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NEARBY



Punjab govt. extends restrictions till April 10

CHANDIGARH As COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to increase in Punjab, with the U.K. strain emerging as the most prevalent, the State government on Tuesday decided to extend the ongoing restrictions till April 10.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 5

Six children killed in fire in Bihar village

PATNA At least six children were burnt to death when a fire broke out in the house they were playing in on Tuesday, in Araria district of Bihar. The police said the children, all aged between three and six years, were playing in a thatched hut filled with husk.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 5



OPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

SGPC flays farm laws, demands withdrawal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee on Tuesday condemned the three farm laws and urged the Central government to revoke them immediately. A resolution condemning the laws was passed during the general house meeting of the SGPC in Amritsar.

According to an official statement, the resolution stated that the farm laws would prove disastrous for the farming community. The SGPC resolved to firmly stand with all sections, including the farmers, who were involved in the struggle against the laws. It also demanded a probe into the violence on January 26 in New Delhi during the 'tractor rally', terming the role of government agencies as "suspicious". The committee demanded the release of youth and farmers arrested following the incident.

Resolution passed

The SGPC, while presenting an annual budget of ₹912 crore for the financial year 2021-2022, also passed a resolution asking the United Nations to observe 2021 as the "International Year of Human Rights" to mark the 400th birth anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It urged the Central government to observe the day of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom as "Religious Tolerance Day". Another resolution urged the Centre to reopen the Kartarpur corridor that has been shut on account of COVID-19.

Another resolution alleged suppression of minorities, including the Sikhs, in the country. "Minorities are being targeted through direct and indirect intervention," it said, urging the government to work towards protection of the rights and freedom of all religions.

Surge in cases a cause for concern: Centre

Pune, Bengaluru among 10 districts with high active caseload

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The surge in the number of COVID-19 cases has gone "from bad to worse", said V.K. Paul, member (health), NITI Aayog, as India registered 56,211 new infections in the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Tuesday.

At a press conference, Dr. Paul said Pune (59,475), Mumbai (46,248), Nagpur (45,322), Thane (35,264), and Bengaluru Urban (16,259) were among the 10 districts across the country with the most number of active cases.

He added, "We are facing an increasingly severe and intense situation, more so surely in some districts. But the whole country is potentially at risk and therefore all efforts to contain and save lives should be taken."

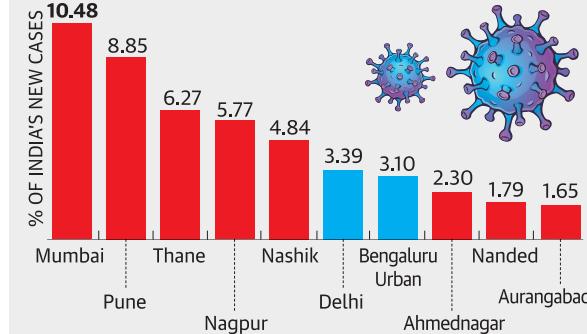
'Urgent action needed' Union Health Secretary Rakesh Bhushan stressed the need to take urgent action to curb the surge.

He said States had been asked to ramp up testing, with focus on RT-PCR tests. They have also been directed to ensure effective and prompt isolation of those infected and tracing their close contacts while strengthening the public and private healthcare resources.

"Ensuring COVID-appro-

Unabated surge

Eight of the 10 districts reporting the highest share of new COVID-19 cases on Monday were in Maharashtra. Mumbai accounted for over 10% of the country's new cases



Fine flyers flouting norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday instructed airports to increase surveillance to ensure compliance of COVID-19 protocols on their premises and to levy fines for violations.

"All airport operators are requested to ensure that the instructions on COVID-19

protocol from the standpoint of wearing face-masks properly, covering nose and mouth, as well as maintaining social distancing within the airport premises are followed scrupulously," the DGCA circular read. It asked airports to join hands with the local police and impose fines on passengers who flout COVID-19 norms.

priate behaviour and saturation of vaccination for priority age groups" in districts reporting a surge in cases was also a priority, he said.

The average national positivity rate stood at 5.65% last week, he added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

RELATED REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 10

Manipur retracts letter on refugees

Mizoram plans to include Myanmar exiles under MGNREGS



Safe passage: A March 20 photo of people crossing the Tiau river which divides the India-Myanmar border, in Mizoram. ■ AP

The Manipur government has withdrawn a letter issued last week directing officials to not set up any camps for Myanmar nationals crossing the border into India and to "politely turn away" those seeking refuge.

