



# The Statesman

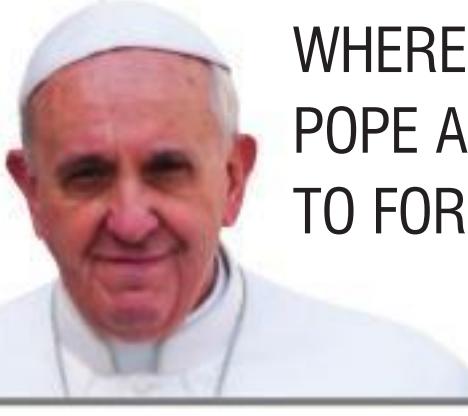
PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



KERALA AT  
CROSSROADS



WHAT TO DO  
WITH IRAN?



WHERE IS. RULED,  
POPE ASKS CHRISTIANS  
TO FORGIVE

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SINDHU FINISHES  
AS RUNNER-UP



P12

## WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. Strong surface winds during the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 31 and 16 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 91% Min: 45%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 34.0°C (+5) Min: 14.4°C (0)

SUN RISES

06:38 hrs SUN SETS

MOON RISES

04:01 hrs MOON SETS

13:31 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Farmers stage a cycle protest against the new farm laws at Ghazipur border on Sunday. SNS

**Curtailment of Parliament session on cards:** In view of assembly elections in four states and one Union Territory, the curtailment of Budget Session of Parliament is on the cards with parties across the aisle in agreement on this idea, sources said on Sunday. It is yet to be decided for how many days the session will be curtailed, but there are suggestions to curtail it by almost two weeks, the sources said, adding that the final call could be taken in the floor leaders' meeting on Monday.

**IPL 2021:** The IPL 2021 will run from 9 April to 30 May across six venues with no team getting to play at home, its Governing Council announced on Sunday. Despite a Covid-19 surge, Mumbai has been named as one of the host cities and the tournament will be held behind closed doors at least in the initial phase of the tournament.

P12

## China, India should not undercut each other; boundary dispute not whole story: Wang

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, 7 MARCH



China and India should stop "undercutting" each other, shed mutual "suspicion" and create "enabling conditions" by expanding bilateral cooperation to resolve the border issue, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said on Sunday.

Calling the boundary dispute as not the "whole story" of the China-India relationship, Wang said that both countries were friends and partners but they should shed suspicion at each other.

Answering a question at his annual press conference on the current state of India-China relations following the tense standoff in eastern Ladakh since May last year and

how Beijing viewed the relationship going forward, he said it is important that both countries manage their disputes properly and expand bilateral cooperation.

"The boundary dispute, an issue left from history, is not the whole story of the China-India relationship.

"It is important that the two sides manage disputes properly and at the same time

expand and enhance cooperation to create enabling conditions for the settlement of the issue," Wang said at an online press conference held on the sidelines of the annual session of the National People's Congress, China's Parliament.

In his lengthy remarks, Wang, who is also a State Councillor, did not touch upon the recent disengagement of troops from the most contentious north and south banks of the Pangong Lake area in eastern Ladakh after the 10th round of military-level talks between the two sides.

Wang's comments on the border issue came days after he held a 75-minute telephonic conversation with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during which the latter emphasised that the disengagement of troops at all friction points is necessary to bring peace and tranquillity on the border and for the development of bilateral relations.

In his remarks, Wang pointed out that the world expects both China and India to safeguard the common interests of the developing countries and advance multipolarity in the world.

The similar national conditions of the two countries also mean that they share the same or similar positions on many major issues, he said.

"Therefore," Wang stressed, "China and India are each other's friends and partners, not threats or rivals."

the pace of change."

IPU secretary general Martin Chungong said: "Progress is being made, but parliaments must be more open to women. They should be gender-sensitive and transform their functioning and structures to facilitate work-life balance for women and men, have zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women in politics, promote legal change for better inclusion of women and be key actors in women's political empowerment."

**Covid-19 and women's political representation**

The IPU Women in Parliament report shows that the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on elections and campaigning in 2020. According to the report, the national parliamentary elections were postponed in nearly 20 countries but went ahead in 57 countries overall in 2020.



of Women Parliamentarians Susan Kihika said: "While we note that a quarter of MPs in the world are women, we see how this still falls far short of representing half the world's population. Unleashing the full potential of women who make up that 50 per cent should be our number one priority."

The report points out that the economic downturn caused by the pandemic exacerbated existing gender socio-economic inequalities, and adversely affected women's ability to campaign for office and access campaign funding, however, the shift to remote, technology-driven parliamentary practices may have a potentially positive long-term impact for women in parliament.

The report further states that virtual voting and sittings have helped promote participation by members for whom travel is difficult, including those with disabilities or with young children. Flexible and remote workplace practices may allow more women and men to combine caring responsibilities with political career aspirations, it states.

**Women in the top leadership in Parliaments**

Globally, 58 women held

## Active caseload rises for 5th day

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

We are in the end game of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, and to succeed at this stage, we need to... keep politics out of the Covid-19 vaccination drive, trust the science behind Covid-19 vaccines, and ensure our near and dear ones get vaccinated on time.

HARSH VARDHAN  
UNION HEALTH MINISTER

the otherhand, have not reported any Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The Centre has been continuously engaging with the states and Union Territories which are reporting higher case-load of active cases and also those showing a rise in daily new Covid cases. It has also deployed high-level teams to Maharashtra and Punjab, that are showing steep increase in new cases, said a senior officer of the ministry. Eight states were displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases, among which the six states required immediate attention.

According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the states of Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu collectively accounted for 85.71 per cent of 18,711 new daily cases reported during the past 24 hours.

While Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 10,187, it is followed by Kerala with 2,791 and Punjab with 1,159 new cases. Maharashtra reported the maximum casualties (47), followed by Kerala with 16 deaths in the previous 24 hours. Nineteen states and UTs, on

rashtra and Punjab, that are showing steep increase in new cases, said a senior officer of the ministry. Eight states were displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases, among which the six states required immediate attention.

India's active caseload continued to increase for a fifth consecutive day, on Sunday standing at 1.84 lakh. With this, the country's active caseload has touched 1.65% of the total positive cases, the officer said.

**Pandemic ending in Delhi, claims Jain:** Delhi might be witnessing an uptick in single-day fresh coronavirus infections, but its health minister Satyendar Jain today said that the Covid pandemic was ending and was rather entering an "endemic" phase in the national capital.

(SEE P2)



## At current rate, it will take 50 years to achieve gender parity in parliaments globally

RAMAN PANDIT  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH



In 2020, the global proportion of women in Parliaments reached a record 25.5 per cent, an increase of 0.6 points compared with 2019, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) latest Women in Parliament report.

Every year, the IPU publishes a report to coincide with International Women's Day on 8 March. Although progress has been steady over the past few years, it is still excruciatingly slow and at the current rate, it will take another 50 years before gender parity is achieved in parliaments worldwide, the report states, adding that as at 1 January 2021, women accounted for 50 per cent or more of members in just three parliaments, include Rwanda, Cuba and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). President of the IPU Forum

the pace of change." IPU secretary general Martin Chungong said: "Progress is being made, but parliaments must be more open to women. They should be gender-sensitive and transform their functioning and structures to facilitate work-life balance for women and men, have zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women in politics, promote legal change for better inclusion of women and be key actors in women's political empowerment."

The report further states that virtual voting and sittings have helped promote participation by members for whom travel is difficult, including those with disabilities or with young children. Flexible and remote workplace practices may allow more women and men to combine caring responsibilities with political career aspirations, it states.

**Women in the top leadership in Parliaments**

Globally, 58 women held

speaker positions in 2020, an increase of one from the previous year, representing a global average of 20.9 per cent. Women held speaker positions in all regions of the world in 2020, with regional variations.

The United States made history in 2020 with the election for the first time of a woman as Vice President. Vice President Kamala Harris also constitutionally becomes President of the Senate. With Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House of Representatives, both chambers of the US Congress are now presided over by women.

**Progress in all regions of the world in 2020**

Despite political upheaval experienced across Latin America, in particular in Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, once again, the Americas outpaced other regions with women making up 32.4 per cent of MPs, the report states, adding in the

United States, 2020 marked the highest levels in history of women's representation in its national legislature, at 26.9 per cent, all chambers combined, the report noted.

The report highlights that despite grave security challenges, in sub-Saharan Africa, Mali and Niger made significant gains in women's representation.

In Europe, of 14 parliamentary renewals in 2020, four countries – Ireland, Serbia, North Macedonia and France – witnessed women's representation exceeding 30 per cent in at least one chamber while three countries – Azerbaijan, Czech Republic and Romania – failed to reach the 20 per cent mark, points out the report.

Within the Middle East and North Africa region, although Egypt reached historic highs for women in parliament thanks to a new quota law for the House of Representatives but as a whole, the proportion of women in parliament in the region is the lowest among all regions at 17.8 per cent, all chambers combined, the report states.

In contrast to other regions, women's representation in parliaments in the Pacific remained consistently low or entirely absent in elections held in 2020 except New Zealand, the report states.

New Zealand's new parliament made history with more women, people of colour, LGBT+ and Maori MPs than at any time in the past.

Pillion rider killed after water tanker hits 2-wheeler

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

A 30-year-old man, who was riding pillion on a scooter, was killed after the two-wheelers hit by a water tanker near the Delhi Jal Board office in south Delhi, police said on Sunday.

The deceased, Vinod Kumar, lived with his family in Haryana's Faridabad and was employed with a private firm in the area, they said. Kumar was returning from Gole Market on the scooter with his brother-in-law Pramod on March 4.

When they reached near the Delhi Jal Board office on the BRT, their scooter was hit from behind by a water tanker, a senior police officer said. The victim was rushed to the Safdarjung Hospital where the doctors declared him brought dead, he said. The owner of the water tanker, identified as Sant Raj, has been served a notice under the Motor Vehicles Act and he will produce the accused driver before police on Monday, he said.

PTI

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Delhi Budget 2021-22, to be presented in the Assembly session starting Monday, is expected to have a special allocation for free COVID-19 vaccination at Delhi government hospitals, sources said.

The budget is also likely to have proposals to open 'Sainik Schools' in Delhi and promote yoga at a wide scale in the city, they said.

Vaccination is currently underway in Delhi at 192 hospitals, including 56 run by the Delhi government, for people aged 60 years and above and those in the age group of 45-59 years having comorbidities.

"The government is expected to allocate funds for free vaccines to all people in the third phase of vaccination at its hospitals in Delhi," said a government source.

Currently, vaccination at government hospitals is free for elderly and those with comorbidities, while Rs 250 is being charged at private hospitals.

The government is also expected to share its plan to increase Delhi's per capita

income to the level of Singapore by 2047, in the budget, the sources said.

"The master plan of the Kejriwal government will focus on economic reforms and fundamental changes in trade and industries to effect a rise in per capita income so that it equals that of Singapore by 2047," they said.

The government is also expected to outline measures in the budget to simplify the trade and business processes and make them more user-friendly in the future,

**The government is also expected to outline measures in the budget to simplify the trade and business processes and make them more user-friendly in the future'**

The Delhi government is working on a plan for taking yoga to the masses in Delhi. The government intends to popularise yoga through extensive campaign in residential areas



Mamata ji has run away from her Bhawanipore seat to Nandigram

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

ON HOW HE SAID THE CM HAD 'RUN AWAY' TO SILEGURI AS SHE WAS 'UNABLE TO FACE' PM MODI'S RALLY IN KOLKATA

## Pandemic ending in Delhi, nearing endemic: Jain

A section of experts disagrees with Delhi health minister; city logs 286 new Covid cases, 2 deaths

SNS &amp; PTI

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Delhi might be witnessing an uptick in single-day fresh coronavirus infections, but its health minister Satyendar Jain today said that the Covid pandemic was ending and was rather entering an "endemic" phase in the national capital.

"Coronavirus pandemic is ending and is entering an endemic phase in Delhi. Experts say some cases continue to occur in the endemic phase. Delhi witnessed a swine flu outbreak around 10 years ago, but still some cases are reported every year. So, coronavirus is similarly not going to end completely and some cases would keep happening, but we will have to learn to live with it," Jain said.

The health minister pointed out that Delhi's Covid positivity rate has been well below 1 per cent, adding that this rate was around 15 per cent in November last year.

"The positivity rate has remained below one per cent for the last two months. The fluctuation in this rate is not that much," he said.

Jain said that less than 10 per cent beds reserved for coronavirus patients in city hospitals were currently occupied.



Today, the national capital's coronavirus caseload mounted to 6,41,101 while its death toll climbed to 10,921, the health bulletin said.

The total number of tests conducted was 91,614—the highest in the city till date—which included 71,250 RT-PCR tests and 20,364 rapid antigen tests, the bulletin stated.

The number of people under home isolation rose to 937 from yesterday's 879.

The Covid patients who recovered during the past 24 hours numbered 260, which took the city's cumulative tally of such recoveries to 6,28,377.

The total number of hospital beds meant for Covid patients in Delhi stood at 57,09, but 5135 beds remained vacant.

The number of containment zones in the city was 938, the bulletin added.

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. AASHISH GUPTA  
AC/CC/ARC (South East)  
Saket Courts, New Delhi  
SS-38/2021

In the matter of :  
Mrs. Kiran Sethi, w/o Sh.  
Vijay Sethi, aged about 68  
Years, r/o D-64, 65, First Floor,  
Amar Colony, Lajpat Nagar  
IV, New Delhi-110024.

—Petitioner

—Respondent

Whereas, an application U/s 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 has been made by Kiran Sethi, successor of Late Ashish Sethi for grant of Succession Certificate in respect of debts/securities of the said deceased.

And whereas the said applicant shall come for hearing on 03-05-2021 at 10-00 a.m.

Therefore, the public at large is hereby given notice to any person has objection to the grant of Succession Certificate in favour of the said applicant, he may appear and file objections in writing, in person or through duly appointed pleader, on the said date and time.

Given under my hand and Seal on 02-03-2021.

ACI/CC/ARC-(South East)

Saket Courts, New Delhi

Seal of the Court

DEBTORS RECOVERY  
TRIBUNAL-I

4th Floor, Jeevan Tara  
Building, Parliament Street,  
New Delhi-110001  
OA No. 206/2020

State Bank of India

— Applicant

— Respondents

To, 1. Manju J. Homes India  
Limited, NH-58, 1st DPS  
School, Meera Road, Rajouri  
Extention, Ghaziabad (UP)-  
201003.

Also at: C-10, Ramprastha,  
Ghaziabad, UP.

Also at: C-294, Vivek Vihar,  
New Delhi-110095.

(Respondent No. 2)

Whereas the abovenamed applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs.  
32,51,913/- (Rupees Thirty  
Two Lacs Fifty One Thousand  
Nine Hundred and One Rupees)  
against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Lt. Registrar on 11-05-2021 10-30 a.m. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.etrifinal.bsnl.gov.in Phone Number : 011-23748473).

To inform you that in case of your failure to appear on the abovementioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:

(i) All the Advocate/Litigants shall download the 'Ciscos WebX' application software.

(ii) Meeting ID and Password for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer/I and Recovery Officer/shall be available one day prior to the next date of DRT Official Portal i.e. Drt.gov.in under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned Official Ph. No. 011-23748473.

Given under my hand and Seal of the Tribunal on this 23rd February of 2021.

By Order of this Tribunal For Registrar

Respondent may contact undermentioned Phone Number for further enquiry.

Mr. Amit K. Dar,  
Ld. Registrar  
DRT-I, New Delhi  
Phone No. : 011-23748473  
Email : dtideli-dts@nic.in

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. VINEET KUMAR  
Addl. District Judge  
Shahdara District  
Room No. 11, 2nd Floor  
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi  
PC - 07/2020

Ms. Ritu Jain & Ors.

Delhi Budget likely to have special allocation for free Covid vaccination at govt hospitals: Sources

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

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The Delhi government is working on a plan for taking yoga to the masses in Delhi. The government intends to popularise yoga through extensive campaign in residential areas

of the city, the sources said.

Besides this, the government is also expected to share its plan to increase Delhi's per capita income so that it equals that of Singapore by 2047," they said.

The budget session will commence with Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal's address to the House at 11 am on Monday. It will be followed by presentation of Economy Survey of Delhi (2020-21) by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

The Outcome Budget of the Delhi government for 2020-21 will also be tabled in the House by Sisodia, who is also the finance minister of the government.

BJP MLA and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that the AAP government has curtailed the Question Hour in the budget session to evade questions from opposition legislators.

He demanded the government to hold a session giving proper time to the MLAs to ask questions.

Mamata ji has run away from her Bhawanipore seat to Nandigram

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ON HOW HE SAID THE CM HAD 'RUN AWAY' TO SILEGURI AS SHE WAS 'UNABLE TO FACE' PM MODI'S RALLY IN KOLKATA

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SNS &amp; PTI

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## Chadha blames Haryana for water supply shortage in Delhi, seeks Centre's help

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Raghav Chadha on Sunday said the national capital was reeling under water shortage as "Haryana has reduced the supply of raw water to the city".

He requested Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to intervene and direct the Haryana government to release Delhi's share of raw water.

Haryana has reduced the supply of raw water to Delhi, as a result we are facing a short-



water treatment plants has dipped by 30 per cent.

The same has reduced by 15 per cent at Okhla WTP, he said.

Further, Haryana Govt's lackadaisical attitude has led to unchecked dumping of sewage into Yamuna. Samples picked up by our Quality Lab show high contamination/Ammonia, Chadha claimed in another tweet.

According to officials, the DJB's water treatment plants can treat up to 0.9 parts per million ammonia concentration in the river water.

If the ammonia content is

higher than this, the raw water is diluted with fresh water from the Upper Ganga Canal or the Munak Canal.

If enough fresh water for dilution is not available, the production capacity of plants is reduced or they are temporarily shut.

At times, ammonia concentration in the river water at Wazirabad and Chandrawal increases up to 7 ppm (parts per million).

Chadha said that the DJB has repeatedly requested the Haryana government to address these issues on war footing, but to no avail.

**Happy International Women's Day**

**Saluting the Pride 'SHE' holds!**

**Delhi Police SHANTI SEWA NYAYA**

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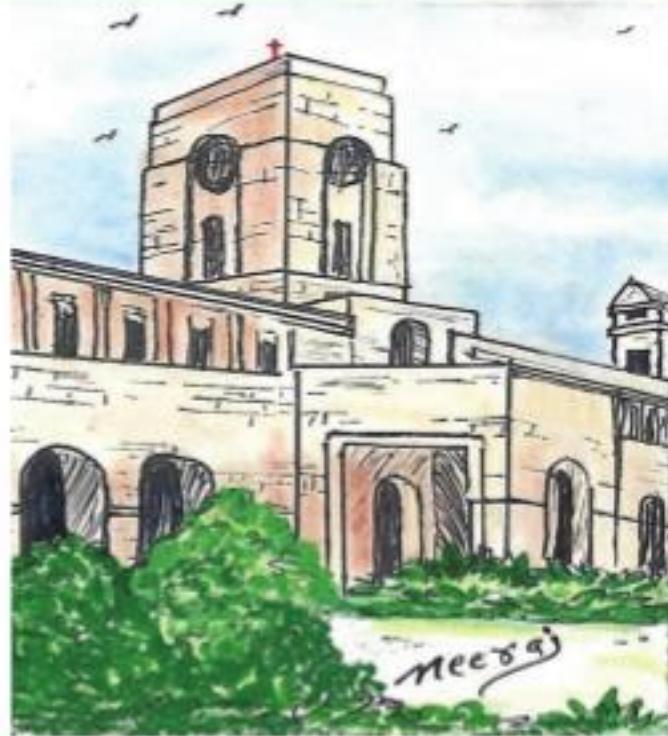
**LUCKNOW**  
2/2, Butler Palace (Near Jopling Road), Lucknow-226 001, Ph.: (0522) 220705

**RANCHI**  
11/C, Road#1, Ashoknagar, Ranchi - 834 002

**BANGALORE**  
No. 68, First Floor, Gold Tower, 50 Residency Road, Bangalore-560025, Tel: 080-22229129, 080-22234813

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All other stations in India - Re. 1

**KOLKATA**  
Statesman House, 4, Chowringhee Square  
Kolkata-700 001  
Tel: (033)



**S**t. Stephen's College, one of the oldest and most prestigious colleges for the arts and sciences in India, completed 140 years of its eventful existence this February. Over the years, it has produced a galaxy of distinguished alumni and some of the best minds in the fields of politics, public services, law and justice, literature, journalism, films, sports, business and many others. Its list of renowned alumni, which include two Presidents of the Indian sub-continent (Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed of India and Gen. Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan), is far too long to mention here. Founded in 1881 by the Reverend Samuel Scott Allnutt at the initiative of the Cambridge Mission in Delhi, St. Stephen's College was first located in a 'haveli' in Katra Khushi Rai, near Kinari Bazaar in Chandni Chowk and was academically governed by the Calcutta University during its first year after which it came under the Panjab University in 1882 when it was first founded. The college functioned from Chandni Chowk till 1891 after which it shifted to the majestic building of Indo-Saracenic Revival Architecture near St. James's Church in Kashmere Gate, which later housed the Delhi Polytechnic and is now the office of the Election Commissioner of Delhi. St. Stephen's was affiliated to Delhi University as one of its constituent colleges in 1922, the year in which DU was born. It moved to its present site at the University Enclave (North Campus) in 1941, its beautiful green campus with imposing academic wings, the Chapel and the hostels designed by the Welsh Architect Walter Sykes George. Sushil Kumar Rudra became the first Indian Principal of the college in 1906 and his contribution towards the all-round development of the college was immense. It was during his time that Reverend Charles Freer Andrews became a faculty member of the college and identified himself with the Indian Freedom Movement. He was named 'Deenbandhu' or 'Messiah of the Poor' by his friend Mahatma Gandhi. He was also close to Rabindranath Tagore who wrote the English translation of the 'Gitanjali' as his guest at St. Stephen's College, which later won Tagore the Nobel Prize. St. Stephen's College remains the most sought-after college in the country. Although a minority institution, it admits students from all denominations and economic status from all parts of the country and even overseas. It admitted women students from 1928-1949 and again from 1975 onwards. Apart from the academic excellence, it is known for sports, drama, debate and literary activities.

