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NEARBY



Delhi reports 96 cases, lowest since last April 30
NEW DELHI
Delhi reported only 96 new COVID-19 cases over 24 hours – the lowest since last April 30 – taking the total number of cases to 6,34,325, stated a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. A total of 6,545 health workers were vaccinated on Wednesday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Abhay Chautala quits as MLA over farm laws

CHANDIGARH
Indian National Lok Dal leader Abhay Chautala, an MLA from Ellenabad in Haryana, on Wednesday resigned from the Assembly over the Centre's new farm laws. He submitted his resignation to Speaker Gian Chand Gupta here.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

3 TV reporters booked for 'baseless' news

LUCKNOW
The police in U.P.'s Kanpur Dehat district have booked three television journalists on charges of airing a "baseless" news report of children of a government school "shivering in cold" in knickers and cotton shirts during a drill on January 24.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

Govt. conspiracy led to violence: farmers

Unions blame one faction, actor for mayhem, vow to continue agitation in a peaceful manner

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Farm unions have blamed the violence which took place during their Republic Day tractor parades on a conspiracy hatched by the government with one Punjab union, the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, and Punjabi actor Deep Sidhu, who has previously been linked to the BJP.

The unions have cancelled their plans to march to Parliament on February 1, when the Union Budget will be presented, but have vowed to continue their agitation in a peaceful manner.

Their statements came even as the Delhi police accused union leaders of instigating farmers to break from the agreed parade route and head towards the Red Fort.

The police have filed FIRs



Heightened vigil: Additional security personnel being deployed at the Red Fort on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

naming a number of senior farm leaders who held talks with the government and signed an undertaking promising to follow the conditions set for the parades.

"The peaceful farmers parade was a victim of a conspiracy hatched by the government," said veteran union leader Balbir Singh Rajewal,

who is among those named in the FIRs.

He alleged that the police had removed the barricades for troublemakers from the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, who had previously declared their intention of breaking from the designated route.

Mr. Rajewal also alleged

that Mr. Sidhu, who has been linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and associated with Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was the person who instigated the flag hoisting at the Red Fort.

"It was a historic parade by lakhs of farmers with more than 2 lakh tractors, and 99.9% of the farmers stayed peaceful," Mr. Rajewal said at a press conference of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the joint front of protesting farm unions, at the Singhu border on Wednesday night.

said he was withdrawing from the Ghazipur protest site due to the violence on Republic Day.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union-Bhanu, which filed a case in the Supreme Court on the issue and was seen as close to the government, also withdrew from the protest at the Chilla site.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 5 & 9

Cinemas allowed to seat more people

Swimming pools can be opened for all

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry issued an order on Wednesday extending the COVID-19 guidelines for surveillance, containment and caution till February 28.

The guidelines permit cinema halls and theatres to operate at a higher capacity than the 50% seating strength allowed till now. Use of swimming pools has been permitted for all.

All kinds of social, religious and cultural gatherings that were earlier restricted to a maximum of 50% of the hall capacity, with a ceiling of 200 persons in closed spaces, will now be allowed subject to the standard operating procedure issued by the State

governments. "For further opening up of international air travel of passengers, the Ministry of Civil Aviation may take a decision in consultation with the Home Ministry based on the assessment of the situation," the order said.

"The main focus is to consolidate the substantial gains that have been achieved against the spread of COVID-19, which is visible in the steady decline in the number of active and new cases in the country over the last four months," it said. The guidelines under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, issued in December are applicable till January 31.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Phoenix rises



Mark of respect: A view of the phoenix-themed memorial to former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, which was unveiled by Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Kamarajar Salai in Chennai on Wednesday. ■ RAGHUNATHAN S.R.

V.K. Sasikala is officially out of prison

Aide of former T.N. CM Jayalalithaa to remain in hospital for COVID-19 treatment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

V.K. Sasikala, the aide of late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, was on Wednesday formally released from the Parappana Agrahara Prison here after serving a four-year sentence in a disproportionate assets case. Officials announced her release at the Victoria Hospital here, where she is undergoing treatment for COVID-19.

Ms. Sasikala, who was expelled from the AIADMK, will remain in hospital for another four or five days, a statement from the hospital said.



Sasikala's nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran outside Victoria Hospital. ■ MURALI KUMAR K.

A team of officials visited Ms. Sasikala in the morning to complete the formalities of her release. While the prison escort has been with

drawn, more than 100 personnel of the Bengaluru city police have been deployed in and around the hospital for security, turning the COVID-19 facility into a fortress. A source said the police were not allowing family members and party workers to meet her, citing security reasons.

Medical Superintendent Ramesh Krishna K. said, "As per protocols, she will be discharged on the 10th day if she is asymptomatic and free of oxygen support for at least three days."

She was admitted to the Bowring and Lady Curzon

Hospital on January 20 after she complained of breathlessness and fever. From there, she was shifted to the Victoria Hospital on January 21 after she was diagnosed with Severe Acute Respiratory Infection. Subsequently, her chest CT thorax showed features suggestive of severe respiratory infection. She tested positive for COVID-19 the same day.

She was admitted to the COVID-19 ICU at the Emergency and Trauma Care Centre, the designated COVID-19 facility on the Victoria Hospital premises.

SC stays Bombay HC order in groping case

It will set a dangerous precedent: A-G

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court stayed a controversial Bombay High Court verdict, which acquitted a man found guilty of assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act on the grounds that he groped his victim over her clothes and there was no "skin-to-skin" contact between them.

The court concluded that mere touching or pressing of a clothed body of a child did not amount to sexual assault.

Mr. Venugopal said that in future, because of the order, an accused could claim innocence under the Act by arguing that the child he assaulted was clothed and there was no "direct physical skin-to-skin" contact between them.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Soldier killed, 3 injured in IED explosion in J&K

Blast took place inside a school

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

A soldier was killed and three others were injured in an IED explosion triggered by militants at Kulgam in south Kashmir on Wednesday.

The explosion took place around 10.15 a.m. inside a school in the Shamshera area when a road opening party of the Army was carrying out a sanitisation drill.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Tractor parade: tear gas killed two horses

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Two horses belonging to Nihang Sikhs died allegedly after being tear-gassed during the clash between security forces and protesting farm-

ers on Tuesday.

Nihang Sikh leader Raja Raj Singh said the two horses were named Mor and Gehna, aged five and seven respectively, and belonged to two different groups. While Mor

died on the spot, Gehna died later in the night.

The horses were buried at a barren land in Narela on Wednesday.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 2

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After-effects: Protesters at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghazipur; an eerie calm prevails at the Tikri border protest site on Wednesday, a day after violence erupted in the Capital . ■ SANDEEP SAXENA AND V.V. KRISHNAN



Have stepped up vigil to keep rogue elements away, say farmers

Many protesters at Tikri border blamed 'outsiders' for the violence during the tractor parade; were on designated route and did not want any violence, they said

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

A day after the tractor rally turned violent, protesting farmers at the Tikri border on Wednesday said they had increased vigil at the protest site to prevent "rogue elements" from infiltrating the protest.

With most of the farmers blaming "outsiders" for the violence that erupted during the tractor parade, several volunteers and village pradhans said regular meetings were being held with the protesting farmers to ensure that "anti-social elements" do not enter the protest.

Jaswinder Singh, a farmer

from Punjab's Sangrur district, said: "After Tuesday, volunteers have been strengthened and given specific instructions. As for the general public, we have asked the village heads to speak to people from their respective areas and increase awareness not only about the laws but also about the fact that rogue elements might try to breach the protest again."

Designated routes

"We were on the designated route and did not want any violence. The clashes took place when some found barricades on the designated routes. While we tried to



Protesting farmers keep a vigil at the Tikri border on Wednesday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

convince people to not create an issue, some ended up straying from the procession," said Mr. Singh.

Manpreet Singh, a 23-year-old volunteer at the protest, added: "We have been here since the first day and we en-

sured that all of us follow the designated route. However, because several unknown people ended up infiltrating the protest, violence erupted. We are now being more alert and the village-level leaders are having meetings with people of their villages."

Several other farmers also claimed that during the parade they encountered several locals in private vehicles who allegedly tried to incite the crowd and resorted to violence.

Angrej Singh, a farmer from Haryana's Sirsia district, said: "The route we were told had barricades when the rally started. Despite being on

the correct route the police fired tear gas at us. During the parade we saw several private vehicles with Delhi registrations. The protesting farmers were on their tractors. How did these private vehicles enter the protest and start throwing stones?"

Agitation to continue
Stating that the agitation would continue, the protesting farmers reiterated their demands of the three farm laws being repealed.

Gurpreet Singh, a farmer from Sirsa, said: "The reason we are here is because we are fighting for our rights. We are a peaceful lot and we never

wanted violence. In a protest which has these many thousands of people, at times it becomes difficult to control as there is a high chance of unscrupulous elements infiltrating. However, the farmers who have been fighting for their rights peacefully for so many months now ensured that they stuck to the route specified by authorities."

Movement discredited
Another farmer, Hardeep Singh added: "Everyone knows who created the ruckus, as their photos are quite visible with the Prime Minister and the Home Minister.

By inciting violence and highlighting the same, the entire peaceful movement is being discredited."

Simarjeet Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Sri Muktsar Sahib district, said: "We went till the Peeragarhi Chowk and did not proceed further. We were around 50 of us with five to six tractors. While we maintained decorum and followed routes given to us, some elements ended up creating a ruckus at the Red Fort. The ones who raised flags over there were not the real farmers who have been protesting peacefully for all these months."

A day after violence, langar service at GTB Memorial stopped

Will resume it in a day or two, says AAP leader

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after clashes between security agencies and protesting farmers in the Capital, langar and other services set up by the Delhi government at Guru Teg Bahadur Memorial were stopped and tents were removed. However, the AAP denied it.

On Wednesday, a worker said, "We were given an order to get the tents removed after langar service was

stopped on Tuesday".

AAP leader Raghav Chadha said langar seva was disrupted due to "Tuesday's violence and vandalism".

"It will resume in a day or two. We have not stopped anything," Mr. Chadha said.

Manpreet Singh, a protesting farmer, said: "The Delhi government only helped us for their political gain and now they've pulled it back because of their public perception," he said.

Tear gas allegedly killed two horses during tractor parade

They attained martyrdom: Nihang Sikh leader

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Two horses belonging to the Nihang Sikhs group died allegedly after being teargassed during the clash between security agencies and protesting farmers during tractor parade on Tuesday.

Raja Raj Singh, Nihang Sikh leader, said that the two horses were named Mor and Gehna aged five and seven respectively and belonged to two different groups of Nihangs. While Mor died on the spot, Gehna died later in the night.

Mr. Singh said during the clash with security agencies, they had broken barricades and simultane-

ously, the police was throwing teargas shells in their direction. "Mor couldn't handle and died on the spot at Karnal bypass but Gehna was in pain. It was taken to a gurdwara nearby where it stayed for a few hours in pain and died later," he said, adding that they couldn't find a doctor in a situation they were in.

The horses, which have attained "martyrdom", were buried at a barren land in Narela on Wednesday, they said.

Meanwhile, an 18-year-old boy, Manpreet Singh Khalsa, sustained injuries in his legs when a tear gas shell was thrown in his direction.

For policemen, a near-death experience

Security personnel recount horrors they witnessed at Red Fort

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

For them, Republic Day arrangements had started days in advance and when the parade commenced successfully on Tuesday, they could heave a sigh of relief. But none of the policemen on bandobast duties had imagined what eventually unfolded.

Nursing grave injuries at city hospitals, a bunch of these policemen spoke to *The Hindu* and recounted what they now call "a near-death experience".

"We were on duty at the Red Fort when a large group of protesters forcefully entered the premises and went straight to rampart after breaking open the main gate. We tried to remove them but they turned aggressive and attacked the police personnel with swords and sticks.

Many received serious head injuries and requested protesters to give way to injured policemen. A protester hit me with a sword on head and my helmet broke into two pieces. I became unconscious and my fingers were seriously injured. We all tried to restrain as we were dealing with farmers. If we had used force, there would have been numerous casualties and loss of lives," said inspector P.C. Yadav.

Head constable Narendra of Lahori Gate police station got injuries on back after he was pushed in the trenches by a group of protesters. "My shoulder got dislocated and suffered injuries on my back as I was thrown from a height of around 20 feet. We tried to stop protesters entering the Red Fort but were cornered

and pushed in the trenches. Protesters tried to snatch our weapons but they failed to succeed," said Mr. Narendra.

Constable Mohan Lal of Wazirabad police station, who is undergoing treatment at Trauma Centre at Civil Lines, said he has never seen a mob of this kind in a decade's service. "A protester tried to ran a tractor over him and he jumped to save his life. I got my right hand fractured. We have been ordered to show maximum restraint and not to open fire at any situation and we followed the orders," said Mr. Lal.

Head constable Narendra of Lahori Gate police station got injuries on back after he was pushed in the trenches by a group of protesters. "My shoulder got dislocated and suffered injuries on my back as I was thrown from a height of around 20 feet. We tried to stop protesters entering the Red Fort but were cornered

3 finials at Red Fort damaged

SAURABH TRIVEDI

New Delhi
A day after violence broke out at the Red Fort, a team of Delhi Police, the Archaeological Survey of India and the CISF surveyed to assess the damage caused to the structure on Wednesday.

Over 2,000 armed security personnel have been deployed at the Red Fort to prevent further security breach by protesters.

A senior police officer said that three finials located on top of the domes of the fort were found damaged. The CISF have beefed up security in and around the structure.

The officer said that religious flags furling at the fort were brought down by policemen and confiscated.

"The protesters damaged ticket counter, X-ray scanner and police vehicles parked on the Red Fort premises. Entry of public at the monument is restricted," he added.

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E-Procurement Notice
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NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING Date: 27.01.2021

1. The Government of India has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of Tamil Nadu Sustainable Urban Development Project and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works as detailed below.
2. Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding procedures agreed with the World Bank. Bidding is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the World Bank's Guidelines Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers, January 2011.
3. Bidders from India should, however, be registered with the Government of Tamilnadu or other State Governments/Government of India, or State/Central Government Undertakings. Bidders from India, who are not registered as above, on the date of bidding, can also participate provided they get themselves registered by the time of bid signing, if they become successful bidders. Bidders are advised to note the clauses on eligibility (Section I Clause 4) and minimum qualification criteria (Section III – Evaluation and Qualification Criteria), to qualify for the award of the contract. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 of the World Bank's Guidelines setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
4. The Commissioner invites online bids for the construction of works detailed below in the table. The bidders may submit bids for any or all of the works indicated therein.
5. Bidding documents are available online on www.tntenders.gov.in from 28.01.2021 to 18.02.2021 at free of cost.
6. For submission of the bid, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the Certifying Authorities authorised by Government of India for issuing DSC. Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-procurement in this Project, may obtain the same from the website: www.tntenders.gov.in. A non-refundable fee of Rs. (inclusive of tax) is required to be paid (to be submitted along with other documents listed in paragraph 9 below) before the opening of the bid i.e. before 23.02.2021. The mode of payment shall be in the form of DD drawn in favour of the Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality payable at Pallavapuram from any scheduled Bank.
7. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of the amount specified for the work in the table below, drawn in favour of The Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality. Bid security will have to be in any one of the forms as specified in the bidding document and shall have to be valid for 45 days beyond the validity of the bid. Procedure for submission of bid security is described in the bidding document.
8. Bids must be submitted online on www.tntenders.gov.in on or before 19.02.2021 and will be opened online on 23.02.2021 at 15:00 hours. Any bid or modification to bid (including discount) received outside e-procurement system will not be considered. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids, the concerned bidders shall be informed by the electronic bidding system would not allow any late submission of bids.
9. The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand drafts towards the cost of bid document and registration on e-procurement website furnished with bid document with The Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality, New Colony 3rd Main Road Chompu, Chennai-600 044, Tamilnadu before the opening of the bid i.e. before 23.02.2021 either by registered post/speed post/courier or by hand, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive and will not be opened.
10. A pre-bid meeting will be held on 05.02.2021 at 15:00 hrs. at the office of The Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality to clarify the issues and to answer questions on any matter that may be raised at that stage as per ITB Clause 7.4 of 'Instructions to Bidders' of the bidding document. Bidders are advised to download the bidding document prior to the pre-bid meeting in order for bidders to have a good understanding of the scope of work under this contract for discussion and clarification at the pre-bid meeting.
11. Other details will be provided in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to this bid.

Package No.	Nature of work	Bid Security (Rs.)	Cost of Document (Rs.)	Period of Completion
I	Providing B.T. Surface at Krishnamay Street, Griffith 4th Street, Railway Station Road, Quarry Street, Vel College Road, Ponniamman Koil Street in ward No: 1,6,11,12 (Package No.01)	1,98,800/-	Nil	6 Months
II	Providing B.T. Surface at Sanmathi Main Street, Kara Nagar Main Road, Thennozhi Nagar 5th,6th,8th Street in ward No:13,14 (Package No.02)	1,98,358/-	Nil	6 Months
III	Providing B.T. Surface at Ambal Nagar 4th,15th,16th,17th Street, Pillaiyur Koil Street, Srinivasapuram Main Road, Junction Border Road, Sanmathi Nagar 3rd Street, Krishnamachari Street, Gajalakshmi Nagar, Ramasamy Street, Aganacooru Street, Panaranooru Street in ward No:14,24 (Package No.03)	1,98,122/-	Nil	6 Months
IV	Providing B.T. Surface at Vembulaman Main Road, AGS Colony 1st,5th Cross Street, AGS Colony Main Road and 2nd Street, Balaji Nagar 3rd Street, Om Sakthi Nagar Extn, Ambal Nagar Main Road in ward No:18,20,21,22 (Package No.04)	1,97,342/-	Nil	6 Months
V	Providing B.T. Surface at Kattabomman Street & Cross Street, Purushothaman Nagar 2nd main road, Bashym 2nd Street, Devarajan Street, Kalamagal Street, Krishnamachari Street, Gajalakshmi Nagar, Ramasamy Street, Aganacooru Street, Panaranooru Street in ward No:19,20,21,22 (Package No.05)	1,97,707/-	Nil	6 Months

*Bid security 1% of Estimate cost

DIPR/591/TENDER/2021 Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT LOWER CAUVERY BASIN CIRCLE, THANJAVUR

TENDER DATE EXTENSION NOTICE

The last date for the receipt of tender for the work as called for by The Superintending Engineer, WRD, Lower Cauvery Basin Circle, Thanjavur in NIT.No.8/ADB-CAVSCDP/TN/DSS/LCB. Circle, Thanjavur/Dated.24.12.2020 is hereby extended from 28.01.2021 to 04.02.2021 at 03.00 pm and will be opened on the same date immediately. Bid document is available for sale up to 05.45 pm on 03.02.2021.

Addenda, Corrigenda, Extensions, if any will be notified on the www.tenders.tn.gov.in website only.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, JAN. 28
RISE 07:12 SET 17:58
RISE 17:32 SET 06:54
FRIDAY, JAN. 29
RISE 07:11 SET 17:59
RISE 18:34 SET 07:42
SATURDAY, JAN. 30
RISE 07:11 SET 17:59
RISE 19:38 SET 08:24

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	22	05
Safdarjung	22	05
Palam	19	07

Delhi Palam Today
21°C Shallow fog/mist likely to
during morning with cold wave
condition at some places. Cool
northerly winds may intensify.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
22°C A very cold morning. A
pleasant day would prevail
with mainly clear sky and
gentle winds.

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'Explain breach
of agreement
with police'

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Wednesday wrote a letter to Darshan Pal of Krantikari Kisan Union, seeking explanation as to why legal action should not be taken against him and other members of his organisation for breach of agreement with the police, rampant vandalism and desecration of Red Fort. He has to file a reply within three days.

Chimmo Biswal, DCP (Headquarters) said despite agreeing to mutually decided terms and conditions for the rally, Mr. Pal and other farmer leaders acted irresponsibly on Tuesday. These militant elements occupied the stage and started provocative speeches right from the early hours of Tuesday, he said.

Delhi reports
lowest virus
infections
since April 30

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A total of 6,545 healthcare workers took the COVID-19 vaccination on Wednesday when the city witnessed only 96 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours – lowest since April 30 – taking the total number of cases to 6,34,325, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

There were 12 "minor" adverse events following immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson. This is 80.8% of the daily target of 8,100 healthcare workers, down from 91.5% on Monday.

Meanwhile, only 29,855 COVID-19 tests were done in the past 24 hours. Also, nine more deaths have been reported, taking the total number of deaths to 10,829.