Meanwhile, even though the Union Home Ministry asserted that the refugees should be identified and deported, the Mizoram govern-

ment is planning to provide them employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

humanitarian steps had recently taken all steps, including taking them to Imphal, to treat the injured Myanmar nationals. The State government has been taking all

measures to avoid this misunderstanding, I am directed to convey the decision of the government that it has decided to withdraw the letter dated 26.03.2021 mentioned above," Mr. Prakash added.

In the March 26 letter to the Deputy Commissioners of five districts bordering Myanmar, Mr. Prakash had said that in case of grievous injuries, medical attention may be provided on "humanitarian considerations" and also directed that Aadhaar enrolment "should be stopped immediately and Aadhaar enrolment kits taken into safe custody."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Kerala was betrayed for a few pieces of gold: Modi

STAFF REPORTER

PALAKKAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday compared the incumbent Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala to Judas.

"Judas betrayed Lord Christ for a few coins. The LDF betrayed Kerala for a few pieces of gold," Mr. Modi said while addressing an election rally of the BJP at Fort Maidan here.

Mr. Modi went on to attack both the LDF and the United Democratic Front (UDF), saying that both fronts were engaged in a match-fixing game.

Calling upon youth to reject the LDF and the UDF, Mr. Modi said they both were masters of vote-bank politics and shared the same objective of making money.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

LDF following 'corporate manifesto', says Priyanka

STAFF REPORTER

KOLLAM

Accusing the Left Democratic Front (LDF) of following a "corporate manifesto" despite swearing allegiance to the Communist manifesto, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi said the Kerala government was trying to assert a borderline fascist culture in the state.

"Just like the Narendra Modi government at the

Centre, the LDF government's agenda is to sell the assets of Kerala to corporates," she said while campaigning for the United Democratic Front candidates at Karunagappally on Tuesday.

Urging the voters to choose well, Ms. Gandhi said Kerala had seen a politics of "fear, fraud and favouritism" during the past five years.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



MOCK INTERVIEW CSE-2020

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Former Ambassador to South Korea, Uzbekistan
- Dr. Bala Prasad (Retd. IFS)**
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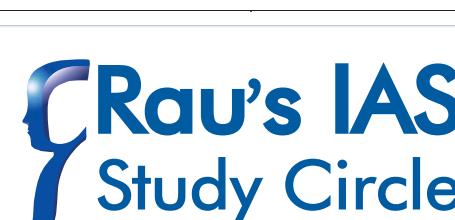
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Fire breaks out on sixth floor of ISBT

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A fire broke out on the sixth floor of the Inter State Bus Terminus (ISBT) at Kashmere Gate, where the office of the Family and Child Welfare was located, on Tuesday, officials said.

According to fire officials, the information regarding the blaze was received at 2.36 p.m.

Nine fire tenders were rushed to the spot, the officials said, adding that the blaze was doused at 3.30 pm. Luckily, no one got injured in the fire accident, they added.

Couple found dead in Alipur farmhouse

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man allegedly hanged himself after killing his wife at a farmhouse in north Delhi's Alipur, the police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday. According to the police, the man who worked as a security guard there used to live in the servant quarters. A quarrel broke out between the couple after playing Holi.

The man suspected his wife of having an extramarital affair. The man was in an inebriated state.

At 6 p.m., their relatives found the couple dead, the police said.

The relatives told the police that the couple had a fight after the man inquired about his wife's new phone.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)



Motorists caught in a dust storm in Delhi on Tuesday.

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Gusty winds of 40 kmph provide relief from heat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Strong winds, gusting up to 40 kmph, swept across the Capital on Tuesday with several parts of the city experiencing dust storms in the afternoon. It brought some relief to the residents.

The maximum temperature settled at 37.9°C Celsius, which was six degrees above normal for this time of the year, while the minimum settled at 19°C Celsius, which was one degree above normal for this time of the year.

Though the temperatures were still higher than nor-

mal, it was cooler than the 40.1°C recorded on Monday, which was eight degrees above normal making it the hottest day in March in the past 76 years.

The last time the temperature in March was higher was on March 31, 1945, when Delhi recorded a maximum of 40.5°C Celsius.

The forecast for March 31 reads mainly clear sky with strong dust-raising winds between 30-40 kmph during the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 36° and 18°C Celsius respectively.

Continue the good work

He said that the Board aims to continue the work done in the last six years that has changed the perception of government schools in the country.

