHOSH

ed at ₹14.54 billion, almost 5% lower than the ₹15.3 billion recorded in January 2020. Exports had grown by a marginal 0.14% in December 2020. Overall exports in the first ten months of 2020-21 remain about 10% lower

than the same period a year earlier, while imports have shrunk by 22.8%.

"The trade deficit has sustained at a high level for the second consecutive month, which is a testament to the recovery in domestic de-

mand, as well as the impact of higher commodity prices following the resurgence in global confidence," said Aditi Nayar, principal economist at rating agency ICRA.

She added that it was increasingly likely that the third and fourth quarters of financial year 2020-21 would see a reversal to a current account deficit.

Sharad Saraf, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIED) said that while several product categories showed impressive growth in January, the contraction in exports of major products such as petroleum products, leather textiles and gems and jewellery were key concerns.

"These products are major constituents of India's export basket and mainly related to the labour-intensive sector of exports," Mr. Saraf

pointed out. Services exports remained a concern, with the Reserve Bank of India pointing to a 6.41% decline in outbound services trade in December 2020.

Services exports decline

"The worsening contraction in services exports meant that the services trade surplus recorded a year-on-year decline in December 2020, after a gap of nine months," Ms. Nayar pointed out.

Mr Saraf also urged the govt

WPI quickens to 2.03% after easing in December

Manufactured products show spike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Inflation in wholesale prices quickened to 2.03% in January, after easing to 1.2% in December 2020, led by a spike in manufactured products suggesting that producers were likely regaining pricing power, after the initial pandemic shock, amid rising commodity prices.

January's Wholesale Price Index (WPI) numbers also point to a divergence between wholesale and retail price trends in the month as consumer price inflation had eased to 4.06% from 4.59% in December.

"Higher prices in manufactured products is positive for business," Care said in a note.

"The recovery in commodity prices can be linked with the unlocking process as producers have also made up for their inability to produce in the first two months of the year by increasing prices."

India Pistons to partner with Shaw Development

JV to make diesel exhaust fluid range

N. ANAND

CHENNAI

India Pistons Ltd., (IPL) a subsidiary of the \$2-billion Amalgamations Group, has entered into a pact with Florida-based Shaw Development LLC to manufacture diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) solutions in Tamil Nadu at an investment of ₹50 crore.

"The new joint venture – IPL-Shaw Solutions – will manufacture two lakh units of DEF solutions and the capacity will be expandable depending on the demand. Operations will commence by March 2021," said R. Mahadevan, director, IPL.

Under the joint venture, the companies will manufacture DEF for heavy duty

vehicles (commercial vehicles and off-road) and diesel engine manufacturers in compliance with BS-VI and equivalent exhaust emission norms.

"Through this joint venture, Indian manufacturers will have a local partner for a complete offering of DEF reservoirs, sensors, modules, filters, caps, and other fluid management solutions. The market size for this product in India is ₹600-700 crore," he said.

Keith Luomala, Chairman & CEO of Shaw Development, said that India was the most strategic growth market for Shaw to develop highly reliable DEF and fluid management solutions.

It had earlier forecast

dual pick-up in revenue collections could lead to an improvement in the capital expenditure from FY22.

The report said due to the economic downturn, even the union government's finances are under pressure, leading to a lower-than-budgeted devolution of ₹5.50 lakh crore to States in FY21 (revised estimate: RE) as against the budget estimate (BE) of ₹8.03 lakh crore.

The agency said although it estimates the aggregate revenue receipt of the States to grow 8.4% y-o-y in FY22 from a decline of 0.6% in FY21, the revenue deficit would persist in FY22.

Oil hits 13-month highs as market rebalances

Prices rally as producers rein in supply

REUTERS

LONDON

Oil prices soared on Monday to their highest in about 13 months as vaccine roll-outs promised to revive demand and producers kept supply reined in.

Brent crude was up 77 cents, or 1.2%, at \$63.20 a barrel, after climbing to a session high of \$63.76, the highest since January 22, 2020. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained \$1.04, or 1.8%, to \$60.51 a barrel. It touched \$60.95 – the highest since January 8 last year, earlier in the session. Oil prices gained around 5% last week.

Prices have rallied over recent weeks as supplies tightened, due largely to production cuts from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries and allied producers in the group OPEC+. Russian Deputy PM Alexander Novak said the global oil market is on a recovery path and the oil price this year could average \$45-\$60 per barrel.

Bank credit grows 5.93%, deposits 11.06%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Bank credit grew 5.93% to ₹107.05 lakh crore, while deposits rose 11.06% to ₹147.98 lakh crore in the fortnight ended January 29, RBI data showed.

In the fortnight ended January 31, 2020, bank credit stood at ₹101.05 lakh crore and deposits at ₹133.24 lakh crore.