**D**elhiites are turning outdoors after the sudden onset of summer. It was not just the Lockdown which kept people indoors. The winter that just ended broke all records of cold days and nights. People are turning out of their homes to enjoy the sun now. The fear of Covid-19 has not gone fully. But it's definitely time for a break. Educational institutions have made relaxations. Offices are allowing near total staff. What is making these events appear a bit unreal is the long interval after which people are meeting again. Even known faces are smiling back at each other abundantly. There is an inclination to even shake hands. But it is the masks which remind people of the restraint that must prevail in personal interactions. As restrictions go slowly, people realize that WhatsApp or virtual media can't really be a substitute for face-to-face communication. That people are visiting friends and relatives, and re-visiting their favorite public places, only confirms they did not like a life of secrecy. The confines of homes made people look inwards only, and worry about the upkeep of their habitat, when there was a huge city to be discovered outside. So what if the outdoors meant a bit of pollution in the air, or the same old traffic slowdowns for one reason or the other. At least the city is alive, and one can feel its presence.

### CRIME CAPITAL

**T**he recent incident in Adarsh Nagar, where a young woman was stabbed to death by a chain snatcher, has once again raised concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation in the national capital. Delhi is already infamous for its rampant crimes and such incidents only reinforce the general impres-

if one is stuck in a traffic jam on the Yamuna, one can appreciate the foam floating on its surface. If it is a circuitous route one has to follow to reach the NCR societies across the city borders, one knows the farmers are still camping at the Delhi doorstep for justice. Eateries are drawing their clientele back. Peo-

ple are re-discovering the food they always ate with a vengeance. Along with this, they hear tales how the Lockdown had taken a heavy toll of the businesses. Going out of homes also means learning at first hand that Ashram Chowk continues to be a nightmare for motorists who can't avoid the route for their

work or reaching back homes. The intersection with links for Faridabad, Noida, South Delhi and Ring Road, has historically seen such a velocity of traffic that can never be brought under regulation for whatever gains, without months and months of bumper-to-bumper breath-stopping traffic. The

underpass project at the spot has already got several extensions of deadlines. The Bhairon Marg connection between Pragati Maidan and Ring Road is another painful stretch that a Delhi motorist may encounter on a trip out of home. One can only wonder when, and how far, the underpasses coming up

A New Delhi-based foreign diplomat after India's agreements for disengagement with China and ceasefire with Pakistan.

### TAILPIECE

**'H**ow is it that the narrative has suddenly changed from two-front war to two-front peace after the Biden administration assumed office in Washington?" wondered

the location will allow a smooth movement of traffic, without flooding of the passageways during Delhi's merciless monsoons. In East Delhi, Mayur Vihar's Phase I continues to wait for the re-opening of its entrance for Noida Road towards New Delhi, even after five-and-a-half years of closure for the construction of Delhi Metro's Pink Line and two flyovers, along with their loops. As a result, people wanting to come out of the massive DDA colony and group housing societies for a trip of Central Delhi, have to take a circuitous route still, with rising costs as petrol gets dearer every other day. Delhiites are however venturing out again despite all the physical discomforts they have to be prepared for to enjoy the real world. In such a scenario, the news that the India Toy Fair 2021 was being held on a virtual platform was a bit disappointing. Toy fairs are unknown in India, and a physical toy fair would have brought much joy to children visiting it. It could travel across the country. The virtual fair, from 27 February to 2 March, brought together over 100 exhibitors from across 30 States and Union Territories, who displayed their products in an e-commerce enabled "virtual exhibition." A major purpose was to enable the government and the industry to discuss how to make India the next global hub for manufacturing toys.

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Bhaskar Roy, Rakesh Kumar and Ashok Tuteja



# Changing weather

## India

### MCs for 3 HP towns to ensure their devp: CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 7 MARCH

**H**imachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday said the constitution of new Municipal Corporations (MCs) in Solan, Palampur and Mandi is vital to ensure that all these towns are developed in a planned and systematic manner.

Addressing a public meeting in Solan, Thakur said this decision of the state govern-



ment had fulfilled the long pending demand of the people of all these three towns.

"The present State Government constituted 412 new gram panchayats, 7 Nagar Panchayats and 3 Municipal

Corporations in the state to ensure active participation of the people in the grass root institutions of democracy," he said.

The CM said the formation of Municipal Corporation in

Solan town would ensure proper planning and systematic development of the town so that the town maintains its old glory and fame.

Solan is one of the most centrally located and lively town of the state, which is not only the gateway of the state but also attracts people from all parts of the state to settle here due to its pleasant environment.

With this, the need has been felt to ensure planned, systemic and proper development of the town and it was thus decided

by the present government to upgrade the Municipal Council of Solan into Municipal Corporation, he asserted.

Thakur further said that the Covid-19 pandemic had adversely affected the world economy and India and that HP was not an exception.

But with the active support and cooperation of the people of the state, the government had successfully come out from this situation, he said.

"The functionaries of BJP not only provided food and

essential commodities to the needy and the poor but also distributed about 53 lakh face masks to the people.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only took timely and effective decisions to bail out the country from this crisis but also motivated the scientists to develop indigenous vaccines for this virus.

Prime Minister gave a clarion call to the people of the country to find out opportunities even in the challenges and it was due to his motiva-

tion that once fully dependent on China for PPE kits, today India was producing over 6 lakh PPE kits daily and exporting the same to several other countries," Thakur said. The CM said Himachal had only 60 ventilators in the state before the Covid pandemic but today the state has over 600 ventilators.

He accused the Congress of not hesitating from politicizing the sensitive issue of pandemic and said the party blamed the government for spreading the virus by bringing home about 2.50 lakh people of the state stranded in different parts of the country.

Not only this, the state Congress raised bills of Rs 13 crore before its party high command as an amount spent to provide masks and sanitizers to the people of the state.

He wondered how and where the Congress leaders spent this amount as the people of the state received nothing from them.

### Jai Ram demands LIDAR survey for Mandi greenfield airport

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 7 MARCH

Chief Minister said that Kullu Airport also required expansion of the existing runway by 660 metres to avoid load penalty. This also required diversion of Beas river and the Airport Authority of India had visited the airport for OLS survey but the report was still awaited.

He said that five heliports were also being constructed under UDAN-2 in the state, which includes heliports at Kanglidhar in Mandi district, at Sanjauli and Rampur in Shimla district, at Baddi in Solan district and at SASE (Manali) in Kullu district.

"All these heliports would give a big boost to tourism development by providing better air connectivity to the high end tourists."

Shimla heliport is nearing completion and trial landing has also been carried out by the GAD helicopter on 3rd January this year," he said.

The Chief Minister requested the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation to expedite the construction on all these heliports so that they could be completed within stipulated time period. He stressed on the need for night parking of helicopters of an additional FATO for atleast MI-172 type helicopter at Shimla heliport anticipating rush off flight at this heliport.

The officials of Airport Authority of India must direct concerned authorities to visit Kangra airport for feasibility study and OLS survey for extended runway and finalize the master plan as the state government has already conveyed the approval on draft master plan," he said. The



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*Bringing petroleum products within the ambit of GST would be a death knell for the states*

FORMER KARNATAKA CM H D KUMARASWAMY

STATING CESS ON PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IS ONE OF THE MAJOR SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR THE STATES.

## THUMBNAILS



Rohingya Muslims leave their settlement for a centre after a police verification drive, in Jammu on Sunday.

AGENCIES

**Three Sri Lankan boats seized:** Coast Guard officials seized three Sri Lankan boats at Vizhinjam near Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. The boats were reportedly ferrying drugs in Indian territorial waters off the coast of Lakshadweep Islands.

SNS

## 'Centre working to amend CrPC, IPC to strengthen women's safety'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD, 7 MARCH

Union minister of state for home affairs G Kishan Reddy said that Centre was working towards amending the outdated Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in order to strengthen them enough to curb crimes against women.

He also said that the Centre was keeping a track of the individuals involved in harassing women.

Reddy was speaking at a gathering of the Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs (COWE) in the city on the eve of International Women's Day.

"Women safety is of paramount importance to the Modi government. We will go to any extent to ensure women safety. We need an effective

IPC or CrPC for effective control of crime. We need to instill fear of the law," said Reddy. He went on to add: "That is why Union ministry thought about bringing sweeping changes to suit the needs of the current day scenario. The ministry has been talking to a cross section of people and consulting experts to change the IPC and CrPC."

Both the IPC and CrPC date back to British India and are considered to be outdated.

He urged the women entrepreneurs to organise discussions and get back to the ministry with the changes required in order to provide better protection to the women. Once the changes are firmed up then the matter will be placed before the Union Cabinet for approval before being placed in the Parliament.

## I-T raids 27 premises; undisclosed income worth ₹1,000 cr found

SNS  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Income Tax Department raided over two dozen premises in the election-bound Tamil Nadu and detected an undisclosed income of more than Rs 1,000 crore.

According to a senior officer of the Income Tax Department, raids were conducted on 27 premises mainly located in Chennai, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy, Tirupur, Nellore, Jaipur and Indore in a case related to two Chennai based groups.

One of the accused is a leading bullion trader in Tamil Nadu and the second is the biggest jewellery retailers in South India

The raids found unaccounted cash sales, bogus cash credits from its branches, and cash credits in dummy accounts in the guise of advance for purchases.

The raids also found unexplained cash deposits during the demonetisation period, bogus outstanding sundry creditors and huge unexplained stock variations.

The Income Tax officials also found evidences, which revealed that the taxpayer received and repaid cash loans from local financiers.

The accused further gave cash loans to builders and made cash investments in real estate properties and made unaccounted gold bullion purchases.

The accused also claimed wrongful bad debts, inflated wastages in conversion of old gold to fine gold and jewellery making.

The searches conducted, so far, have resulted in the detection of undisclosed income of more than Rs 1,000 crore and seizure of Rs 1.2 crore from their possession.

## 'Pawri nahi ho rahi hai': Delhi Police after seizing 'hukkas' from restaurant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Delhi Police on Sunday seized 24 'hukkas' after it raided a restaurant-cum-bar here and then joined the "pawri ho rahi hai" meme fest on social media, saying "Yeh Hum hain.. Yeh Hooke Hain.. Aur ab Pawri nahi ho rahi hai."

The meme set the social media on fire after it surfaced online with Daniaan Mobeen, a Pakistan-based Instagram influencer, speaking in a heavily-accented tone as she stood partying with some friends.

From his official handle on Twitter, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Prashant Gautam said, "Yeh Hum hain.. Yeh Hooke Hain.. Aur ab

Pawri nahi ho rahi hai.. PS- Some Pawris are not only injurious to health they are illegal too. Seized 24 Hooka from Rajouri Garden area," he tweeted and tagged photos of the seized 'hukkas'.

A senior police official said during patrolling duty, sub-inspector Prakash Kashyap along with head constable Suresh raided the restaurant-cum-bar in west Delhi's Rajouri Garden area after receiving information that 'hukkas' were being served to customers, they said.

"The police team found that Covid-19 protocols were also not being followed. There were no screening machines or sanitizers at the restaurant. The customers were also found to be smoking 'hukkas,'" the senior police officer said.

## No break from politics even on Sunday

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

On Sunday streets of Kolkata wore unusually busy looks as spate of rallies headed towards the Brigade Ground while city dwellers preferred to remain indoors to avoid hassles.

The station premises at Howrah and Sealdah was chock-a-block with BJP supporters who came from suburban areas for the mega rally at Brigade.

Howrah and Sealdah, the two major railway stations, were flooded with rally participants right from the morning. Unlike other Sundays, the suburban trains were jam packed. While Sealdah Station received supporters mostly from the adjoining districts, trains carrying rally participants

from North Bengal reached Howrah Station.

While there were traffic restrictions in and around the venue of the mega rally, the city roads were flooded with BJP supporters carrying flags and banners and they were chanting slogans. Like the local trains, most of the buses plying on the city's roads were seen carrying rally participants.

On the other hand, hardly any private vehicle could be spotted on the roads as the city dwellers preferred to remain indoors to avoid traffic snarls.

The grounds close to Brigade and other nearby places that remain usually busy with Sunday evening revellers till last week, had fewer headcounts. Even the private buses and minibuses had hardly any passenger.

## Mithun joins BJP, shares dais with Modi



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

Bollywood actor Mithun Chakraborty on Sunday joined the BJP at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Brigade Parade Ground rally.

He was clad in a white punjabi and a cream colour dhoti. Wearing sunglasses and donning a cap he reached the mega rally venue around 1.30 pm.

Earlier his convoy was stuck in a traffic jam on Bidhan Sarani while it was heading towards the rally venue. People from buses, taxis and other vehicles alighted to catch a glimpse of their superstar. Chakraborty's security guards later cleared the way and the actor managed to leave the place after a 10-minute traffic snarl.

Mithun was handed over the party's flag by BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh on the stage.

Later Modi praised Mithun by saying that he is "Bangla kriti santan (blessed son of Bengal)" and the superstar is a follower of spiritual master and yogi Loknath Baba.

"His life was full of struggle against all odds. Yet he achieved success," Modi said.

Mithun, in his speech, vowed to fight for rights of everyone in Bengal.

"Since age 18, I wanted to work for the poor. I used to stay in a congested area, but it was my dream that I will work for the welfare of the underprivileged people. I am proud to be a Bengali. I know you like my dialogues," he said.

The National Award winning actor said that it was like a dream come true.

Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy. And I will share the stage with him. I had never dreamt of being a part of such a huge rally. I wished to work for the poor and that wish will now be fulfilled."

*Bringing petroleum products within the ambit of GST would be a death knell for the states*

FORMER KARNATAKA CM H D KUMARASWAMY

STATING CESS ON PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IS ONE OF THE MAJOR SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR THE STATES.

*India*

## NDA partners appeal workers to fight unitedly in Assam election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
GUWAHATI, 7 MARCH

NDA constituents in Assam on Sunday appealed to workers to help each other to ensure the victory of the BJP-AGP-UPPL alliance in the wake of protests by a section of supporters after announcement of seat-sharing and ticket distribution in the poll-bound state.

The presidents of the three parties accepted that ground level workers are "slightly dissatisfied" which is "natural" in an alliance. "Workers of every party want leaders to contest from their areas. They also want inclusion of more candidates from their parties. But in an alliance, we have to accept give-and-take understanding," BJP Assam chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass said.

The aim of the BJP-led alliance is to win over 100 seats in the election to the 126-member assembly and it will

be achieved with the help of its allies - the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), he said.

"I appeal to all BJP workers to help the AGP in their 26 seats and UPPL in their eight seats, which were allotted as per the understanding. BJP workers should consider AGP and UPPL as one party and help them," Dass said.

Workers of the saffron party and the AGP have protested in over 10 places across the northeastern state following the announcement of the seat-sharing among the NDA partners and publication of the first list of BJP candidates.

Dass said, BJP workers are dedicated and the dissatisfaction of some of them due to ticket distribution will not have any impact on the poll outcome.

AGP president Atul Bora said, the party joined hands with the BJP to defeat the

Congress-AIUDF alliance and that is why all his party workers should work for the victory of NDA candidates in Assam.

Ex-CM Mahanta's traditional seat given to BJP

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a constituent of the ruling BJP-led coalition in Assam, on Sunday said that Barhampur, the traditional seat of former CM Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, was allotted to the saffron party this time considering his "winning possibility" from there.

Mahanta, an MLA since 1985, won the Barhampur constituency in Nagaon district for six consecutive terms since 1991. The seat has now gone to the BJP which selected Ittu Goswami to contest the Assembly polls from there.

The AGP chief also refused to say whether Mahanta was taken into confidence before handing over the seat to the BJP.

## TN Assembly polls: DMK allots 25 seats to Cong

It also gives Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency to its key ally Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHENNAI, 7 MARCH

**A**fter tough negotiations that stretched for days, the DMK on Sunday allotted 25 Assembly seats and the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency to its key ally, the Congress.

A formal pact for the 6 April Assembly election was signed by DMK president M K Stalin and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee chief K S Alagiri at the Dravidian party's headquarters Anna Arivalayam here.

After days of deliberations, a point of conclusion was reached late Saturday night and Congress leader and Tamil Nadu in charge Dinesh Gundu Rao told that the agreement was signed in a "spirit of cooperation" when the country was facing a "threat" from the BJP.

Rao and Alagiri called on Stalin at his residence here last night and said the pact would be signed on Sunday, but declined to give an indication on the number of seats that would be allotted.

Asked if his party was satisfied with the number of seats allotted by its ally, Rao said the only aim was to ensure the victory of the secular front led by DMK.

"Once we sign an agreement, we have to be satisfied because this has been done after a lot of deliberations. Our only aim is now to see that the secular front wins. The time for being satisfied or dissatisfied is over.

Now we are in the battlefield. We have to take on our opponents," Rao said.

The decision on accepting the DMK's offer was taken only



**TN Cong: Will not seek share in power from DMK**

CHENNAI, 7 MARCH

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K S Alagiri on Sunday said his party did not intend seeking a share in power if the DMK is elected after the 6 April Assembly poll.

He expressed joy over the Congress getting 25 seats from the Dravidian partner.

After consulting all senior leaders and the high command and "there is no difference of opinion within our party on this issue," he added.

TNCC chief Alagiri, however, pitched in, saying, "We are fully satisfied."

Rao said the battle against the saffron party was not confined to ideology alone, but extended to "saving democracy" from its clutches.

The country was being run like a "dictatorship" and elected governments of Opposition parties were toppled, he alleged. Recently, the Congress government in neighbouring Puducherry lost majority after its MLAs resigned and CMV Narayanasamy Cabinet resigned.

Rao alleged that the BJP was using "money and government" power to destabilise and finish off the Opposition parties. "Their agenda in Tamil Nadu is also the same," he claimed, adding that by aligning with the AIADMK, the BJP's intention was to "finish

Shah confident of NDA 'coalition govt' in TN post polls

KANYAKUMARI (TN), 7 MARCH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday launched his party's campaign for the April 6 Lok Sabha bypoll here and exuded confidence that the party would not only win here, but that the NDA in Tamil Nadu would emerge victorious in the Assembly elections too next month.

The BJP is part of the AIADMK-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu and the party is contesting the 6 April bypoll to the TNCC leader said.

Single phase polls to 234 Assembly seats in the state are also scheduled on 6 April, with arch rival AIADMK and DMK led combines keen to ensure victory for the respective alliances.