M.P. Police team arrests man over cousin's death

He had posted her morphed photos

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A team of Madhya Pradesh Police arrested a man from Patel Nagar of central Delhi for allegedly hacking the social media account of his cousin's boyfriend and posting her morphed pictures to take revenge, said an officer on Tuesday.

"The accused was detained and handed over to the M.P. police. The accused said he committed the crime in order to take revenge on his cousin over some personal issue," said the officer.

The officer said that the woman ended her life last year, allegedly because her morphed photos were uploaded on the Internet.

During initial probe, her fiancé was the main suspect.

However, later when he too lodged a complaint with the police that his account was hacked, an FIR was registered in Madhya Pradesh and investigation was taken up. A team of M.P. Police approached their Delhi counterpart with the details of the accused.

According to the fire department, a call about the fire at JJ Colony in Bawana was received around 12.35 p.m. Fifteen fire tenders were rushed to the spot, it said.

The flames were doused by 2 p.m. The cause of the fire is being ascertained.

Schools to focus on holistic development

Sisodia conducts first Delhi Board of School Education meeting; rote learning to be discouraged

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday said that the Delhi Board of School Education will bring in the next generation reforms in education and changes in the evaluation process, which will move away from rote learning and encourage a holistic development of a student.

Mr. Sisodia who is the president of the Board conducted its first meeting after it was registered under the Society Registration Act, 1860. The meeting was attended by nominated and ex-officio members of the Board.

The government plans to rollout the new Board in selected schools from the academic session 2021-2022.

Continue the good work

He said that the Board aims to continue the work done in the last six years that has changed the perception of government schools in the country.

60 shanties gutted in Bawana fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Around 60 shanties were gutted in a fire that broke out in a slum cluster in Delhi's Bawana on Tuesday, officials said.

No injuries were reported, they said.

According to the fire department, a call about the fire at JJ Colony in Bawana was received around 12.35 p.m. Fifteen fire tenders were rushed to the spot, it said.

The flames were doused by 2 p.m. The cause of the fire is being ascertained.

A NEW APPROACH

March 6:
Cabinet approves
Delhi Board of
School Education

March 19:
Society for the
Board registered

THREE-FOLD PURPOSE
OF THE BOARD

1. End practice of rote learning and encourage holistic development of every learner
2. Emphasis on continuous formative assessments
3. Encourage a growth mindset among students

We have to ensure that our children are not only efficient in their subjects but at the same time they are deeply connected to their family, society and nation. It will be a partner of learning and not just an authority of testing

Manish Sisodia, Education Minister

FEATURES

- Employ effective modern technology to ensure a personalised learning experience for students

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT

ing". He added that the government wants to encourage a growth mindset among students, which would be strengthened by making it part of regular assessment.

"We have to ensure that our children are not only efficient in their subjects but are also deeply connected to their family, society and nation. On the one hand, our goal is that the learner is able to use the knowledge for the purpose of profession/ industry for livelihood, but on the other hand we must ensure that the learner is ready to use his/her knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of his/her family, society and the nation at large with full responsibility," Mr. Sisodia said.

Teachers' feedback
The Board, he said will also empower teachers to achieve their full potential by giving them timely feedback on specific actions they take to help every child. It will also use modern technology to ensure a personalised learning experience for students.

"Artificial intelligence, game-based assessments will be put to use to create a system where every student is regularly evaluated on the basis of his/her strengths and enters the next phase of their life with a deep understanding of their unique strengths," he said.

Ex-BJP leader found dead in park; note recovered

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Former West Delhi BJP vice-president was found dead in a park in Hari Nagar on the day of Holi. A note has been recovered, the police said.

A senior police officer said that a call was received around 5 p.m. on Monday stating that a man had ended his life at Jheel Wala Park behind a school in Hari Nagar.

When the police reached the spot, the man was found dead on a grill near the lake.

The man was then identified as a resident of Fateh Nagar and a lawyer by profession. His family was informed and his son reached the spot to identify him.

"A two-page note was recovered and its contents are being verified. He had an argument at home before he left the house," the officer said.

The officer said that no legal action has been taken so far and inquest proceedings have been initiated. However, the allegations made in the note are being looked into, he added.

The man was then identified as a resident of Fateh Nagar and a lawyer by profession. His family was informed and his son reached the spot to identify him.

30% less challans this Holi compared to 2020

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A total of 3,446 challans were issued on Holi this year, nearly 30% less as compared to last year, the police said on Tuesday. Two accidents were also reported, they said.