In the previous fortnight ended January 15, growth in bank credit was 6.36%, while deposits rose 11.41%.

"Most of the hiring was for digital skills and expertise in deep technologies and not for traditional IT functions," Ms. Ghosh said.

During the first nine months of the current fiscal, bank credit rose by 3.2% and deposits by 8.5%, according to the data.

SPORT

Four ex-champions could prove 'dangerous floaters'

NATIONAL TT

Rakesh Rao

CHANDIGARH Although Manika Batra and Sutirtha Mukherjee are seeded to set up the title-clash in the National table tennis championship at Panchkula later this week, the presence of four former champions poses a serious threat to prospects of several prominent players.

World No. 63 Manika and defending champion Sutirtha can expect a tough passage ahead with several players looking to regain their lost status.

Former champions Madhurika Patkar and Archana Kamath will be placed in the 9-16 bracket when the seeding is drawn on Tuesday morning. Two other National champions K. Shamini and Ankita Das are expected to come through the qualifying phase that began on Monday.



Dark horse: Archana is capable of creating a flutter. • FILE PHOTO

Frenaz Chipia.

With the Olympic qualification event round the corner, the form and fitness of Manika and Sutirtha will come under scrutiny. Unlike most leading names from the men's section who have worked together at Sonepat and later in Chennai, most prominent women trained on their own during the past year.

After the first set of league matches, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal inaugurated the championship on Monday. Also present during the brief opening ceremony was Haryana's Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, who is also the President of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI).

The top-8 ranked players: 1. Man

Ashwin writes his own script, decides his bat is a magic wand

His century coupled with skipper Kohli's resolute effort leaves England staring at a daunting target; home bowlers strike to further add to the misery

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

There is a touch of drama in whatever R. Ashwin does. You can never tell his mind.

On 99, Ashwin needed just a single for his fifth Test hundred. What does he do? He jumps out to off-spinner Moeen Ali's flighted delivery outside off, has a big swipe but the top-edge travels over the slip to the fence.

Soon he throws up his arms in triumph and relief. The crowd goes berserk. The home boy has done it!

Magical over

Earlier in the thrill-a-minute over, he slog-swept a flighted delivery from Moeen past the ropes, and drove to long-off for a brace. Then arrived his three-figure mark.

And, India, riding on Ashwin's 106 and skipper Virat Kohli's 62, set England a daunting target of 482 on the third day of the second Test at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Monday.

By stumps, England was staring down the barrel at 53 for three. Dom Sibley was trapped leg-before by an Axar Patel arm-ball. Rory Burns was held in the slips off Ashwin and night-watchman Jack Leach was prised out by Axar.

The day belonged to Ashwin. On a pitch where the ball turned and bounced, he battered with refreshing freedom.



Another avatar: After tormenting the Englishmen with the ball the previous day, Ashwin gave them a taste of his batting skills on Monday. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

COf course, Ashwin and Kohli showed that runs can be made. Kohli was fantastic in the second innings. Ashwin came out and swept early and then was able to manipulate the field

JETAN PATEL
England's spin-bowling coach

sweep, the pull and the cut for the bulk of his runs.

And when Broad erred in line, he was clipped. Ashwin's footwork is limited, but timing sweet.

Fortune favours the brave and Ashwin was let off at 28 [by Ben Stokes in the slips off Stuart Broad], 56 [a difficult

chance to 'keeper Ben Foakes standing up to Broad] and 70 [a tough catch and stumping off the same ball by Foakes off Moeen Ali].

Good in parts, Moeen sent back a well-set Kohli with a good length delivery that spun and fatally struck the India captain on his back-leg and consumed Ajinkya Rahane with a flighted ball which spun, bounced and took the inside edge.

Kohli's weight distribution at the crease is the essence of his batmanship. And it is his footwork – he goes fully forward or travels right back – that is the enabler.

His still head in offence or

All-round impact

Ashwin is among 23 players who have scored a century and also picked up five or more wickets in an innings in the same Test. Ian Botham has done it the most number of times (5) and Ashwin thrice

PLAYER	OCCASIONS	OPPONENT AND VENUE
Ian Botham (Eng)	5	NZ, Christchurch, 1978 Pak, Lords, 1978 Ind, Mumbai, 1980 Aus, Leeds, 1981 NZ, Wellington, 1984
R. Ashwin (Ind)	3	WI, Mumbai, 2011 WI, Antigua, 2016 Eng, Chennai, 2021
Garry Sobers (WI)	2	Ind, Kingston, 1962 Eng, Leeds, 1966
Jacques Kallis (SA)	2	WI, Cape Town, 1999 Ban, Potchefstroom, 2002
Mushtaq Mohammad (Pak)	2	NZ, Dunedin, 1973 WI, Port of Spain, 1977
Shakib Al Hasan (Ban)	2	Pak, Dhaka, 2011 Zim, Khulna, 2014

Players who have done it once: Tony Greig (Eng), Vinoo Mankad and Polly Umrigar (Ind), Imran Khan and Wasim Akram (Pak), Denis Atkinson, Collie Smith and Roston Chase (WI), Charles Kelleway, Jack Gregory, Keith Miller and Richie Beaumont (Aus), Aubrey Faulkner and Jimmy Sinclair (SA), Bruce Taylor (NZ), Paul Strang (Zim) and Sohag Gazi (Ban)



SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS: 329.
ENGLAND – 1ST INNINGS: 134.