Launching his "Vetri Kodi Eandhi Tamizhagam Velvom" (Will Win Tamil Nadu Carrying the flag of victory) campaign from Suseendram in this district, Shah said he was confident that a coalition government of the NDA will come to power in the state after the polls.

BJP has fielded former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan for the Lok Sabha bypoll, necessitated due to the death of Congress MP H Vasantha Kumar last year.

## Shah slams CM Vijayan, poses questions over smuggling cases

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
7 MARCH

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that Kerala has become a centre of corruption and political killings. He was speaking at a rally at the Sankumukam beach here organised for 'Vijaya Yatra' of Kerala BJP president K Surendran.

He slammed Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan for calling Central probe agencies as political tools of the BJP-led NDA government and asked him to make it clear whether the main accused in the gold and dollar smuggling cases worked in his office or not. He was referring to Swapna Suresh.

"The CPI-M led LDF and Congress-led UDF are competing with each other in corruption. While UDF was immersed in Solar scam, the LDF government is engaged in gold and dollar smuggling," alleged Shah.

Addressing the Press, CPI-M politburo member Md Salim termed Modi's rally as a 'Sikka and chawanni Brigade' which failed to become '16 annas or one rupee'.

"Today Modi talked about jhupri hatao (remove scattered slums), but it is the same man who during the Covid lockdown couldn't look beyond a balcony from where he asked countrymen to clap and light candles to rid India of coronavirus," said Salim. He added: "How many smart cities did this Modi government promise and how many have been built across the country? And now he is promising to build one in Kolkata if the BJP comes to power." Unless people are first granted land rights, no government grant can be of any use. We demand that the Centre must return their unutilised lands in Kolkata, be it a land of Kolkata Port, Railway or Ministry of Defence.

The slum-dwellers along railway tracks must get land rights to improve their standard of living. Instead of handing over vacant government lands to business tycoons at Rs 1, it should be handed over to the poor," the veteran leader said.

The slum-dwellers along railway tracks must get land rights to improve their standard of living. Instead of handing over vacant government lands to business tycoons at Rs 1, it should be handed over



We can learn a lot from our tribal brothers and sisters. In tribal communities, stress is laid on unity-based societies

PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND

SAYING SEX RATIO AMONG TRIBALS BETTER THAN GENERAL POPULATION

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 08 MARCH 2021

05

#### THUMBNAILS



Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath pays tribute to Govind Ballabh Pant on his death anniversary, in Lucknow on Sunday. ■ AGENCY

**'Sticky bombs': Suspecting that 'sticky bombs' may have entered the Valley, security forces are redrawing their standard operating procedures and also advising general public not to leave their vehicles unattended, officials said on Sunday.** PTI

**29 people fall ill after eating 'prasad':** Twenty nine people were admitted to a hospital when they complained of stomach ache after having 'prasad' during a religious function in Kannauj (UP), police said on Sunday. PTI

**Dowry death case:** A UP court has awarded life imprisonment to a man for killing his wife for dowry in 2015. A fine of Rs 5,000 has been imposed on convict Ajay Kumar Patel, said additional sessions judge Madhu Dogra. PTI

**Hindu Mahasabha's yatra:** The Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha will embark on a vehicle rally from Gwalior to Delhi on 14 March to inform people about the lives of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse and co-conspirator Narayan Apte. PTI

## Intensify stir: Priyanka to farmers

In Meerut, she calls upon people to support farmers not just for 100 days but for next 100 months

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
MEERUT, 7 MARCH

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in her 5th Kisan Mahapanchayat in western UP at Kaily village of the district on Sunday called upon the farmers to intensify agitation against the three farm laws by protesting in their respective villages and appealed the public to stand by the farmers even for 100 more months if the need be.

Addressing a crowd in the mahapanchayat in Kaily, village in Sardhana, Priyanka Gandhi asked the people to extend their support and give blessings to the farmers in their agitation against the three farm laws in their villages. She said if the need be "we should stand with the agitating farmers not just for 100 days but for the next 100 months".

Priyanka had arrived at the Mahapanchayat venue on a tractor accompanied by PCC UP chief Ajay Kumar Lallu and other party rank and files. People gave her a rousing welcome amid slogans of "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan" and "Priyanka Gandhi Jindabad".

Starting with Saharanpur, she held similar mahapanchayats in Bijnore and Muzaffarnagar districts in the past weeks.

"The first war of independence started from Meerut in which many people made supreme sacrifice and farmers gave their contribution. Now is the time to give strength to the farmers," she stated.

Comparing the BJP rule with the British Rule, Priyanka said as the farmers were exploited then, BJP is doing the same with them now. In 100 days of agitation over 200 farmers have been martyred and the government is mocking at it and insulting the farmers, she quipped and added that instead they could have initiated for dialogues with the agitating farmers.

The Congress leader said



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi rides a tractor to attend a Kisan Mahapanchayat in Meerut on Sunday. ■ AGENCY

the government has introduced these laws to benefit corporates and these would reduce the income of farmers.

"If these farm laws were in favour of the farmers than why are they sitting at borders of Delhi for more than 100 days?" She questioned adding that the farmers are full of courage and valor. So should the PM not respect them?

Instead the water supply of the agitating farmers were cut, she lamented and charged the Prime Minister of mocking at the farmers. "His ministers did not even bother to stand to keep 2 minutes silence to pay tribute to the farmers who lost their lives during the agitation at the Delhi borders," she charged.

Also raising the issue of skyrocketing hike in the prices of diesel, petrol, cooking gas and electricity, Priyanka said the government is running only to benefit its two friends.

Highlighting the problem of sugarcane farmers, Priyanka Gandhi attacked the government for non-payment of sugarcane dues. She said that sugar mills have to pay more than Rs 10,000 crore to the farmers, but instead of clearing these dues Modiji has bought two planes for himself spending Rs 16,000 crore. He spent Rs 20,000 crore on the new Parliament and Rs

26,000 crore have gone to the pockets of his friends from farmers insurance policy. She called upon the people to unite to bring about a change in the country.

"The time has come when you should wake up and know what wrong is being done to you," she said to the farmers appealing them to raise the voice for their rights. She maintained a 2-minute silence in the Mahapanchayat to pay tribute to farmers who sacrificed their lives in this movement against the farm laws.

**Women farmers:** From managing the stage, food and security to sharing tales of their struggles, and significance of taking part in the farmers' agitation, thousands of women farmers, students and activists will take over key roles at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur protest sites at Delhi's borders on International Women's Day on Monday, according to a PTI report from New Delhi.

Noting that women contribute significantly to the country's farming sector, the organisers have laid out elaborate plans to let women farmers take centre stage and all the space under the sky to acknowledge the big but unrecognised part of the farming community.

## BKU's Tikait to hold rally in MP's Sheopur today



BKU Spokesperson Rakesh Tikait plays 'Chanda Melam' with protesters from Kerala during an agitation against new farm laws, at UP Gate in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ AGENCY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BHOPLA, 7 MARCH

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Singh Tikait will address three rallies in Madhya Pradesh from Monday to drum up support for his protest against the Centre's three agri marketing laws, a functionalary of his outfit said.

The rallies will be held in Sheopur on Monday, in Rewa on 14 March and in Jabalpur the next day, and a decision would be taken later on holding more rallies in the state, said BKU MP general secretary Anil Yadav.

Tikait will be touring MP, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Telangana to interact with farmers and widen the protests against the Centre's new laws.

Incidentally, there is an arrest warrant pending against Tikait in connection with a 2012 attempt to murder and rioting case in the state's Anuppur district, said police officials.

Tikait had led a BKU protest against a power plant in Jaithari area, which turned violent, leading to injuries to policemen and torching of

vehicles, they added.

Over 100 people, including Tikait, were arrested under sections 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting with armed weapon), 149 (unlawful assembly), 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC, an official said.

"However, after being released on bail in 2012, Tikait failed to appear before court for subsequent hearings, after which an arrest warrant was issued against him in 2016. We will take necessary action on the arrest warrant," Anuppur Superintendent of Police Mangil Solanki said.

Meanwhile, a 49-year-old farmer from Haryana's Hisar district on Sunday allegedly hanged himself from a tree, about seven kilometers from the Tikri border protest site, police said. The farmer, who supported the agitation against Centre's new farm laws, has purportedly left a suicide note, they said.

In the suicide note mentioned by Rajbir, it is mentioned that the three farm laws were responsible for him to take the extreme step. He also said that the Centre should fulfil his last wish by repealing the legislations, police said.

In the suicide note mentioned that the three farm laws were responsible for him to take the extreme step. He said the Centre should fulfil his last wish by repealing the legislations, police said.



activist Disha Ravi on sedition charges.

"Political control over media houses, political strategies to win elections and break the opposition, defying constitutional norms ~ all these things are just the same even now as what happened in 1975. Indira Gandhi's place has been taken by Narendra Modi," he wrote.

The Sena MP added that Indira Gandhi had expressed regret over the excesses committed during that period and promised that there will be no Emergency in future.

"She was firm that the step had to be taken against the prevailing backdrop where provocation was done in an attempt to create anarchy. She was of the view that Emergency was imposed because democracy was derailed," Raut said.

Varavara Rao discharged from hospital

Poet-activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, has been discharged from Nanavati Hospital here, sources said.

The 82-year-old activist was granted interim bail for six months on medical grounds by Bombay High Court on 22 February.

Rao, arrested in 2018, was admitted to the medical facility in November last year due to ill-health.

## Nitish: Giriraj saying errant officials be beaten up with sticks not okay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PATNA/BEGUSARAI, 7 MARCH

Union minister Giriraj Singh's declaration that officials who did not listen to the people be "beaten up with bamboo sticks" was on Sunday frowned upon by his former boss, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar.

Singh made his latest controversial remark at a function in his Begusarai Lok Sabha constituency on the previous day. The firebrand BJP leader was visibly peeved over repeated complaints from locals that officials often paid no heed when they were approached with grievances.

Kumar, in whose Cabinet Singh had served till less than a decade ago, was asked by journalists what he thought about the utterances. "You should go and ask Giriraj whether the use of such language is *nyasangat* (proper)," said Kumar, a stickler for propriety in public behaviour, with a broad smile barely concealing his distaste.

The Union minister, who moved to the Centre in 2014 and was elevated from MoS to the Cabinet rank five years later, had made the remark at a function organised by an agricultural institute.



Another farmer from Haryana commits suicide near Tikri border

CHANDIGARH, 7 MARCH

Singh, who earlier represented Nawada but won Begusarai for his party by defeating CPI's Kanhaiya Kumar by a margin of over four lakh votes, holds animal husbandry, fisheries and dairy portfolios.

A video footage of the function has gone viral on social media. Singh can be heard lamenting: "People come to me with the complaint that officials do not listen (*nai sunaichhe*, an idiom in local Angika dialect.)"

"If that is the case, *baans lekar maaro* (beat them up with bamboo sticks)," said the MP known for shooting from the hip, as some of the audience burst into laughter.

"If you are approaching an official with a genuine grouse... Stand your ground. Giriraj is there with you, always. It is you (the people) in whom the real power is vested, not MPs, MLAs, DMs, BDOs or Mukhiyas," he had added.

#### BEST FOOT FORWARD



Indian Air Force's women officers during a media interaction, a day before International Women's Day, at the Air Force Station, Hindon, on Sunday. ■ AGENCY

the pioneer of the concept, a fact that has got blurred over the years because of skewed interpretations of the Quran and Hadith," Quraishi said.

"I have argued that the Quran has nowhere prohibited family planning," he added while stressing that there are only interpretations - for or against.

Islam, he explained, is supportive of family planning ideas as it expects youth to marry only when they have the wherewithal to support a family. It lays great emphasis on the health of mother and children and the need for proper upbringing," said the former bureaucrat who was chief election commissioner from

July 2010 to June 2012.

Quraishi argues in his book that family planning is actually not a Hindu-versus-Muslim issue as the two communities have similar statistics and stand shoulder to shoulder in the socio-economic indicators that influence family planning behaviour.

Their socio-economic con-

ditions are region specific, and that is what determines their fertility behaviours, he asserts.

It is true that a Hindu Muslim fertility differential persists in the demographic reality of India, but this is due to the relative backwardness of Muslims in all factors that determine fertility behaviour - literacy, income and access to services being some of them.

Polygamy is among the myths he has attempted to bust in his book. Hindutva groups have perpetuated the propaganda that Muslims marry four wives to increase their population with statements such as *Hum Chaar Humare*

is taking place at a time when political parties have their focus on elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry.

The elections would take place in March-April.

Senior leaders of various parties, especially the regional ones, are likely to skip most of the House sittings to focus on campaigning.

The first part of the Budget session started on 29 January with the President's address to joint sittings of both Houses of Parliament.

The address was boycotted by over 20 Opposition parties, including the Congress, in support of the demand of the protesting farmers for the repeal of the three farm laws. The Union Budget was tabled on 1 February.

Thereafter, House proceedings were washed out for four consecutive days over the Opposition's demand for separate discussion on farm issues.

To compensate the sessions lost time, the House sat till midnight for several days.

## Delhi among top 3 states with most contaminated sites: CPCB

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The national capital stands third on the list of states and Union Territories with most contaminated sites, according to the Central Pollution Control Board data.

There are 112 sites in India contaminated by toxic and hazardous substances. Besides, there are 168 sites that may be contaminated but require investigation and confirmation, as per the CPCB.

Odisha tops the list with 23 contaminated sites, followed by Uttar Pradesh (21) and Delhi (11).

Bhalswa and Ghazipur landfill sites, industrial areas at Jhilmil, Wazirpur, New Friends Colony, Dilshad Garden and Lawrence Road are among the 11 contaminated sites in Delhi. Also, there are 12 probably contaminated sites in the national capital.

According to the Union Environment Ministry, 'Contaminated Sites' are delineated areas in which the constituents and characteristics of the toxic and hazardous substances, caused by humans, exist at levels and in conditions which pose existing or imminent threats to human health and the environment.

## 'Time to call the bluff, bust myths created by Hindutva groups to demonise Muslims'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Declaring that the time has come to bust "myths created by Hindutva groups" to demonise Muslims, former chief election commissioner S Y Quraishi says Islam is not hostile to the concept of family planning and Muslims are the least polygamous among all communities in India.

There is also no organised conspiracy by Muslims to overtake Hindus in terms of population and their number can never rival that of Hindus in the country, Quraishi argues in his book *The Population Myth: Islam, Family Planning and Politics in India*.



He uses facts and figures to demolish propaganda that he says is reaching a crescendo. "If you repeat a lie a hundred times, it becomes the truth," Quraishi added in an interview on his book.

The propagandas are region specific, and that is what determines their fertility behaviours, he asserts.

It is true that a Hindu Muslim fertility differential persists in the demographic reality of India, but this is due to the relative backwardness of Muslims in all factors that determine fertility behaviour - literacy, income and access to services being some of them.

Polygamy is among the myths he has attempted to bust in his book. Hindutva groups have perpetuated the propaganda that Muslims marry four wives to increase their population with statements such as *Hum Chaar Humare*

BEFORE DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI 4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001	
OA NO 246/2020	Date: 11.12.2020
BANK OF BARODA	Vs
M/S JANKI TRANSFORMERS PVT. LTD. & ORS.	APPLICANT
To,	RESPONDENT
Defendant	
1. M/S JANKI TRANSFORMERS PVT. LTD. PLOT NO. H-45, RICOH INDUSTRIAL AREA, SHAHJAHANPUR NEEMRANA, DISTT. ALWAR, RAJASTHAN-301076	
ALSO AT: B-183, 1ST FLOOR, SECT-1, DSIDC BAWANA INDUSTRIAL AREA, BAWANA, NEW DELHI.	
ALSO AT: F-419, VILLAGE KUSHKHERA IND	

## Kerala at crossroads

The 6 April election to the Kerala Assembly will see for the first time three serious contenders to form the new government. Other than the usual fight between the Congress-led United Democratic Front and the Marxists-led Left Democratic Front, the BJP has entered the fray as a serious contender with 'Metroman' Sreedharan, 88, who recently joined the party, as its chief minister candidate. Age has not withered nor diminished his infinite talents. K Surendran, president of the BJP in Kerala, says a person like Sreedharan becoming the Chief Minister will be good for Kerala. The Kochi metro and the timely completion of the Palaiyattam flyover are examples of Sreedharan's engineering skills. Given a chance, he will execute Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda. Surendran said, Union Minister V Muraleedharan from Kerala, is confident of defeating both the LDF and the UDF with Sreedharan leading the battle on the promise of corruption-free, development-oriented governance for the people of Kerala. Minorities play a significant role in Kerala politics. A recent article in Deepika, a Malayalam daily published by the church, said the Christian community is unlikely to support the LDF or the UDF in the current election. None of the splinter groups of the Kerala Congress, political arm of the Christian community, is in a hurry to join the BJP, but PS Sreedharan Pillai, a senior BJP leader from Kerala who is now Governor of Mizoram, arranged a meeting of Kerala church leaders with the Prime Minister on 19 January. Asked if there is any shift in the community's political affiliation, Fr Jacob Palackapilly, spokesman of Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council, said the church respected all political parties in India and "citizens are free to choose the party they wish."

The LDF and the UDF are more or less evenly balanced and the people of Kerala have been changing governments every five years. According to this pattern, it is the turn of the UDF to form the next government. Recent local body polls, however, put the LDF ahead, an indication the UDF has not done its homework. The Congress, leader of the UDF, is in disarray. Good governance of the LDF under the chief ministership Pinarayi Vijayan seemed poised until six months ago to break the chain and emerge with a consecutive second term. A serious smuggling scandal in which people in high places were allegedly involved has tarnished the image of the LDF. The Customs Department informed the Kerala High Court in an affidavit on Friday that Swapna Suresh, prime accused in the famous gold smuggling case, has revealed that smuggling of foreign currency was carried out at the instance of the Chief Minister and P Sreeramakrishnan, Speaker of the Assembly. The amount involved is just 1.3 crore worth of US dollars. It is inconceivable Vijayan would have risked his and the LDF's reputation built over the last five years for a mess of potage. The Customs was merely a cat's paw of the BJP, said Vijayan. BJP State president Surendran said Vijayan and his co-accused would end up in prison and not in government.

## Testing times

As India and England went into the fourth and final match in Ahmedabad on Thursday, Australia were said to be keeping an eye peeled. If England, then 1-2 in arrears, won this one, the points positions would have the Australians making the International Cricket Council's World Test Championship final where New Zealand had already booked their berth. India, of course, sat pretty, with just a draw sending them through. These varied points of the competitive focus had been anticipated when the WTC was thought of and then began to be worked on, with the ICC saying Test cricket would thus be given a "context" which would add considerably to its appeal, lending it a fresh lease of life at a time when domestic Twenty20 tournaments here, there and virtually everywhere had become the game's staple. But quite a while before the India-England series, the ICC's new boss, Greg Barclay, the New Zealander, had let it be known that he was not sure that the WTC's inaugural season would not be its last. The gloomy forecast dates from 2020, soon after Barclay's ascent to the most senior position in the game. There doubtless were factors that discouraged effervescent optimism. The competition coincided with the coronavirus, which swept the world in a terrifying, seemingly unstoppable surge and caused a shutdown which would later have to be coped with by means of what came to be called bio-secure bubbles. The schedule took a nasty hit. And many within the game and out of it saw "the goalpost being shifted" midway through the contests as percentage points became the determinant in a departure from the rules previously announced. India, it was said at the time, were not really pleased as punch as the advantage they had worked to secure was perceived to be in danger of being nullified. But Barclay spoke also of the WTC being quite unaffordable for a good many countries. Specifics have been scarce but you hardly need Leonardo da Vinci's power of imagination to conclude whom he meant. Which precisely is where two questions crop up. First, why can the ICC, which is not exactly broke, not help the under-resourced ones so a competition it deemed important enough to set going does not come a cropper? Secondly, why was the WTC given the green light by it if was beyond the means of so many of its participants? It may be difficult, on the face of it, to arrive at an incontrovertible conclusion about which of the inquiries is more important, but the way things are suggests the cavalier way the big boys go about their job when it comes to Test cricket. Life in their Dubai ivory tower must really be a fairytale if they fail to apprehend a credibility crisis should a competition begin with a sufficiency of fanfare comes to be dumped within a season or two of it being gone through strenuously.