Hospital services
The Delhi government on Wednesday allowed all State-run hospitals to restart all types of surgeries, invasive procedures, IPDs, OPDs, and other medical services, according to an official order. The decision was taken due to a fall in the number of infections.

BJP behind violence on Republic Day, alleges AAP

'It was planned to defame agitation, trap leadership of farmers'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

AAP on Wednesday alleged that the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was behind the violence in Delhi and the clashes at Red Fort on Tuesday.

"We will prove how the BJP and Narendra Modi planned this conspiracy to defame the agitation and to trap the leadership of the farmers," AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chadha said at a press conference.

Showing an alleged photo of Punjabi actor-cum-activist Deep Sidhu with the Prime Minister, at the latter's official residence, Mr. Chadha said, "Deep Sidhu is a plant by the BJP. He infiltrated the agitation to defame it and planned the whole conspiracy. He was there at the Red Fort and car-



Raghav Chadha

"BJP's agent, who works for the BJP's sleeper cell, had infiltrated the agitation and has been the mastermind to end the [farmers'] agitation. The BJP and Modi government are trying to divert attention from the real issue. They don't want to talk about the three farm laws."

FIR against farmers
He also said that police have filed FIR against farmer leaders who were neither present when the violence happened nor was involved with it.

Mr. Chadha also shunned allegations by the BJP that one Amrik Singh, who was seen at Tuesday's protest, belongs to AAP. "With all the responsibilities I want to make it clear that Amrik Singh has no connection with AAP," he said.

ried out the events there."

Mr. Sidhu had been a close associate of BJP Lok Sabha MP from Gurdaspur, Sunny Deol, and had campaigned for him during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However, last year, when he joined the farmers' protest against the farm laws, Mr. Deol distanced himself from him and his activities.

Calling Mr. Sidhu a "BJP agent", the AAP leader said:

AAP has direct hand in R-Day incidents, says BJP

Ministers collaborated with miscreants'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday accused AAP of having "a direct hand" in incidents of violence that happened on Republic Day.

State BJP chief Adesh Gupta displayed pictures of "prominent workers of AAP involved in the violence" at the Red Fort on Tuesday.

Mr. Gupta also claimed that "several Ministers and leaders" from the Delhi government had funded and collaborated with those who were part of the

violence.

"Whatever happened on Republic Day was very embarrassing. On one side, the soldiers of the country were performing excellently on the Rajpath and on the other side, there were scenes of shaming democracy," Mr. Gupta said.

"No one else is making Delhi hostage, but these are the very people who are running the government of Delhi today. The people of AAP joined the miscreants and were trying to instigate them," he also alleged.

Farmers were not guided on planned route'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Wednesday said it was evident that Delhi Police was acting at the behest of the Union Home Ministry, judging from the way the police handled the farmers' tractor rally on Tuesday.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said: "Many of those who participated in the rally were new to Delhi and had no idea about the route. It was the duty of the police to guide them on the route, but instead, they tried to use force."

Officers awarded medals by President

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

2021 on the occasion of Republic Day.

The President's Home Guard and Civil Defence medal for Distinguished Service was awarded to Baljit Singh Solanki, Additional Chief Warden Honorary (North West District), for

(East District) Iqbal Singh Jagdeva.

The President of India awarded medals to the officers for their commendable service rendered in Delhi Civil Defence Corps for the Directorate of Civil Defence Organisation.

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Mamata Banerjee
A new initiative of the State Government

JAGROTO BANGLA

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to rehabilitate the victim families & provide employment to the
young sportspersons from the Jungle Mahal area.

Netaji Indoor Stadium
28 January 2021 | 3.30 pm

Besides, virtual Inauguration of



- Adibasi Bhavan, Rajarhat
- Lepcha Bhavan, Rajarhat
- Akanksa Bhavan, Rajarhat
- Bonorini Market Complex, Bonhoogly & hand over of keys and ownership deeds to the shop owners
- New building of Rampurhat Jitendralal Pouromandir (Town Hall)
- Newly constructed "Mahatoron" at Tarapith

Government of West Bengal

ICA-171(22)/2021



A new housing project
for Government officers & employees
'Akanksha'

at New Town, Rajarhat



will be inaugurated by
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Mamata Banerjee

on 28th January 2021, at Netaji Indoor Stadium at 3.30 pm



A new housing project with ownership to officers and employees of the Government of West Bengal. The government has allotted 5.1 acres of land, free of cost, at New Town's DB Block, where 13 towers with 576 flats have been constructed. The Housing Department has charged only the actual construction cost from the allottees.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

ICA-167(11)/2021

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SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that one boy Namely: Bablu, S/o: Hukum Singh, R/o: Vill-Misripur, P.S. Akrabad, Distt-Aligarh, U.P., Age: About 22 Years, Height: 5'5", Complexion: Fair, Built: Medium, Face: Round, Wearing: Unknwn has been kidnapped since 13.08.2015 from Balaji Tent House, Ashok Nagar, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 899/15, U/s 363 IPC, Dated 05.11.2015, has been lodged at P.S. Jyoti Nagar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the kidnapped boy but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this kidnapped boy please inform the undersigned.

Phone : 011-24368638 and 24368641, Ext. 2101.

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in>

E-Mail ID: cic@cbi.gov.in

Fax: 011-24368639

DP/506/NE/2021

SHO
P.S. Jyoti Nagar, Delhi
Ph: 011-22110186, 22110185

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that a man namely Rajender, S/o Unknown R/o Unknown has been found abandoned at Mukharji Public School, Sarojani Nagar, New Delhi on 09.01.2021. In this regard a DD No. 56-A, dated 09.01.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Sarojani Nagar, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the family and identity of abandoned man but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the abandoned man is as under:

Age: 65 years, **Gender:** Male, **Height:** 5'7", **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Normal, **Wearing:** Black colour jacket and grey colour pajama.

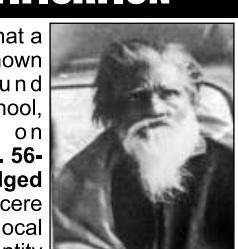
If anyone has any information regarding this abandoned lady, kindly inform SHO/Sarojani Nagar, Delhi.

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

Fax: 011-24368639

DP/483/SW/2021



SHO
P.S. Sarojani Nagar, Delhi.
Ph. No.: 011-26882346, 24671281

SEARCH FOR MISSING WOMAN



General public is hereby informed that this woman namely Lalsa W/o Alok Nirjanji R/o H.No. 461, Gali No. 7, Baba Mohan Ram Colony, Mukund Vihar, Delhi **Age :** 19 years **Height :** 5'4", **Face :** Round, **Complexion :** Sallow, **Build :** Thin, wearing purple colour suit and pink colour jacket, has been missing since 11.01.2021 at about 11:30 P.M. from her house. In this regard DD No. 43-A dated 12.01.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi.

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

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

SHO: P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi
Ph. : 011-27811933,
27811934

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Dy.CME/Works for Chief Workshop Manager, N. E. Railway, Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur- for and on behalf of President of India invites open tender through on line (E-Tendering) for the following work. **S. No. 1. E-Tender Notice No & Name of the work :** IREPS Tender No. 12-GKP-MWS- 2020-21 "Grit blasting cleaning, Primer & Painting of 2072 nos. FIAT Bogie for 02 years". Estimated cost (in Rs.) : Rs. 30458000.00, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : Rs.0.00/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs, Date 26.02.2021, Cost of the Tender forms : 0.00/-, Period of Contract : 24 Months, The details of above tender are also available on Indian Railway website www.ireps.gov.in

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Mechanical Workshop,
CPRO/Mech = 90
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SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the photo), Namely: Pushpendra @ Shekhar, S/o: Vidyaram, R/o: Auchandi Road, Shiv Mandir, Patasse Wali Gali, Devender Ka Farm, Bawana, Delhi, Aged: 20 years, has been missing from his house since 04.01.2021 at 05.00PM. In this regard a case vide DD No. 64/A, Dated 08.01.2021, has been registered at P.S. Bawana, Delhi. His physical description is as under:

Height: 5'6" feet, **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Fair, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue Colour T-Shirt, White Colour Jacket and Lower and Yellow Colour Chappal in feet.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing boy, may inform SHO, Bawana, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in or website : <http://cbi.nic.in> Tel No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641

S.H.O
P.S. Bawana, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27751949, 27756090

DP/727/ON/2021

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BH PUBLIC NOTICE
We are going to destroy the 2017 IPD case records except M.L.C., DEATH, NEONATAL AND PAEDIATRIC cases of both Bhagat Hospital, D-2/48-49, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058 and Bhagat Chandra Hospital, R-Z/F-1/1, Mahavir Enclave, New Delhi-110045 from 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017. Those patients or attendants who are interested to collect the record, may please contact the Reception within one month. After 28th February 2021, the hospital is not responsible to any query for the said period.

Contact Numbers:
011-45102030 / 45254525
BY ORDER OF MANAGEMENT

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public that my clients Shri Brahm Prakash S/o Hari Ram and Smr. Krishna Devi W/o. Shri Brahm Prakash both R/o. WZ-909, Badliy Mohalla Palam Village New Delhi-110045 has discontinued and disbarred their son namely Lalit Solanki from their all movable & immovable property/assets whatsoever/ wherever situated and severe all connections with them and whoever dealing with them shall be doing so at their own risk and my clients shall not be liable for their acts and deeds.

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MANAGING DIRECTOR

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(email:xen.comm.dvn.rsd.shahpurkandi@gmail.com)
TENDER NOTICE (FOR PRESS)
E-Tendering Notice No. 155 Dated 25/01/2021
Request for Proposal (RFP)
(E-Procurement)
PLUGGING OF THE LEAKAGE FROM BULK HEAD SHAFT GATE AND ITS ALLIED COMPONENTS INSIDE IRRIGATION TUNNEL T-1 OF RANJIT SAGAR DAM PROJECT, SHAHPURKANDI
E-Procurement Portal
Date of Issue / Publishing
Date and Time of Pre-Bid Meeting
Last date of submission queries
Start date and Time for uploading of Technical and Financial Proposal
Last date and Time for Uploading of Technical and Financial Proposal
Date and Time of Opening and evaluation of Technical Proposal
Interested parties may view and download the document containing the details free of Cost from the website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/nicgep/app only.>
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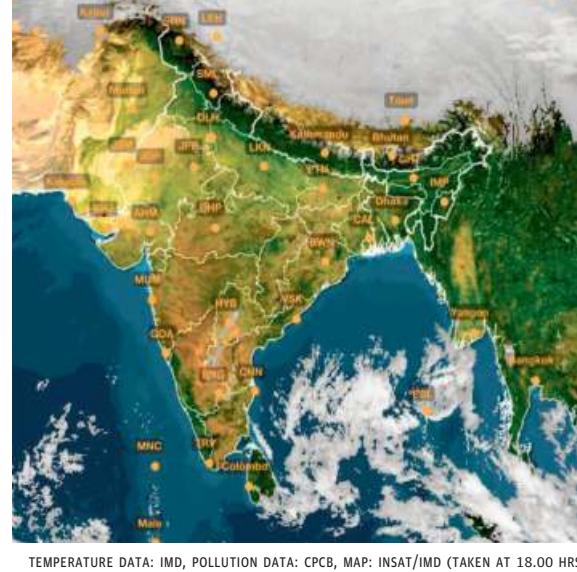
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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Thursday: Dense/very dense fog likely in some/isolated pockets over Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Cold/severe cold wave conditions likely in many/isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Saurashtra & Kutch.

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala	20.2	12.0	Kozhikode	33.8	22.9
Ahmedabad	25.5	11.0	Kurnool	33.1	19.6
Aizawl	22.6	6.7	Lucknow	16.3	6.7
Allahabad	17.3	6.0	Madurai	31.0	19.4
Bengaluru	30.2	15.4	Mangalore	33.5	21.2
Bhopal	21.9	5.8	Mumbai	29.7	15.3
Bhubaneswar	29.0	18.6	Mysuru	32.0	14.0
Chandigarh	22.2	4.9	Patna	16.1	10.4
Chennai	30.0	21.6	Pond Blair	30.6	25.2
Coimbatore	30.6	19.0	Puducherry	30.8	20.0
Dehradun	22.9	6.3	Pune	32.3	14.7
Gangtok	13.3	5.3	Raipur	31.0	16.5
Goa	32.7	20.2	Ranchi	25.9	9.7
Guwahati	25.2	13.2	Shillong	16.6	4.5
Hubballi	31.0	17.0	Shimla	15.6	4.4
Hyderabad	31.7	19.0	Srinagar	2.7	3.2
Imphal	24.3	4.6	Thiruvananthapuram	33.1	20.6
Jaipur	22.9	6.6	Tiruchi	30.7	19.6
Kochi	31.8	22.6	Vijayawada	30.8	21.0
Kohima	17.0	6.2	Visakhapatnam	30.5	23.0
Kolkata	23.5	12.7				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	33	.81	167	.97	.140
Bengaluru	.8	.33	25	103	.92
Chennai	14	28	131	106
Delhi	14	.78	59	382	346
Hyderabad	.2	.57	25	110	.107
Kolkata	40	22	109	.294	.210
Lucknow	.9	.56	90	283	.335
Mumbai	.9	.36	.61	308	.249
Pune151	.47	142	.109
Visakhapatnam	21	.38	30	138	.133

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 362 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Bagalkot, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 30.

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

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

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

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

Abhay Chautala quits as MLA

'Resigned as Centre refused to meet demands of farmers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader Abhay Chautala, a sitting MLA from Ellendar in Haryana, on Wednesday resigned from the Legislative Assembly over the Centre's new farm laws.

Mr. Chautala, the sole MLA in Haryana from his party, submitted his resignation to Speaker Gian Chand Gupta here. The Speaker told journalists that the resignation had been accepted with immediate effect. In his resignation, Mr. Chautala mentioned that he was quitting because demands of farmers, who had been agitating against the Centre's farm laws, had



INLD leader Abhay Chautala

not been accepted, said Mr. Gupta.

The resignation of Mr. Abhay Chautala, who is the uncle of Dushyant Chautala, Deputy Chief Minister in Haryana government, is being seen as an attempt to corner Mr. Dushyant, who has been under pressure from

protesting farmers and the opposition parties to withdraw from coalition with the BJP in the State government by resigning from his post over farm laws.

Mr. Dushyant Chautala of the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) has been defending the new farm laws as "pro-farmer".

After his resignation, Mr. Chautala said the Centre should immediately repeal the three farm laws.

He said farmers had been agitating peacefully, but to discredit the farmers and the ongoing movement, the BJP government had brought antisocial elements that resulted in violence in Delhi on Republic Day.

V.M. Singh of Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan declared that his organisation was withdrawing from the protest after the violence on Tuesday.

"The protest deviated from the agenda on Republic Day. We were not supposed to go to the Red Fort and unfurl a religious flag that is meant to be hoisted on gurdwaras," he told reporters.

He and Rakesh Tikait were among several farmer leaders booked by the Delhi Police on Wednesday for violent clashes in the Capital on Tuesday.

Mr. Singh, the ex-conven-

Don't deny farmers their just demands

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

A day after the incidents of violence on Republic Day in Delhi, the Shiromani Akali Dal has said that it stood against the use of violence in any form by anyone. "We are firmly of the view that Punjab and the country can progress and prosper only through preserving the atmosphere of peace and communal harmony," said

Though the working group of AIKSCC removed him from the position of convener last month, a significant number of farmers present at the Ghazipur border owed allegiance to Mr. Singh.

The BKU leadership held it was Mr. Singh's personal decision and it would not affect the movement but sources in the union said it was going to hurt them both in terms of numbers and ration for the farmers.

Describing it as a "selfish move", Dharmendra Malik, media in-charge of BKU, said it seemed Mr. Singh had come under "the pressure of government".

Separately, SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia demanded an international inquiry into the manner in which a few self-styled leaders in the garb of farmers incited violence in Delhi. These antisocial elements, he said, had played into the hands of agencies that wanted to torpedo the farmers' agitation.

Mr. Majithia said SAD stood with the farmers and would continue to fight for the cause of the farming community.

cold" while performing drills and yoga.

The three, working for a local TV channel, were identified as Mohit Kashyap, Amit Singh and Yaseen Ali. They were not even present at the event, officials said.

Visuals of the event shows pupils performing drills, apparently in summer uniform, and holding toy guns. The FIR accused the journalists of projecting the officials were busy while the children shivered in the cold.

In the complainant, Mr. Dutt said the pupils were made to take off their winter wear only while performing yoga and exercise, and that

after that they wore back their warm clothes. Yoga and physical exercise could not be carried out in winter cloth and required loose clothing, he pointed out.

Kanpur Dehat District Magistrate Dinesh Chandra Singh said, "I am pained that some journalists who were not even present here have circulated such information that the pupils were shivering in the cold."

Yoga cannot be performed wearing a sweater, coat or pant, he said. "These children have performed well," Mr. Singh said at the event, promising action against the scribes.

Three TV reporters booked for 'baseless' news

Yoga, physical exercise cannot be done in winter clothes, says the complainant

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The police in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur Dehat district have booked three television journalists on charges of airing a "baseless" news report of children of a government school "shivering in cold" in knickers and cotton shirts during a drill at a public function on January 24.

The event was part of a government function held at the Eco Park in Kanpur Dehat on the occasion of U.P. Foundation Day. Minister for Technology Ajit Singh Pal, MLAs and officials were present.

The FIR was lodged at the

I am pained that some journalists who were not even present here have circulated such information that the pupils were shivering in the cold

DINESH CHANDRA SINGH
Kanpur Dehat DM

Akbarpur police station on a complaint by Sunil Dutt, District Basic Education Officer. Mr. Dutt accused the three journalists of publishing "baseless and misleading" reports and videos that pupils were made to "shiver in

Banned group threatens to kill oil firm worker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent or ULFA(I) has threatened to kill an abducted Bihar-based man if the oil drilling firm that employed him failed to pay for his release by February 16.

Members of the ULFA(I) had abducted radio operator Ram Kumar and drilling superintendent Pranab Kumar Gogoi from the Kumchaikha hydrocarbon drilling site in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh on December 21, 2020. The two were taken to an unknown location in Myanmar.

Pares Baruah, the outfit's military chief, had reportedly asked the New Delhi-based Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Limited to pay ₹20 crore for Mr. Kumar's release.

The extremist leader said the money demanded was not ransom but compensation for the exploitation of Assam's natural resources.

THE HINDU / TENDER / 2021

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CM YK



GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
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E-Procurement Notice

(One Envelope Bidding Process with e-Procurement)

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Bid No.: e/2021-2024/2020/MD4 Date: 25.01.2021

1. The Government of India has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of Tamil Nadu Sustainable Urban Development Project and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works as detailed below.

2. Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding procedures agreed with the World Bank. Bidding is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the World Bank's Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers, January 2011.

3. Bidders from India should, however, be registered with the Government of Tamilnadu or other State Governments/Government of India, or State/Central Government Undertakings. Bidders from India, who are not registered as above, on the date of bidding, can also participate provided they get themselves registered by the time of contract signing, if they become successful bidders. Bidders are advised to note the clause on eligibility (Section I Clause 4) and minimum qualification criteria (Section III – Evaluation and Qualification Criteria), to qualify for the award of the bid. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 of the World Bank's Guidelines setting forth the Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

4. The Commissioner invites online bids for the construction of works detailed below in the table. The bidders may submit bids for any or all of the works indicated in the table.

5. Bidding documents are available online on www.intenders.gov.in from 27.01.2021 to 17.02.2021 at free of cost.

6. For submission of the bid, the bidder is required



A wrong turn

Farmers must suspend agitation and return to talks without their maximalist approach

The chaos and mindless violence unleashed on the national capital by a section of protesting farmers on Republic Day were abhorrent. It is plausible that agents provocateurs infiltrated the farmers' march but that does not absolve the leaders of responsibility. The chances of fatigued agitators breaking loose were high as were the possibilities of vested interests triggering violence. The leaders of the agitation should have taken note of the divergence in the rank and the rejection by certain recalcitrant groups of the routes for the march they had agreed with the Delhi police. True, no popular mobilisation can be held hostage to the threat of violent deviation by a handful, but there is judgement to be made at each turn. The leadership, itself an association of disparate individuals and organisations, should have been more realistic about its capacity to manage such a gathering. In the end, unruly elements took over the streets of Delhi. They broke barricades, thrashed, and tried to mow down police personnel. The police resorted to lathi charge and used tear gas, but, given the circumstances, showed restraint. More than 300 personnel were injured, at least 40 of them seriously. All this, and the march itself, was avoidable.