The police said that 1,255

dangerous driving and 2,898 for other traffic violations in 2020. The police said that a total of 72 cases were registered for violation of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority guidelines and four incidents of gatherings were reported.

The police said that 871 persons were prosecuted and 1,696 vehicles were impounded.

Arrangements were made to ensure that DDMA guidelines over COVID-19 norms were followed and senior officers, including Commissioner of Police, visited officers on the ground to boost their morale.

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by Mr. Abhishek Saraf (AIR 8, CSE 2019)
Interview Score : 190 - CSE 2019, 193 - CSE 2018, 193 - CSE 2017

- Do's and Don'ts while filling up DAF.
- Approach to analyze DAF.

Session 2 Facing the Interview

Live session : Date : 3rd April'21 1.00 PM to 3.00 PM

by Mr. Abhishek Saraf

- Ways to answers questions on areas of interests, educational achievements, gaps in studies, resignation from previous job,etc.
- Approach for situation & opinion based questions and questions on leadership, social issues, etc.

Session 3 Cadre Policy & Service Preferences

by Senior Bureaucrat

- In-depth analysis of various services, cadre policies and service preferences.

Session 4 Budget & Economic Survey

by Mr. Vibhas Jha

- Discussion on highlights and important issues of Budget and Economic Survey 2021.
- Approach to answer opinion based questions related to Budget and Economic Survey.

One to One DAF Discussion

- Discussion on strengths, weaknesses, prizes, scholarships, areas of interest, extra-curricular activities, service preferences, gap in study, optional subject selection, etc.
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RISE 21:40 SET 08:02
THURSDAY, APR. 01
RISE 06:12 SET 18:39
RISE 22:50 SET 08:45
FRIDAY, APR. 02
RISE 06:10 SET 18:40
RISE 23:58 SET 09:34

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 38 19
Safdarjang 38 19
Palam 38 22**Delhi Palam Today**
36°C Drop in day temperature possible, dust raising winds likely during day. A very warm day.**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**
36°C Dryness would increase again. Dry moderate gusty winds would prevail. Sunny warm day likely.© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.**THE HINDU**
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authorship or any statement contained in an advertisement or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the publisher be held responsible for any claim and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.**IN BRIEF****'Look into plea seeking ban on single-use plastic'**
NEW DELHI
Following a plea seeking implementation of the ban on sale of single-use plastic, by stopping inter-State transport of such material between Delhi and Noida, the NGT directed the Noida Authority and State Pollution Control Board to look into the plea and take action. A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice A.K. Goel said, "While adverse effect of single-use plastic is well acknowledged and once law has been enacted to address such concern, implementation needs to be ensured."

Daily cases drop below 1,000 as testing declines by almost half

On account of Holi, govt. conducted 36K tests compared to 68,000 the day before

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

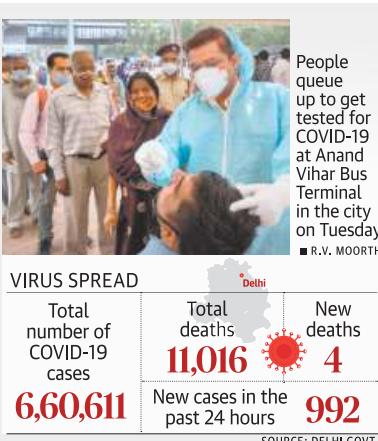
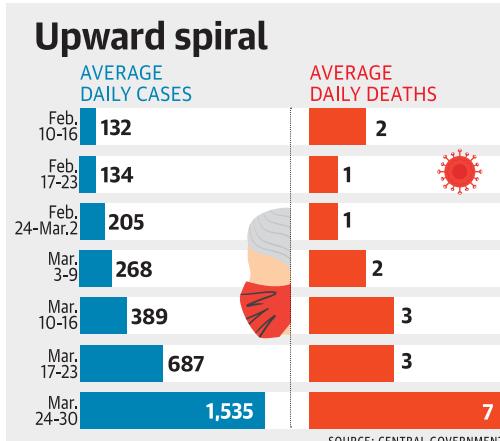
The Capital reported 992 new COVID-19 cases in 24-hours with four deaths, a bulletin released by the Health Department on Tuesday said. It added that 36,757 tests were conducted in a single day, with a positivity rate of 2.7%. The case tally stands at 6,60,611 with 11,016 total fatalities.

The number of tests dipped on account of Holi.