# Virtue of Savings

Savings are a vital way for the poor to weather financial shocks and capture income-generating opportunities. Nest eggs increase the capability of the poor to manage cash flow, address the problems of uneven income, reduce the impact of the lean season and become more resilient

There's an old saying about poverty: Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and you feed him for a lifetime. However, in today's context, one of the most effective tools to fight poverty is not a fishing rod, but a savings account. Over four decades ago the most popular retail banking product was the Piggy Deposit or the Daily Deposit Scheme. Housewives would scrape together a few rupees daily to give to a savings collector who would visit their homes. The money was deposited in a bank account that paid interest and was insulated from the daily demands of life. The depositors squirrelled away a decent sum by the end of a year. Most of the time it was enough to buy a much-desired home appliance. The simple message was, saving money, even if it was only a few rupees at a time, was a sure way to build wealth.

Later, a very innovative idea - microcredit - was born out of a radical concept: Poor people, when lent small amounts of cash, pay it back in a timely manner. In the meantime, that money could be put to use in ways that would help boost income and ostensibly raise a family's standard of living. The world soon witnessed a great global rush, with banks pouring billions into microcredit to help the poor. It was a powerful revolution, but it bypassed the centuries-old idea of wealth creation: Savings, the most trusted and the oldest building block of financial management for all societies.

As impoverished borrowers defaulted on debts at alarming rates and often with fatal consequences, many organisations questioned the power of credit. This led to soul-searching by the industry and the rediscovery of a new radical idea, specifically the realisation that what the people really need - more urgently than business loans - was a safe place to save their money. This is what development expert Robert Vogel once famously called the "forgotten half of rural finance." It is now universally acknowledged that the most fundamental instrument of personal finance is the piggy bank.

The tide is now turning, sparked in part by microcredit's discredit. We all now know that there may be families who have the intelligence to benefit from loans, but there may be many who can be ruined. When they miss loan payments because a lingering illness keeps them away from their business, they get into a regular default cycle. This soon leads to acute indebtedness and makes life stressful for the entire family.

On the contrary, every family in the world can benefit from the habit of stashing small amounts of cash away. Given the variability of their income, the poor are vulnerable to sickness, death and natural calamities, which can be a drain on finances and may even prevent families from hanging on



to accumulated assets, including productive ones.

These shocks can quickly sink families into financial mire. As a result, the poor lead precarious, anxiety-ridden lives with the risks looming much larger than opportunities. The benefits of microcredit are often extolled, but debt remains debt; it always increases the risk and borrowers are sometimes overstretched. Savings can help people manage such risks conveniently, with a smaller monetary burden. And savings do matter, especially to women.

Credit can be both an opportunity and a risk for low-income families. Though it is necessary to open the doors of self-reliance, this can also be a barrier. You can dig yourself into a fair amount of debt, and that prevents you from moving up financially. It may become a deepening hole. Loans can be malignant. Some people just cannot handle debts. Certain business enterprises are too risky. And there is always the temptation to take these costly loans and scrimp on the necessities of life.

However, in contrast, savings are a vital way for the poor to weather financial shocks and capture income-generating opportunities. Nest eggs increase the capability of the poor to manage cash flow, address the problems of uneven income, reduce the impact of the lean season, become more resilient in the face of shocks, build assets or invest in a family business and, most importantly, become empowered to improve one's status within the households and communities.

Savings involve little risk and not much expertise in financial management. Even in traditional societies, no matter how oppressed women are or the level of their literacy, they are often stew-

ards of the family's savings. Sadly, most people do not put aside enough money. That is because humans suffer from economic myopia: The failure to give adequate weight to future benefits over immediate pleasures.

This is because, the self-discipline required to save is greater and the consequences of failure are worse. The instinct for gratification of immediate pleasures overrides the urge to put money away in a savings account for a rainy day. This is particularly true of men. The key to effective financial inclusion is a safe and confidential savings account for every woman. The older ones always advise the younger women to keep a store of value that other family members do not know about. When there is an emergency, they will understand your wisdom and appreciate you. The poor require little compulsion to save. They simply want a reasonable mechanism to do so and the assurance that they will be able to access the nest egg as per their needs.

Households normally put away money to have an insurance against emergencies, for religious and social obligations, for investment, for the higher education of their children and for future consumption. Savings have been the mainstay of the impoverished across the country, in particular villagers, who cope with a veritably Biblical range of hazards. Nature delivers snakes, scorpions, malaria, dengue, drought, floods, hurricanes, tuberculosis and pests that ravage crops and animals. Then there are the environmental and vocational risks arising out of changes in market climates. Families are normally financially prepared for education and marriages, but health emergencies are usually a nasty surprise.

A safe and smart savings account can transform the lives of people. Accumulation of money also serves as a form of self-insurance and enhances the sense of well-being. They are a gateway to self-employment and job creation. Lower-income families can convert savings into home purchases, education and microenterprise. Despite conventional wisdom, the underprivileged actually do save, even if it is just a few rupees each day.

The importance of savings for the poor is also demonstrated by the many ingenious (but often costly) ways they find to put money aside. They use a variety of informal mechanisms like hiding cash at home, loaning funds to relatives, participating in rotating savings groups with their neighbours, engaging deposit collectors and so on. However, for a variety of reasons, most such mechanisms fail to meet the needs of the poor in a convenient, cost-effective and secure manner.

As a consequence, when poor households are provided a safe, easily accessible opportunity to save, their commitment to saving, and the amounts they manage to put aside, are remarkable.

The fact remains that institutions that promote credit, to the exclusion of savings, place poor clients in bondage. To finance a child's primary school education, clients must take on debt because they are not in a position to save. To deal with a health emergency or family food shortage, to finance weddings, funerals or social ceremonies, they must keep borrowing, again and again. To acquire essential gadgets, they will need to borrow at prohibitive rates of interest that keep them on the debt treadmill since there is no other option. Financial institutions ought to realise that they owe poor people a safe, flexible entity to save. With credit alone, they cannot free them from the tangled web of poverty. Putting money away is a vital prerequisite for the emancipation from poverty. We must think beyond the standard microcredit model.

One of the lessons imbibed during the current pandemic is that there is no substitute for savings, given the fact that most of the people, in rural and urban India, too are surviving on savings during this crisis. Thankfully, this wisdom is now particularly influencing young people. Earlier the refrain was "young people don't save enough." It represented the conventional wisdom about our millennials. This is now changing. This cohort of young people is putting away more funds, though for short-term goals. Millennials now have a savings discipline that the preceding generations lacked. It is heartening to see people realising the wisdom of putting some cash aside. Stuart Rutherford put it pithily long ago: "The choice to save rather than to consume is the foundation of money management."

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIAN VOICES

## Technology and carbon recycling

It will be difficult to achieve the government's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 unless every possible measure is taken. As one promising measure, carbon recycling - a method of recovering and recycling carbon dioxide - has already been introduced in industrial circles. Japan is seen as a strong player in this field, so it is hoped that the method will be put into practical use and become common at an early stage. Taisei Corp has developed a new technology to seal CO2 in concrete.

Instead of cement, it produces calcium carbonate from CO2 recovered mainly from exhaust gas from factories and mixes it with water and sand. The company aims to put it to commercial use in around 2030. Asahi Kasei Corp became the first company in the world to commercialise CO2-based plastic material, which is already used in vehicles and personal computers, among other items.

The drawback is that both these measures are expensive. It is hoped that the companies will explore ways to realise mass production and reduce costs. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero, the contribution of electric power utilities and other energy companies is essential. It is necessary to increase the use of renewable energy, such as solar and wind power, but the power output by renewable sources tends to be unstable depending on weather conditions, and this type of power generation is costly.

Renewable energy alone may not be enough to support domestic industrial activities. If carbon recycling supply becomes widespread, it will pave the way for the continued operation, to a certain extent, of thermal power generation that uses fossil fuels, such as petroleum and liquefied natural gas. Carbon recycling can be called a technology that will contribute to the stable supply of energy.

It will also help reduce the burden on steelmakers and other companies that have difficulty in eliminating CO2 emissions in their production processes. The government established carbon recycling as a priority area in its Green Growth Strategy compiled at the end of last year.

In the third supplementary budget for fiscal 2020, the government decided to allocate ₹2 trillion (\$18.8 billion) to support the development of decarbonisation technology. It should strive to provide maximum support while utilising the fund and other resources.

Expectations are also high for technology to store CO2 underground. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is conducting an experiment in Hokkaido in which exhaust gas from a refinery is piped into the seabed to separate CO2 and inject it in geological layers.

The government is conducting joint research with the US, which has an oil industry that also produces shale oil. It is hoped that strengthening cooperation with other countries will accelerate and realise practical use of the technology.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

**ROY-DASGUPTA** — Bhaskar and Debasree happily remember this day when they were United 40 years ago.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## Utterly lonely in a crowded world

SIR, This refers to Rajaram Panda's article, 'Battling loneliness' (4 March). Ever since my formative years the issue of loneliness has been the key element of my life and therefore this stellar article is of particular interest to me. The writer dwells on societal problems in present day Japanese society as a result of breakdown of the family set-up, the declining birth and death rates. The marriageable members of both sexes are either not marrying or are delaying the union. They are not interested in bringing up children, are self-sufficient, and spend the better part of their time in professional work. With the decline of the family system, material prosperity and freedom are of uppermost importance. Of far greater concern is that young men and women have ended their lives during and after the pandemic. Even with material prosperity and freedom from bondage, the Japanese society is far from happy with increasing suicides and infidelity. Money and comforts do not lead to happiness.

In societies of middle income countries and even more backward ones with much less equality, lib-



erty and justice people are still attached to different identities including family and comparatively lesser propensity to commit suicides. Certainly, Covid and related tragedies all over the world points to general insecurity. The suicides by young people demonstrates that even a materially happy society is not necessarily happy.

It is pertinent to note that full fledged Ministers with their portfolio of Loneliness have been on place in the UK, Japan and presumably also in Australia. This may appear ludicrous but the problem of loneliness has remained and will remain in the distant future, whether or not a society has a protective mechanism or not. The family

system may appear as unit of bondage but nevertheless it is the only social unit where there is scope for happiness of the individual. In this toxic world, nothing is greater than kindness and love, we have long forgotten these simpler virtues.

Development of science and technology buttresses material prosperity and nothing more. Happiness is a state of the mind, we can remain content with simpler things and virtues. With all limitations and obstacles the individual must rise to the occasion and never think of ending one's life as that will be the greatest insult to the Creator. We need better individuals, better families and soci-

## SASIKALA SPRINGS SURPRISE

SIR, Jayalalitha's aide, VK Sasikala's sudden withdrawal from politics provides a new twist to the political narrative of Tamil Nadu, and is set to alter its dynamics and calculations ahead of the assembly elections in the State. The biggest gainer from her rather surprising announcement is of course the ruling AIADMK, which was wary of her political moves after her return to Chennai following a four-year term in a Bengaluru jail in the disproportionate assets case. In the wake of this unforeseen development, it will be interesting to watch if the AMMK, led by TTV Dinakaran will merge with the AIADMK as per her wish for the sole purpose of keeping the principal rival DMK away from power. Nonetheless, it is a pity that Sasikala's political career seems to have almost ended even before it could actually take off. She was at one time crazy about films and film stars, Sasikala's life story is nothing short of a film script.

Yours, etc., Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai, 5 March.

## DRAMATIC GROWTH

SIR, Four years ago, Uttar Pradesh was known as a backward state. A state with such a large population had a budget of Rs 2 lakh crore. For the development of villages, cities, youth, women, there was no importance attached to expanding the size of the budget. In 2015-16, UP was ranked 14th in terms of ease of doing business. Today it is in the second spot. The machinery and sources of revenue are the same, only the faces have changed drastically. As a resident of Ghaziabad for over 45 years, the developments of roads and infrastructure have been remarkable. The per capita income in 2015-16 was Rs 43,000; it has now increased to Rs 95,000.

Again, the GDP of the state was Rs 10.90 lakh crore in 2015-16. It has grown to Rs 21.73 lakh crore over the past four years and has increased more than twice in a span of four years. The team is working towards bringing the GST collections to the country's maximum and the state is working towards that objective.

Yours, etc., MR Jayanthi, Ghaziabad, 5 March.

SUNIL SHARAN

The Biden administration seems determined to ink a nuclear deal with Iran. While John Kerry, now Biden's climate czar, is now not directly involved in the deal-making with Iran, as Barack Obama's secretary of state he was the architect of the Iran deal and would be keen to influence the American President to resuscitate his legacy.

The Iran nuclear deal of 2015 restricted Iran's time period to build a nuclear bomb, called the breakout period, to 10 years. This Donald Trump felt was too little and therefore walked out of the deal. Analysts now believe that since Trump walked out, Iran has already produced fissile material sufficient for two bombs. Any new deal will have to suss out these bombs and neutralize them.

One way or another, deal or no deal, Iran will eventually get the bomb. No sectarian or religious conflict since Islam came into being about 1,400 years ago has been as pitiless as the Shia-Sunni divide. Even the Christian-Islam war that is going on these days pales in comparison. The Sunni Gulf states have access to the bomb from two sources - Pakistan and Israel. Iran feels that the Sunni bomb is a veritable existential threat to it and absolutely feels the need to counter it, just as the Pakistanis said they would eat grass but build a nuke to counter India.

Shias constitute only about 10 per cent of the world's total Muslim population of 1.8 billion. Yet a Shia crescent, as King Abdullah of Jordan puts it, has enveloped the Muslim world. In Syria, the Shia ruler, Bashar al-Assad, ruthlessly slaughters his majority Sunni population all with the connivance of Iran. In Yemen, Shia Houthi rebels have almost taken over the country, once again with the support of Iran.

In Lebanon, Iran buoys the Shia militia group Hezbollah that has taken on Israel and even checkmated it once, in 2006. Palestine is an interesting exception. There Iran props up the Sunni Hamas that fights the Israelis. No Sunni country buttresses the Sunni Hamas as much as Shia Iran does. In Bahrain, which is a Shia-majority country, the Sunni king teeters on the edge because of Iran. Saudi Shias make up between 10 and



15 per cent of the population. They are persecuted by the dominant Sunnis and look to Iran for succor.

The Shia crescent extends to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India as well. It's almost beyond imagination how a country, Iran, of just over 80 million people is able to stump a worldwide Sunni population of about 1.6 billion. The Iranians are a very ingenious people. Before they converted to Islam, they were Zoroastrians, who in India are known as Parsis. We in India well know what Parsis are capable of achieving.

Iran supported India's case on Kashmir in 1994. Now Ayatollah Khamenei is bashing India on Kashmir. Interestingly enough, Saudi Ara-

bian support for Pakistan's case on Kashmir seems to have dried up. That is because during the Trump years, India blindly followed the American line on Iran and romanced Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain - all Sunni-led states - conferred their highest accolades on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India remained fast friends with Israel, a staunch Iran-baiter.

In December 2020, Indian army chief, M M Naravane, visited Saudi Arabia to enhance defence cooperation between the two countries. But what kind of defence cooperation? Sitting in Riyadh is the former Pakistani army chief, Raheel Sharif, who heads Saudi Arabia's fruitless war

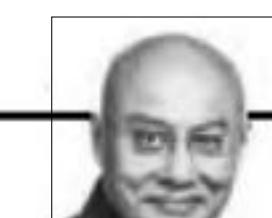
against the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Will India now send troops to Saudi Arabia to be under Sharif's command?

India has gone all-in with the Israeli-Sunni alliance just as Trump had done. Now Biden is miffing the Israelis and the Sunni Arabs by seeming to restore relations with Iran. If a new Iran deal goes through, as well it might, then the current crippling sanctions on Iran will be lifted. India will once again be able to buy Iranian oil and gas and think about installing the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. That won't make the Saudis and the Emiratis a wee bit happy because they have already promised tens of billions of investment in India's energy infra-

structure.

India has been sailing in two boats - the Shia and the Sunni - for a long time. But now it seems to have put all its eggs in the Sunni basket. The US is powerful enough to sign a deal with Iran while still being able to irritate the Israelis and the Sunnis and get away with it. India isn't that powerful. Once Iran emerges from isolation, India would like to deal with it as before. But it has gone so far in with the Sunni-Israeli coalition, will it be able to backtrack now? Even Mr. Modi's hugplomacy may not be able to solve this conundrum.

The writer is an expert on energy and contributes regularly to publications in India and overseas.



IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

## A Special Train

If a surgeon were to cut open my heart, he is likely to find three English letters inscribed on it: BNR. They don't stand for the names of three beloved women, nor the initials of just one. I hate to dispel the patina of romance, but the letters refer to the Bengal Nagpur Railway. Why this tedious obsession with trains? Let me tell you why.

My parents had moved from Kolkata to Nagpur, where my father had a job, and that is where I was born in Mure Memorial Hospital. They returned to Kolkata in a few years, but the link with Nagpur remained. My aunts stayed in Nagpur, where they had found jobs they liked. Stayed, too, a large number of close friends the family had garnered in the city. So began our family's steady patronage of the BNR, as my aunts visited us in Kolkata on every major vacation in central India and we visited them on every major holiday in eastern India.

We lived in a large house in northern Kolkata, at the junction of two major roads, Harrison Road, the main east-west thoroughfare, and College Street, the long corridor that ran north to south, changing names at intervals. From our home, it was a short hop to the Howrah rail station, whence BNR's trains would take me to Nagpur.

Short but colorful, Harrison Road was an incredibly crowded route, with trams, buses, cars, trucks, rickshaws, bullock carts, and thousands of pedestrians, not to mention beggars, sadhus, pickpockets, and stray cows and mangy dogs. To negotiate the short distance from our home to the rail station you needed to overcome Murphy's Law: Anything that could go wrong, would. A heat-stroke victim, some broken truck, two colliding buses and their brawling conductors, clashing political processions, all could stop you in the track and make you miss your train.

Like everyone else, I arrived at the station an hour or two ahead of the time. A belated train meant even a longer wait. There was no reservation for the cheapest class of travel, the only class one could afford. You chose a sturdy porter, who could muscle his way to a passenger compartment ahead of others, deposit your suitcase on the stuffed overhead bunk and occupy a seat, holding it for you until you wheeled your way through the crowd into the compartment, paid the enterprising porter his dues and replaced him on the seat. You were lucky if the overhead fan was whirring, for it was warm and muggy, crowded and stifling.

A huge relief when the train started. There was a sudden puff of wind in the compartment, and the air got fresher and cooler as the train finally left the city and its crammed suburbs and slowly entered the countryside. I felt the wind stronger as I was fortunate to be in a seat next to the window. Keeping in mind my mother's admonition, I kept my head turned in the direction of the wake; otherwise the wind would carry coal particles from the train's boiler into my eyes. I felt a tinge of sadness, leaving Kolkata and my friends behind, but there was the compensating excitement of visiting a new city and meeting new people.

The older man with a turban, sitting next to me, opened a small container and treated himself to some peanuts. Then he extended it to me and said, "Have some, young man. It is good for you." I was embarrassed but took a handful. Then he said, "I am just going up to Gonda. My son has just had a baby. He is coming to collect me."

The couple sitting opposite was looking at us. The woman asked, "A boy or a girl?"

"A boy," he said. "They say he looks like me. I am rather curious."



The woman's husband was middle-aged, with glasses and a small mustache. He was looking at me and said, "Aren't you a little young to travel alone? Where are you going?"

I said, "My father brought me to the station in Kolkata. My aunt will receive me in Nagpur." I didn't want him to think my family didn't take good care of me.

"Ah, you are going to Nagpur! We live in Nagpur. We came to Kolkata to visit our cousin."

Then followed an animated conversation about Nagpur, the areas where we lived, the zoo I loved, the school where the man taught, the quiet charm of the city. Then the man in the blue jacket, sitting in a corner and reading a newspaper, spoke up and said that he had also visited Nagpur and was going there for a meeting.

Soon the compartment was

buzzing; everybody seemed to be talking about something or other. A roomful of unfamiliar people had started exchanging their views about cities, jobs, markets and relations. Even the young woman sitting in the other corner, who had so far kept modestly silent, spoke up and said she studied in Nagpur's Hislop College and loved the hostel she lived in and her friends there.

This was a true microcosm of India. The train, with the transience of forced company, had converted a bunch of strangers into a convivial group talking about their friends and families. By the time it got late, people were even sharing snacks and blankets. I looked out of the window at the villages whizzing past in the gathering dusk and thought of my aunts and their loving faces.