The Delhi police must investigate and hold to account individuals and groups responsible for the violence. Farmer leaders have the unenviable task of cooperating with the police in the investigation. False friends and real enemies of the agitators have painted them with a communal brush. Bringing the culprits to book is essential not only to salvage the reputation of an agitation that had remained largely peaceful for nearly two months but also to nip in the bud a dangerous communal slant before it slips out of control. The Centre has said it would continue to engage the protesters in negotiations. The offer of the government to keep in abeyance for up to 18 months the three controversial farm laws that are at the heart of the current face-off remains an opportunity for the leaders to seek a negotiated settlement. The agitators want the laws to go lock, stock, and barrel but their maximalist approach is unhelpful. They must discontinue the protest for now and disperse, while reserving the option of restarting it later. They should consider options short of a complete repeal of the laws. The Centre must consider more concessions, including the suspension of the laws until a broader agreement can be arrived at. It must make more efforts to allay the fears of those most affected by these reforms. The Centre's imperious refusal to engage with political parties and State governments on critical questions of agriculture reforms has come back to haunt it. The resolution to this impasse can come only by involving them all.

Troubling trends

Inequality is widening across the world, and India is no exception

The world economy is slowly recovering from the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but that is only partial solace. The recovery is uneven among countries, and within countries, but the emerging universal truth is that economic inequality is rising sharply in all countries. A new report by Oxfam has revealed that the 1,000 richest people worldwide recovered their losses from the pandemic within nine months as opposed to the world's poorest who might take a decade to limp back to their pre-pandemic standing. Inequality was alarmingly high and destabilising social and political order in much of the world even before the pandemic struck. It is set to further aggravate, fear 295 economists from 79 countries, commissioned by Oxfam. Inequality in India has risen to levels last seen when it was colonised. The additional wealth acquired by India's 100 billionaires since March when the lockdown was imposed is enough to give every one of the 138 million poorest ₹94,045, according to the report. An unskilled worker in India would take three years to earn what the country's richest person earned in one second last year, the report calculates. The worsening inequality in income and opportunities impacts some sections disproportionately due to discrimination based on gender, caste and other factors. The poorer people were worst affected by the disease itself.

The focus on growth had led politicians and policy makers to accept rising inequality as inevitable for decades. Inequality came to be seen as a benign outcome of economic growth that led to reduction of absolute poverty. Concerns about inequality could also be easily dismissed as being informed by socialism. Any criticism of capitalism was viewed with scepticism in the mainstream of development debates, until the crisis of capitalism could no longer be ignored. The literature on capitalism and its linkage with democracy is now growing fast. There is now universal agreement among economists that the distribution of new wealth between capital and labour has become so one-sided that workers are constantly being pushed to penury while the rich are getting richer. This has social and political consequences as upheavals in democratic societies around the world show. The environmental costs of a development model that hinges on higher and higher growth are also obvious. On the one hand, there is an acknowledgment of the crisis among capitalist moguls. The theme of the World Economic Forum at Davos this week is 'the Great Reset' which it says is a "commitment to jointly and urgently build the foundations of our economic and social system for a more fair, sustainable and resilient future". On the other, measures that favour capital at the cost of labour continue; for instance, changes in labour laws in several States during the pandemic. Lip service is not enough to tackle inequality.

Revise the text of the Budget speech

The Finance Minister must move to an expansionary fiscal stance that prioritises job creation, public service provision



JAYATI GHOSH

the coming year. Meanwhile, the media will wait breathlessly for what they see as the crucial numbers: the ratio of fiscal deficit to GDP in the current year, and in the Budget estimates.

Largely formal sector-centric Some of this will be only partly correct, much of it will be misleading, and some will be downright wrong. It is certainly true that COVID-19 infections are on the decline in India – as they are in the Asian region generally, including in countries that did not implement the extreme lockdown that India experienced. The "revival" of the economy that is being much touted is from the complete collapse of the first quarter of the current fiscal year, and is largely confined to the formal sector, while most informal activities are still facing crisis. The "recovery" of employment is because of the absence of social security for the vast bulk of Indian workers, which forces them to seek out any income-generating opportunities, simply to survive. Wage incomes are significantly lower than before the lockdown. The stock market reaching stratospheric heights is really more of an indication of how divorced it has become from the real economy and its prospects. The past year has witnessed significant destruction of livelihoods and increases in material distress, poverty and hunger. To talk of economic recovery without factoring these in is untenable.

Now, consider the numbers that will be presented. We know from past Budgets, especially with this government, that the numbers for revenues and spending have been inaccurate, sometimes off by around ₹1,50,000 crore as in Budget 2019-20. This is not only because the actual data are available only for the first nine months. It is



also because the Budget numbers are themselves a fudge, with excessively optimistic projections for revenue generation in the remainder of the year and reducing the actual expenditures of the central government by pushing items "off-budget".

Expenditure estimates

The Finance Minister never seems to learn from her own experience of actual revenues being much less than the Budget projections: each year, this mistake is repeated and even amplified. The expenditure estimates are even more disingenuous, because they underestimate the actual expenditures that should be counted.

This concern has been repeatedly brought up by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). A CAG report in 2018 identified at least three methods of reducing the stated expenditure: not paying for the full fertilizer subsidy by using "special banking arrangements"; not paying the central government's dues to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) for the food subsidy, and forcing the FCI to borrow from the market; using other special purpose vehicles to pay for infrastructure investment, like the Long Term Irrigation Fund. In 2017-18, just those three items amounted to ₹1,29,446 crore, or 1.8% of GDP. To these could be added other strategies

the central government uses to "reduce" its own spending, like not paying States their rightful dues under the Goods and Services Tax Compensation Fund, or not paying what State governments have already spent on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which is legally mandated.

These strategies are problematic not only because they are non-transparent: they also force other agencies (like State governments and public sector enterprises) to go in for expensive commercial borrowing that unnecessarily adds to their future interest costs. But what all this does underline is that the numbers presented in the Budget are not to be taken seriously, either for current year projections, or for the next year's estimates. This also effectively means that Parliament is reduced to approving a piece of fiction.

CGA data and spending

So what do we have to go by, to gauge the real state of the government's finances? The data from the Controller General of Accounts provide the most reliable information. They tell a rather disturbing story. Between April and November 2020, revenues of the central government predictably collapsed, by around 18%, or ₹181,372 crore, compared to the same period of the previous year. But despite that, expenditures should have gone up, because the lockdown-induced collapse in economic activity meant that public spending would be the only thing keeping the economy afloat.

Indeed, that is what the government promised: in three rounds of stimulus packages, it claimed to inject amounts of ₹1.7-lakh crore in March, ₹20-lakh crore in May and then ₹2.65-lakh crore in November. But it turns out that very little

of these apparently large amounts involved actual commitments of more public spending. And the public accounts show that total spending of the central government increased by only ₹86,301 crore. That was only a 4.6% increase – not even enough to keep pace with inflation. In other words, the central government reduced its real spending over the period of the pandemic and economic crisis!

This fiscal stance obviously adds to the material suffering of the people and deprives them of basic goods and essential public services at a time of much greater need. But it is also a macroeconomically stupid strategy, because it adds to contractionary tendencies in the economy, and prolongs the severe demand recession facing millions of small and informal enterprises and hundreds of millions of self-employed workers.

As we saw after demonetisation, policies that destroy informal economic activities set in train processes of economic contraction that eventually come to bite formal enterprises as well. A similar process is under way in India now. Those who celebrate the higher profits of some large corporate houses or the gains in the stock market will find out soon enough that these are ephemeral if the vast bulk of the economy continues to stagnate or decline. Only if the Finance Minister realises this and changes course, moving to a more expansionary fiscal stance that prioritises employment generation and public service provision, would the Budget speech this year be worth listening to.

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Keep the wheels of economic recovery turning

The fiscal stimulus needs to continue in FY 2021-22 to speed up India's economic healing



EMMANUEL THOMAS &
LEKHA CHAKRABORTY

The forthcoming Economic Survey will tell us about the state of the economy based on available empirical evidence. The first advance estimates of national income published on January 7 project a contraction of 7.7% for real GDP. The Q2 GDP estimates published by the National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) on November 27 had suggested an economic recovery in India. An improvement in the rate of contraction from 23.9% in Q1 to 7.5% in Q2 was seen as the beginning of a sustained recovery. The Ministry of Finance, in its Monthly Economic Review highlighted it as signifying a 'V' shaped recovery and as a reflection of the resilience and robustness of the Indian economy. The Monetary Policy Statement of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released on December 4, 2020 also projects positive growth in the remaining quarters of the financial year. A low fatality rate and rolling out of the vaccination programme have added to the optimism.

Growth rate of the economy had collapsed from 8.2% in Q4 of 2017-18 to a mere 3.1% in Q4 of 2019-20, sliding continuously for eight quarters. The policy stance adopted by the Union government

against this backdrop was premised on the hope that private corporate investment will pick up momentum sooner than later, putting the economy back in the trajectory traced in the first decade of the new millennium. The RBI did the heavy lifting through five consecutive lowering of repo rate, adding to a total of 135 basis points from February to October 2019 along with liquidity infusion programmes. However, monetary-fiscal linkages are crucial to catalyse the demand.

Revise monetary framework While being cautious of inflation, the RBI has decided to continue the accommodative stance in its latest monetary policy to support growth. It has retained *status quo* in the policy rate of repo at 4%. The CPI inflation after crossing 7% has cooled off to 4.6% in December. Still, the real interest rates remain very low. The RBI expects inflation to ease to the specified band. The efficacy of the new monetary framework (NMF) – the agreement between the RBI and Government of India in February 2016 to adopt inflation targeting in India – will be reviewed in March 2021, and we flag the need for revising the framework.

The RBI is continuing its liquidity infusion programmes including the on-tap Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTRO). This programme announced on October 9, 2020 for five stressed sectors has been extended to 26 stressed sectors notified under the Emergency Credit Line Guaranteed Scheme (ECLGS 2.0). The RBI is also continuing its 'operation twist' – the



elongation of debt maturity structure through simultaneous buying of long-term bonds and selling of short-term bonds – with Open Market Operations (OMO) of ₹10,000 crore scheduled for December 17, 2020.

Nevertheless, the RBI Governor has rightly pointed out that the signs of recovery are far from being broad-based and are dependent on sustained policy support. He has also pointed out that it is a no-brainer that Union Budget 2021-22 will be pro-growth.

Stimulus by the state's moves

The economies which rebounded fast, post the global financial crisis, were the ones which resorted to significant fiscal stimulus. We argue for fiscal stimulus not based on "business cycle" arguments to trigger animal spirits, but from the perspective of much needed targeted state interventions in public health, education, agriculture and physical infrastructure, and to redress widening inequalities in the time of the novel coronavirus pandemic. In a context where private final consumption expenditure is sluggish, contracting 26.7% and 11% in Q1 and Q2, respectively, a "fiscal dominance" is expected in

India for sustained economic recovery. However, India cannot afford fiscal stimulus at the rates of advanced economies, due to a lack of fiscal space. The pandemic has hit many crucial sectors and has left millions jobless. It is in this context that the Finance Minister has promised a "never before like budget" on February 1, 2021.

The Biden Plan of \$1.9 trillion will make the pandemic response of the United States a massive \$5.2 trillion one. Compare this with the \$800 billion worth U.S. fiscal response to the global financial crisis. According to the International Monetary Fund's Fiscal Monitor Database of Country Fiscal Measures, the fiscal stimulus for India is 1.8% of GDP. The corresponding figures are: for Brazil 8.3%, Russia 2.4%, China 4.6%, and South Africa 5.3%. The IMF, in its Fiscal Monitor, highlights the need to scale up public investment to ensure successful reopening, boost growth and prepare economies for the future. Subdued interest rates make this case even stronger.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her interview on December 8, 2020 to Bloomberg TV, indicated that the "fiscal deficit fears will not derail government spending". This announcement is welcome, given the much needed fiscal package for enhancing the public health infrastructure and the COVID-19 vaccine roll out, to address the falling effective enrolment rates due to the digital divide, the employment and livelihood crises and the need for strengthening social and physical infrastructure spending.

Plummeting private corporate

investment in India is a matter of concern. A co-authored paper by Hrishikesh Vinod, Honey Karun and Lekha Chakraborty in *The Handbook of Statistics titled "Financial, macro and micro econometrics using R"* (bit.ly/3oNf6sn) using maximum entropy ensembles time series methodology showed that public infrastructure investment is the prime determinant of private corporate investment in India. The fear of financial crowding out emanating from high fiscal deficit is misplaced in the context of India.

Flexible fiscal rules

The path of economic recovery will be determined by the degree of containment of the pandemic and the sustained macroeconomic policies. Any abrupt withdrawal of ongoing economic policy support, both by the monetary and fiscal authorities, will be detrimental to growth in times of the pandemic. The fiscal rules at the national and subnational government levels need to be made flexible to enhance the fiscal space to deal with the extraordinary situation. The public debt deficit dynamics in India, therefore, needs a careful calibration in the forthcoming Budget 2021-22.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Rally and showdown The incidents and chaos in Delhi are a blot and as usual, intelligence gathering seems to have been very poor. The central government's constant line, that the *kisan* movement has been hijacked by 'anti-national elements', seems to have been proven right. After what has happened, all right thinking farmers should now return home without delay, leaving only a few leaders to conduct discussions. It is time, balanced spokespersons analyse the three Farm Acts, clause by clause, and point out where it can hurt farmers.

G. VENKATARAMAN,
Mumbai

■ The eruption of violence and farmers going berserk are reprehensible and have in no uncertain terms tarnished the farmers. The blame falls on the shoulders of the leaders who were mistaken to assume that there would be self-discipline and civilised behaviour. The Red Fort incident reminds us of the egregious Babri Masjid demolition.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

■ It is a national shame that the Republic Day celebrations this year also witnessed violence. While the Delhi Police appreciably displayed maximum restraint despite extreme provocations, the acts by the

farmers say it all. Such destruction points to a larger conspiracy which calls for holding a time-bound judicial inquiry.

VINAYAK G.,
Bengaluru

■ The violence and vandalism unleashed by the farmers' associations could have been avoided had the judiciary denied permission to hold the rally or directed the farmers to defer it. The central government has shown magnanimity by holding parleys for several rounds, and even now saying that it is ready to continue talks (Page 1, January 27). By swarming Red Fort and unleashing aggressive behaviour on the Delhi

police, the farmers' organisations and their leaders have committed an act of sacrilege. Those responsible have lost the moral authority to represent the real farmers.

K. CHELLPAN,
Chennai

■ I did expect the farmers' rally to end in a clash with the authorities – tensions on both sides were palpable. The ruling dispensation would undoubtedly use these events to discredit the legitimate grievances of farmers. It is thus incumbent upon the media to sift through the facts and present a clear picture.

DEEPAK DENNY,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ The Prime Minister should be advised to step in and also get the Minister for Agriculture to issue a full-fledged statement on the points that the farmers want to be addressed. The silver lining is that the festivities connected with the main Republic Day celebrations were not marred.

MANI NATARAJAN,
Chennai

M-sand policy

The recent decision of the Rajasthan government to implement an M-sand policy is bound to usher in many changes. The effects of illegal mining lead to serious environmental problems in both marine habitats and river courses. Those of us in

Rajasthan know the importance of *bajri* in construction. Other States need to emulate the Rajasthan example.

TRILOK SINGH,
Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Old vehicles

In order to reduce pollution, the suggestion to levy a tax on old vehicles can be modified. In many cases, these are vehicles owned by retired and senior citizens, and sparingly used. It will not be fair to tax them based on the vehicle age. The levy of tax can be based on the actual usage, in kilometres.

T.A. RAJAGOPALAN,
Chennai



Emphasising self-reliance in science

The draft science policy is a rambling document, but it contains nuggets of scientific vision and information



C.P. RAJENDRAN

On March 4, 1958, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, for the first time in the history of independent India, Parliament passed a resolution on science policy. The resolution stated: "Science... has provided new tools of thought and has extended man's mental horizon. It has thus influenced even the basic values of life, and given to civilization a new vitality and a new dynamism." The resolution said the aim of the scientific policy was, among other things, to "encourage individual initiative for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, and for the discovery of new knowledge, in an atmosphere of academic freedom." In effect, this resolution proved to be a springboard for the development of the country's scientific infrastructure. Since that resolution, successive governments issued policy statements with varying emphasis on chosen objectives and goals, often echoing the existing national and global imperatives and the ruling dispensation's ideology.

The 2020 draft policy
India's Department of Science and Technology recently released a draft of the fifth Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy. This 62-page-long document presents the objectives and goals of our new science policy. The public is expected to provide feedback on this document before it gets finalised. But the problem with the document is that it is rambling and full of jargon and clichés, making the task of separating the grain from the chaff a major exercise in itself.

The new policy envisages technological self-reliance and aims to position India among the top three scientific superpowers. Though the names of the other two nations are not mentioned, it must be understood that they are the U.S. and China. For that to happen, the draft policy says, we need to attract our best minds to remain in India by developing a "people-centric" science, technology, and innovation "ecosystem". It states that the private sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Expenditure



on Research and Development should be doubled every five years. The 2013 policy had similar aims. The 2020 draft policy fails to discuss what we have achieved on these fronts since then.

Why does our R&D investment in science continue to hover between 0.5% and 0.6% of the GDP? Raising it to 2% of the GDP has been a national goal for a while. Despite strong recommendations in the past by several scientific bodies and leading scientists and policymakers, we are still well short of that goal. The 2020 draft policy blames this on "inadequate private sector investment" and adds that "a robust cohesive financial landscape remains at the core of creating an STI-driven Atmanirbhar Bharat." It looks as if the government is trying to shift the responsibility of financing R&D to different agencies such as the States, private enterprises, and foreign multinational companies. But it is doubtful if the various funding models that are presented are workable or practical, especially during a pandemic.

The policymakers who drafted this report should have gone back to the self-financing revenue model proposed in the Dehradun Declaration for the CSIR labs back in 2015 and critically evaluated its success rate. Common sense informs us that the private sector cannot be expected to pay for basic research. This is because the return on investment in basic research takes too long from a private sector perspective. Only the government can have long-term interest to support such research. Participation of the private sector in basic science has not happened even in the U.S. The fact is that basic science research in India is suffering from the lack of adequate funding despite grand proclamations. Even elite insti-

tutes like the Indian Institutes of Technology are finding it difficult to run their laboratories on a day-to-day basis because of paucity of funds.

The draft policy visualises "a decentralized institutional mechanism balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches, focusing on administrative and financial management, research governance, data and regulatory frameworks and system interconnectedness, for a robust STI Governance". This is easier said than done. This intention is in fact defeated in the document itself, where several new authorities, observatories and centres have been proposed, which may end up feeding up the already fattened bureaucracy in science administration. Decentralisation of administrative architecture is essential, but we need to explore the practical option of providing more autonomy to research and academic centres for financial management.

Some points are welcome. These include the fact that policymakers are considering alternative mechanisms of governance of the financial landscape; that they realise the administrative burdens of researchers and the problem of journal paywalls; and promise to explore international best practices of grant management.

It was reported in 2019 that more than 2,400 students dropped out from the 23 IITs in just two years, with over half of them belonging to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Classes. The number of suicides of students is also on the increase in the IITs. Caste discrimination could be one of the reasons for these tendencies. As a part of inculcating an inclusive culture in academia, the document promises to tackle discriminations "based on gender, caste, religion, geography, language, disability and

other exclusions and inequalities". It mentions more representation of women and the LGBTQ community, but is silent on how we are to achieve their proportionate representation.

Science and society

In the chapter 'Science Communication and Public Engagement', concerns on the disconnect between science and society are valid. But the fact is that hyper-nationalism is not conducive to the propagation of evidence-based science and a rational outlook. It is also heartening to see that the document harks back to our constitutional obligation to "develop a scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform." But it is silent on how this can be achieved when pseudoscience is deliberately propagated in the name of traditional science with the help of some arms of the government. A recent instance is the proposal by the Rashtriya Kshemayayog to conduct a national examination under the garb of 'cow science'.

The document does not mention how to stem the rot within, although it speaks extensively about science communication and scientific temperament. Our belief systems, values, and attitudes have an impact on the quality of research. That partly explains why Indians who have chosen to work in labs abroad are able to make path-breaking discoveries. The ruling dispensation has a moral obligation to facilitate an environment that encourages a mindset that constantly challenges conventional wisdom as well as open-minded inquiry among the students. Only a dissenting mind can think out of the box.