INDIA – 2ND INNINGS

Rohit Sharma st. Foakes b Leach 26 (7ob, 2x4, 1x6), Shubman Gill lbw b Leach 14 (28b, 1x6), Cheteshwar Pujara run out 7 (23b, 1x4), Virat Kohli lbw b Moeen 62 (149b, 7x4), Rishabh Pant st. Foakes b Leach 8 (11b, 1x4), Ajinkya Rahane c Pope b Moeen 10 (14b, 2x4), Axar Patel lbw b Moeen 7 (17b, 1x4), R. Ashwin b Stone 106 (148b, 14x4, 1x6), Kuldeep Yadav lbw b Moeen 3 (9b), Ishant Sharma c Stone b Leach 7 (24b, 1x4), Mohammed Siraj (not out) 16 (21b, 2x6); Extras (b-5, lb-15): 20; Total (in 85.5 overs): 286.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-42 (Gill, 11.2 overs), 2-55 (Pujara, 18.6), 3-55 (Rohit, 21.1), 4-65 (Pant, 25.3), 5-86 (Rahane 30.3), 6-106 (Axar, 36.1), 7-202 (Kohli, 65.4), 8-210 (Kuldeep, 67.6), 9-237 (Ishant 76.4).

ENGLISH BOWLING

Stone 6.5-1-21-1, Leach 33-6-100-4, Moeen 32-7-98-4, Root 4-0-15-0, Broad 9-3-25-0, Lawrence 1-0-7-0.

ENGLAND – 2ND INNINGS

Rory Burns c Kohli b Ashwin 25 (42b, 4x4), Dom Sibley lbw b Axar 3 (25b), Dan Lawrence (batting) 19 (38b, 2x4, 1x6), Jack Leach c Rohit b Axar 0 (1b), Joe Root (batting) 2 (8b); Extras (b-4); Total (for three wkts. in 19 overs): 53.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-17 (Sibley, 8.2), 2-49 (Burns, 15.6), 3-50 (Leach, 16.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Ishant 2-1-6-0, Axar 9-3-15-2, Ashwin 8-1-28-1.

Axar rebuts pitch criticism

'No ball has taken off extraordinarily, we made runs on it'

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

Axar Patel on Monday refuted criticism of the pitch, saying it has played true from the first day.

"Not even one ball has hit the batsman's helmet or taken off extraordinarily. It is just spinning normally. We are also playing on the same pitch and making runs. So nobody should have reservations about the pitch," said Axar.

He added that the pitch required the spinners to hit the right speeds to get maximum purchase. "The wicket is turning, but the turn is on

offer when you bowl at a faster pace and have strength behind every ball. If you bowl slowly, the pitch is not offering as much assistance."

The left-arm spinner, who missed the first Test after complaining of knee pain, felt that the decision was in the team's best interests. "It was slightly frustrating, but I didn't want to play with a niggle and then midway through the match make the team suffer. I wanted to give myself time. If you look at it positively, I am able to give my 100% [here]," said the 27-year-old debutant.

Picked as a like-for-like re-

placement for Ravindra Jadeja, Axar said, "I know my strengths. My accuracy is my strong point and it works well for me. You don't need to try too many variations or anything fancy. I am just looking to bowl at one spot and let the pitch do the work for me."

After India lost early wickets in the morning, Axar revealed that there were some nerves in the dressing room before Ashwin and Virat Kohli steadied things. "The partnership gave us confidence. When you have a big score on the board, you can bowl freely and confidently," he said.

Meanwhile, England's spin-bowling coach Jeetan Patel backed his side's batsmen to play their natural games on the fourth day.

"We've got stroke-makers in the group and we want them to express themselves. That's been one of the strengths of our three Test matches in the sub-continent, still trying to score.

"If we sit back and try to defend for two days we're not going to have much success and not going to go anywhere in the game," said the former New Zealand off-spinner.