A month later BNR brought me

back to Kolkata and the arms of my father and mother. Mother kissed me openly to my embarrassment, and Father hugged me and said he had missed me.

Years later, when work or vacation took me to Europe, I often used their clean, comfortable trains that took me swiftly from one place to another.

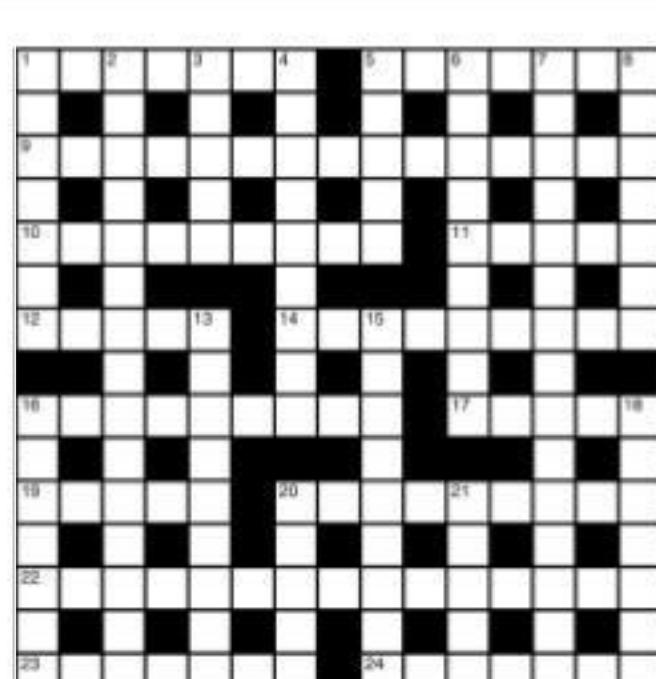
In the US now, though I mostly use the plane to go places, I sometimes take Amtrak trains to New York and luxuriate in its plush seats. Occasionally I even use their 'quiet' compartment to read books and do my work.

I must be honest and tell you: I haven't seen anything yet that has a patch on the BNR I knew.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

NO 28847

CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 1 Bread from dining room sent back after tea (7)
- 5 Excellent sects from the east in island nation (2,5)
- 9 Rotten people sin to produce malicious missive (6-3,6)
- 10 Black couple to protect composer reversing in road (9)
- 11 One bounding area that separates two major cities (5)
- 12 Russian female revolutionary in American election (5)
- 14 Quietly detests being involved in key software trial (5,4)

### DOWN

- 16 Neglected animal given signal amid tangled gorse (6,3)
- 17 God needing name for Germanic character (5)
- 19 Net profit at last drawn that voids margins (5)
- 20 Approaches snooker table but loses form? (4,2,3)
- 22 Two kids lost? New angle: three lads lost! (6,3,6)
- 23 Time pressure on in war zone (7)
- 24 Characters seen in flannelette or cotton garment? (7,8)
- 1 Old man cutting wire with skill (7)
- 2 Intense musical disrupted contemplative period (1,7,7)
- 3 Relaxed game ends on schedule (5)
- 4 Bloke caught out, venture being random (9)
- 5 Yankee stops lecturers travelling up for meeting (5)
- 6 We initial changes to prepare ambush (3,2,4)
- 7 Doctor at this place? Go to small medical institution (7,8)
- 8 American Satan devouring Republican alongside (7)

### 13 Diversion giving an essential cover for English soldiers? (9)

- 15 Revolting animals were so stubborn! (3-6)
- 16 Mechanical device skinned fantasy author (7)
- 18 Folded card husband lost in TV fundraiser turned up (7)
- 20 Peer outside entrance to Lords in coat (5)
- 21 Finnish port one from Ankara found acceptable (5)

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

100 YEARS AGO

## OCCASIONAL NOTE

Mr. Cohen, the emissary of the Executive of the world organisation of "Zionists" which, in cooperation with the British Government, is assisting to create in Palestine a National Home for the Jews, leaves Calcutta today. He has addressed two or three meetings of his co-religionists in this city and it may be hoped that such of them as are well endowed with this world's goods will give the Zionist cause their support. The scheme, is, of course, intended primarily not for those Jews who are so fortunate as to live under a civilised Government but for such - and their name is Legion - who suffer cruel persecution merely because they are Jews. The condition of the Jewish community along the whole of what was formerly the western frontier of Russia baffles description. Although many, if not the majority, of the Bolshevik leaders are themselves Jews, the old persecution still continues and in many places has been accentuated. To plant some of these unfortunate creatures on the vast uncultivated wastes of Palestine is as legitimate an object as to encourage the emigration of the oppressed members of down-trodden European races to the New World. By their agriculture they will enrich not merely Palestine but humanity, while the new chance in life thus afforded them should render many of them useful citizens of the world and of their new National Home.

## NEWS ITEMS

### ISSUE OF EMPIRE-WIDE PASSPORTS

In the interests of the travelling public an arrangement has been arrived at under which British passports will ordinarily entitle the holder to admission to any part of the British Empire, the necessity for obtaining a separate endorsement for each journey within the Empire being dispensed with. It is, therefore, notified for the information of all British subjects who desire to avoid the necessity for separate endorsements for subsequent journeys within the Empire that all passport issuing authorities in India are now empowered to issue to approved applicants such passports of Empire wide validity. Persons already in possession of valid British passports may present them to the proper passport issuing authority. These authorities have been empowered to grant such an endorsement in all suitable cases free of charge.

### THE TROUBLE IN TRICHUR

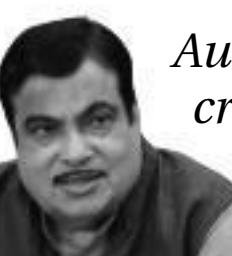
The trouble began on Sunday afternoon when a Christian and Ezhava procession was pelted with stones near the Mahomedan quarter, and the Christians retaliated. Six Mahomedan houses were set on fire, and the town divided itself into two factions, Hindus and Mahomedans on the one side and Ezhava and Christians on the other. They came into collision on February 28, and on the police charging the crowd dispersed. One Christian rioter who was injured died on the following day. Hearing of the death of the Christian rioter, the Christians poured into the town from the adjoining villages and mobbed the Hindu houses and business places. The police opened fire, injuring eight Christians, and the whole rioting was put down in half an hour. Sixty-eight arrests have been made.

### RACIAL DIFFERENCES ON THE RAILWAY

In the Madras Legislative Council this afternoon, a warm debate centred round a resolution urging on the Government the adoption of measures to put an end to all racial differences among railway passengers as regards accommodation, retiring rooms, etc. That such distinction was looked upon as insulting to the self-respect of Indians was made evident from several of the speeches made in support of the resolution. It was pointed out that the abolition of the differentiation was desirable, even from the point of view of business, as it would lead to additional revenue to the Government by throwing open retiring rooms to Indians. A member of the Panchama community complained, that the members of the depressed class could not buy food in the Indian refreshment rooms, owing to this racial distinction.

### TAXI DRIVERS AND STRIKES

That no taxi driver shall convey armed police or military to quell a disturbance or riot caused by the labouring class as the result of a strike was a resolution carried by the Calcutta Taxi and Private Car Drivers' Association on Sunday. Complaints were made regarding police arrangements for the driving of cars on the Barrackpore Road and it was resolved that taxi drivers should abstain from plying cars to Barrackpore from today. The cessation will have particular reference to Barrackpore Races. The Association condemned the drivers alleged to be implicated in the recent Lyons Range robbery.



Automobile industry turnover is likely to swell to Rs 10 lakh crore in years to come with India becoming an automobile hub.

NITIN GADKARI  
UNION MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

**PVR Cinemas:** Multiplex major PVR plans to invest Rs 150 crore to open up to 40 screens across the country in the next fiscal. The company's target of having 1,000 operational screens has been pushed by a year due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic to the end of fiscal 2022-23, a top company official has said. PTI

**Toyota Kirloskar:** Having established its presence in urban centres, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) is now looking to expand its sales network in rural areas in the country as it aims to tap demand for its entry-level products like Glanza and Urban Cruiser in such locations. The company, a joint venture between Japanese auto major Toyota and Kirloskar Group, plans to ensure that a major part of any future investment on sales network expansion is now directed towards smaller cities and towns. PTI

**Sikkim power supply:** NTPC has restored power supply to Sikkim after the state's assurance of paying the outstanding amount of Rs 89 crore in a time-bound manner, a company official said on Sunday. From midnight of 3 March, the country's largest power producer NTPC had stopped 105 megawatt of power supply to Sikkim because of non-payment of Rs 89 crore outstanding dues. PTI

**Amazon India expands:** E-commerce major Amazon on Sunday said more than 50,000 offline retailers and neighbourhood kirana stores across 450 cities in the country are now part of its 'Local Shops' programme. Launched in April this year, 'Local Shops' aims to enable local shopkeepers and kirana store owners to sell online. In October, Amazon India had said the programme had seen participation from over 20,000 retailers in 400 cities. Amazon said the programme helps these neighbourhood stores supplement the existing footfalls at their stores with a digital presence, and expands their reach beyond the normal catchment. PTI

# Flush with cash, banks slash home loan rates to record low

Last month chairman Dinesh Khara said SBI's home loan portfolio crossed ₹ 5 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 7 MARCH



Flushed with excess liquidity as general credit demand is still way below the desired levels, leading home loan players State Bank of India, HDFC, ICICI Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank have slashed their rates to a decadal low, leaving consumers spoilt for choices.

The interest rate war comes as banks are sitting on huge excess liquidity which was as of last week was over Rs 6.5 lakh crore, according to Care Ratings. Excess liquidity is a drag on the banks' bottomlines as they have to pay interest to depositors which is as low as 2.5 per cent now, though.

The rate war also comes on the back of continuous prodigies by the monetary authority which has slashed the repo rates by a whopping 200 bps since March 2020 to 4 per cent to help revive the economy ravaged by the pandemic, but still credit demand remains under 6 per cent.

For banks, housing loans are safe bets in the current scenario as the risk of default is minimal with a gross NPA of just 0.67 per cent for SBI which leads the market and for HDFC too this NPA is under 1 per cent.

According to the RBI data, home loan growth decelerated in FY21 due to the pandemic, though the decline in fact began in March 2020. From 17.5 per cent in January 2020, home loan growth halved to 7.7 per cent in January 2021.

Banks are hoping that the nascent economic recovery will lead to more home purchases, which has been faltering since last March. With corporates demand still a far cry and down in the dumps from an NPA point of view, for banks the biggest reason to push home loans is its risk-free nature. Unlike personal loans, housing loans involve a collateral. In case of default, banks can seize the asset and auction it off. At Rs 14.17 lakh crore as of November 2020, live housing

loans account for more than half of personal loans for banks.

For consumers there are other advantages too attractive property prices due to the pandemic and the resultant reduction in stamp duty by many states after the pandemic hit the realty sector badly.

But lenders are still choosy by pricing loans differently, depending on the risk profile and creditworthiness of borrowers. For SBI and Kotak Mahindra, the new rates of 6.7 per cent and 6.65 per cent, respectively, are applicable only to those borrowers with a credit score of 800 and above.

Also, barring HDFC, the new rates are only up to March 31.

The rate war began on 1 March when market leader SBI, which has over Rs 5 lakh crore of live home loan book and commanding a market share of 34 per cent of the Rs 14.17 lakh crore market, has gone to the extent of waiving the processing fee as well and cut the rates by 10 bps to 6.75 per cent.

The SBI offer of 6.7 per cent with no processing fee is up to November 2020, live housing

31 March 31 for loans up to Rs 75 lakh and 6.75 per cent for above that. It is also offering an additional 5 bps lower rate to women and if applied through its mobile app Yono, said Saloni Narayan, deputy managing director for retail business at SBI.

SBI being the market leader in home finance, takes ownership in bolstering consumer sentiments. The affordability for the consumer increases immensely with the present offerings as the EMI will be reduced, she said.

On the same day, Kotak Mahindra Bank followed suit reducing its rate by 10 basis points to 6.65 per cent, making it the lowest in the mortgage market. Even before this, it had the lowest rate for past many months at 6.75 per cent.

The two days later, HDFC, the pureplay mortgage leader with over 19 per cent market share (according to an Emkay Global report), joined the race and lowered the rates by 5 bps to 6.75 percent to new and existing customers for unlimited period.

## Global trends, oil price to dictate market trend this week: Analysts

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NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The tone of the market seems to be on the downside, for now, Oza added.

On 5 March, benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled over 440 points and the NSE Nifty cracked below the psychological 15,000-level amid relentless sell-off in global equities as US bond market turmoil continued to rattle investors.

The 30-share Sensex plummeted by 440.76 points or 0.87 per cent to close at 50,405.32, continuing its falling trend for the second day on Friday due to concerns over bond yields. The NSE barometer Nifty ended lower by 142.65 points or 0.95 per cent at 14,938.10.

"In the coming week, the market will be mainly focusing on the expectations on whether the Fed, in its upcoming meeting, will maintain its accommodative stance in a rising bond yield market. Additionally, Fed's measures to maintain low-interest rate and high liquidity will also provide relief to the market sentiments," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

## FPIs turn net sellers; pull out ₹ 5,156 crore in March so far

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investors with markets touching all-time highs.

Besides, weakness in the global markets on concerns of rising bond yields and inflation didn't augur well for the flows into equities. "The declining trend in March, so far, is mainly on account of the rising bond yields in US and appreciation in the dollar index, according to VKVijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial.

"Bond markets are discounting inflation in the US due to the massive monetary and fiscal stimulus. But the US 10-year yield is unlikely to move beyond, say 1.7%, given the Fed's declared policy to keep interest rates near zero through 2023. The upcoming FOMC Meet is likely to emphasize the need to keep rates down for an extended period of time," Vijayakumar added.

This can cool the bond

markets and stabilize equity markets, he further said.

Harsh Jain, co-founder and CEO of Groww, said such behaviour is common whenever the US bonds' yields rise. "Most of the emerging markets are facing foreign portfolio investors outflows with higher outflows witnessed in Taiwan and S.Korea. This calendar year to date Taiwan has seen \$9.4 billion of FPI outflows whereas S.Korea has seen outflows of \$8.1 billion," said Rusmik Oza, executive vice president, head of fundamental research at Kotak Securities.

"Bond markets are discounting inflation in the US due to the massive monetary and fiscal stimulus. But the US 10-year yield is unlikely to move beyond, say 1.7%, given the Fed's declared policy to keep interest rates near zero through 2023. The upcoming FOMC Meet is likely to emphasize the need to keep rates down for an extended period of time," Vijayakumar added.

This can cool the bond

## Cairn wants India to honour its word and pay \$1.4 bn, shareholders to seek enforcement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH



British oil firm Cairn Energy plc on Sunday said its shareholders, including top financial institutions of the world, expect the use of the company's "strong powers of enforcement" to recover \$1.4 billion from the Indian government should it not keep its word of honouring international arbitration tribunal awards on retrospective taxes.

Cairn has already moved courts in the US, UK, Netherlands, Canada, France, Singapore, Japan, UAE and Cayman Islands to get the December 21 international arbitration tribunal award registered and recognised - the first step before it can seek seizure of the Indian government assets such as bank accounts, payments to state-owned entities, aeroplanes and ships in those jurisdictions, in case New Delhi does not return the

value of the shares seized and sold, dividend confiscated and tax refund stopped to adjust a Rs 10,247 crore tax demand raised using retrospective legislation. Cairn CEO who last month met top finance ministry officials for three straight days over the issue, said the Indian government should

keep its word on honouring arbitration awards and return the \$1.4 billion that an international arbitration tribunal has ordered rescinding a retrospective tax demand. "Our shareholders are watching," he said in a Twitter post. "They expect India to honour its obligations and to quickly

bring this matter to a conclusion and if India do not do that, and if India delay, then our shareholders expect us to pursue our strong powers of enforcement which we have to do."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on 5 March indicated the government's intent to appeal against the award when she said it is her "duty" to appeal in cases where the nation's sovereign authority to tax is questioned.

Interestingly, the 21 December arbitration award specifically made clear that the basis of the judgment was not a challenge to the 2012 law, which gave the government powers to tax deals retrospectively, or India's sovereign right to tax. "The issue at stake is thus not a matter of domestic tax law; it is rather whether the fiscal measures taken by the State, valid or not under its own tax laws, violate international law," the tribunal had said.

## India Inc's overseas direct investment declines 31pc to \$1.85 bn in February

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MUMBAI, 7 MARCH



tries \$100 million in a joint venture in the US.

ONGC Videsh Ltd invested a total of \$96.15 million in various joint ventures/wholly owned subsidiaries in Russia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Sudan, Colombia, Vietnam and Azerbaijan.

JSW Steel made a collective investment of \$62.85 million in its three WoS/JVs in the Netherlands and the US.

GMM Pfaudler Ltd, which is engaged in pharma equipment manufacturing, put in \$45.33 million in its JV in Luxembourg; the Indian Hotels Company \$33 million in Netherlands JV; L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering \$37.55 million in a JV in Saudi Arabia and Millars Concrete Technologies invested \$34.26 million in Luxembourg joint venture.

## Mutual funds' selling spree continues; withdraw ₹ 16,306 cr from equities in February on profit booking

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NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

India showed. "Whenever the markets surge after a big fall, investors pull out. Investors -- who had seen losses in the last two years before COVID -- had seen profits in the last few months and have booked their profits, resulting in the mutual funds to pull out from equities," Divam Sharma, co-founder of Green Portfolio, said.

Besides, many investors had started to directly participate in equity markets by opening their Demat accounts. Initial success in the rising markets and the poor performance of many mutual funds over the last few years have further induced them to withdraw from equity mutual funds, he added. Also, many large com-

panies have gone expensive on valuations, resulting in fund managers to sell and increase the cash allocation, Sharma noted. According to the data, MFs have been continuously withdrawing money from equities since June 2020 and pulled out over Rs 1.24 lakh crore till February. On a month-on-month basis, MFs withdrew Rs 16,306 crore from equities in February, 13,032 crore in January, Rs 26,428 crore in December, Rs 30,760 crore in November, Rs 14,492 crore in October, Rs 4,134 crore in September, Rs 9,213 crore in August, Rs 9,195 crore in July and Rs 612 crore in June. However, they have invested over Rs 40,200 crore in the first five months of 2020. Of this, Rs 30,285 crore was

invested in March last year. Nifty 50 has risen 73 per cent from its lows of March 2020 till date, with the S&P BSE Midcap index rising by 95 per cent and S&P BSE Smallcap index delivering 120 per cent return in the same period. "Buoyed by this disbelief rally in stock markets, retail investors continue to redeem their mutual funds to shore up their gains of the last one year," FYERS' Kavalireddi said.

"Also marred by low mutual fund returns from earlier years, hardships arising due to the coronavirus pandemic, and stagnant incomes unable to counter high inflation, small investors continue to withdraw their profits from most mutual fund schemes," he added. According to him, with

## India Inc's business confidence highest in decade: FICCI survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

build up during the lockdown.

However, rising raw material costs is emerging as a bothersome factor for members of India Inc. The rise in fuel and other commodity prices is beginning to exert pressure on the input costs of companies, FICCI stated on the survey.

Companies participating in the survey cited high input costs including man power costs, weak demand conditions and lack of availability of affordable credit as their top-most concerns for the year 2021. A near-unanimity was observed as far as input costs were concerned. This along with high interest costs on loans, higher inward and outward transport and logistics costs, greater compliance bur-

den on the back of frequently changing statutory compliances and increased manpower costs are further pushing the cost of doing business in India, FICCI stated. This does not bode well in the current environment wherein a shift in global supply chains is being witnessed, it added.

"In this context, respondents also added that leaving trade policy issues unaddressed will create an even bigger challenge with China as well as other countries including Vietnam regaining market share to become global suppliers.

"Lack of adequate export incentives is also making it difficult for Indian entrepreneurs to compete globally," the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) stated. Improvement in conditions as well as expectations have pulled the Overall Business Confidence Index value to a decadal high in the current survey, FICCI said. Outlook on employment and exports also reported a discernible improvement, said FICCI. This, together with measures announced as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, has infused optimism among industry members and the same is corroborated in the improved outlook for various operational parameters, it added.