The document contains nuggets of modern scientific vision and information. But its digressive style impacts the reader's attention. The document should prioritise important issues and amplify first the problems which have cultural and administrative dimensions. With the advent of new disruptive technologies, global competitiveness will be increasingly determined by the quality of science and technology, which in turn will depend on raising the standard of Indian research/education centres and on the volume of R&D spending. India has no time to waste.

C.P. Rajendran is an adjunct professor in the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. Views expressed are personal

The best shot against COVID

Our choice of vaccine has to be dependent on whether the data have been gathered with scientific rigour



UPENDRA KAUL & MEERA SHAH

This is slated to be the year of minimising the impact of COVID-19. While mutants of the virus pose a new threat, the only viable strategy to curb COVID-19 has been to develop vaccines. The fast-paced scientific work done to develop the vaccines is unparalleled. Within a year of COVID-19 being identified, several vaccines have become available. What do we know about these vaccines?

Types of vaccines

The result of the trial of Pfizer and BioNTech's mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine was submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December 2020. It showed 95% efficacy in adults ages over 65. However, the infrastructure for the delivery and storage of the vaccine under fastidious requirements of -70°C is not easy to achieve. Equally, this vaccine has come under a cloud, with 29 deaths of elderly people with pre-existing illnesses reported in Norway following administration of 42,000 doses.

Moderna using mRNA-based vaccines and Johnson & Johnson using DNA-based vaccines are also being developed in the U.S. These vaccines are unlikely to come soon to India because of cost and storage requirements.

The first heterologous COVID-19 vaccine consisting of two components has been used in Russia with good initial reports. However, this adenovirus-based vector vaccine, Sputnik V, was released after Phase 2 studies in a very small number of volunteers and the protocols were not published. Other countries to get a nod for its use are Serbia, Argentina, Bolivia, Algeria, and Palestine. It has reportedly been administered in more than a million people in several countries without safety concerns. In India, Dr Reddy's Laboratories is using Sputnik vaccine in a placebo-controlled Phase 3 trial with 1,500 volunteers. The results are expected by mid-2021.

The chimpanzee adenoviral vector vaccine by Oxford University-AstraZeneca is the only vaccine in India which has completed Phase 3 trial. The large placebo-controlled trial of 23,848 volunteers in the U.K. and Brazil has shown an acceptable safety profile along with increased antibody response by homologous boosting. The Drugs Controller General of India gave approval for its use in India on January 2 and it is being rolled out under the name Covishield. The Serum Institute of India in collaboration with AstraZeneca

has produced a stockpile of 50 million Covishield vaccines which has been sent to all the States. This vaccine can be stored and transported easily.

Then we have the adenovirus vector-based Covaxin by Bharat Biotech, which is in Phase 3 trial with a goal of 26,000 volunteers. The results are expected only after three months or so. Yet this vaccine has been rolled out in India for restricted use in clinical trial mode which lacks clarity.

The States and priority group beneficiaries don't have the option to choose whether they receive Covaxin or Covishield. Consequently, uptake amongst health professionals has significantly reduced. As per established protocols and ethical norms, the immunogenicity and safety data from Phase 1 and 2 trials are not enough for approving the clinical use of a vaccine. Without Phase 3 trial data, confidence in the safety and effectiveness of Covaxin will remain questionable. It is noteworthy that due to inadequate immune response of two vaccines using inactivated virus, Merck & Co in the U.S. abandoned its trials.

Zydus Cadila is developing two COVID-19 vaccines. The company's novel DNA-based vaccine will complete Phase 3 studies by mid-March before applying for approval. It is appropriate for the company to wait until Phase 3 results are available.

In addition to these, there are at least two more vaccines in various stages of development in India. Biological E is working on a protein-based vaccine in collaboration with the Baylor College of Medicine, U.S. The company is conducting Phase 1 trial. Phase 2 trial may begin in March. Gennova's vaccine is India's first mRNA COVID-19 vaccine that can be stored at 2°C-8°C. Phase 2 trial of this vaccine is likely in March.

How do we choose a vaccine?

Our choice of the vaccine has to be dependent on whether the data have been gathered with scientific rigour. Each trial should involve an adequate number of volunteers; studies need to have a control or placebo arm; protocols of the studies should be in the public domain and in peer-reviewed scientific journals; and Phase 3 trials should be completed with an adequate number of volunteers and observation periods of adequate length with the results reviewed by experts.

Trial outcomes need to be scientifically validated and should not be influenced by political pressure and deadlines. The aim must be to effectively and safely protect the population and make COVID-19 innocuous.

Upendra Kaul is Chairman Cardiology and Dean Academics and Research, Batra Hospital, New Delhi; and Meera Shah works in Public Health in rural India

More vaccines than takers

Exporting limited quantities of Covishield is wise as India is unlikely to meet its vaccination target by July

R. PRASAD

Ten days after the massive COVID-19 vaccination drive began in India to immunise 300 million high-risk individuals first, only over 1.95 million people were vaccinated as of January 25. It is true that while the U.S. took 10 days to breach the one-million mark and the U.K. took 18, India took only six days. The number of people vaccinated each day has been slowly but steadily increasing since day one – from over 1.91 lakh on January 16 to about 3.35 lakh on January 25.

Yet, seen in the larger context, the number of individuals vaccinated so far pales in comparison to the number of children vaccinated each year under the universal immunisation programme. About 25 million children are born each year in India. Millions of children are immunised against 10 vaccine-preventable diseases within the first year of life across the country.

By end-December 2020, Serum Institute of India (SII) had already manufactured about 50 million doses of Covishield. Adar Poonawalla, Chief Executive Officer of SII, had told NDTV that the company manufactures 2.4 million doses each day. On January 11, SII signed an agreement with the Indian government to supply 11 million doses for local use.

A long way to go
At the current rate of 2 lakh jabs per day, it would take about eight years to immunise the target population of 300 million people with two doses of the vaccine. This is provided that COVID-19 vaccination is carried out on all seven days of the week. However, as the Health Ministry has recommended that COVID-19 vaccination should not affect routine immunisation and other health services, most States have been vaccinating only on four days a week. The most populous State, Uttar Pradesh, vaccinates only twice a week.

A single session can vaccinate only 100 people. Until January 25, 35,785 sessions had been held altogether, with the maximum number of sessions held on a given day touching 6,230 on January 21. India plans to vaccinate the target 300 million peo-

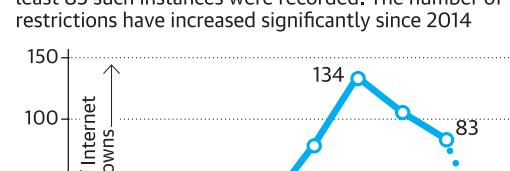


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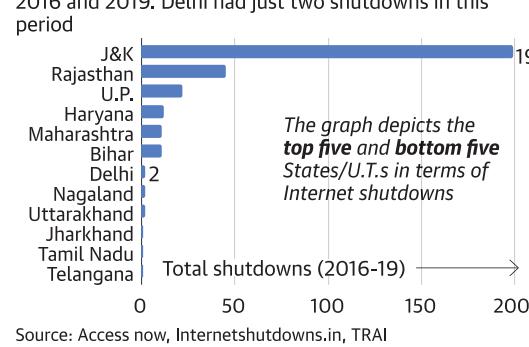
Shutdown culture

During the farmers' protest on January 26, Internet services were suspended in specific localities of the National Capital Region, including Delhi's Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri. Such clampdowns are rare in the region, with only two documented shutdowns in the last five years. However, J&K, where Internet services were again snapped on January 26, has borne the brunt of such blackouts in the past. Even when Internet services were available, people in J&K had the slowest Internet speed in the country. In 2019, 121 Internet shutdowns were recorded in India, 10 times more than the second-highest number recorded in Venezuela. By The Hindu Data Team

1. POST 2014 | In the first month of 2021, four instances of Internet shutdowns have already been recorded in India, of which three were imposed on Tuesday and Wednesday. In 2020, despite lockdown restrictions, at least 83 such instances were recorded. The number of restrictions have increased significantly since 2014



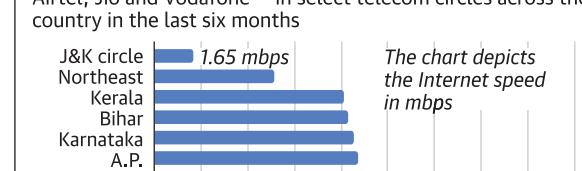
2. MOST AFFECTED REGION | Jammu and Kashmir experienced nearly 200 Internet shutdowns between 2016 and 2019. Delhi had just two shutdowns in this period



The graph depicts the top five and bottom five States/U.T.s in terms of Internet shutdowns

Source: Access now, Internetshutdowns.in, TRAI

3. SLOW SPEED | Besides constant Internet disruptions, the J&K telecom circle also had the slowest average Internet download speed in the last six months. The chart depicts the average mobile Internet download speed of three providers – Airtel, Jio and Vodafone – in select telecom circles across the country in the last six months



The chart depicts the Internet speed in mbps

4. MOST SHUTDOWNS IN THE WORLD | Of the 213 Internet shutdowns recorded in 2019, 56% occurred in India



With 12 shutdowns, Venezuela was a distant second on the list

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 28, 1971

Problem of pests

World agricultural scientists were to-day [January 27] called upon to unleash a "chemical and biological warfare" to control the onslaught of pests and plant diseases that has come in the wake of the high-yielding varieties. The Union Food and Agriculture Minister, Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, who gave this call at the inauguration of the second international symposium on plant pathology here [New Delhi], said pathogens from the time of planting seed through harvest to the consumption stage took away between 10 to 20 per cent of the produce and had created a "dent" in the world's granaries. He asked plant pathologists to reorient their research programmes and eliminate the ravages of diseases that affected plants. Mr. Ahmed said last year's devastating epidemic of leaf blight in the United States highlighted the importance of co-operative endeavour of plant pathologists and plant breeders in crop improvement. The eight-day symposium, organised to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Indian Phytopathological Society, is being attended by 500 Indian scientists and more than 60 top agricultural scientists from 19 countries. Mr. A. H. Boerma, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, said the tremendous promise of the high-yielding varieties carried with it a host of problems, creating greater hazards to plants, particularly in India.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 28, 1921

Scavengers' strike

Mr. G. Harisarvathama Rao, President of the Scavengers' Union, writes as follows: Consequent on the requisition by the municipal authorities, it appears a large number of men gathered at the Municipal Corporation premises the day before yesterday from the several depots. Influenced by a few men amongst themselves, some of them presented a demand, that men should be paid at Rupee one a day, and women eight annas, as well as a rice allowance of Rs.4 a month. The authorities and the men could not agree

FROM PAGE ONE

Govt. conspiracy led to violence, say farmers

Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava said the unions had not followed the terms laid down for the parades, alleging that the farmer leaders made inflammatory speeches and were involved in the violence that left 394 personnel injured. He added that a Special Investigation Team was being set up which will question all culprits, including farm unions.

Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav asked how the police had not been able to control protesters before they entered a national monument. "The question must be asked – who let them in, who opened the gate? We must remember that the Red Fort is guarded not just by the police but by the armed forces as well," said Mr. Yadav, who was also named in the FIR, although he has not been part of the

Cinemas allowed to seat more people

"It is, therefore, emphasised that to fully overcome the pandemic, there is need to maintain caution and to strictly follow the prescribed containment strategy focused on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines/SOPs issued by MHA and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW)," the order said.

"Cinema halls and theatres have already been permitted upto 50% of seating capacity. Now they will be permitted to operate at higher seating capacity, for which a revised SOP will be issued by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Swimming pools have already been permitted for use of sportspersons. Now swim-

ming pools will be permitted for use of all, for which a revised SOP will be issued by Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MoYAS&S)," it said.

"There shall be no restriction on inter-State and intra-State movement of persons and goods including those for cross land-border trade under Treaties with neighbouring countries. No separate permission/ approval/ e-permit will be required for such movements," the order reiterated.

The MHA said that "containment zones, if required, shall be carefully demarcated by the district authorities at the micro level, taking into consideration guidelines prescribed by MoHFW in this regard."

SC stays Bombay HC order in groping case

"The accused was sentenced to the minimum three years' imprisonment under Section 8 of the POCSO Act. That was set aside by the High Court and his sentence was reduced to one year under Section 354 (assault of a woman to outrage her modesty) of the Indian Penal Code... This is very disturbing," Mr. Venugopal submitted. "Mr. Venugopal, do you remember how we took cognisance when the Attorney-General mentioned about a judge ordering a public hanging?" the Chief Justice asked Mr. Venugopal, who said he did.

Issues notice
The Bench issued notice to the accused and to the State of Maharashtra after registering a case on the basis of Mr. Venugopal's mentioning.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights had asked the State government to urgently ap-

peal the High Court judgment.

Meanwhile, several organisations, including the Youth Bar Association of India, represented by advocate Manju Jetley, also moved the top court against the High Court judgment.

The petitioners said they were "badly perturbed" to note that the January 19 verdict contained several observations about the victim child's modesty, which were both "derogatory and defamatory". The child was even named in the judgment, the petition said.

"Abuse and outraging the modesty of a child has been a matter of great concern. The POCSO Act was enacted to deal with evil and to impart speedy justice. Special courts were formed. The observations [in the January 19 judgment of the HC] have badly shaken the belief of the petitioners and like-minded people," the petition said.

Distribution of food kits and monthly allocation of rations were affected due to network issues, which prevented authentication of the consumers.

Civil Supplies Minister P. Thilothaman told *The Hindu* that the technical team had been apprised of the network issue.

Soldier killed, 3 injured in IED explosion in J&K



Security personnel at the blast site in Kashmir's Kulgam district on Wednesday. ■ ANI

"The personnel of the Army's 24 RR would come and use the verandah of the building regularly for various purposes. The IED was most probably planted during the night before the incident. It is evident that the at-

tack was planned in advance after observing troop movement for a sustained period of time," Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said. This is the first major attack by militants in Kashmir this year.

SEC censures two IAS officers, A.P. govt. objects

He says they did not update rolls and failed in discharging their duties

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has "objected" to the censure notices issued by State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar to two senior IAS officials over preparations for the local body elections.

Mr. Kumar said Principal Secretary (Panchayat Raj) Gopal Krishna Dwivedi and Commissioner M. Girija Shankar had failed in discharging their duties related to the gram panchayat elections. Addressing mediapersons here on Wednesday, Mr. Kumar said he had done no great harm by censuring them and that he may rethink the decision on being satisfied with their functioning hereafter.

Mr. Kumar said he had reached the conclusion that the two senior IAS officers were responsible for the adoption of old (2019) electoral rolls which jeopardised the right of nearly 3.6 lakh youth who attained 18 years as on January 1, 2021, to vote, and there was nothing personal about it.

"Having come from the same all-India services to which the two officers belong, why will I act in a vindictive manner against them," he asked.

In a letter to Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das, Mr. Kumar stated that Mr. Dwivedi and Mr. Shankar "displayed total lack of sensitivity to the tenets of empowerment of grassroots democracy and institutions as laid down by the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution," citing their al-



Poll position: State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar addressing the media in Vijayawada on Wednesday. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

leged failure in updating the electoral rolls, which forced the commission to adopt the voter lists that dated back to 2019. He mentioned that the "censure will form part of their service records".

Mr. Das has reportedly written to the SEC raising an objection to the censure of Mr. Dwivedi and Mr. Shankar on the ground that certain procedures were not fol-

lowed. A government source told PTI: "The State government would not be considering that censure. It is one-sided. The SEC did not seek explanation from the officials before issuing the censure. The SEC is not the competent authority."

When contacted, Mr. Kumar said he was yet to go through the communication. (With PTI inputs)

Alert sounded on unanimous elections

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Asserting that he had never misused his discretionary powers, State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar on Wednesday exhorted Andhra Pradesh government officials to make a concerted effort in the available time for the smooth conduct of gram panchayat elections in an apolitical manner.

Village volunteers should not be used for election duty or campaigning, he said.

Mr. Kumar said polling would be closely monitored with the help of a special mobile application to ensure that the process was fair and transparent. Video footage and photographs could be uploaded on the app by officials.

IN BRIEF



Actor rape case trial postponed

KOCHI
The trial in the actor rape case in Kerala has been postponed to February 8 after a defence lawyer tested positive for SARS-CoV2 and two others going into quarantine. The court has also issued a stop memo on the examination of the witnesses in the case following the postponement of the trial. Actor Dileep is the eighth accused in the case.

Karnataka Legislature session to begin today

BENGALURU
The first session of the Karnataka Legislature this year will begin on Thursday. It is likely to be stormy as Opposition parties are planning to corner the BJP government, which is already battling resentment within after the recent Cabinet reshuffle, on a host of issues. The seven-day session will begin with Governor Vajubhai Vala's customary address. ■

Kerala HC seeks report on stalled tunnel work

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court has directed Sivakumar Babu, a scientist appointed by the National Highways Authority of India, to study the slope stability of the under-construction Kuthiran tunnel between Thrissur and Palakkad districts and to file a report on the ongoing work. The project, which will reduce travel time between the two districts, has come to a standstill due to fund crunch.

Woman who woke up at graveyard dies

BENGALURU
A 40-year-old woman who regained consciousness at the Khuddus Saheb graveyard here minutes before her last rites, died of cardiac arrest at a hospital on Tuesday. On January 17, Yasmin Banu was taken to a private hospital after she fainted. The hospital later told the family to take her home as she was "brain dead". Due to miscommunication, her brother took the "body" to the cemetery.

Conservationist joins panel on elephant corridor case

SC committee to hear resorts and land owners of Nilgiris

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday appointed conservationist Nandita Hazarika as Member of a Technical Committee constituted by it on October 14 last year to hear complaints by land owners against the action taken by the Nilgiri Collector, which included sealing of their buildings and allegations about the "arbitrary variance in acreage of the elephant corridor."

The order came after a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde was informed of the death of one of the committee members, Ajay Desai, through an application filed by the Hospitality Association of Mudumalai.

On October 14, the top court upheld the Tamil Nadu government's authority to notify an 'elephant corridor' and protect the migratory path of the animals through the Nilgiri biosphere reserve. The reserve is the largest protected forest area in India, spanning across Tamil



Jumbo hub: One of the main elephant corridors in the Nilgiris at Masingudi. ■ M. SATYAMOORTHY

Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

A three-judge Bench led by CJI Bobde had said it was the State's duty to protect a "keystone species" such as elephants, immensely important to the environment.

The corridor is situated in the ecologically fragile Sigur plateau, which connects the Western and the Eastern Ghats and sustains elephant populations and their genetic diversity.

It has the Nilgiri Hills on its southwestern side and the Moyar River Valley on its north-eastern side. The elephants cross the plateau in search of food and water.

The Supreme Court judgment was based on 32 appeals filed by resorts/private land owners, including Bollywood actor Mithun Chakraborty, against a Madras High Court decision of July 2011.

The High Court had confirmed a State government order of August 2010, notifying the corridor.

The three-member Technical Committee of the National Elephant 2 Action Plan also includes former Madras High Court judge, Justice K. Venkatraman; and Praveen Bhargava, trustee of Wildlife First.

Stand united, Rahul tells workers

'Congress-led front will return to power in Kerala'

STAFF REPORTER
MALAPPURAM

Supply of foodgrains came to a halt in Kerala on Wednesday morning after technical glitches in the Aadhaar-based electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) machines affected the Public Distribution System.

Distribution of food kits and monthly allocation of rations were affected due to network issues, which prevented authentication of the consumers.

Addressing a UDF meeting in Mambad near Nilambur on Wednesday, Mr. Gandhi called upon the Congress workers to stand united for an electoral win.

He interacted with students at the Government Girls' Vocational Higher Se-



Hearing out: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a school in Wandoor in Malappuram district on Wednesday.

condary School at Wandoor. He called upon girls to be independent, especially financially and psychologically.

Mr. Gandhi was here on a two-day visit to his constituency.

KPCC president Mullappally Ramachandran, former Chief Minister Oommen

Chandy, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and IUML national general secretary and MP P.K. Kunhalikutty were among those who welcomed Mr. Gandhi at the Karipur airport.

Ventilators handed over

After a brief meeting with the UDF leaders, Mr. Gandhi proceeded to Wandoor, where he inaugurated a new building of the Government Girls' Vocational Higher Secondary School. He also inaugurated five school buses sanctioned from Mr. Anil Kumar's MLA fund for different schools in the afternoon.