Picked as a like-for-like re-



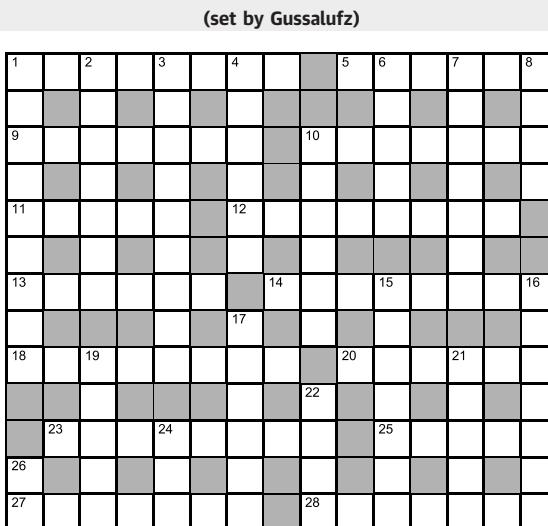
Role to play: Axar Patel, centre, took two of the three England wickets to fall on the third day. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

CROSSWORD

13172

(set by Gussalufz)

Display keystrokes of genius.
Solve crosswords and sudoku online
at <https://rgo.page.link/jjpTn>



ACROSS

- Extremely rough translation of Socrates (8)
- Workplace no longer using internal combustion engine (6)
- Tommy's secret (7)
- They might be keeping tabs on all singles, etc., about to get into cross-dressing (7)
- A broken pen and a lack of inspiration (5)
- Lift operator crushed ... Om Shanti (8)
- Saved a little chap getting hurt (6)

- Vehicles of love-laden, excited escorts (8)
- New listeners: oddly, it'd be one flank of a horse or a car? (8)
- Come home from metro station, rushing briskly and taking only seconds (6)
- Having the capacity to live without a drop of refreshing fluid (8)
- Rude to change sides for status (5)
- Trying a sour rum (7)
- File away any rough chips, helping insure very even openings (7)
- In poor taste to have ministry ultimately moving back to some coal plant production (3,3)
- House under-prepared; daughter and son get centuries (8)
- A picnic arranged around two pieces of sandwiched essence of chillies (9)
- Coin tossed after many denials, essentially, of a particular charge (7)
- Sailors from a great distance taken in by soothsayers (9)
- Look at the rage! (6)
- Bob regularly rejected team on left (5)
- Repeat attire accidentally worn by me at last (7)
- Different sizes under discussion (4)
- Replacement of wife for new betrayer (6)
- Ice-cold A.I. replaced an organic substance found in plants and animals (5,4)
- Creative artists' plea for help involving messy gents room for starters! (9)
- Homes in which walls of blackwood are swapped for bricks (6)
- College Fashion Day came! (7)
- Nuke going off over gangster Gussalufz opposed? (7)
- When you relive Javed's shot getting cup, limitlessly (4,2)
- Images of tragic onslaughts (5)
- Turn left and feminine! Game? (4)

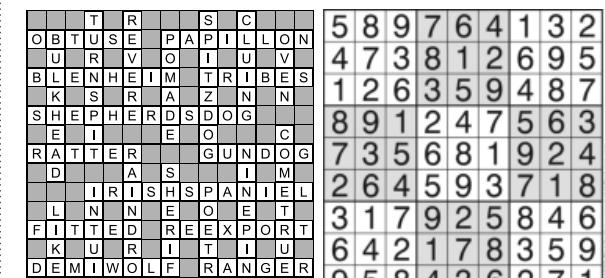
SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13171

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Daksha resumes sacrifice

During the grand sacrifice performed by Daksha, his feud with Rudra reaches a peak when he deliberately insults Rudra by denying him the sacrificial offerings. Sati Devi, unable to bear Daksha's antagonistic stance and conduct, gives up her body in the fire generated by her yogic power. Then Rudra sends his followers to disrupt the yagna. The celestial beings who were victims of the fight, rush to Brahma for help. Brahma propitiates Rudra who is in meditation. Brahma praises Rudra who is all knowing and above the Lord's Maya. He requests Rudra to give up his anger and to take steps to complete the yagna. Eventually the disrupted sacrifice is resumed.

In a discourse, Sri R. Krishnamurthy Sastrigal drew attention to the fact that the Bhagavata Purana projects the view that the Supreme Godhead is one but also seen variously as the Trimurtis. The Supreme Lord is the indwelling spirit in each and every aspect of creation and is also the embodiment of compassion. His omniscience makes Him aware of the faults of the jivas who are bound by the gunas and their karma. Daksha represents the jivas who transgress and are likely to commit mistakes.

Rudra is now pacified and makes it clear that he had shown this attitude to Daksha only to purify him and not out of revenge. Rudra wills that Daksha should get back his life. He also wills that all the celestial beings and the sacrificial priests who had been wounded by the weapons be restored to their original selves. Daksha is purged of his hatred and ill feelings towards Rudra. He is now transformed and his heart is filled with love and devotion to Siva. He is repentant and acknowledges the magnanimity of Siva who does not entertain hatred towards Daksha. The sacrifice is resumed.