Improved economic conditions and greater pricing power are likely to drive profits of corporate India over the next two quarters. The per-

centage of participants citing 'higher to much higher' investments in the coming six months increased to 36 per cent in the latest survey from 33 per cent respondents stating likewise in the previous round, the survey showed.

With demand situation slowly turning positive, an improvement was also noticed in capacity utilisation rates. In the current survey, around 77 per cent participating companies reported capacity utilisation of more than 50 per cent, compared with 68 per cent stating likewise in the previous round. Companies expect higher export orders in the coming months on the back of global economic recovery led by large scale vaccination drive against Covid-19 around the world.

tion of respondents citing 'higher to much higher' investments in the coming six months witnessed an upswing in the current survey when compared to the previous round.

With demand situation slowly turning positive, an improvement was also noticed in capacity utilisation rates. In the current survey, around 77 per cent participating companies reported capacity utilisation of more than 50 per cent, compared with 68 per cent stating likewise in the previous round. Companies expect higher export orders in the coming months on the back of global economic recovery led by large scale vaccination drive against Covid-19 around the world.



We urge the new US administration to fully understand the high sensitivity of the Taiwan issue and completely change the previous administration's dangerous practices

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI  
WHILE SPEAKING AT HIS ANNUAL PRESS MEET

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 08 MARCH 2021

# Where IS ruled, Pope urges Christians to forgive

Francis' visit aimed at encouraging Iraqi Christians to stay and help rebuild the country and restore what he called its 'intricately designed carpet' of faith

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
QARAQOSH, 7 MARCH

Pope Francis called on Iraq's Christians to forgive the injustices committed against them by Muslim extremists and to rebuild as he visited the wrecked shells of churches and met ecstatic crowds in the community's historic heartland, which was nearly erased by the Islamic State group's horrific reign.

At each stop in northern Iraq, the remnants of its Christian population turned out, jubilant, ululating, decked out in colourful clothing, though heavy security prevented Francis from plunging into the crowd as he would normally do. Nonetheless, they seemed simply overjoyed that they had not been forgotten.

It was a sign of the desperation for support among an ancient community un-

tain whether it can hold on. Traditionally Christian towns dotting the Nineveh Plains of the north were emptied as Christians—as well as many Muslims—fled the Islamic State group's onslaught in 2014. Only a few have returned to their homes since the defeat of IS in Iraq declared four years ago, and the rest remain scattered elsewhere in Iraq or abroad.

Bells rang out in the town of Qaraqosh as the pope arrived. Speaking to a packed Church of the Immaculate Conception, Francis said "forgiveness" is a key word for Christians.

"The road to a full recovery may still be long, but I ask you, please, not to grow discouraged. What is needed is the ability to forgive, but also the courage not to give up." The Qaraqosh church has been extensively renovated after being vandalized by IS



Pope Francis prays on Sunday afternoon for war victims at 'Hosh al-Bleaa' in Church Square, located in Mosul's Old City.

militants during their takeover of the town, making it a symbol of recovery efforts.

For the Vatican, the continued presence of Christians in Iraq is vital to keeping alive faith communities that have existed here since the time of Christ. The population has dwindled from around 1.5 million before the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that plunged the country into chaos to just a few

hundred thousand today.

Francis's visit to Iraq, which was on its last day Sunday, aimed to encourage them to stay and help rebuild the country and restore what he called its "intricately designed carpet" of faith and ethnic groups.

In striking images earlier Sunday, Francis, dressed in white, took to a red carpet stage in a square in the north's main

city, Mosul, surrounded by the grey hollowed-out shells of four churches, nearly destroyed in the war to oust the Islamic State group from the city.

It was a scene that would have been unimaginable years earlier. Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, was at the heart of the IS so-called "caliphate" and witnessed the worst of the group's rule inflicted on Mus-

lims, Christians and others, including beheadings and mass killings.

"How cruel it is that this country, the cradle of civilization, should have been afflicted by so barbarous a blow," Francis said, "with ancient places of worship destroyed and many thousands of people—Muslims, Christians, Yazidis—who were cruelly annihilated by terrorism—and others forcibly displaced or killed."

He deviated from his prepared speech to address the plight of Iraq's Yazidi minority, which was subjected to mass killings, abductions and sexual slavery at the hands of IS.

"Today, however, we reaffirm our conviction that fraternity is more durable than fratricide, that hope is more powerful than hatred, that peace more powerful than war."

The square where he spoke is home to four different churches—Syriac Catholic, Armenian-Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean—each left in ruins.

IS inflicted atrocities against all communities, including Muslims, during its three-year rule across much of northern and western Iraq. But the Christian minority was hit especially hard. The militants forced them to choose among conversion, death or the payment of a special tax for non-Muslims. Thousands fled, leaving behind homes and churches that were destroyed or commandeered by the extremists.

Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, became IS's bureaucratic and financial backbone. It was from Mosul's al-Nuri mosque that then-IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made his only public appearance when he gave a Friday sermon

calling on all Muslims to follow him as "caliph."

It took a ferocious nine-month battle to finally free the city in July 2017, during which between 9,000 and 11,000 civilians were killed, according to a probe.

Al-Baghdadi was killed in a U.S. raid in Syria in 2019. The war left a swath of destruction across Mosul and the north, and many Iraqis have been left on their own.

The Rev. Raed Kallo, was among the few Christians who returned to Mosul after IS was defeated. "My Muslim brothers received me after the liberation of the city with great hospitality and love," he said.

Before IS, he had a parish of 500 Christian family. Most emigrated abroad, and now only 70 families remain, he said. "But today I live among 2 million Muslims who call me their Father Raed," he said.

## Myanmar police fire on protesters in former ancient capital Bagan

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
YANGON, 7 MARCH

Police in Myanmar's ancient former capital, Bagan, opened fire Sunday on demonstrators protesting last month's military takeover, wounding several people, according to witness accounts and videos on social media.

At least five people were reported wounded as police sought to break up the Bagan protest, and photos showed one young man with bloody wounds on his chin and neck, believed to have been caused by a rubber bullet. Bullet casings collected at the scene indicated that five rounds were also



fired.

Large protests have occurred daily across many cities and towns in Myanmar, and security forces have responded with greater use of lethal force and mass arrests.

At least 18 protesters were shot and killed on 28 February and 38 on Wednesday, as per the UN Human Rights Office. More than 1,500 have been arrested, the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said.

Protests on Sunday, including in the two biggest cities of Yangon and Mandalay, were also met with the use of force by police firing warning shots, and variously employing tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades.

Multiple reports from Yan-

gon said there were also police raids on Saturday night seeking to seize organizers and supporters of the protest movement. A ward chairman from Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, which was ousted from power in the coup, was found dead in a military hospital Sunday morning by fellow residents.

The city, located in Mandalay, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recognition of the more than 2,000 pagodas or their remnants still situated there when it was the capital of a kingdom that later named Burma and is now Myanmar.

## Iran ready to 'immediately' take steps if US lifts sanctions: Rouhani

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, 7 MARCH

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that Iran was prepared to take steps "immediately" to live up to measures in the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers as soon as the United States lifts economic sanctions on Iran.

In a meeting with Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, Rouhani said: Iran is ready to immediately take compensatory measures based on the nuclear deal and fulfill its commitments that have been made just after the United States illegal sanctions are lifted and it abandons

economic sanctions. When the US then reimposed some sanctions and added others, Iran gradually and publicly chose to abandon the deal's limits on its nuclear development.

Rouhani criticised the European signatories of the historic nuclear deal for what he said was their inaction on their commitments to the agreement. He said Iran is the only country that kept its side of the bargain.

Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the USA from the Iranian nuclear agreement

its policy of threats and pressure.

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Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the USA from the Iranian nuclear agreement, in which Tehran had agreed to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of

## Explosion on Gaza fishing boat kills three

GAZA CITY, 7 MARCH

Three Palestinian fishermen were killed Sunday after a blast ripped through their boat off the Gaza shore, officials said, in what appeared to be an explosion caused by a misfired rocket launched by the ruling Hamas militant group.

Nezar Ayyash, a spokesman for the local fishermen's association, said the men two brothers and a cousin were working off the coast of the southern town of Khan Younis when the explosion happened.

The cause of the blast wasn't immediately clear, but there were growing indications that it was the result of a misfired rocket. Minutes before the explosion, local media reported that Hamas was test-firing rockets toward the sea.

Hamas, which is usually quick to cast blame on Israel, instead said it was launching an investigation and relatives of the fishermen also posted a statement on Facebook describing them as the martyrs of living who were killed.

"For now, it's mystery and nobody knows how they were killed," he said.

However, four hours after the investigation was announced, he said no one from Hamas or the government had contacted the family, reports further added. Earlier, Palestinian media blamed Israeli navy fire, but the Israeli military said it was not involved in it. AP

## China to operate high-speed bullet trains in Tibet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BEIJING, 7 MARCH

China will operate bullet trains in Tibet, close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh before July this year, marking the opening of high-speed train services to all Chinese mainland provincial-level regions, a senior official has said.

A 435-km rail link to the regional capital of Lhasa will run Fuxing high-speed trains powered by both internal-combustion and electricity. Lu Dongfu, board chairman of China State Railway Group Company Limited, told state-run Xinhua news agency on Saturday.

Construction started in 2014 on the railway line connecting Lhasa with Nyingchi in eastern Tibet. It is the first electrified railroad in Tibet and is slated to begin operations in June 2021.

The track-laying work was completed by the end of 2020, the report said.

The railway has a designed speed of 160 km per hour, according to Tibet Railway Construction Company Limi-

tated, a subsidiary of China State Railway Group.

China aims to extend the total length in operation of its high-speed train network to around 50,000 km by 2025, up from 37,900 km by the end of 2020, Lu said.

The high-speed railway network will cover 98 percent of cities with over 500,000 residents, he said.

China's self-developed Fuxing trains now operate at a speed range of 160 kmph to 350 kmph, Lu said.

China is ramping up the train network in the country's southeast Tibet Autonomous Region connecting its remote parts with the Chinese mainland.

Last December, the track-laying work was completed for a railway line linking the cities of Lhasa and Nyingchi in Tibet close to Arunachal Pradesh.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will be the second railway into Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. It will go through the southeast of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of the world's most geologically active areas.

## Nepal's SC annuls unification of Oli-led CPN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KATHMANDU, 7 MARCH

Nepal's Supreme Court on Sunday quashed the unification of the erstwhile Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) led by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda.

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

On Sunday, an apex court bench of justices Kumar Regmi and Bam Kumar Shrestha issued the verdict giving authenticity of the Nepal

Communist Party (NCP) to Rishiram Kattel, who had registered the party at the Election Commission (EC) in his name prior to the formation of Nepal Communist Party (NCP) led by Oli and Prachanda, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

Kattel had challenged the Election Commission's decision to register Nepal Com-

unist Party (NCP) under Oli and Prachanda in May 2018.

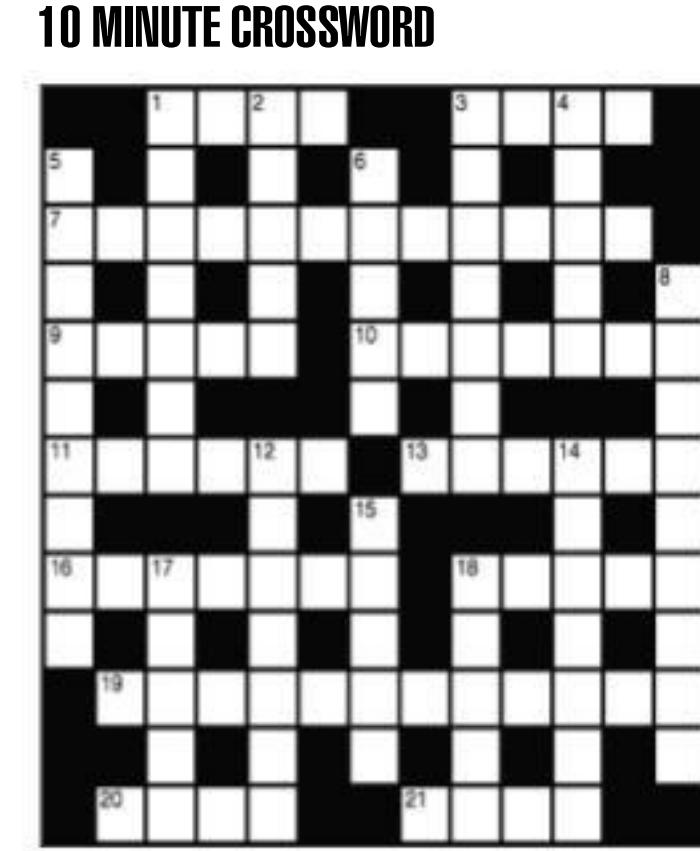
The bench said that a new party cannot be registered with the Election Commission when it already has a party registered with a similar name.

"The Supreme Court has passed a verdict in our favour," Kattel's lawyer Dandapani Poudel was quoted as saying by the paper. "We have won the case."

The court said then CPN-UML and then CPN (Maoist Centre) would return to the pre-merger stage and if they were to merge, they should apply at the Election Commission as per the Political Parties Act, according to the paper.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**CROSS**  
1 Small hole in the skin (4)  
3 Foot part (4)  
7 Building design (12)  
9 Cut of meats (5)  
10 Coupon (7)  
11 Pillager (6)  
13 Strategy (6)  
16 Abste (7)  
18 Excellent (Informal) (5)  
19 Pub (Informal) (8,4)  
20 Young male horse (4)  
21 Green-blue (4)  
**DOWN**  
1 Small wind instrument (7)  
2 Means of control (5)  
3 Citrus fruit (7)  
4 Conifer (5)  
5 Unequalled (9)  
6 Of great weight (5)  
8 Foodstuffs (9)  
12 Apparent (7)  
14 Tropical storm (7)  
15 Start (5)  
17 Cry of approval (5)  
18 Sodden (5)

**SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**

**CROSS**  
1 Scree, 11 Goblet, 13 Topple,  
4 Myrrh, 15 Skyscraper, 19 Baslica,  
7 Cord, 20 Owed, 21 Litre,  
9 Considered, 22 Merit,  
**DOWN**  
1 Snow, 12 Parlour,  
2 Radical, 3 Eaten,  
5 Unquaed, 6 Great weight (5)  
8 Foodstuffs (9)  
10 Cocktail, 14 Stint,  
17 Psalm, 18 Zest.  
6 Heavenly,

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

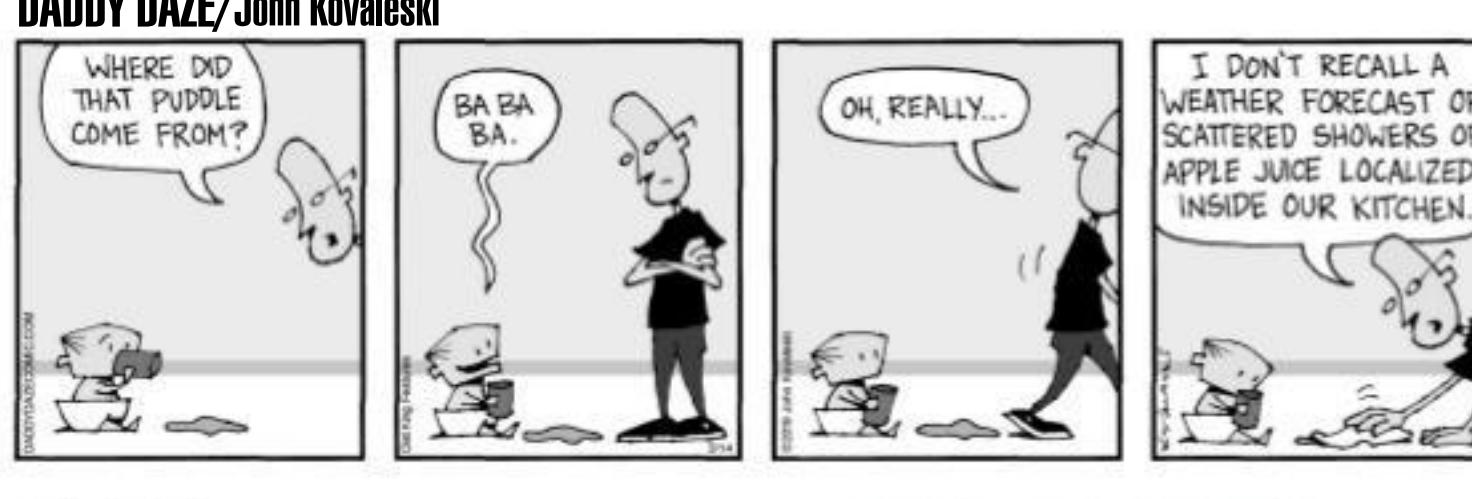
### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886,

54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 099010383383,

29958747

Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403

Guru Tegh Bahadur 2



*I don't know how they could expect ... we would still be silent if there was an active role... in perpetuating falsehoods about us.*

MEGHAN MARKLE, DUCHESS OF SUSSEX

REFERRING TO THE UK ROYAL FAMILY IN AN INTERVIEW WITH OPRAH WINFREY

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	24 R
HONG KONG	21	18 H
TOKYO	09	06 R
LONDON	09	02 R
DUBAI	25	18 S
SAN FRANCISCO	13	08 H
NEW YORK	07	03 S
MOSCOW	-04	-14 H

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

## THUMBNAILS



People line up in their vehicles for Covid-19 vaccines at a mass vaccination site at Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, Sunday.

AGENCIES

**Pakistan forces attacked:** Unidentified gunmen attacked a vehicle carrying security forces, killing two personnel of the Pakistan Navy and injuring another in the coastal district of Gwadar in the restive Baluchistan province.

The Pakistan Navy vehicle came under indiscriminate firing on Saturday while travelling from Ganz to Jiwani in Gwadar district. As a result of the firing, two personnel of the Pakistan Navy were killed and another man was injured, an official said.

PTI

**Floyd death trial protest:** Dozens of people gathered in front of the Minnesota governor's mansion on Saturday to demand accountability for police officers, days before a former Minneapolis officer is scheduled to go on trial in the death of George Floyd.

Many demonstrated in Minnesota were family members of others who died during police encounters. Similar protests were being organized in cities around the country in advance of the trial of Derek Chauvin.

PTI

**Iranian-British national ends 5-yr sentence in spy case**

TEHRAN, 7 MARCH

A British-Iranian woman held in an Iranian prison for five years on widely refuted spying charges ended her sentence on Sunday, her lawyer said, although it remains unclear when she can leave the country.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was able to remove her ankle bracelet for the first time since she was released from prison on furlough last March because of the surging coronavirus pandemic, the lawyer said. She has been under house arrest at her parent's home in Tehran since.

The situation of her leaving the country is not clear yet, lawyer Hodjat Kermani told AP.

Last fall, Iranian state TV abruptly announced a new indictment against Zaghari-Ratcliffe, but the trial was indefinitely adjourned. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that Zaghari-Ratcliffe would be summoned to court on March 13 over these new charges, which include spreading propaganda against the system.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 42, was sentenced to five years in jail after being convicted of plotting to overthrow Iran's government, a charge that she, her supporters and rights groups vigorously deny. She was taken into custody at the airport with her toddler daughter after visiting family on holiday in the capital of Tehran.

In what the UN has criticised as an emerging pattern, Iran has frequently arrested dual citizens in recent years, often using their cases as bargaining chips for money or influence in negotiations with the West, something Tehran denies. AP

# US Senate approves \$1.9T relief Bill

As President Joe Biden and his Democratic allies notched a victory they called crucial for hoisting US out of pandemic-linked economic doldrums

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH

An exhausted Senate narrowly approved a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill Saturday as President Joe Biden and his Democratic allies notched a victory they called crucial for hoisting the country out of the pandemic and economic doldrums.

After laboring all night on a mountain of amendments - nearly all from Republicans and rejected - bleary-eyed senators approved the sprawling package on a 50-49 party-line vote. That sets up final congressional approval by the House next week so lawmakers can whisk it to Biden for his signature.

The huge measure - its cost is nearly one-tenth the size of the entire U.S. economy - is Biden's biggest early priority. It stands as his formula for addressing the deadly virus and ailing economy, twin crises that have afflicted the country for a year.

"This nation has suffered too much for much too long," Biden told reporters at the White House after the vote. "And everything in this package is designed to relieve the

suffering and to meet the most urgent needs of the nation, and put us in a better position to prevail."