He handed over the ventilators he sanctioned from the MP fund to Government Hospital, Nilambur.

Uddhav's call for UT sets off outrage in Karnataka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI/BELAGAVI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday said the disputed border area between Maharashtra and Karnataka should be made an Union Territory until the matter is heard by the Supreme Court. This sparked off a strong reaction in Karnataka.

Maharashtra has been claiming that Belagavi, Karwar and Nipani should be the part of that State as they are Marathi-speaking areas.

"Ideally status quo must be maintained in an area when a dispute is being heard in the apex court. But

the Karnataka government renamed it Belgaum, gave it the status of the second capital and holds the Assembly session there. Doesn't it amount to disrespecting the court," asked Mr. Thackeray at a book launch.

While Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa is yet to react to the comment, several leaders in Belagavi reacted strongly to this, asserting that Belagavi is an integral part of Karnataka.

Srinath Patil, Karnataka Textiles Minister, said he would urge the Chief Minister to ban the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti for its anti-Karnataka stand and other alleged provocative acts.

Village celebrates its newborn daughters

Sweets distributed, lamps lit when girls are born in Telangana's Haridaspur village

R. AVADHANI
HARIDASPUR

It's celebration time in Haridaspur, a remote village in Telangana, whenever a girl is born.

What's more, all girl children in the village located in Kondapalli mandal of Sangareddy district are going to have accounts of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY), a savings scheme being implemented by the Union government.

As many as eight girl children of the village born last year and 49 girls born before that are going to have the SSY accounts shortly.



Satyavati with daughter Bhavyasri at Haridaspur in Sangareddy. ■ MOHD ARIF

The required amount was handed over to panchayat president Md. Shafi and

secretary Rohit Kulkarni by Collector M. Hanumantha Rao on Wednesday.

The transformation

The village has been witnessing a great transformation.

It all began on January 1, 2020 when Satyavati of the village gave birth to Bhavyasri on that day. She was the third girl child in the family. There were issues in the family over the third girl child.

Hearing about this, both Mr. Shafi and Mr. Kulkarni visited the family and counselled them saying

IN BRIEF



Culture Minister visits Red Fort, calls for report

NEW DELHI
Union Culture Minister Prahil Singh Patel on Wednesday visited the Red Fort to assess the damage to the site, a day after protesting farmers entered the monument, and asked officials to prepare a report. Mr. Patel also said he had directed officials to file police complaints. The Archaeological Survey of India extended the closure of the Red Fort till January 31.

HC seeks response on farmers' bond amount

LUCKNOW
The Allahabad High Court has sought a response from the Sitapur district administration in Uttar Pradesh on the "exorbitant" amount of personal bonds and sureties asked of farmers, allegedly to prevent them from participating in the ongoing farm protests. A Division Bench of Justices Ramesh Sinha and Rajeev Singh sought the reply on a PIL plea filed by Lucknow-based social activist Arundhati Dhuru.

Concerted conspiracy by Modi govt.: Congress

People were allowed to enter Red Fort'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Congress demanded the immediate sacking of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and alleged that the Republic Day events, where a group of farmers stormed the Red Fort, were a conspiracy drafted by the government to malign the farmers' peaceful protest.

"A concerted conspiracy, aided and abetted by the Modi government, took place to malign the entire farmers' movement. A set of people with a premeditated motive of violence, who have nothing to do with the Samyukt Kisan Morcha [SKM], were permitted to enter the Red Fort," Congress general secretary in charge of communications Randeep Surjewala said at a press conference.

He claimed that the police facilitated the entry of a group of miscreants into the Red Fort. "Those who did it, Deep Sidhu and gang, have been seen in the past cohabiting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Instead of arresting them then and there, they were permitted to go back. The police were mute spectators," he alleged. Deep Sidhu is a Punjabi actor, who has been part of the protests from the beginning.

Police were told not to fire at protesters

Anti-social elements infiltrated the otherwise peaceful movement, say farmer unions

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police were given instructions not to use firearms at agitators as some groups turned violent during the January 26 tractor rally in protest against the three farm laws enacted by the Centre last September. Farmer unions have alleged that "anti-social elements had infiltrated the otherwise peaceful movement".

"Strict legal action is being taken and no one involved in the violent incidents will be spared," Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava told *The Hindu*.

The police used tear gas and batons, and blocked the roads with public buses, containers and concrete barriers, which were breached by agitators.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who held a second review meeting on Wednesday, was briefed in detail by Mr. Srivastava on the law and order situation in the national capital a day after the violence.

"The police cannot be revengeful and there were instructions not to use fi-



In solidarity: Farmers at a gathering near Tikri in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

rearms. The brief was not to further flare up the matter. The police personnel followed the instructions diligently. It took perseverance and patience to control the situation," a senior government official said.

Though there were intelligence inputs about violence during the tractor rally, permission was still given to

"pacify" the farmers who have been sitting at Delhi's borders since November 26, the official said.

Asked why the intelligence inputs were not taken seriously, he said, "The police is a part of the government. It cannot unilaterally decide if permission is to be given or not. We have to find a solution. A warning from

intelligence was there, but the farmer unions were also apprised of the security aspects."

Security in the national capital was on heightened alert for the Republic Day parade, and more than 5,000 Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel were deployed in addition to the police.

Farmer leaders Darshan Pal, Rajinder Singh, Balbir Singh Rajewal, Buta Singh Nurjigil, Jigninder Singh Ugrahan and Rakesh Tikitai – who held meetings with the police to agree on the tractor routes – were named in the first information reports (FIRs) filed on Wednesday.

Deviation from route

Protesters deviated from the route sanctioned by the police for rallies at three locations on the outskirts of Delhi and stormed into central Delhi, thereby damaging property and hoisting religious flags at the Red Fort. Several policemen were injured.

Actor Deep Sidhu, a former election agent of BJP parliamentarian Sunny Deol in Punjab's Gurdaspur who was seen leading the violent protesters at the Red Fort on Tuesday, has not been named in any FIR.

"We have not reached any conclusion, the investigation will reveal the conspiracy and other aspects of the case. This is the primary stage of the investigation," an official said.

Party is instigating agitating farmers'

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday accused the Congress of "continuously instigating agitating farmers" which led to the violence during the tractor rally taken out by farmer groups on Republic Day on Tuesday, and singled out the Amarinder Singh government in Punjab for not taking action against "habitual offenders" who, the BJP said, had headed to Delhi for the rally.

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, at a press conference late on Wednesday evening, blamed the Congress and the party's government in Punjab for inciting protesters that led to the violence. "They [the Congress] want to provoke violence, provoke the police to take harsh action, to create instability, that is all the politics the Congress is now reduced to," he said.

"The government has held 10 rounds of talks with farmers' groups, and also said it was ready to suspend the laws for a year or two, to discuss it clause by clause. The laws dealing with agricultural reform were just to give an option to farmers. The Congress also understands this, but did not want any compromise to work out. They want to spoil the atmosphere in the country only because they lost the election. That the Congress would attempt this on Republic Day shows the depths to which their politics has sunk. They cannot escape responsibility as they are in power in Punjab," he said.

He lauded the Delhi Police for "showing restraint" in the face of provocation. "The Delhi Police showed remarkable restraint yesterday. They had weapons, but they did not use them despite being attacked by swords, rods, lathis and

managed to bring order in a few hours," he said.

"The people of this country have seen all, and will give an appropriate response to this. The Congress tried the same tactics by instigating protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, and now with the farm laws. I'm sure they will try again. Despite the Congress's efforts, farmers have not agitated in many other States," he said.

"The BJP's official statement in the wake of the violence during the tractor rally shows that it is determined to seize the moral high ground it feels farmer groups have ceded, as violence erupted on Republic Day despite assurances by farm leaders that the protest rally would be peaceful.

A section of the party, however, feels that the events have consolidated people in their own positions and the party would have to work hard to remove the anti-farmer tag from itself, especially in Punjab and Haryana. In Haryana, the resignation of Indian National Lok Dal MLA Abhay Chautala is being seen as an attempt to pressure his nephew and Jannayak Janata Party leader Dushyant Chautala to withdraw support from the Manohar Lal Khattar-led government in the State. "We are watching the developments," a BJP leader said.

Committee approves hike in MSP for copra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved an increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for copra, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said.

The decision would benefit copra farmers in 12 coastal States, he added.

The MSP for Fair Average Quality of milling copra was increased by ₹375 to ₹10,335 a quintal for 2021 from ₹9,960 last year, an Agriculture Ministry statement said.

TENDER NOTICE

Co-operative Department, Government of Kerala invites tender for the implementation of common software in Primary Agricultural Credit Co-operative Societies in the State of Kerala. Detailed Notification and RFP documents may be downloaded from "etenders.kerala.gov.in"

Tender Reference No. IT-4/4554/2018

Tender ID: 2021_RCS_408054_1

Last date for submitting the tender: 10-03-2021, Date of pre-bid meeting: 09-02-2021, Pre-bid queries may be sent to the e-mail mentioned below.

Registrar of Co-operative Societies
Co-operative Department, Government of Kerala,
Phone No: 0471-2330825, Mobile No : 9447475480,
e-mail: keralcars.coop@kerala.gov.in

RO/00224/D3/2021/I&P/RD

PSPCL

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

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D-3 Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, PATIALA-147001

TEL. NO 0175-2970894,

e-mail: ce-ppr@pspcl.in, sepspc.powersale@gmail.com

Empanelment of Power Trading Firms for Sale of Power on short basis on behalf of PSPCL

TENDER SPECIFICATION NO. PPR 01/2021

E-tendering page: http://eproc.punjab.gov.in

Tenders are invited from Power Trading Companies having valid CERC license for entering into an MOU for selling of surplus Power on behalf of PSPCL

1	Last date and time of downloading of specification from the website http://eproc.punjab.gov.in	09/02/2021 upto 11:00 AM
2	Last date and time of submission/uploading of RFP document	09/02/2021 upto 03:00 PM
3	Date and time of opening of RFP document	10/02/2021 at 03:00 PM
4	Date and time of e reverse auction	24/02/2021 at 11:00 AM
5	Earliest money Deposit (in the form of Bank Guarantee/RTGS/Demand Draft in favour of PSPCL Patiala)	Rs. 50,00,00/- (Rupees Fifty lac only)

In case the due date of opening of tenders happens to be a holiday, tender shall be received and opened at the same time on the next working day.

All tenders must be accompanied by Earnest Money Deposit at the rates prescribed in the tender documents. Tender received without Earnest Money shall be rejected.

The prospective bidders are requested to be extra cautious in filling the tender and to get in touch with this office in case of any difficulty. Once the tender is opened, no request regarding giving relaxation or for overlooking any mistake committed by the bidder will be entertained.

Tender shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of the bids. Tender specification may be downloaded from PSPCL's website i.e. http://eproc.punjab.gov.in

PSPCL reserves the right to reject any or all tenders and drop the Tender Enquiry at any stage without assigning any reason and no claim on any account in this regard shall be entertained.

Note:- The corrigendum's, if any, shall be hosted on website only. Bidders are advised to check the website regularly.

Key No.: C-32/21
DPRB 76155/12/61/2021/1102

Dy. Ce/PP&R
PSPCL, PATIALA

Farmers flay Deep Sidhu's actions, call him govt. agent

He was chased away by them soon after the incident

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Embroidered in controversy after he was seen in the crowd while a "religious flag" was hoisted at the Red Fort in Delhi on Republic Day, Deep Sidhu, a Punjabi actor-cum-activist, was chased away by farmers soon after the incident.

In a video clip, Mr. Sidhu can be seen sitting on a tractor when a group of farmers confront him over his presence at the Red Fort. Amid heated arguments with the group, in which the farmers hurl abuses and accuse him of damaging the entire movement against the farm Acts, Mr. Sidhu can then be seen jumping from the tractor and, with the help of a few other people, rushing away from the spot on a motorcycle.

Mr. Sidhu has been a close associate of BJP Lok Sabha MP from Gurdaspur Sunny



Deep Sidhu

Deol, and had campaigned for him during the 2019 Lok Sabha election. However, Mr. Deol on Tuesday distanced himself from Mr. Sidhu and made it clear that neither he nor his family members had any links with Mr. Sidhu. In a tweet, Mr. Deol said: "I am very sad to see what happened on the Red Fort today. I have already made it clear on Twitter that I or my family has no connection with Deep Sidhu," he said in a video message.

Farm laws have ability to raise income'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON

India's new farm laws have the potential to increase income, but vulnerable cultivators need to be given a social safety net, International Monetary Fund's Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, farmers' outfits condemned Mr. Sidhu's actions and accused him of working at the behest of the Central government.

"Deep Sidhu is an agent of the government and he did it at the behest of the Centre to defame the farmers' agitation," said Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrilakan on Wednesday.

Gurnam Singh of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Chaduan) said Mr. Sidhu's actions were condemnable and that he had misguided the protesters. "We didn't have any plan to go to the Red Fort," he said in a video message.

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- ◆ Disposal of Usable Spares, Thro "MSTC" for details visit www.mstcindia.in
- ◆ Supply of 7000MT Lime Stone (Low Grade) to Malabar Cements Limited, Walayar for FOR Walayar basis.

Visit www.malabarcemts.co.in for Tender details.

Sd/- MANAGING DIRECTOR

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA E-mail : servsbd2003@yahoo.com					
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SOUTHERN CIRCLE, RURAL WORKS, SUNABEDA.					
E-Procurement Notice					
1. Name of the Work : 1) Construction of Roads under State Plan (01 No) 2) Construction of road under UPANTA (01 No)					
3. Class of Contractor : "B", "A", "Special Class of (Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authority.					
4. Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.221.84 Lakhs to Rs.462.45 Lakhs (Approximately)					
5. Details projects as per Annexure attached :					
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
1	2	3	4	5	6 8
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works, Southern Circle, Sunabeda	SERWSCSBD -Online -05/2020-21	28.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	15.02.2021 up to 5.00 P.M.	12	

'A global challenge to deliver vaccine'

Vardhan says India shouldering the task in 2021

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

If 2020 was the year of discovery of COVID-19 vaccines, 2021 will be the year India faces the challenge of getting them to people across the world who most need it, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, who is the Chairman of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization, has said.

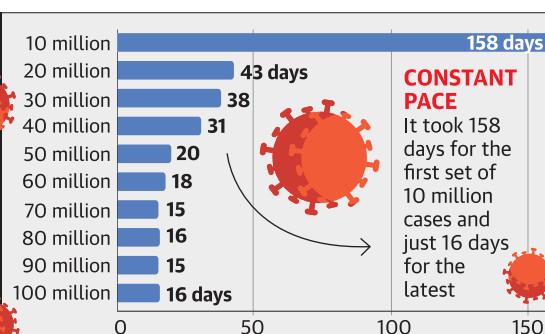
He chaired the 148th session of the Board on Tuesday, said a press release issued by the Health Ministry on Wednesday.

The release said Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to the U.S. President, addressed the Board on behalf of the Biden administration, announcing that the U.S. would remain a member of WHO and fulfil its financial obligations, with continued technical collaboration at all levels, including through its collaborating centres.

Dr. Fauci acknowledged the role of the WHO in leading the global public health response to the outbreak,

100 million and counting

On January 26, COVID-19 cases worldwide crossed the 100 million mark, nearly 13 months after the first infection was confirmed in China. Lately, infections are surging in the U.S. and Europe after India's case share peaked in September.



SHIFT IN BURDEN | The table depicts the % of the world's new cases in a region, each month. Nearly all cases were in China in January and February last year, before moving to Europe and the U.S. Cases in Asia peaked in September. Lately, the burden has again shifted to Europe and the U.S.

Continent	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
Africa	0	0	1	1	4	6	7	4	3	3	2	3	4
Asia	100	98	12	14	21	27	28	36	42	25	18	16	12
Europe	<1	2	59	37	21	11	6	10	17	40	43	33	34
N. America	<1	<1	26	40	30	25	32	23	18	19	29	37	36
Oceania	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	0	0
S. America	0	<1	2	7	25	31	26	28	21	13	8	11	13

convening scientists and researchers to help accelerate the development of vaccine therapeutics and diagnostics and tracking the latest developments for keeping the member-states informed.

The Board, according to the release, welcomed the Immunisation Agenda 2030 and was unanimous in recognising the central role played

by immunisation programmes in safeguarding public health globally. The member-states also called for early and equitable availability of COVID-19 vaccines, including through the COVAX facility.

Dr. Vardhan said, "Immunisation has been a singularly successful global programme in preventing

vaccine-preventable morbidity and mortality and the WHO must continue providing evidence-based and scientific advocacy to support member-states in effectively implementing the Immunisation Agenda. Vaccine coverage must continue to improve, particularly to reach vulnerable sections and reduce inequities."

No protection from arrest for Tandav team

Supreme Court agrees to examine their plea to club FIRs registered against them in various States

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to pass an order to protect the makers and artists of the web series *Tandav* on Amazon Prime from arrest, even as it agreed to examine their plea to club the FIRs registered against them in various States on the charge of hurting Hindu religious sentiments.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan asked them to approach the lower courts concerned for interim relief, including bail. The court also rejected their plea to quash the FIRs.

The court did not appear convinced when the makers and artists said the web series was a "political satire".

They urged the court to protect their freedom of artistic speech and expression.

But Justice M.R. Shah, on the Bench, said free speech is not absolute and is subject to reasonable restrictions.

One of the actors, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, told the court that he had enacted a character whose dialogues in the series had no connection whatsoever to his own individual beliefs. "I was contracted to play a character. What I said or did in the series has nothing to do with me as an individual," his lawyer argued for him.

"You cannot play the role of a character which hurts the religious sentiments of others," Justice Shah replied.

Senior advocate Sidd-

harth Luthra, one of the lawyers appearing for the makers, said signing on to an OTT platform to watch a series was unlike public viewing on Doordarshan.

"I have to pay and view. I consent to watch it. I want to see a political satire, so I watch it," Mr. Luthra submitted.

Senior advocate Fali Nari-

man, also for the makers, said FIRs have been filed in multiple States merely as a source of harassment. "We have already deleted one or two scenes, still FIRs are being filed," he submitted.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi reminded the court of how it had, several years ago, protected painter M.F. Husain from arrest after FIRs were filed against him by persons across the country, similarly for hurting religious sentiments.

He said the makers have come directly to the SC following the precedent of the Arnab Goswami case where multiple FIRs were filed in different States and the court agreed to club them.

The FIRs were registered on the basis of complaints filed against director Ali Abbas Zafar; Amazon Prime India head Aparna Purohit; producer Himanshu Mehra; show's writer Gaurav Solanki and actor Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub.

Transit pre-arrest bail

Earlier, the Bombay High Court had granted a transit pre-arrest bail to Mr. Zafar, Ms. Purohit, Mr. Mehra and Mr. Solanki against whom a case was registered in Lucknow for allegedly hurting religious sentiments.

The four have been booked under Sections 153 A, 295, and 501 (I)(B) of the IPC and under relevant Sections of the IT Act.

Owaisi, Viswam file dissent on DNA Bill

Standing panel to meet on February 1

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Asadduddin Owaisi, president of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM), and CPI leader Binoy Viswam have filed dissent notes to the parliamentary standing committee's report on the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019 on the grounds that it does not take into account their concerns over privacy violations.

They say if enacted, the Bill will target Dalits, Muslims and Adivasis by way of DNA sample collection and indefinite storage.

The Standing Committee on Science and Technology, headed by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, will meet on February 1 to discuss and adopt the final report. The Bill proposes DNA sampling and profiling of citizens accused of crime or reported missing, and storing their unique genetic information for administrative purposes.

The fear is that the law could be used for caste or community-based profiling.

"It is most regrettable that while the finalised draft report recognises the potential dangers of indexing the DNA profiles of non-convicts, especially convicts and suspects, it has still retained these objectionable provisions," Mr. Owaisi said in his dissent note. The crime data showed that the Indian criminal justice system disproportionately incarcerated Dalits, Muslims and Adivasis. With this Bill, this targeted discrimination would be encoded into the law, he said.

The Bill ran afoul with the standards set in the Puttaswamy and Subramanian Swamy judgments of the Supreme Court. "In the absence of a statutory framework protecting the right to privacy, this Bill will cause irreversible damage to individuals' right to privacy as well as the criminal justice system," he said.

Jairam Ramesh clarifies

Mr. Ramesh has countered Mr. Owaisi's concerns. In a letter to Mr. Owaisi, he said the objective of the Bill was not overarching but limited to the establishment of a regulatory board to regulate the use of DNA technology in consonance with international standards.

In his note, Mr. Viswam said, "Without adequate statutory safeguard to protect against the opacity of the law on the sort of information being collected and its unrestricted usage for a variety of purposes this law is susceptible to future misuse and abuse." The impact that this law would have on Dalit, Adivasi and religious and gender minority was such that he could not support it, he added.

SC asks for timeline on appointments

It expresses concern over govt. delay in clearing Collegium recommendations

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the government about the delay in clearing Collegium recommendations for judicial appointments to various High Courts. A Bench of Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Surya Kant asked the Centre if there was a timeline for government clearance of such recommendations.

"If you don't give comments for five months on Collegium recommendations, it is a matter of great concern," Justice Kaul said.

The Bench noted how recommendations from the High Courts of Bombay and



If you don't give comments for five months on Collegium recommendations, it is a matter of great concern
JUSTICE SANJAY KISHAN KAUL,
SUPREME COURT JUDGE

Allahabad dated back to May or June last year. It said 189 proposals for judicial appointments were still pending. "What is your timeline to respond to these recommendations of judges' appointment? The government has taken more than a year to respond... You say something is pending with Intelligence Bureau and some Chief Minister has not responded. We want to know

your timeline," the court addressed Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal.

The Bench served notice on the High Courts which were not party to the petition filed by Lok Prahar, an NGO, seeking the appointment of additional judges. "We expect the High Courts to express their views in the present matter. The High Courts that are not impleaded shall be impleaded as par-

ty respondents in the instant matter," the court said.

In February last year, the Supreme Court had conveyed its alarm at the rising number of judicial vacancies in various High Courts.

Some of them were functioning only with half their sanctioned strength.

Mr. Venugopal, at the time, explained that the Collegium had also delayed the appointment process. The government's delay was largely because it thoroughly combed through the antecedents of the candidate. The process, on an average, takes at least 127 days. On the other hand, the judiciary takes 119 days on an average merely to forward the file to the government, he said.

Four denied bail under new U.P. Act

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A South Korean woman and three Uttar Pradesh residents accused under the new ordinance of allegedly trying to entice two Hindu women to convert to Christianity were denied bail by a local court in Gautam Buddha Nagar. The four accused have been in jail

since December 20. South Korean national Minkyagali alias Anmol and Seema, Sandhya and Umesh Kumar of Prayagraj were booked on charges of using enticement to convert people to Christianity. The FIR lodged at the Surajpur police station in Gautam Buddha Nagar on December 19 under the U.P. Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020, also evoked Section 295a of the IPC.

COVID-19 test mandatory, says Venkaiah

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

No person should enter the Parliament's premises during the Budget session without a negative COVID-19 report, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said on Wednesday at a review meeting to discuss the preparations for the upcoming Budget Session.

Apart from parliamentary officers and staff, COVID-19 test should be made mandatory for personal staff of Ministers, members and officers of the Ministry, Mr. Naidu said.

Three more Rafale aircraft land in India

NEW DELHI
The third batch of three Rafale aircraft arrived in India on Wednesday, flying non-stop from France. With this, the IAF has received 11 of the 36 Rafale jets contracted from France under a €7.87 billion Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in September 2016. "They flew over 7,000 km with in-flight refuelling. Indian Air Force (IAF) deeply appreciates the tanker support provided by UAE Air Force," IAF tweeted.

8 killed, 4 injured in Rajasthan road accident

JAIPUR
Eight persons were killed and four injured when a speeding trailer truck hit their car from behind near a bridge on Banas river in Rajasthan's Tonk district early on Wednesday. The victims, belonging to Rajgarh in Madhya Pradesh, were returning from the popular pilgrim destination of Khatu Shyam. The deceased, who were from a single family, included two women and two children.

'Arrest Arnab under Official Secrets Act'

MUMBAI
The Congress on Wednesday filed complaints with the Mumbai Commissioner of Police and at all stations in the city demanding action against Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami under the Official Secrets Act. In a memorandum submitted to Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, the Congress highlighted the WhatsApp chats that are part of the chargesheet filed in the alleged TRP scam case.

Covaxin effective against U.K. virus variant, says study

Researchers post results on bioRxiv pre-print server

R. PRASAD
CHENNAI

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin has been found to neutralise the U.K. variant of the COVID-19 virus with "similar efficiency" as the strain used for making the vaccine and hence "dispels the uncertainty of possible neutralisation escape" following vaccination, say results posted on the bioRxiv preprint server.

At a press briefing on Wednesday, he said 23,277 people had been vaccinated so far across the country, including 2,99,299 on Wednesday.

The sera from people vaccinated with Covaxin were tested on various strains. • FILE PHOTO

totalisation studies are carried out, Dr. Panda said that the virus isolated from people is grown in the lab using cell lines. When viruses successfully grow in them, the pathogenic effects of the viruses are observed in the cells. The sera taken from vaccinated people are then added to the cell line culture system, and its ability to prevent the virus from causing pathogenic effects is observed.

In this case, the sera taken from vaccinated people were able to neutralise the virus and hence prevent pathogenic effects being produced in the cell lines containing the virus.

The U.K. variant was isolated and characterised from people returning from there. The variant isolated from returnees had "all signature mutations of the U.K. variant," the authors say.

The manuscript has been submitted to the *Journal of Travel Medicine* for publication, Dr. Balram Bhargava, Director-General of ICMR told *The Hindu*.

Explaining how the neutr-

alisations studies are carried out, Dr. Panda said that the virus isolated from people is grown in the lab using cell lines. When viruses successfully grow in them, the pathogenic effects of the viruses are observed in the cells. The sera taken from vaccinated people are then added to the cell line culture system, and its ability to prevent the virus from causing pathogenic effects is observed.

The sera from people vaccinated with Covaxin were tested on various strains. • FILE PHOTO

and one of the authors of the preprint told *The Hindu*.

The study was conducted using sera collected from 38 people who have been vaccinated with Covaxin during the Phase-2 trial. Researchers from ICMR's Pune-based National Institute of Virology and Bharat Biotech found that the vaccine has "comparable neutralisation activity" against the U.K. variant and the strain used for making the



Urban Indian foragers discover bursts of flavour in overlooked tangles of weeds, as wild fritters, cutlets and soups become a delicious side effect of lockdown

SHILPA NAIR ANAND

Between sips of blue pea flower tea, Saritha OT, a teacher of environmental science, makes patties out of sessile joyweed foraged from near her house in Hyderabad's Jubilee Hills.

Next, she grinds leaves of creeping sorrel from her garden into a chutney. Having recently learned that the weed she pulled out from her potted plants was wandering Jew (*Commensalis benghalensis*), an edible green, she has been surfing the net looking for suitable recipes. Fortunately, she has a community to lean on: Saritha is part of a growing group of urban Indian foragers who use wild edibles in their food.

Foraging is gathering 'food' – edible weeds, fruits and flowers – that grows in the wild. Traditionally associated with rural and tribal communities, foraging is also practised in urban and semi-urban pockets. Edible weeds are consumed across the country, and they vary due to geographical and climatic variations. Lately, foraging has picked up in cities, triggered by lockdown, when people had more time at hand to explore their surroundings and experiment in the kitchen.

Saritha got interested in the hobby two years ago when she attended a lunch, Festival of Uncultivated Foods, hosted by the Deccan Development Society, Hyderabad. "Edible weeds were used in cutlet, *vada*, chutney and even rotis. Each has a distinct taste – purslane is tangy, gale of wind is bitter,"



The edible city



she says. She was impressed by the uses plants such as devil's horsewhip, kidney leaf, spider wisp and jute mallow, as well as their nutritional content. "I learnt that farmers and locals depend on foraging during dry months when there isn't much else," she says.

Facilitating change

Saruthi Tharayil (@forgottengreens on Instagram) hosts programmes to teach people more about how to recognise and cook edible wilds, to make fritters, soups, *dal*, stir fries, salads and more. "Foraging is not new. We have always done it; our mothers probably still pluck herbs and add them to the food. We have a lot of knowledge, but there is a gap between practice," says Calicut-

based Shruti, who calls herself a 'facilitator for change'.

Her curiosity was piqued when she was working with a non-profit organisation in rural Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. She noticed rural women collecting greens to cook. The more she researched, the more she learnt and the results fascinated her. Shruti sees foraging as a means of connecting with the immediate ecosystem and staying connected to the land and soil; more importantly that it helps keep biodiversity alive.

India boasts a diverse range of these greens – mountain knot grass, creeping daisy (*wedelia*), wood sorrel, Indian pennywort, *Peperomia pellucida*, Bengal day flower, red hogweed, desert

horse purslane, asthma weed, Indian nettle, and stinging nettle are some which figure on a very long list. "It is not that these have been forgotten or that only rural or tribal communities use these. Certain plants are recognised in urban pockets too. You see an empty plot – you will find many edible weeds there," says Elizabeth S, a gardener from Bengaluru.

Foraging is not easy – it demands patience, time and skills of observation. Active communities of gardeners and farmers share information and recipes online, sustaining interest and guiding newcomers. Lockdown brought with it a lot of time and an increased interest in foraging. People began cooking with what was available in their compounds,

Wild food (Clockwise from left) A family on a hiking trip looking at edible mushrooms; a meal made of foraged plants; Shruti Tharayil during her forage walk in Chennai; and Saritha OT • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

typically familiar greens such as moringa leaves, *kuppai keerai* (*Amaranthus viridis*), and colocasia leaves.

"Confinement draws attention to what is nearby. People are thinking about how to self-sustain – this is a life skill," says Elizabeth. She and foragers like her use 'wild greens' to supplement store-bought vegetables as these are not found in huge quantities.

Walking the talk

Kush Sethi from Delhi has been organising forage walks in Delhi's Lodhi Gardens for the last four years (it was cancelled in 2020). The walks are organised in winter months from November to March. "I don't forage for myself; this is an educational walk programme. We do it in Lodhi Gardens as there is an



Shruti Tharayil conducted a food forage walk at Kottivakkam in Chennai. "There are plenty of places in Chennai – vacant plots and open spaces – where people can forage; any place except near sewage or garbage dumps," she says. By the time the two-hour expedition ended the participants had found 16 varieties of edible weeds such as Indian nettle (*kuppaimeni*), purslane (*paruppu keerai*), and spreading hogweed/spiderling (*punarnava*). Cooler months (or post-monsoon) from October to February are the best time to forage in Chennai, there is seasonal variation in the plants found. The summer months do not yield as much.

interesting mix of plants," says Kush. The walk ends with a multi-course meal at a pan-European restaurant, made with the plants foraged.

Kush leads foraging walks not more than five or six times a year. Working with gardeners, he forages from plant beds in the park. ("I tell them that I'll pluck the weeds for them," Kush jokes.) He also does commissioned work for travel companies organising 'forage walks'. "They are selling aspects of the city that extend beyond its [Delhi's] heritage," he adds. The interest, he believes, has been consistent.

Urban foraging is not as dichotomous as it sounds. "Urban spaces have so much – empty plots or road dividers – where you can find edible weeds. These could be polluted which can be cleaned by washing with rock or table salt water or turmeric powder or tamarind infused water," Shruti says.

Farah Yameen, digital archivist from Delhi, started @thesagarchive, an Instagram handle during lockdown on which she posts illustrations of edible weeds, with recipes, usually shared by other enthusiasts such as Shruti. Saag refers to greens, usually leafy vegetables. Some are well-known and others family recipes, recently a *chana saag* recipe came from Bihar.

She is careful about where she sources these greens from, avoiding spaces that could be toxic as some plants such as varieties of amaranth tend to absorb toxins from the soil. "People have found these edible plants in the most unexpected places – flower pots on terraces," she says.

Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar, chef and co-founder Edible Archives (Goa) links foraging with first creating awareness. The edible herb she uses – *gotu kola* – as seasoning is plucked from the garden at the restaurant just before serving. "There is the perception that what we 'buy' is food has to change. For me it is related to conservation," she says. It is a delicate balance, indiscriminate foraging might cause a shortage for people whose source of nourishment these plants might be.

Actor Aari Arujunan, this season's winner, talks about the highlights of his stay in the House and the need to celebrate everyday heroes

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

After emerging victorious at the Bigg Boss Tamil House, Aari Arujunan has been busy. Apart from spending time with his family, he has resumed work on his film projects; the teaser of his upcoming *Ellam Mela Irukaranavan Paathuppan* released a few days ago. But the buzz surrounding his conduct at Bigg Boss does not seem to die down, if one one were to go by comments on his social media. "This isn't my victory. I see it as people's victory," says the actor, whose honesty and outspoken nature seem to have contributed in a big way to people voting for him.

In a telephonic chat, Aari talks about taking one of the biggest decisions of his life – getting into the House – and the plans ahead. Excerpts:

Who do you have to thank most for your victory?

• People who have voted for me. And my wife, for being so patient and handling all the feedback and criticism of me that came her way.

At what point in 2020 did you decide you had it in you to compete in the House?

• In my 15-year film career, I have faced more losses than victory. Offers to participate in Bigg Boss have come during previous seasons as well, but I could not take them up due to other commitments. This year, when I was in a dilemma to take it up, it was director Thamira (*Rettaisuzhi*) who gave me the confidence. That push – and the fact that I could use this platform to tell the world about issues close to my heart – is what prompted me to take it up.

Did you do prepare for it?

• I have never seen the previous seasons completely. When I decided that I would take part this year, I told myself, "Why should I prepare when this is all about being myself?"

With lockdown and work from home, several regular households became like the Bigg Boss House.

• Oh yes. Earlier, we would be out



Be yourself
Aari Arujunan
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Bigg Boss taught me self-discipline'

most of the time and spend just a few hours at home. But now, with people working from home, there is a lot of time spent with family members. This can lead to both love and differences of opinion. Maybe that's why this season of Bigg Boss was celebrated so much; perhaps the audience saw their own lives on screen. Also, having spent time in the House, I can vouch that nothing was scripted. Every contestant is as raw as clay when we go inside; it is entirely up to us to mould ourselves the way we want.

I'm happy that I could sow the seeds of change among contestants about aspects like speaking in Tamil and the importance of not wasting food

Your fight with Balaji was much talked about on social media. How do you handle aggressive people?

I recall having a heart-to-heart talk with him before we came out. I told

What made you the happiest from this experience?

• Many people have called me to say that they would like to see their children grow up like me. I see this as a big compliment honestly. I'm also happy that I could sow the seeds of change among contestants about aspects like speaking in Tamil and the importance of not wasting food.

You voiced your opinion on important issues. Do you see yourself getting into politics?

• I am already in politics, just like every citizen. Today, I am in the politics of casting my vote. If there comes a time when I feel worthy enough of asking votes, we will see.

him to be patient, listen to others and see life from other people's shoes. Actually, I see myself in Balaji; I was like him a few years ago.

What do you wish to convey to the fans who have been supporting you?

• Plant a tree. Take tuition classes for someone in your neighbourhood. Write a 'kural' somewhere where kids can read it. Be the reason for change. If there's someone in your neighbourhood who is doing this earnestly, recognise and celebrate them. I am not the only brand for *nermai* (honesty); it's a virtue that is present in all of us.

You voiced your opinion on important issues. Do you see yourself getting into politics?

• I am already in politics, just like every citizen. Today, I am in the politics of casting my vote. If there comes a time when I feel worthy enough of asking votes, we will see.

Master digital release this Friday

Vijay-starrer *Master* will be out on Amazon Prime Video this Friday. The film had released in theatres on January 13, during the Pongal season. Written and directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, the film also stars Vijay Sethupathi, Malavika Mohanan and Andrea Jeremiah, among others.

Vijay plays an alcoholic professor named John Durairaj in the film that is running successfully in theatres. In a press statement, the actor says, "I am certain that the interesting duel between John and Bhavani [Vijay Sethupathi] will take the audiences on a roller-coaster ride of action and drama." Adds Lokesh, "With the film's global digital release, we are hoping to reach a wider audience that's been at home, and reach regions that otherwise wouldn't have been possible."

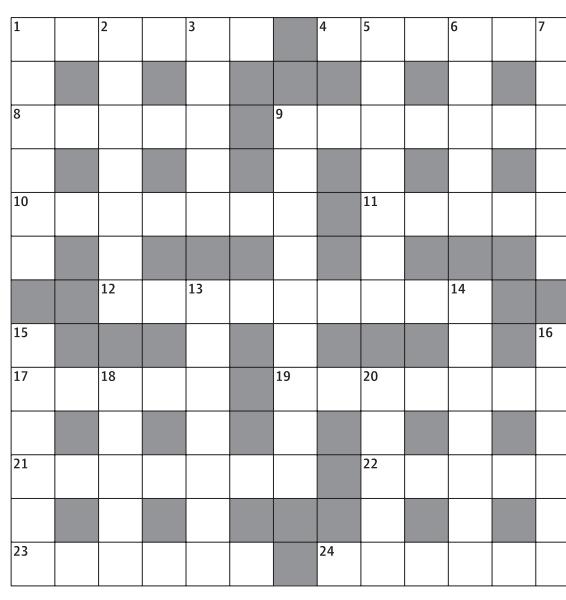


Sivakarthikeyan's next is *Don*

Sivakarthikeyan is teaming up with debutante director Cibi Chakaravarthi for an upcoming entertainer titled *Don*, the announcement of which was made by Lyca Productions on Wednesday. Set against a college backdrop, the film will see Sivakarthikeyan playing a student and has music by Anirudh Ravichander. "Happy to announce my next film with Lyca Productions titled *Don*. Music by my dearest rockstar Anirudh. It's always an extra happiness to join with a debutant director," said

Sivakarthikeyan on Twitter. Meanwhile, Sivakarthikeyan is gearing up for the release of *Doctor*, directed by Nelson Dilip Kumar of *Kolamavu Kokila* fame. He also awaits the release of R Ravikumar's *Ayalaan*.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13397



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

7 Present again with just the odd change (6)

9 Metal instrument (5,4)

13 Field for horses (7)

14 Great storm (7)

15 Shot – slug (6)

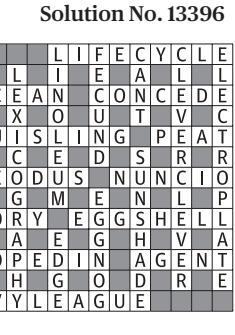
16 Suffering from acne (6)

18 Brass instrument (5)

20 Lead (5)

The solution will appear on February 4, 2021

Solution No. 13396



AN-ND-E

Most GOP Senators oppose Trump trial

45 Republicans voted to dismiss impeachment move, casting doubt on possibility of his conviction

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

All but five of the U.S. Senate's 50 Republicans unsuccessfully attempted to block the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump from progressing, in a vote on the constitutionality of impeaching a former President. While Mr. Trump will be tried because 55 of the 100 Senators voted to proceed, Tuesday's vote cast doubt on whether Mr. Trump would be convicted – a move that would need 17 of the Senate's 50 Republicans to vote along with their Democratic colleagues.

"I think it is pretty obvious from the vote today that is extraordinarily unlikely that the President will be convicted," said Senator Susan Collins of Maine, one of the five



On track: Senator Patrick Leahy swearing in members of the Senate for the trial at the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday. ■ AP

Senators who voted against the motion to declare the trial unconstitutional. Mr. Trump is being tried on charges of "inciting an insurrection" for his alleged role in inciting violent protesters just before they attacked the

U.S. Capitol on January 6, resulting in the death of five people.

The other Republicans who voted against the motion questioning the trial's constitutionality were Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt

Romney of Utah, Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania and Ben Sasse of Nebraska.

"If you voted that it was unconstitutional, how in the world would you ever vote to convict somebody for this?" said Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, who introduced the motion.

U-turn

Notably, Senate Minority Leader, who had in recent weeks – including when he led the majority in the chamber – entertained the possibility of convicting Mr. Trump, joined his Republican colleagues and voted against taking the trial forward.

Democrats are hoping that the evidence they plan to present during the trial – including videos – will sway

more Republicans.

"...There's no predicting with any certainty what the result will be until we see all of that graphic evidence and it can include the words out of Donald Trump's own mouth," Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut said. "That's the most incriminating, but also other evidence about what he said when he saw those images of the assault on the Capitol and he called those mob rioters 'special people'..." he said.

While the members of the House of Representatives had delivered their charges to the Senate on Monday and Senators – all of whom will act as jurors – were sworn in, the trial itself is scheduled to commence in the week of February 8.