Saturday's vote was also a crucial political moment for Biden and Democrats, who need nothing short of party unanimity in a 50-50 Senate they run with Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote. They hold a slim 10-vote House edge.

Not one Republican backed the bill in the Senate or when it initially passed the House, underscoring the barbed partisan environment that's characterized the early days of Biden's presidency.

A small but pivotal band of moderate Democrats leveraged changes in the legislation that incensed progressives, hardly helping Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., guide the measure through the House. But rejection of their first, signature bill was not an option for Democrats, who face two years of running Congress with virtually no room for error.

In a significant sign, the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, representing around 100 House liberals, called the Senate's weakening of some provi-



Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., praises his Democratic Caucus at a news conference just after the Senate narrowly approved a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill, at the Capitol in Washington on Saturday.

AP

sions "bad policy and bad politics" but "relatively minor concessions." Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., said the bill retained its "core bold, progressive elements."

"They feel like we do, we have to get this done," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said of the House. He added, "It's not going to be everything everyone wants. No bill is."

In a written statement, Pelosi invited Republicans

"to join us in recognition of the devastating reality of this vicious virus and economic crisis and of the need for decisive action."

The bill provides direct payments of up to \$1,400 for most Americans and extended emergency unemployment benefits. There are vast piles of spending for Covid-19 vaccines and testing, states and cities, schools and ailing industries, along with tax breaks to help lower-earning people, families with children and consumers buying health insurance.

Republicans call the measure a wasteful spending spree for Democrats' liberalities that ignores recent indications that the pandemic and economy was turning the corner.

"The Senate has never spent \$2 trillion in a more haphazard way," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. He said Democrats' "top priority wasn't pandemic relief. It was their Washington wish list."

The Senate commenced a dreaded "vote-a-rama" - a continuous series of votes on amendments - shortly before midnight Friday, and by its end around noon dispensed with about three dozen. The Sen-

ate had been in session since 9 a.m. EST Friday.

Overnight, the chamber looked like an experiment in sleep deprivation. Several lawmakers appeared to rest their eyes or doze at their desks, often burying their faces in their hands. At one point, Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, at 48 one of the younger senators, trotted into the chamber and did a prolonged stretch.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, missed the votes to attend his father-in-law's funeral.

The measure follows five earlier ones totaling about \$4 trillion enacted since last spring and comes amid signs of a potential turnaround.

Vaccine supplies are growing, deaths and caseloads have eased but remain frighteningly high, and hiring was surprisingly strong last month, though the economy remains 10 million jobs smaller than pre-pandemic levels.

The Senate package was delayed repeatedly as Democrats made eleventh-hour changes aimed at balancing demands by their competing moderate and progressive factions. Work on the bill ground to a halt Friday after an agreement among Democ-

rats on extending emergency jobless benefits seemed to collapse.

Nearly 12 hours later, top Democrats and West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, perhaps the chamber's most conservative Democrat, said they had a deal, and the Senate approved it on a party-line 50-49 vote.

Under their compromise, \$300 weekly emergency unemployment checks - on top of regular state benefits - would be renewed, with a final payment Sept. 6. There would also be tax breaks on some of that aid, helping people the pandemic abruptly tossed out of jobs and risked tax penalties on the benefits.

The House relief bill, largely similar to the Senate's, provided \$400 weekly benefits through August. The current \$300 per week payments expire March 14, and Democrats want the bill on Biden's desk by then to avert a lapse.

Manchin and Republicans have asserted that higher jobless benefits discourage people from returning to work, a rationale most Democrats and many economists reject.

The agreement on jobless benefits wasn't the only move that showed moderates' sway.

The Senate voted Friday to

reject a House-approved boost in the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025, a major defeat for progressives. Eight Democrats opposed the increase, suggesting that Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and other liberals pledging to continue the effort will face a difficult fight. Party leaders also agreed to restrict eligibility for the \$1,400 stimulus checks for most Americans. That amount would be gradually reduced until, under the Senate bill, it reaches zero for people earning \$80,000 and couples making \$160,000. Those ceilings were higher in the House version.

Many of the rejected GOP amendments were either attempts to force Democrats to cast politically awkward votes or for Republicans to demonstrate their zeal for issues that appeal to their voters. These included defeated efforts to bar funds from going to schools that don't reopen their doors or let transgender students born male participate in female sports.

One amendment would have blocked aid to so-called sanctuary cities, where local authorities don't help federal officials round up immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

## Biden to mark 'Bloody Sunday' by signing voting-rights order

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH

President Joe Biden plans to sign an executive order directing federal agencies to take a series of steps to promote voting access, a move that comes as congressional Democrats press for a sweeping voting and elections bill to counter efforts to restrict voting access.

Biden will announce the order during a recorded address on the 56th commemoration of Bloody Sunday, the 1965 incident in which some 600 civil rights activists were viciously beaten by state troopers as they tried to march for voting rights in Selma, Alabama.

Every eligible voter should be able to vote and have it counted, Biden says in a script of his recorded remarks to Sunday's Martin and Coretta King Unity Breakfast.

Biden's order includes several modest provisions. It directs federal agencies to expand access to voter registration and election information.

mation, calls on the heads of federal agencies to come up with plans to give federal employees time off to vote or volunteer as nonpartisan poll workers, and proscribes an overhaul of the government's Vote.gov website, according to an administration official who briefed reporters.

Democrats are attempting to solidify support for House Resolution 1, which touches on virtually every aspect of the electoral process. It was approved Wednesday on a near-party-line vote, 220-210.

The voting-rights bill includes provisions to restrict partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts, strike down hurdles to voting and bring transparency to a murky campaign finance system that allows wealthy donors to anonymously bankroll political causes.

Democrats say the bill will help stifle voter suppression attempts, while Republicans have cast the bill as unwanted federal interference in states' authority to conduct their own elections.



be a conscious-shocking turning point in the civil rights movement that led to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

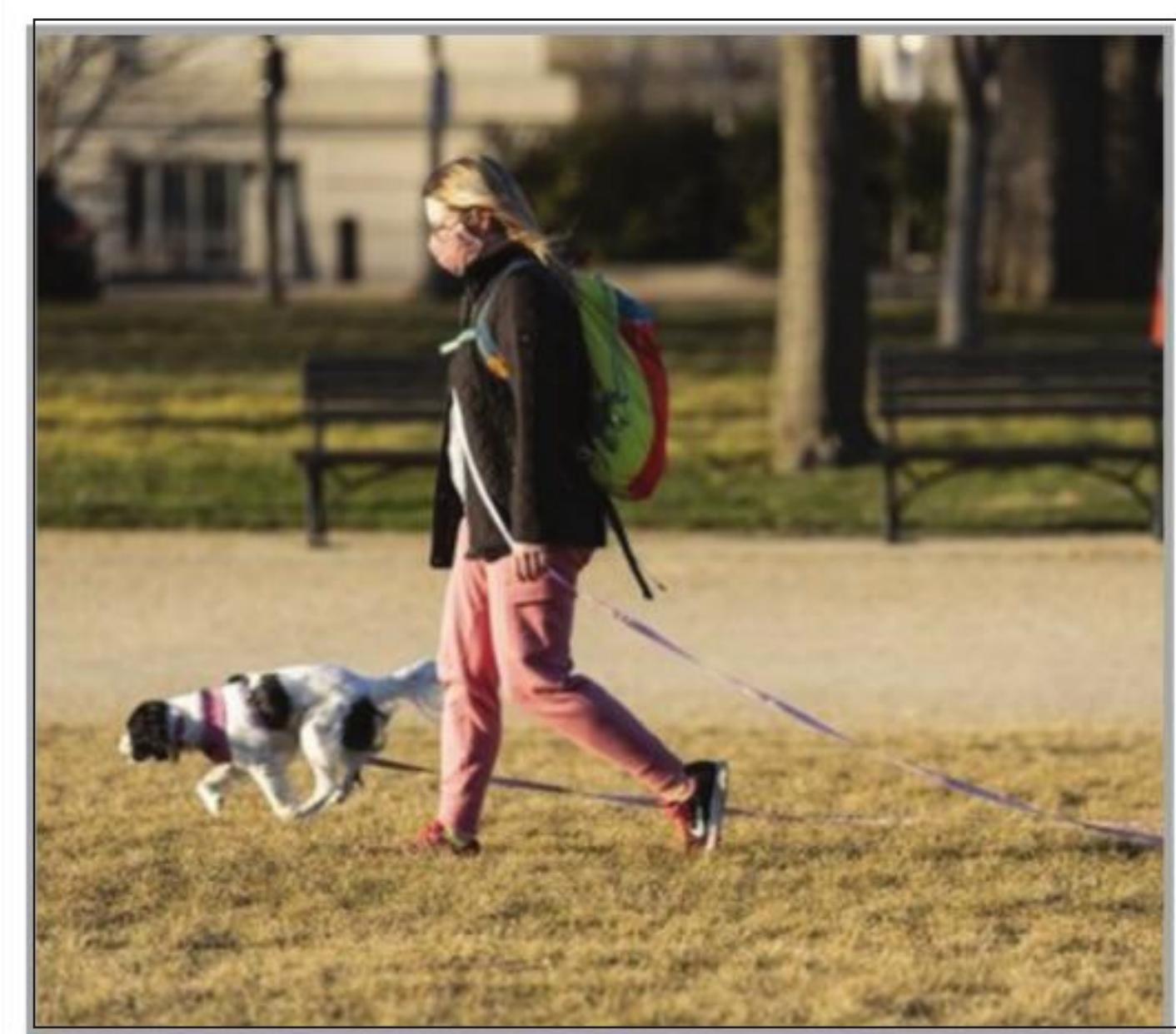
Similarly, Biden is hoping the Jan. 6 sacking of the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Donald Trump mob will prove to be a clarion call for Congress to take action to improve voter protections.

In 2020 with our very democracy on the line even in the midst of a pandemic more Americans voted than ever before, Biden says in the script.

Yet instead of celebrating this powerful demonstration of voting we saw an unprecedented insurrection on our Capitol and a brutal attack on our democracy on January 6th. A never-before-seen effort to ignore, undermine and undo the will of the people.

Biden's remarks also pay tribute to the late civil rights giants Rev. C.T. Vivian, Rev. Joseph Lowery and Rep. John Lewis. All played critical roles in the 1965 organizing efforts in Selma and all died in the last year.

## STROLLING AWAY



A woman wearing a face mask walks a dog in Washington, D.C.

IANS

## Another ex-aide calls Cuomo's office conduct inappropriate

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

NEW YORK, 7 MARCH

behavior.

Cuomo's workplace conduct has been under intense scrutiny in recent days as several women have publicly told of feeling sexually harassed, or at least made to feel demeaned and uncomfortable by the Democrat.

Former adviser Lindsey Boylan, 36, said he made inappropriate comments on her appearance, once kissed her on the lips at the end of a meeting and suggested a game of strip poker as they sat with other aides on a jet flight.

Another former aide, Charlotte Bennett, 25, said Cuomo asked if she ever had sex with older men and made other comments she interpreted as gauging her interest in an affair. Another woman, who did not work for the state, described Cuomo putting his hands on her face and asking if he could kiss her after they sat with other aides on a jet flight.

It's not appropriate, really, in any setting, she said. I wish that he took me seriously.

A spokesman for Cuomo didn't immediately return a request for comment from The Associated Press, but told the Journal that some of the behavior Liss was describing was the kind of innocent glad-handing that politicians often do at public events.

Reporters and photographers have covered the governor for 14 years watching him kiss men and women and posing for pictures," said Rich Azzopardi, a senior advisor to Cuomo. "At the public open-house mansion reception, there are hundreds of people, and he poses for hundreds of pictures. That's what people in politics do. Liss said she never made a formal complaint about the governor's

## UK's Covid-19 vaccine rollout expands to over-56 age groups

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

LONDON, 7 MARCH

The UK entered the next phase of its vaccination drive against Covid-19 on Sunday as the eligible cohorts for jabs were expanded from over-60s to all those aged 56 and over.

Letters from the National Health Service (NHS) to around 850,000 people in that age group were issued this weekend with a further 850,000 due to arrive by Monday. The expansion comes as NHS staff said more than one-third of the adult population have now received a life-saving jab.

The NHS vaccination programme is in full swing and more than 21 million of the most at-risk people have already received their first

dose, said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"This includes more than 90 per cent of those aged 65 and over and almost 9 in 10 people who are clinically extremely vulnerable. It's an extraordinary feat and we remain on track to offer a first vaccine to all adults by 31 July," he said.

People receiving the letters are invited to go online to the national booking service to arrange a jab at a time and location that is convenient for them.

The NHS vaccine programme is committed to protecting the country against coronavirus and it is testament to our incredible staff that we can now move on to the next age group, said Dr Nikki Kanani, a general practitioner (GP) and NHS national med-

ical director for primary care.

The NHS is vaccinating in line with Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) guidance which sees people invited to be vaccinated in order of risk, which increases with age and people aged between 50 and 55 are set to be invited shortly.

Vaccinations are now being administered at more than 1,600 sites across the country, including temples, mosques, museums and rugby grounds, with a maximum 10-mile radius of availability of at least one vaccination centre.

People can use the national booking service to

# North-East Consequences of the coup

With Myanmar set to remain  
'destabilised' for the foreseeable future,  
the North-east must look elsewhere



RANGAN DUTTA

**S**trange though it may seem, Myanmar, a country sharing 1,600-km land borders with Assam and Manipur, and whose thriving trade in "Burma rice" provided food security to tea labourers in the region, is now a distant neighbour of the North-east. At present, there are just two land customs stations at Moreh in Manipur and Zowkhathar in Mizoram accounting for only 1.1 per cent of Myanmar's border trade of US \$8,465 million. Its trade with other neighbours, especially China and Thailand, are booming as their shares of the pie in 2017-18 were 79.8 per cent and 18.8 per cent respectively.

That fact and others such mentioned in the 2019 study of the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations establish the reality that the much-hyped Look East and then, Act East policy hasn't really worked yet. Simply because economic and infrastructural links are not in place for positioning the North-east firmly in the Association of South-east Asian Nations economy, which for us begins with Myanmar.

It's indeed a "chicken and egg" situation as strategic road connectivity is still not in place for forging ahead with trade and development. For instance, only 40 km of the 110 km stretch of road between Imphal and Tubul is two-lane. The remaining portion of the Imphal-Moreh road is single lane and subject to disruption during monsoons. The upgradation of the Imphal-Jiribam

sector under the "Bharatmala Pariyajana" project is tardy.

Similarly, road conditions between Aizawl and Zowkhathar in Mizoram need early upgrading. The Friendship Road to link Moreh with Kyigone/Kalewa in the Sagaing region of Myanmar and Mandalay is also not good. Even after resurfacing and handing over the Kyigone-Kalewa section to Myanmar in 2009, the stretch beyond Kyigone and up to Mandalay is still bad as the neighbouring country has not been able to upgrade the road and construct the 69 bridges critical for faster movement of traffic. Consequently, the ambitious India-Myanmar-Thailand Triilateral Highway project is yet to be operationalised.

The story of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project to link the North-east and the Sittwe Port of Myanmar is about the same. All these facts explain why only about one per cent of our US \$1.06 billion merchandise trade with Myanmar in 2017-18 is "border" trade, the rest being maritime.

From a broad South Asian perspective, the separation of Burma under the Government of India Act may be seen as the "first Partition" of India preceding the 1947 division. Taken together, both destroyed the vibrant regional economy encompassing East and North-east India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Act East policy is thus an unfinished effort to reconstruct the same.

The widespread and continuing agitation in Myanmar against the military coup notwithstanding, the view

that the junta might be able to run the State, much like the way it did from 1962 till 2011, is not without basis. That is because the colonial administrative system that Burma inherited as a part of India, with features like separation of powers between the executive and judiciary and local self-government, had been subverted so much over half a century of military rule that the elected government under Aung San Suu Kyi had to accept the blatantly wrong provisions of the 2008 Constitution. It first allowed reservation of 25 per cent seats in the Central Legislature for the country's Armed Forces and second, placed internal security and external affairs under the Armed Forces and not the elected government.

Both provisions are violative of the basic principles of a democratic State based on the rule of law. For instance, Armed Forces personnel cannot be lawmakers because of "conflict of interest" as they are government servants. And the two subjects mentioned above are central to governance and hence, fall within the basic functions of any elected government.

Myanmar has thus been rightly put in the "authoritarian" category of States and ranked 135 in the 2020 Global Democracy Index among 167 countries - down from 110 in 2017. It is unfortunate that notwithstanding "sanctions" of the West after the 1 February coup and the emphatic verdict of the people in favour of the National League for Democracy and the leadership of Suu Kyi in the November 2020 election, democracy

in Myanmar, even with all its deficiencies, is unlikely to be restored in the near future. The reasons for the same are two-fold.

First is the unique history of the Armed Forces of Myanmar. It emerged, not from a professional colonial force as in Pakistan, but from the Burma Independence Army under General Aung San. It was formed during World War II, first with the help of the Japanese occupation forces and later, the Allied Forces, which made it a part of the political power structure from the very beginning. It even has a political platform - the Union Solidarity and Development Party - which contested the November 2020 election and fared badly, winning only 86 seats in the Lower House and seven in the Upper House, compared to the NLD's tally of 285 and 138.

Second, unending ethnic conflicts, which began soon after Myanmar attained freedom from the British in 1948, reflect the failure of the dominant Barman ethnic group to accommodate aspirations of the diverse "geopolitical minorities". They are ethnic groups such as the Karen, Kachin, Mon and Wa, who constitute the majority in the provinces they inhabit even when they are minority groups in the total population of the country. It gives them an edge, especially because such provinces are border lands.

That explains why there are 17 insurgent groups, each having an army like the Wa, Mon and Kachin Armies and enjoy access to arms and logistical support from the neigh-

bourhood, especially in South China. Suu Kyi's failure to unite and make those ethnic groups stakeholders is matched by her failure to deal effectively with the Covid-19 crisis and slowdown of the economy.

Myanmar, therefore, is set to remain "destabilised" with adverse consequences for the North-east. First, Assam, Nagaland and several other parts of the North-east have been facing insurrections of varying intensity for decades. The insurgent groups operate from the Myanmar border lands taking advantage of the lack of effective control of the Myanmar government. They receive logistics and arms, indeed covert and overt Chinese support, which have been well documented in Bertil Lintner's book, *Great Game East*. As the situation will now favour those groups, it would obstruct implementation of the Act East policy and development of the region.

Second, it would facilitate the deepening of China's political, economic and military engagement in Myanmar, as China views Myanmar as the "strategic land bridge" to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean region. China has already invested an estimated US \$ nine billion to develop a deep-sea port at Kyaukphyu in Myanmar and operationalised the oil and gas pipelines from there to Ruili in Yunnan province for transporting oil and gas from West Asia. China's engagement with the Myanmar Army, therefore, will be long-standing.

In fact, according to a 2011 report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, China has been the major supplier of military hardware to Myanmar since 1988 covering 90 per cent of military transport, war planes, battle ships and provided training to the officer corps. All that created a base for the recent China-Myanmar Economic Corridor designed to expand China-Myanmar cooperation to a strategic level. In this scenario, the official Chinese response to the coup that "it's an internal matter of Myanmar" suggests it is willing to work with the junta as earlier.

What does this situation augur for policy makers in the North-east? A possibility is to seek a viable alternative to reach out to the ASEAN. In this regard, the prescient view of Purno Sangma, the legendary leader of the North-east, that "for us in Meghalaya, Look East begins with looking South, that is Bangladesh" makes strategic sense.

It is time Bangladesh is seen in the North-east as an opportunity given its fast-growing economy, which the International Monetary Fund has placed in the category of "emerging economies". For that, apart from gaining access to Chittagong Port, it is also necessary to develop the region's production function and especially its service sector in tune with the rising demand of the Bangladeshi market. It could revive the pre-1947 arrangements, which served the East Asian region so well.

This is the real strategic challenge thrown up by the military coup in Myanmar. The impending visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh has much significance for the North-east.

The writer is a retired IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre and has served as a scientific consultant in the office of the principal scientific advisor to the Government of India

## PLUS POINTS

### DSP Hima Das



As promised by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government, sensational Assamese sprinter Hima Das was recently appointed as a deputy superintendent in Assam Police. Chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, in the presence of state police chief Bhaskar J Mahanta, handed over the appointment letter at a function in Guwahati.