Blinken gets to work, stresses on U.S. alliances

New Secretary of State emphasises security and prosperity for a free and open Indo-Pacific region

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

After his 78 to 22 confirmation at the Senate, new U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had an administrative swearing-in on Tuesday at the State Department, after which he got to work and spoke to his counterparts from Japan, South Korea, Canada, and Mexico on the phone.

Speaking to Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Mr. Blinken called the alliance between their two countries "the cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity for a free and open Indo-Pacific region and across the world".

U.S. alliances and engage with the world again," the readout said.

On his call with South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, Mr. Blinken again brought up the importance of the U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral relationship and "affirmed the enduring strength and importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance, the lynchpin of peace, security, and prosperity for a free and open Indo-Pacific region and across the world".

Advancing values' He also underscored the continued need for the denuclearisation of North Korea and stressed President Biden's commitment to strengthening U.S. alliances", the readout said.

"We will revitalise American diplomacy to advance our interests and values in the world as it is – not as it was," Mr. Blinken, 58, tweeted.



Antony Blinken

ed on Tuesday. "Together, we will implement @POTUS Biden's vision of a foreign policy that promotes America's security, prosperity, and values – and that delivers for the American people," he wrote.

Tweeting pictures of his swearing-in, Mr. Blinken, who, during Barack Obama's final term, was second in command at the State De-

partment as Deputy Secretary, wrote, "I want to thank my colleagues for welcoming me home."

Mr. Blinken is expected to oversee America's re-engagement with the world via multilateral forums.

He will also seek to strengthen multilateral relationships and move away from a transactional 'America First' emphasis that characterised the Trump administration's foreign policy.

During his confirmation hearing, he said America should approach the world with "humility and confidence," and that no country, however powerful, could address the world's problems alone.

U.S.-China ties

However, Mr. Blinken also agreed with some areas of the Trump administration's foreign policy. For instance, on the tough line against China, he told Senators that he

agreed with the principle but disagreed "very much" with the way the former President went about handling the U.S.-China relationship. He called India a "bipartisan success story".

At home, Mr. Blinken is expected to try and revitalise the State Department and increase the diversity of its workforce.

The Department has close to 1,000 fewer staff than when Mr. Blinken left it. Many have quit over the last four years, demoralised first with the leadership of former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and then Mike Pompeo, including as the 2019 Trump impeachment unfolded.

Some career professionals had been edged out for political reasons.

Last week, Mr. Blinken told Senators that the State Department will be a "non-partisan institution" on his watch.

Malign competition" was, however, a theme in some of the reporting this week in Chinese media outlets. On Tuesday, the Communist Party-run *Global Times*, known for its hawkish views, quoted an "insider" as saying "China-Bangladesh cooperation was also disturbed due to interference from India."

The *Global Times* said "in the eyes of India, however, it has become a lever in its tool kit to compete with China".

The newspaper claimed clinical trials were delayed "due to the Indian government allegedly meddling in the two sides' cooperation during the period".

That was not, however,



A health worker administering a COVID-19 vaccine in Beijing. ■ AFP/FILE

eration with countries in South Asia in cooperation on the anti-epidemic fight as the region is traditionally under India's influence."

China's State media have slammed foreign observers, including those in India, for raising questions about Sinovac's vaccine, after authorities in Brazil reported a 50.4% efficacy rate, a number questioned by the Chinese media.

State media have, however, been raising questions about the efficacy of India's Covaxin and the Covishield vaccine, while offering no evidence, only saying "concerns are natural for anyone who has seen thick clouds of smoke billowing from the site [of Covishield manufacturer Serum Institute of India], 10 fire tenders rushing to the spot, and news stories that the fire had killed five people".

Many Twitter users share the same uneasiness over the fire's influence on SII's vaccine manufacturing capacity," the paper said, adding that "scientists 'scout' at the goal of the Indian government agency to test and approve its homegrown COVID-19 vaccine at such a high speed".

State media has also raised unfounded questions about the Pfizer vaccine, calling for an investigation into reports of deaths of 23 elderly people in Norway which the media in China has widely covered, while not highlighting the fact that a WHO panel said the vaccines did not play a "contributory role". The *Global Times* also reported of deaths in India but without offering evidence they were connected to vaccines.

"In comparison," the newspaper said, "not a single death occurred in China for having received coronavirus vaccines."

Chinese media takes aim at India over COVID-19 vaccines

Earlier, Beijing had said there's no 'malign competition'

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's government said this week there was "no place for malign competition" on the issue of supplying vaccines.

The media it controls in China have, however, adopted a different line, from accusing India of "interference" in preventing Chinese vaccines being used in South Asia, to questioning the efficacy of Indian and Western vaccines.

"There are multiple COVID-19 vaccine candidates out there on the market, and countries should be able to make their choices on the vaccines independently," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said this week when asked by Chinese State media about reports of India's "vaccine diplomacy" in the neighbourhood.

"This issue can afford no place for malign competition, let alone the so-called 'rivalry'. We hope and welcome that more doses of safe and effective vaccines will be manufactured at a faster pace by more countries and then provided to more countries to benefit more people," he said.

At the same time, Mr. Zhao said, "we have no place for malign competition" was, however, a theme in some of the reporting this week in Chinese media outlets.

On Tuesday, the Communist Party-run *Global Times*, known for its hawkish views, quoted an "insider" as saying "China-Bangladesh cooperation was also disturbed due to interference from India."

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Iran says Israel is waging a 'psychological war'

Israel Army keeps 'offensive options' open

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN

A top Iranian official on Wednesday said Israel was waging a "psychological war" after the Jewish state's Army said new "offensive options" were being drawn up in case they were needed against the Islamic republic.

Mahmoud Vaezi, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff, also vowed that his country was ready and willing to defend itself.

"We have no intention of going to war, but we are serious about defending the country," he said.

Israel, a close U.S. ally, accuses Iran of seeking to build a nuclear bomb, a charge Tehran denies.

Israel's military chief General Aviv Kochavi said on Tuesday he had ordered new plans be drawn up this

year to counter Iran's nuclear capabilities, in case political leaders decided to target the country.

"The power to initiate them lies with the political echelon," Gen. Kochavi stressed. "However, the offensive options need to be prepared, ready and on the table."

Mr. Vaezi shot back on Wednesday, accusing Israel of "conducting a psychological war."

Iran's recent military manoeuvres, testing missiles and drones, Mr. Vaezi added, showed that "our armed forces are trained" to defend Iran.

Gen. Kochavi's remarks came nearly a week after the inauguration of U.S. President Joe Biden, who has signalled he wants to return to dialogue with Iran.

U.S. issues domestic terror alert

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security declared a nationwide terrorism alert on Wednesday, citing the potential threat from domestic anti-government extremists opposed to Joe Biden as President.

"Information suggests that some ideologically-motivated violent extremists with objections to the exercise of governmental authority and the presidential transition, as well as other perceived grievances

fuelled by false narratives, could continue to mobilise to incite or commit violence," the department said.

The National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin said a heightened threat of attack "will persist in the weeks following the successful presidential inauguration," which took place on January 20.

"DHS does not have any information to indicate a specific, credible plot," it said.

"However, violent riots have continued in recent days and we

remain concerned that individuals frustrated with the exercise of governmental authority and the presidential transition...

could continue to mobilise a broad range of ideologically-motivated actors to incite or commit violence."

The alert said there had been mounting threats since last year from domestic violent extremists motivated by COVID-19 restrictions.

Mr. Biden's defeat of Donald Trump in the November election, police brutality and illegal immigration.

Russia mooting West Asia meet as U.S. resets Palestinian ties

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NEW YORK

Russia backed a Palestinian proposal for a West Asia peace conference, suggesting on Tuesday that it could be held at the ministerial level in spring or summer, as the U.S. said it would move towards renewing ties with the Palestinians under Joe Biden.

The U.S. – which sided with Israel under the administration of Donald

Trump – said on Tuesday it intended to "restore credible U.S. engagement with Palestinians as well as Israelis".

"The roughly 10 participants would include Israel, the Palestinians, the four members of the West Asia diplomatic quartet (Russia, the UN, the U.S. and the EU), along with four Arab states – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and the UAE," Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
TAMILNADU SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
E-Procurement Notice
(One Envelope Bidding Process with e-Procurement)
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
Bid No.: E-12489-2020, Date: 27.01.2021

1. The Government of India has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of Tamil Nadu Sustainable Urban Development Project and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works as detailed below.
2. Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding procedures agreed with the World Bank.
3. Bidders from India should, however, be registered with the Government of Tamil Nadu or other State Governments/Government of India, or State/Central Government Undertakings. Bidders from India, who are not registered as above, on the date of bidding, can also participate provided they get themselves registered by the time of contract signing, if they become successful bidders. **Bidders are advised to note the clauses on eligibility (Section I Clause 4) and minimum qualification criteria (Section III - Evaluation and Qualification Criteria), to qualify for the award of the contract.** In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 of the World Bank's Guidelines setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
4. The Commissioner, Erode City Municipal Corporation has to invites online bids for the construction of works detailed below in the table. The bidders may submit bids for any or all of the works indicated therein.
5. Bidding documents are available online on www.tntenders.gov.in from 29.01.2021 to 19.02.2021 at a free of cost.
6. For submission of the bid, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the Contracting Authorities authorised by Government of India for issuing DSC. Aspiring bidder may obtain the same from the website www.tntenders.gov.in at free cost.
7. All Bids must be accompanied by a bid security of the amount specified for the work in the table below, drawn in favour of **The Commissioner, Erode City Municipal Corporation Bid security will have to be valid for 90 days beyond the validity of the bid.** Procedure for submission of bid security is described in Para 9.
8. Bids must be submitted online on www.tntenders.gov.in on or before 15:00 hours on 19.02.2021 and will be opened online on 22.02.2021 at 15:30 hours. Any bid or modifications to bid (including discount) received outside e- procurement system will not be considered. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time. The electronic bidding system would not allow any late submission of bids.
9. The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and registration on e-procurement website (if not previously registered); (b) original bid security in approved form; and (c) original affidavit regarding non-disqualification of the bidder with respect to the contract. The Commissioner, Erode City Municipal Corporation, 246, Meenachi Sundarar Selai, Erode - 638 001. Before the opening of the Bid is on 22.02.2021, either by post/express/post/courier or by hand, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive and will not be opened.
10. A pre-bid meeting will be held on 05.02.2021 at 11:00 hours at the Office of The Commissioner, Erode City Municipal Corporation to clarify the issues and to answer questions on any matter that may be raised at that stage as stated in ITB Clause 7.4 of 'Instructions to Bidders' of the bidding document. Bidders are advised to download the bidding document prior to the pre-bid meeting in order for bidders to have a good understanding of the scope of work under this contract for discussion and clarification at the pre-bid meeting.

11. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to this bid.

TABLE				
Package No.	Name of Works	Bid Security (Rs.)	Cost of Document (Rs.)	Period of Completion
1.	Restoration of Damaged B.T. Roads in ward no. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 12 & 14. Package-1.	2,12,006/-	Nil	6 Months
2.	Restoration of Damaged B.T. Roads in ward no. 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, 2			

MARKET WATCH

	27-01-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	47410	-1.94
US Dollar	72.92	0.02
Gold	48421	-0.18
Brent oil	55.56	-0.10

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	518.85	-4.80
Asian Paints	2436.60	-77.35
Axios Bank	632.10	-26.30
Bajaj Auto	4146.35	-22.60
Bajaj Finserv	9126.10	-72.80
Bajaj Finance	4845.00	-63.70
Bharti Airtel	570.80	-9.95
BPLC	380.60	-6.70
Britannia Ind	3610.75	-2.80
Cipla	842.50	5.70
Coal India	129.15	-2.70
Divis Lab	3483.05	-86.00
Dr Reddy's Lab	4909.30	-173.10
Eicher Motors	2789.90	-79.65
GAIL (India)	127.70	-5.25
Grasim Ind	1061.55	-8.20
HCL Tech.	955.50	8.00
HDFC	2467.00	-84.40
HDFC Bank	1409.60	-53.25
HDFC Life	682.85	2.45
Hero MotoCorp	3358.55	-116.40
Hindalco	231.40	-8.90
Hind Unilever	2391.30	-8.30
ICICI Bank	522.35	-15.70
IndusInd Bank	820.15	-29.00
Infosys	1301.00	-24.10
Indian Oil Corp	91.40	-2.05
ITC	210.65	2.85
JSW Steel	376.25	-6.20
Kotak Bank	1764.70	-29.70
L&T	1359.85	-1.45
M&M	769.95	-24.60
Maruti Suzuki	7870.90	-110.60
Nestle India Ltd.	17538.10	122.85
NTPC	91.30	-1.90
ONGC	89.70	-1.65
Power Grid Corp	192.35	2.15
Reliance Ind	1895.00	-46.00
SBI Life	881.75	18.90
State Bank	275.65	-5.30
Shree Cement	22820.20	-435.45
Sun Pharma	569.80	-16.60
Tata Motors	267.50	-11.65
Tata Steel	626.00	-25.95
TCS	3261.05	-30.25
Tech Mahindra	997.10	25.05
Titan	1440.70	-59.15
UltraTech Cement	5404.85	36.45
UPL	574.25	-13.90
Wipro	446.45	9.20

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.72	73.04
Euro	88.14	88.53
British Pound	99.84	100.29
Japanese Yen (100)	70.06	70.37
Chinese Yuan	11.24	11.29
Swiss Franc	81.90	82.26
Singapore Dollar	54.83	55.07
Canadian Dollar	57.14	57.40
Malaysian Ringgit	17.96	18.07

Source: Indian Bank

Rane Madras net surges fivefold to ₹21.5 cr.

CHENNAI
Rane Madras Ltd.'s standalone net profit for the third quarter ended December surged more than fivefold to ₹21.5 crore, due to improved sales to original equipment, international and aftermarket customers. Revenue rose to ₹399 crore from ₹280 crore, the company said in a filing. "Cost reduction initiatives continued to yield results," said chairman L. Ganesh.

BoB back in black with Q3 PAT of ₹1,061 crore

MUMBAI
Bank of Baroda reported standalone net profit of ₹1,061 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2020 as compared to a net loss of ₹1,407 crore due to a sharp reduction in provisioning for bad loans. Total income was lower at ₹20,664 crore as compared to ₹21,809 crore in the year earlier. Standalone provisioning and contingency fell to ₹3,957 crore from ₹7,155 crore in the year-earlier period.

Sensex falls 1.9% as FIIs eye exit

Banking stocks, RIL lead losses as investors turn wary ahead of Budget on Feb. 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices fell sharply on Wednesday, extending their losses to a fourth straight session, as foreign funds turned net sellers and domestic investors opted for caution ahead of the Union Budget due to be presented on Feb. 1.

Analysts expect the correction to continue till the presentation of the Budget.

The S&P BSE Sensex tumbled 938 points, or 1.94%, to 47,410 led by banking stocks and Reliance Industries. Top losers included Axis Bank, Titan, IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank and Dr. Reddy's. RIL, which has the highest weight in the index, slid 2.3% as Amazon pursues challenges to its deal to acquire the Future Group's retail assets.

HUL net climbs 19% to ₹1,921 cr., sales rise 21%

Growth across categories spurs profits'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (HUL) reported standalone third-quarter net profit rose 19% to ₹1,921 crore, from ₹1,616 crore in the year-earlier period on broad-based growth across categories.

"We have significantly dialled up investments behind our portfolio and in building future-fit capabilities," the consumer goods maker said in a regulatory filing. "Net revenue management and savings agenda has enabled us to drive a healthy bottom line."

Axis Bank Q3 profit falls 36% to ₹1,117 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Private sector lender Axis Bank on Wednesday reported a 36.4% decline in standalone net profit to ₹1,116.60 crore for the third quarter ended December 2020. The bank had posted a net profit of ₹1,757 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

Total income slipped to ₹19,274.39 crore as against ₹19,494.87 crore in the year-earlier period, Axis Bank said in a regulatory filing.

"Reported profits after tax for the quarter are adversely impacted to the extent of ₹1,050 crore on account of prudent expenses and provisioning charges during the quarter," it said.

It may be recalled that on

TVS elders to execute family arrangement pact

MFA to include amalgamation of firms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Senior nominated members of the TVS family on Wednesday decided to implement the memorandum of family arrangement (MFA), through a composite scheme of amalgamation and arrangement to be filed with the National Company Law Tribunal, (NCLT) Chennai Bench.

The MFA will include amalgamation of T.V. Sundram Iyengar & Sons Pvt. Ltd., Sundaram Industries Pvt. Ltd., Southern Roadways Pvt. Ltd., and Trichur Sundaram Santhanam & Family Pvt. Ltd., TVS group family members said.

It may be recalled that on



Shedding stock: Scheduled derivatives expiry also added to the pressure. ■ PAUL NORONHA

The Nifty 50 index fell 271 points, or 1.91%, to 13,968.

Net sellers

Foreign funds were net sellers of ₹662 crore of equities on the bourses on Monday, NSDL data show.

"Several factors like negative foreign flows combined

with not so encouraging earnings' announcements dented sentiment," said Ajit Mishra, VP, research, Religare Broking.

"Caution ahead of the Union Budget and scheduled derivatives expiry also added to the pressure. In line with the benchmark, all the other indices, barring FMCG, ended with losses wherein metal, realty and auto were the top losers," Mr. Mishra said.

He said he expects the Nifty to test 13,700.

"This decline of Nifty by 800 points from the top ought to be seen as a healthy correction and an interim consolidation phase before the markets begin the next leg of movement," said Pankaj Pandey, head of research, ICICI Direct.

Job loss, income shocks pose 'highly negative' risks: Moody's

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's high government debt could limit its ability to give a fiscal stimulus to the economy, Moody's Investors Service noted in a report on credit conditions in Asia.

Job losses, income shocks and the gaps in health infrastructure pose 'highly negative risks' for the country's growth prospects, Moody's added. "In India, a high government debt burden will limit the extent of fiscal support, although the government has undertaken a num-

ber of measures to improve policy transmission and broader structural reforms," it pointed out.

It warned that the sheer magnitude of the recession would lead to a degree of economic scarring in the

TikTok owner cutting India staff after ban

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

China's ByteDance is cutting its India team and is unsure when it will make a comeback, the firm told employees in a memo on Wednesday, months after its popular TikTok video app was banned.

The move came after India decided to retain its ban on TikTok and 58 other Chinese apps following responses from the firms on issues such as compliance.

The Indian government recently sent notices to Chinese firms, informing them that the ban, announced in June, would continue. India had banned the 59 Chinese apps including TikTok, WeChat and UC Browser, citing national security concerns in the wake of the stand-off in Ladakh. Another 118 apps were banned in September and 43 more in November.

The recent notice was sent after reviewing the responses from the Chinese firms, which had been given a chance to respond to the June move.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT had said in its order last year that it had received "credible inputs that such apps pose [a] threat to sovereignty and integrity of India" and that it had taken the measure "in view of information available they are engaged in activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order."

"Since last year, the Indian side has repeatedly used national security as an excuse to prohibit some mobile apps with Chinese background," the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi said in a statement.

"These moves [are] in violation of WTO's non-discriminatory principles and fair competition principles of a market economy and severely damage the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies."

The moves had "hindered the improvement of the Indian business environment and the innovative development of related Indian industries," the Chinese Embassy said. "China-India economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial by nature," it said. "We urge the Indian side to immediately correct its discriminatory measures and avoid causing further damage to bilateral cooperation."

China slams apps ban, urges India to 'correct discriminatory measures'

Govt. has notified firms of extension

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China on Wednesday called on India "to immediately correct its discriminatory measures" over the decision to extend a ban on 59 Chinese apps.

The Indian government recently sent notices to Chinese firms, informing them that the ban, announced in June, would continue. India had banned the 59 Chinese apps including TikTok, WeChat and UC Browser, citing national security concerns in the wake of the stand-off in Ladakh. Another 118 apps were banned in September and 43 more in November.

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FDI inflows hit ₹58.37 bn in April-Nov. '20

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into the country hit a record high of ₹58.37 billion in the first eight months of 2020-21, with equity inflows of nearly \$44 billion, the government said on Wednesday.

"FDI equity inflow received during April to November 2020 is \$43.85 billion. It is the highest ever for first eight months of a financial year and 37% more compared to first 8 months of 2019-20 [\$32.11 billion]," the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade said. Overall FDI inflows had risen 22% over the previous year, the department said.

"Cement prices remained somewhat stable in some of the States, while it had undergone marginal fluctuations in some southern States

England arrives, tough challenge beckons

Indian players also land in batches; teams to practise only from February 2

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

With the close-in cordon surrounding the batsmen, the ball will turn and bounce with shouts of 'howzat' renting the air.

Welcome to the Indian conundrum.

The English team landed here from Sri Lanka on Wednesday to face one of the toughest challenges in cricket – defeating host India in a Test series.

The first of the two Tests in Chennai gets underway on February 5; the teams will start practice only from Feb. 2.

Under quarantine

Skipper Joe Root & Co. joined their teammates including influential all-rounder Ben Stokes – he has the ability to impose his will on a match – who is already under a quarantine in the city.

Also coming in batches here were the Indian team



New assignment: The England team arrives at the Chennai airport ahead of the Test series. ■ PTI

members including skipper Virat Kohli.

They are high on morale after their exploits in Australia.

England will not be short of confidence either after having triumphed 2-0 in a

two-match Test series on pitches offering turn in Sri Lanka.

Driving force
And Root, rediscovering his mojo, was the driving force with innings of 228 in the

first Test and 186 in the second.

The first game in Chennai would be Root's 100th Test – at 49.39 he has an average inching towards 50.00 that so often is the cut-off point for greatness – and it would be a

pity the match would be played before empty stands.

In off-spinner Dom Bess and left-arm bowler Jack Leach, not to forget off-spinning all-rounder Moeen Ali, England has a useful spin attack. These men, though are not in the same league as Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar, who, bowling quicker through the air, ambushed the home team in the 2012 Test series in India.

That series defeat was also inflicted by some scientific and methodical batting from left-handed opener Alastair Cook and some inspirational strokeplay by the gifted Kevin Pietersen, whose 186 on a spiffy wicket in Mumbai has to be rated among the greatest innings against spin in our times.

England, like India, has a worthy pace attack – old warrior James Anderson's swing, Stuart Broad's seam, and Jofra Archer's sheer pace and hostility.

There is plenty to play for. At stake will be pride.

IPL auction on February 18

SPORTS REPORTER
CHENNAI

The mini auction ahead of the 2021 Indian Premier League will be held here on February 18, a day after the second Test between India and England is scheduled to end.

The venue was confirmed on the official IPL twitter handle on Wednesday and will be held at the Hotel ITC Grand Chola.

The eight teams will have a maximum purse of ₹85 crore, the same as last year.

With the short turnaround time between the two editions – the 2020 edition was held from September to November – the purse was not increased this time like it was done in the previous two years.

Ganguly hospitalised again

'Vital parameters stable, stenting procedure will be done'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Nearly three weeks after being discharged from a hospital following a mild heart attack, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly, on Wednesday, was admitted to Apollo Hospital following chest discomfort.

"Dr. Saptarshi Basu and Dr. Saroj Mondal are attending to Ganguly."

"Dr. Aftab Khan will do the stenting tomorrow (Thursday) in the presence of Dr. Devi Shetty," a senior



Sourav Ganguly. ■ FILE PHOTO

the hospital said." There is no change in his parameters since his last hospitalisation and his vital parameters are stable."

Ganguly was hospitalised on January 2 and underwent angioplasty the same day.

The former India skipper was discharged from the hospital on January 7.

Anomalies observed

According to reports, the ECG (Electrocardiogram) on the 48-year-old cricket administrator showed some anomalies.

Kohli and Rohit stay one and two

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

India captain Virat Kohli and senior batsman Rohit Sharma retained their number one and two position respectively in the ICC rankings for ODI batsmen, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah remained at the third spot in the bowler's list.

New Zealand's Ross Taylor and Australia skipper Aaron Finch round up the top five in the batsmen's list.



Virat and Rohit. ■ FILE PHOTO

Solanki seals it with a last-ball six

Steers Baroda past Haryana with an unbeaten 71; Lomror sets up Rajasthan's win

MUSHTAQ ALI

SPORTS BUREAU

A stunning unbeaten 46-ball 71 from Vishnu Solanki (4x4, 5x6) helped Baroda snatch victory off the final delivery against Haryana in the quarterfinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy on Wednesday.

Needing 15 off the last three balls and five off one, Solanki pulled out the helicopter shot to flick Sumit Kumar down the ground for six.

Solanki, who came in with Baroda 33 for one, added 68 with captain Kedar Devdhar (43, 40b, 2x4, 2x6) in a chase of 149.

The two did not take undue risks against Haryana's trump card Yuzvendra Chahal (one for 15 off four overs), but targeted the other spinners, Jayant Yadav and Rahul Tewatia.

Devdhar got stuck into Tewatia, collecting 12 off an over while Solanki scored 13 off Jayant.

Baroda was threatening to take the game away from Haryana when Sumit prised out Devdhar for 43. The asking rate started to climb after a few tight overs at the death, but Solanki had the final say.

Earlier, Haryana, asked to bat, lost openers Chaitanya Bishnoi and Guntashveer Singh within the first five overs.



What a finish! With 15 needed off the final three deliveries, Baroda's Solanki, right, hit a six, four and six. ■ TWITTER/BCCI

ers. A third-wicket stand of 80 between Shivam Chauhan (35, 29b, 3x4, 1x6) and Himanshu Rana (49, 40b, 7x4) saw Haryana reach a promising 105 for two.

However, once Chauhan and Rana were dismissed in successive overs, Haryana lost the momentum and finished at 148 for seven, a total it nearly defended.

On the rampage

In the other quarterfinal, Rajasthan rode on Mahipal Lomror's unbeaten 78 (37b, 5x4, 5x6) and contributions from Bharat Sharma (38)

and Ankit Lamba (38) to score 164 for five against Bihar. The latter fell short by 16 runs despite Mangal Maharaj's best efforts. He remained unbeaten on 68.

The scores:

Haryana 148/7 in 20 overs (Himanshu Rana 49, Shivam Chauhan 35) lost to Baroda 150/2 in 20 overs (Kedar Devdhar 43, Vishnu Solanki 71 n.o.).

Rajasthan 164/5 in 20 overs (Bharat Sharma 38, Ankit Lamba 38, Mahipal Lomror 78 n.o.) bt Bihar 148/4 in 20 overs (Mangal Maharaj 68 n.o.).

The semifinal line-up: January 29: Tamil Nadu vs. Rajasthan, noon; Punjab vs. Baroda, 7 p.m.

ICC's new award: Pant, Ashwin in fray

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

R. Ashwin and Rishabh Pant will be in contention for the newly-introduced 'Player-of-the-Month' awards announced by the ICC on Wednesday.

Besides Ashwin and Pant, two other Indians, Mohammed Siraj and T. Natarajan, are also in the fray.

Sindhu and Srikanth lose their openers

The two suffer defeats after winning the first game of their matches

WORLD TOUR FINALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BANGKOK

P.V. Sindhu and K. Srikanth squandered an opening-game advantage before suffering close defeats in their first Group-B matches at the \$1.5 million HSBC BWF World Tour Finals here on Wednesday.

World champion Sindhu lost to World No. 1 Tai Tzu Ying of Taiwan 21-19, 12-21, 17-21, while World No. 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark got

the better of Srikanth 15-21, 21-16, 21-18 in 77 minutes.



P.V. Sindhu...
close contest. ■ AFP

much better in training before I came here. I had my chances today, I could have won from 17-16 in the third."

Sindhu, who had won this title in 2018, will next play home favourite Ratchanok Intanon, who had handed her a defeat last week, while Srikanth, ranked 14th, faces fourth seed Wang Tzu Wei of Taiwan on Thursday.

The results: Men: Anders Antonsen (Den) bt K. Srikanth 15-21, 21-16, 21-18; Women: Tai Tzu Ying (Tpe) bt P.V. Sindhu 19-21, 21-12, 21-17.

Kanth said "I can't say I'm happy with the way I played today, because I was playing

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TV PICKS

BWF World Tour Finals: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 9.30 a.m.

Pakistan v South Africa: First Test, Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10.30 a.m.

ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Friday).

IN BRIEF



Luu is 10th woman to achieve double in ODIs

DURBAN
South Africa allrounder Sune Luus has become just the 10th woman to achieve the double of 1,000 runs and 100 wickets in ODIs. The 25-year-old cricketer achieved the feat during the third ODI against Pakistan at the Kingsmead Cricket Stadium. ANI

Indian women's hockey team loses to Argentina

Buenos Aires
The Indian women's hockey team put up a valiant fight before losing 3-2 to World No. 2 Argentina in a thrilling match here.

The result: Argentina 3 (Micaela Retegui 25, Augustina Gorzelany 50, Granatto Maria 57) bt India 2 (Sharmila 34, Gurjot Kaur 40). PTI

Missed chances cost Kerala Blasters dear

BAMBOLIN
It was a story of missed chances for Kerala Blasters as they were held to a goalless draw by Jamshedpur FC in the Hero Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, Bambolin, on Wednesday. On a very unlucky day, Blasters were denied thrice in the space of five minutes towards the end of the first half as Gary Hooper, Jordan Murray and Lalithangha Khawlring 'Puiea' hit the crossbar. The story was virtually the same in the second half and this time it was Murray who hit the ball wide on a few occasions.

Thursday's match: Hyderabad vs Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.



Javier Tebas. ■ FILE PHOTO

Murray to play lower-tier Challenger in Italy

ROME
Andy Murray has entered a lower-tier Challenger tournament in Italy next month after withdrawing from the Australian Open due to coronavirus. Murray is listed to play an indoor tournament in Biella starting on February 15, the Italian Tennis Federation said on Wednesday. AP



Arsenal signs Odegaard on loan from Real

LONDON
Arsenal has signed Norway midfielder Martin Odegaard on loan from Real Madrid for the rest of the season, the latest step in the career of a player who is looking to fulfil the promise he showed after making his international debut as a 15-year-old. Odegaard has been at Madrid since 2015 and has had loan spells at Heerenveen and Vitesse Arnhem in the Netherlands and then at Real Sociedad last season. AP

Shai and Kyle Hope test positive for COVID-19

BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)
West Indies opener Shai Hope and his brother Kyle have been ruled out of the Barbados squad ahead of the Regional Super50 Cup after testing positive for COVID-19. "Shai and Kyle have tested positive for COVID-19 and will miss the Cricket West Indies CG Insurance Super50 Cup in Antigua," the Barbados Cricket Association said in a statement. PTI

Man City zooms to the top

Arsenal extracts a measure of revenge over Southampton



Star turn: Ilkay Gundogan, scoring his second, led Manchester City's rout of West Brom. ■ REUTERS

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Manchester City thrashed West Brom 5-0 to move back top of the Premier League on Tuesday as Arsenal aided its push towards the European places with a 3-1 win at Southampton.

City has now won 11 consecutive games since West Brom earned a shock 1-1 draw at the Etihad last month.

Pep Guardiola's men have hit top form since and did not miss the presence of the injured Kevin De Bruyne in blowing away the Baggies by

scoring four goals before half-time.

Ilkay Gundogan opened the floodgates by curling home from the edge of the box before Joao Cancelo's controversial strike doubled City's lead.

Distracted defence

The West Brom defence was distracted by a wrongly raised offside flag before the Portuguese full-back found the net, but the goal stood after a VAR review.

Gundogan then took his tally to seven goals in his last eight league games before Riyad Mahrez and Raheem Sterling rounded off the

scoring.

West Brom has now conceded 17 goals in Sam Allardyce's four home games in charge as it remains second bottom of the table, six points off safety.

Fine run

Guardiola's former assistant Mikel Arteta is also enjoying a fine run of form as Arsenal has taken 16 from the last possible 18 points.

The Gunners avenged their FA Cup to Southampton at the weekend despite falling behind after three minutes to Stuart Armstrong's sweet strike.

Nicolas Pepe quickly le-

velled before Bukayo Saka rounded Alex McCarthy and slotted home to give the visitors a half-time lead.

Alexandre Lacazette sealed a vital three points 18 minutes from time as Arsenal moved up to eighth and within five points of the top four.

The results: Crystal Palace 2 (Zaha 3, Batshuayi 90) lost to West Ham 3 (Soucek 9, 25, Dawson 65); Newcastle 1 (Almiron 57) lost to Leeds 2 (Raphinha 17, Harrison 61); Southampton 1 (Armstrong 3) lost to Arsenal 3 (Pepe 8, Saka 39, Lacazette 73); West Brom 0 lost to Manchester City 5 (Gundogan 6, 30, Cancelo 20, Mahrez 45, Sterling 57).

TATA STEEL MASTERS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

P. Harikrishna was required to dig deep into his reserves to hold Spain's David Anton Guijar in 45 moves in the ninth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament at Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands, on Tuesday.

With 4.5 points, Harikrishna shares the seventh spot with former leader Nils Grandelius, who lost to Magnus Carlsen.

Firouzja held

Overnight leader and Iranian prodigy Alireza Firouzja drew with fellow-teenager Russia's Andrey Esipenko 45, Sterling 57).

three after Siraj approached an umpire to voice his concerns before police stepped in to take six male fans from their seats.

"CA confirms that members of the Indian cricket team were subjected to racial abuse," CA integrity chief Sean Carroll said in a statement.

Play was held up for about 10 minutes on day

responsible. "CA's investigation concluded that the spectators filmed and/or photographed by media in the Brewongle Stand concourse at the conclusion of the 86th over on day three of the Test did not engage in racist behaviour."

CA said it had submitted its report on the investigation to the International Cricket Council (ICC). The board added that it was awaiting confirmation from police that they had completed their own investigation.

Harikrishna holds Anton; three share lead

reach six points.

Fabiano Caruana and Anish Giri won their games to share the lead with Firouzja.

With four rounds to go, Carlsen is one-point off the leaders.

Ninth-round results:

David Anton Guijar (Esp, 3.5) drew with P. Harikrishna (4.5); Alireza Firouzja (FIDE, 6) drew with Andrey Esipenko (Rus, 5.5); Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 5) bt Nils Grandelius (Swe, 4.5).

Radoslaw Wojtaszek (Pol, 3.5) lost to Fabiano Caruana (USA, 6); Anish Giri (Ned, 6) bt Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 5.5) drew with Alexander Donchenko (Ger, 3); Aryan Tari (Nor, 3.5) drew with Jan Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 3.5).

Gokulam to appeal against transfer ban

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

Gokulam Kerala is likely to appeal against the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Players' Status Committee's transfer ban. The club was handed over a two-window ban following a complaint from its former player Malemngamba Meitei.

The midfielder from Manipur was sacked by Gokulam after one season, ahead of the three-year contract. Sources at the club said that it was due to disciplinary reasons that Meitei was asked to leave.

The player complained to the Players' Status Committee demanding a compensation of about ₹30 lakh, according to sources. It is learnt that the committee has arrived at an amount of ₹18 lakh.

The club, the sources said, would file an appeal to lift the ban after making the payment to Meitei, who is now with Bengaluru United.

Wildcard for Gujrathi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi gained a wildcard to be part of the elite 16-player field, headed by World champion Magnus Carlsen, in the Opera Euro Rapid online chess tournament from February 6 to 14.

The field comprises the top eight players from the \$1.5 million Champions Tour standings, two by public voting, and six wildcards.

After three days of preliminary round-robin league, the top-eight will battle it out on a knockout basis for the \$30,000 winner's prize.

The players: Magnus Carlsen (Nor), Ding Liren (Chn), Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus), Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra), Levon Aronian (Arm), Alexander Grischuk (Rus), Wesley So (USA), Tiemour Radjabov (Aze), Anish Giri (Ned), Leinier Dominguez (USA), Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol), Hikaru Nakamura (USA), Vaidit Gujrathi, Daniil Dubov (Rus), Sam Shankland (USA) and Matthias Bluebaum (Ger).

AFC Cup group stage draw

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KUALA LUMPUR

Indian Super League team ATK Mohun Bagan was, on Wednesday, clubbed with Bangladeshi's Basundhara Kings, Maldives' Maziya S&RC and one yet-to-qualify side in the Group D of this season's AFC Cup.

The group stage draw of the continent's second-tier club competition involving 39 teams – an increase of three from 2019 – was held online here.

The Group D (South Zone) matches of the AFC Cup will commence on May 14 at a yet-to-be-decided centralised venue.

Financial control has helped weather crisis, says LaLiga's Tebas

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Most of the Spanish clubs have successfully weathered the financial crisis brought about by the pandemic due to the systems put in place by LaLiga, feels its president Javier Tebas.

Speaking to a select Indian media, Tebas said the financial controls introduced by La Liga seven years ago was proving effective, allowing the Spanish clubs to deal with falling revenues far better than other big football leagues around the world.

"If we look at the figures available, the Spanish clubs, excluding the big ones like Barcelona and Real Madrid, owed €300 million before the financial control was put in place. Now, prior to the pandemic, they were earning €300 million," said Tebas. "The economic control has also meant that the Spanish clubs can handle any new financial crisis like the one the world is facing now."

"This means that the clubs are financially sound and can overcome the situation despite having less revenues. This is something other leagues can learn from. Prior to a season, La-

Liga determines how much the clubs can spend on the salaries of the players and the technical staff. We do studies on their spending and the revenues, and hence this has become quite a successful model," said the LaLiga president.

Not serious
The financial issues plaguing global giant Barcelona is not that serious and the club will be able to manage it, he felt.

"We have been reading about Barcelona's financial problems, but the situation is not as bad as the headlines say. You need to know that if you have a debt, it needs to be in line with your revenues. I think Barcelona has a billion (Euros) in debt, but they also generate one of the highest revenues in the world. So when the pandemic comes to an end, Barcelona can easily overcome its problems," Tebas said.

"This means that the clubs are financially sound and can overcome the situation despite having less revenues. This is something other leagues can learn from. Prior to a season, La-

Remarkable fightback by Riya Bhatia

SPORTS BUREAU
NEW DELHI

Top seed Riya Bhatia clawed back from the brink to register a 4-6, 7-6(3), 6-3 victory over Lucie Nguyen Tan of France in the first round of the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Cairo on Wednesday.

Riya also moved into the doubles quarterfinals along with Bhojana Marinovic of Serbia.

The results: \$15,000 ITF women, Cairo, Egypt: Singles (first round): Riya Bhatia bt Lucie Nguyen Tan (Fra) 4-6, 7-6(3), 6-3.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Anastasia Sukhotina & Anastasia Zolotareva (Rus) bt Merina Refaat (Egy) & Sharannya Gaware 6-0, 6-1; Bojana Marinovic (Srb) & Riya Bhatia bt Yasmin Ezzat (Egy) & Smriti Bhasin 6-4, 6-1.

\$15,000 ITF men, Cairo, Egypt: Singles (first round): Naoki Tajima (Jpn) bt Muthu Aadhiya Senthilkumar 6-1, 6-1.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Alejo Lorenzo Llangu Lavalen & Juan Bautista Torres (Arg) bt Yash Chaurasia & Tushar Madan 6-2, 6-4; Yurii Dzhavakian (Ukr) & Piotr Matuzewski (Pol) bt Aryan Go'veas & Dhruv Sunish 6-2, 7-5; Taisei Ichikawa & Selta Watanabe (Jpn) bt Faisal Qamar & Muthu Aadhiya Senthilkumar 7-6(2), 6-4.

Beal does well
Washington's Bradley Beal, the league's leading scorer, tallied 33 points on 12-of-28 shooting, while Russell Westbrook, traded for Wall in the off-season, added 19 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists.

In Salt Lake City, Royce O'Neale scored a career-high 20 points and Rudy Gobert dominated the inte-

Wall propels Rockets past Wizards

Jazz on song with ninth straight win

NBA

REUTERS
HOUSTON

John Wall scored a team-high 24 points in his first match-up with his former team as host Houston Rockets earned a 107-88 victory over the short-handed Washington Wizards on Tuesday.

Eric Gordon and Victor Oladipo added 20 apiece for Houston, which played without center Christian Wood (ankle).

DeMarcus Cousins tallied 19 points, 11 rebounds and five steals for Houston, which played without center Christian Wood (ankle).

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DELHI ROUND-UP

Big win for Ace Academy

Harshit Shaukeen topped with 86 and Abhiraj Gagan Singh made an unbeaten 45 as Ace Academy thumped Airliner Academy by nine wickets in the Bal Bhawan Premier League.

The scores: Sporting Club 249/9 in 40 overs (Vikas Solanki 83, Saurav Dagar 67, Rohan Rathi 35) lost to RSC 252/4 in 39.1 overs (Yash Sehrawat 101, Manish Dhillon 101 n.o.).

Sarthak, Suraj shine
Sarthak Ray's 66 and Suraj Kumar's 3/30 helped Push Academy defeat Rohtak Road Gymkhana