Sonowal, also in charge of the home portfolio, commented on the occasion that it was a proud day for Assam as the "Dhing Express" was ceremonially appointed as a DSP in the state police force. He said that the ace athlete would continue to strive for excellence in sports. Moreover, he expressed hope that Das' appointment would motivate more youngsters to take up sports as their careers.

The 21-year-old sprinter said that she had a dream to become a police officer and her mother also endorsed it advising her to become a good officer to serve the common people. She admitted that she got everything from sports and would never leave sporting activities in her life. It must be mentioned here that a recent cabinet meeting at Janata Bhawan in Dispur, chaired by Sonowal, decided to appoint Das as a DSP. The council of ministers also amended the integrated sports policy for appointing medal winners of Olympics, Asian Games, and other world championships in various state departments.

Union youth affairs and sports minister Kiren Rijiju lauded the decision to appoint the Arjuna Awardee in a senior post of the state police force. He also commented that all sportspersons, including Das, who are employed in different government sectors, should continue to play for the country. Even after their retirements, they should be engaged in the mission to promote sports in the country, he added.

Das is presently preparing for the forthcoming Tokyo Olympics qualification at the Patiala-based Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports. She in fact became the second athlete from Assam (after Bhogeswar Baruah) to win a gold medal in an international event.

Hailing from a poor family at a remote village of Dhing locality in central Assam, Das initially showed interest in football and she even played the power game with boys during her school days. She passed the Class XII Assam board examination in 2019.

Das won her first medal in a 100-meter race in a junior national championship held in Assam. Soon she grabbed a gold in a 400m race at the IAAF World U20 Championships in Finland. Later, she won the silver in 400m at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia. The following year, she won gold medals in 200m at the Poznan Athletics Grand Prix (Poland), Kutno Athletics Meet (Poland) and Kladno Athletics Meet (Czech Republic).

-NAVA THAKURIA

### Tribal body polls



The much-delayed elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council will be held on 4 April, officials announced in Agartala last week.

Tripura State Election Commissioner ML Dey said that polling to the 28-member TTAADC would be held on 4 April and counting of votes would be done on 8 April. According to Dey, 8,65,041 voters including 4,28,490 female voters are eligible to cast their votes in the TTAADC. It has a jurisdiction over two-thirds of Tripura's 10,491 sq km area, which is home to more than 12,16,000 people with 90 per cent of the population being tribal people.

The five-year tenure of the TTAADC, considered a mini Assembly in terms of political significance, expired on 17 May last year and the BJP-led state government promulgated Governor's Rule by appointing a retired IAS officer as administrator next day for a period of six months and then extending the term for another six months on 17 November.

-IANS

## Voicing their protest

The expulsion of four students from Geyzing College in Sikkim has elicited sharp responses



SHRADHA R CHHETRI

**I**n Sikkim, there is a dearth of dissent. Students are well, students. And the politics of the state is left to elders, with even student wings of political parties here more focused towards social work.

That passive attitude, though, has receded somewhat in the last few years. The formation of the Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum heralded a sudden change in the way the youth work.

Of course, there were setbacks. Many chose to remain as they were, dissent and debate confined to social media. One would ask, "Is it wrong to not have an issue to politicise?" or a

favourite, "Why look for trouble when there is none?"

Granted, a peaceful state of affairs allows for more time to focus on academic and personal commitments but what is the use of having a student council in educational institutions if the leaders of those groups are dismissive of long-term issues that may affect future alumni? Isn't it impossible to believe that sexual harassment, petty politics and bullying have been eradicated from all schools and colleges?

I'd written an opinion piece on this issue in 2019, after the Delhi University elections concluded. There is an unspoken awe amongst students from other states and cities as far as

comparing their college student unions with the DU unions are concerned. That said, from choosing to become allies for minority groups to openly questioning authority for the pressing problems they deem necessary to bring to public attention, Sikkimese students have found a spine.

Except, their only obstacle is the rhetoric of anti-nationalism seeping into the state and its institutions. Who does one blame for it? Leaders who side with parties that propagate policies of speech and expression or the ones who bequeathed the idea of compromise and detachment from politics to this generation?

In 2014, a hike in college fees pro-

pelled several students to protest and demand a rollback. It was one of the largest student protests in the state's history. They were lathicharged by the Sikkim police for blocking National Highway 10.

Since then, groups like the SPYF and other student unions of government colleges began voicing their opinions on a public scale by way of sit-ins and rallies. Often, the demands are the same -- better faculty, syllabi and campuses.

In 2019, students took out a rally from Indira Bypass to the district court in Gangtok to protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act. The crowd also comprised social activists and the general public who were worried about the implementation of the divisive act in Sikkim. The Centre, however, had assured citizens that the Act would not be implemented in the state.

That may well have been the point of return for young scholars and activists who are now spearheading a cultural and political revolution within campus walls and social media by urging fellow classmates to care about what happens in Sikkim and elsewhere. Not just national issues but those related to the health and education sector are causes that students have taken to the streets for.

Recently, a five-day protest conducted by students of Geyzing College, West Sikkim for the completion of their college campus led to the expulsion of four students by the administration on grounds of disciplinary rules violation. The decision was both a lesson and warning. They couldn't have made a bolder statement -- either the student body keeps mum, or they lose precious time.

Jacob Khaling, political secretary to the chief minister, tagged the four suspended students as anti-nationals

at a press conference. The SPYF, on the other hand, has been vocal on this blatant disregard for the future of students. They have asked for revocation of the decision.

Former Supreme Court judge Markandey Katju wrote to the principal of the college concerned seeking reinstatement of the expelled students. He wrote, "Surely making such demands, if done in a peaceful manner, is the democratic right of everyone, including students. Our Constitution grants freedom of speech and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms to everyone vide Article 19."

When young environmental and political activists in college are being arrested and jailed in broad daylight for their opinions and hope for change, what message is being sent by the authorities? That the only statements to be made are in favour of the government and anything deviating from that would lead to a heavy price, financially, mentally and physically?

Students have been pivotal to shaping a country's political landscape. In India, the current affairs have given much reason for student populations to educate, agitate and organise. The vocal nature of the youth now transcends borders and nationalities.

The presence of student leaders who went on to create political parties and participate in India's most influential protests must serve as a reminder that someday the ones in school will get there too. They will usher in laws and amendments that benefit the public. They will also make mistakes but maybe, they will be held accountable by virtue of those who will be inspired to do the same.

The writer is a journalist at *The Sikkim Chronicle*, Gangtok



## SON RISE

Taking the Schumacher surname back into Formula One this season will be more a source of pride than pressure, Michael's son Mick (photo, left) said. "I'm very happy to carry that surname, and I'm very happy to carry that name back into Formula One, and I'm very proud of it," he said. "It's like a boost for me and it gives me motivation every single day."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**Delhi Marathon:** Army's Srinu Bugatha and Asian Games gold medallist Sudha Singh won the men's and women's titles respectively of the sixth New Delhi Marathon on Sunday. Both winners fell short of the qualification timings of this year's Olympic Games.

**Rangers win:** Rangers won its first Scottish Premiership title in 10 years on Sunday to complete its recovery from financial implosion and being forced to start again in the fourth division. A record 55th domestic league title was sealed after Glasgow rival Celtic drew 0-0 with Dundee United.

**Delhi reaches quarters:** Wicketkeeper-batsman Anuj Rawat smashed an unbeaten 95 off 85 balls as an under-pressure Delhi made a remarkable recovery to beat Uttarakhand by four wickets in the pre-quarter final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy on Sunday.

**Roma wins:** Gianluca Mancini's bullet header helped Roma beat Genoa 1-0 to move back into fourth place in Serie A on Sunday. Mancini scored the only goal of the match.

## IPL 2021: Starts 9 April, no home games, no crowds at 6 venues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The IPL 2021 will run from 9 April to 30 May across six venues with no team getting to play at home, its Governing Council announced on Sunday.

Despite COVID-19 surge, Mumbai has been named as one of the host cities and the tournament will be held behind closed doors at least in the initial phase of the tournament.

The other venues are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Kolkata. The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the final on 30 May as well as the play-offs.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Royal Challengers Bangalore in the tournament opener in Chennai on 9 April.

As on Sunday, the BCCI's released schedule for the first four weeks till 6 May during which 33 matches will be played and not a single game has been slotted in Kolkata during the phase as there will be eight-phase state assembly elections in Bengal.

Each team is set to play at four venues during the league stage. Out of the 56 league matches, Chennai, Mumbai,

## Messi sets up goals in Barca win

AGENCIES  
BARCELONA, 7 MARCH

Lionel Messi linked up with two generations of teammates to ensure that Barcelona will gain ground on at least one of its two Spanish league title rivals this weekend.

Barcelona won 2-0 at Osasuna on Saturday as Messi undid the hosts' disciplined defense on the half-hour mark when he repeated a pass that has led to plenty of goals over his career sending the ball behind the defensive line to meet a darting run by Jordi Alba.

The 31-year-old left back, who has made a career of returning that initial through-ball back to Messi, this time sought his own shot and drilled a powerful strike right past the head of goalkeeper Sergio Herera.

Messi then fast-forwarded to Barcelona's future with seven minutes left in the match when he served as the link between two of the team's 18-year-old talents. After receiving the ball from Pedri González, Messi quickly laid it off for substitute Ilaix Moriba to cut back to his left foot and curl a shot into the corner of the net.



Barcelona extended its undefeated run to 16 league matches to keep the pressure on Atletico a day before it hosts third-place Real Madrid in a Spanish capital derby. Atletico will also have one more game to play after this round.

Ilaix thanked Messi for the pass, and coach Ronald Koeman for the chance to play, after scoring his first goal for the team two weeks after his debut.

"From the first game, Koeman told me to look to score and that's what I did," said Ilaix. Messi gave me the pass

and I don't know how I cut back ... but I shot and it went in. I will never forget this. I will take this to my grave.

Koeman arrived last summer to overhaul a team that had looked old and worn out when it finished the season without a title and capitulating 8-2 to Bayern Munich. Instead of promising immediate titles, he lowered expectations and focused on rejuvenating the team for years to come.

And that he has done.

Ilaix is the latest of a number of young players that Koeman has nurtured along, including Pedri, the injured Ansu Fati, Frenkie de Jong, Ousmane Dembele, Ronald Araújo, scar Minguiza, and Sergio Dest.

We are proud to give opportunities to the young players Koeman said. They are demanding a chance because they are the future of the club.

It is important to bring some fresh air into the team. Playing for Barcelona, you are obliged to win, but if we can do so while introducing young players and the changes we are making, then even better.

The win comes before Barcelona's club members vote on Sunday for a new president, who will inherit a club with a ballooning debt and the task of convincing Messi to stay on when his contract expires this summer.

Barcelona's good form in Spain will face an extremely tough test on Wednesday when it visits Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League. PSG won 4-1 in the first leg of the round of 16 with a hat trick by Kylian Mbappé at Camp Nou.

Before kick-off at El Sadar Stadium, Barcelona's players wore shirts with 8 March to commemorate International Women's Day on Monday.

## SEVILLA SLIPS

After losing both games of its league-cup doubleheader against Barcelona in the last week, Sevilla was upset 2-1 by Elche.

Ral Guti and Guido Carrillo scored for Elche in the 70th and 76th minutes, before Luk de Jong pulled one back for Sevilla. Sevilla remained in fourth place and in control of Spain's last Champions League spot. Elche escaped the relegation zone.

## Mumbai face depleted Goa in quest for 1st ISL final

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
BAMBOOLIM (GOA), 7 MARCH

at a slight disadvantage after losing a few key players to injuries in the first leg. The draw in the first leg will seem like a missed opportunity for Juan Ferrando's side, who took the lead twice in the game but saw their defence crumble under pressure, yet again. Goa may have been unbeaten for 14 games now but their backline will need to step up, if the two-time finalists harbour any hopes of getting past Mumbai.

They have kept only three clean sheets (only Odisha have kept fewer this season) and will be facing a side with the most goals this season. Ferrando revealed he wanted more than just a draw from the first leg.

"We are not very happy because we wanted to win," he said. "The most important thing now is that the players are 100 per cent ready. It's a great opportunity for us to continue to improve and continue working. We hope to be in the final," said Ferrando.

While Princeton Rebello will be out, the return of Alberto Nogueira and Ivan Gonzalez will serve as a much-needed boost for Goa.

## SA cruise to eight-wicket win over India



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, 7 MARCH

Kolkata and Bengaluru will host 10 matches each while Ahmedabad and Delhi will host eight matches each.

One of the highlights of this edition of the Vivo IPL will be the fact that all matches will be played at neutral venues, no team will play at their home venue. All teams will play at 4 out of 6 venues during the league stage," read an IPL statement.

There will be a total of 11 double headers where six teams will play three afternoon matches and two teams will play two afternoon matches.

The afternoon games are slated for a 3:30 PM start while the evening games will have a 7:30 PM start.

The fixtures of the tournament have been mapped in a way that every team will travel only three times during the league stage, thus reducing commute and minimising risk.

"The fixtures of the tournament have been mapped in a way that every team will travel only three times during the league stage, thus reducing commute and minimising risk.

Veteran fast bowler Jhulan Goswami was the lone wicket-taker for India, dismissing Wolvaardt for 80 and thus ending South Africa's opening partnership on 169.

Jhulan then got the wicket of South Africa captain Sun Luus after which a wide delivery

from Harmanpreet Kaur gave the visitors the winning run.

Earlier, captain Mithali Raj's 54th ODI half century was followed by a late collapse which led to India being restricted to a low total. This is India's first international match since the final of the T20 World Cup in Melbourne, Australia on March 8, 2020.

It is also the first time that India are playing an ODI match since November 6, 2019 when they faced West Indies in North Sound, Antigua.

Earlier, Mithali and Harmanpreet put up a 62-run partnership for the fourth wicket that took India past the 100-run mark. Harmanpreet, who is playing her 100th ODI, was especially aggressive, hitting six fours in her 40-run knock. However, she was denied a 12th ODI half-century when she mistimed a lofted shot off South Africa captain Sun Luus and holed out at long off.

Deepti Sharma then stood strong with Mithali and the pair put up 52 runs for the fifth wicket. Mithali was dismissed on 50 in the 38th over after which India lost their last four wickets for 21 runs.

**Brief scores:**

India 177/9 in 50 overs (Mithali Raj 50, Harmanpreet Kaur 30; Shabnim Ismail 28) lost to South Africa 178/2 in 40.1 overs (Lizelle Lee 83 not out, Laura Wolvaardt 80, Jhulan Goswami 2/38) by nine wickets with 59 balls remaining.

## New Zealand beats Australia by 7 wickets, wins T20 series 3-2

AGENCIES  
WELLINGTON, 7 MARCH

Ish Sodhi led a concerted attack by New Zealand's spin bowlers before Martin Guptill smashed a quickfire 71 runs to set up a seven-wicket win over Australia in the fifth Twenty20 international on Sunday and a 3-2 win in the five-match series.

Leg spinner Sodhi came into the match as the leading wicket-taker in the series with 10 at an average of 18 and improved to 13 at 11.8, taking 3-24 as Australia was held 142-8 after choosing to bat on winning the toss.

New Zealand surpassed that total with 27 balls to spare, steered by Guptill and Devon Conway who put on 106 for the first wicket in 11.5 overs.

Sodhi was supported during Australia's innings by left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner who took the new ball and bowled his four overs at a cost of only 21 runs. Having noted the influence of spin in the previous match in the series, New Zealand also used part-time spinners Mark Chapman, who took 1-9 from two overs, and Glen Phillips whose two overs cost 21 runs.

The spinners shared 12 of New Zealand's 20 overs, including 10 wickets.

Guptill posted his 17th T20 from 33 balls and moved to second place behind Virat Kohli on the list of top run-scorers in T20 internationals.

The partnership finally was broken by Riley Meredith in the 12th over when Conway was caught in the deep for 36. There was a flicker of hope for Australia when New Zealand captain Kane Williamson fell lbw to Meredith's first ball.

Guptill was out in the 15th over, having made 71 from 46 balls with seven boundaries and four sixes, and having set the foundation on which New Zealand's win depended.

Phillips finished the job, hitting 34 from 15 balls with five fours and two sixes including a six for the winning runs in the 16th over off Adam Zampa.

Australia also tried a new

opening combination, promoting Josh Philippe to join Aaron Finch but the move was unsuccessful and Philippe was out for 2 in the second over, trapped lbw by Trent Boult who took 2-26.

Finch made 69 in the third match and carried his bat for 79 in the fourth. But he was out for 36 Sunday, falling to Sodhi. The Australian captain had been dropped by Tim Southee off Sodhi in a potentially costly miss but fell only two balls later to a catch by Mitchell Santner.

## Sindhu suffers demoralising defeat in Swiss Open final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BASEL, 7 MARCH

World Champion PV Sindhu finished a distant second best in the Swiss Open final after being completely routed by Olympic gold medallist Carolina Marin of Spain in a lopsided women's singles title clash here on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Indian, who had won the coveted World Championship gold medal here in 2019, couldn't match the speed and accuracy of Marin during her 12-21, 5-21 defeat in the final that lasted only 35 minutes.

It was Sindhu's third successive loss to Marin, who had won both the Super 1000 events in Thailand in January before finishing runners-up at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals.

Playing her first final in 18 months, Sindhu, ranked 7th in the world, entered the match with a 5-8 head-to-head record against Marin, having lost her last two matches against the former world no 1.

The world no 7 Indian, who didn't drop a game in the last four matches this week, however, failed to summon her 'A' game under pressure as Marin came up trumps to



claim her third title of the year. Marin, the current world no 3, had also defeated Sindhu in the final of the Rio Olympics in 2016.

Sindhu seemed completely clueless against a rampaging Marin, who outclassed the Indian with her pace, power and precision during the summit clash.

In the opening game, Marin opened up a 2-0 lead early on, which was quickly erased by Sindhu as she looked to step up the pace.

The Indian moved ahead 6-4 -- the only time she had a lead in the match -- but Marin again clawed back with Sindhu finding the net more often than not.

Sindhu missed a shot at the backline and committed a couple of unforced errors as Marin lead 9-6.

The Spaniard erred twice before winning a video referral. She then entered the mid-game interval with a healthy 11-8 advantage.

It was a one-way traffic after the break as Marin continued the momentum, grabbing four straight points to move to 15-8. A precise return at backline helped Sindhu to break the run of play.

But Sindhu couldn't vary the pace or take control of the

net as Marin continued to march on, grabbing nine game points. Sindhu saved one before sending her backhand return to net to hand over the game to Marin.

Marin didn't take the foot off the pedal and continued to dominate the proceedings, zooming to a 5-0 lead in the second game.

An error gave Sindhu the serve but the Indian just couldn't get going as she again faltered at the net and then miscued a forehand return. Marin soon moved to 8-2.

Sindhu then changed her racquet but that didn't change her luck as she went long next as Marin took an nine-point advantage at the interval.

Marin continued her ruthless march, moving to 14-2 before cruising to a winning position with a 18-3 lead leaving the Indian in complete despair.

The Spaniard eventually had 15 match points at her disposal and Spaniard sealed the issue with a cross-court return at the net which caught the Indian napping.

Sindhu will next compete at the USD 850,000 All England Championships, a Super 1000 event to be held from 17 to 21 March.

## Vinesh wins gold, reclaims top rank; Bajrang in final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ROME, 7 MARCH

Living up to the expectations, star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat (in photo) grabbed the 53kg gold medal along with world number one rank while Bajrang Punia booked his spot in the final of the men's 65kg event at the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event, here on Sunday.

It was second gold medal for Vinesh in as many weeks with a dominant win as the 26-year-old World bronze medallist blanked Canada's Diana Mary Helen Weicker 4-0 in the title clash.

Vinesh scored all her points in the first period and held on to her lead in the second to ensure a top-of-the-podium finish.

Vinesh had won a gold medal in Kiev last week and this performance would give her the belief that her preparations for the Tokyo Olympics are on the right track.

The Indian had entered the event as world number three but is back to world number one by jumping 14 points. The Canadian was ranked as low as 40 before

the tournament but is now just behind Vinesh at number two.

Vinesh did not concede a single point at this tournament, winning two of her three bouts by pinning her rivals while getting injury walkouts in the other two in the eight-woman field.

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