In the 24-hour period before Holi, 68,805 tests were conducted, and 1,904 persons were found positive.

The positivity rate was 2.77%. Also, six deaths were recorded in the same period.

There are currently 7,429 active cases in the Capital out of which 4,832 are under home isolation. Fourteen



private hospitals have run out of ICU beds for COVID-19 patients amid a resurgence in the daily cases.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted that in view of the developing situation in Delhi, the number of normal

and ICU beds reserved for COVID-19 patients is being increased in a few hospitals.

"This will improve bed availability. We are keeping a close watch and we will take all necessary steps. There is nothing to worry

about. But please follow all precautions," he said.

According to government data, over 18,500 challans were issued and fines worth over ₹3.18 crore imposed for COVID-19 protocol violation in the last five days.

Steps to curb pollution successful, says Rai

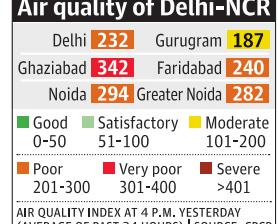
Minister promises action against East civic body for fire at Ghazipur landfill

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday said the measures taken by the Delhi government to curb pollution had been successful, according to two reports published by environmental organisations at both the national and international levels.

Mr. Rai made the remark while presenting two reports: one by iqair.com, a Sweden-based outfit, and an other by the Centre for Science and Environment.

The report by IQ Air stated that the Capital had dropped down to the 10th spot among the most polluted cities in the world. On the other hand,



report also stated that Delhi is the first State to have initiated 13 hotspots, which initiate measures at the micro-level to curb pollution right from dust particles to expansion of the green-belt; the first State to have provided PNG Gas at subsidised rates to its industrial sector," he added.

"According to report IQ Air, among the world's most polluted cities, Delhi has dropped down to the 10th position.

The Minister said it was mentioned in the CSE's report that Delhi was the first State in India to have shut down power plants. It is further stated that Delhi is the first State to have 39 Air Quality Monitoring Systems, he added. "The

He said Delhi launched the EV policy to help curb pollution. That the city provides 24x7 electricity to its citizens had also been a helpful measure in controlling pollution. Power cuts, he said, meant that the industries were operating with diesel-oriented generators which were extremely detrimental for pollution. With 24-hour electricity, this had been avoided extensively.

Mr. Rai also said action will be taken against East civic body for not taking steps to prevent fire at Ghazipur landfill site. A section of the landfill had caught fire on Sunday, worsening pollution levels in the area, he said.

Converting waste to greener : The Taiwan experience

By Baoshuan Ger, Representative of Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India (TECC), Chin-Tsan Wang, Director of Science & Technology Division, TECC

Taiwan-India Cooperation

A Strategic Vision for Taiwan-India Cooperation on Science and technology



Preventing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by converting agricultural wastes into environment value addition seems to be a feasible solution to fight air pollution globally. A circular economy converting agricultural wastes into value-added and eco-friendly products, such as bioethanol or bioplastics is possible. Besides increasing farmers' income, it can also fundamentally solve the environmental pollution caused by the burning of agricultural wastes.

In Taiwan, a win-win circular economy framework has been implemented

effectively on solving environmental pollution and creating economic value which is different from the "take-make-waste" traditional linear model. On the contrary, an advanced circular economy model has been adopted by systematic design to keep products with recyclable features, enhance resource utilization, eliminate waste, avoid pollution of the natural environment, and achieve the principles of 3Rs (Reduce, Recycle and Reuse). Among them, the cycle in a circular economy, uses agricultural wastes as biomass raw materials, which are converted into value-added and environmentally beneficial renewable energy or bio-chemicals through bio-refinery technologies. Those related technologies are gradually entering the phase of mature development and a sustainable approach for moving towards an organic circular economy as is shown.

For its sizable rice fields in the eastern part of the country, including a "Demo Site of Sustainable Economy and Energy" located in Hualien County, Taiwan owns its potential for lignocellulose-rich biomass resources, revealing in the framework of an organic circular economy. Here, Taiwan-India cooperation can create a prospective win-win situation in the future. Taking rice straw as an example, alternative fuels such as bio-ethanol or briquette are used to generate bio-power as a syngas instead of natural gas. They do not produce air pollutants like PM2.5 and simultaneously solve the problems of agricultural wastes and air pollution. As for the final remaining residue and slurry from biogas production, those natural organic fertilizers can also be returned to farmland to solve the problem of soil acidification caused by the use of chemical fertilizers.

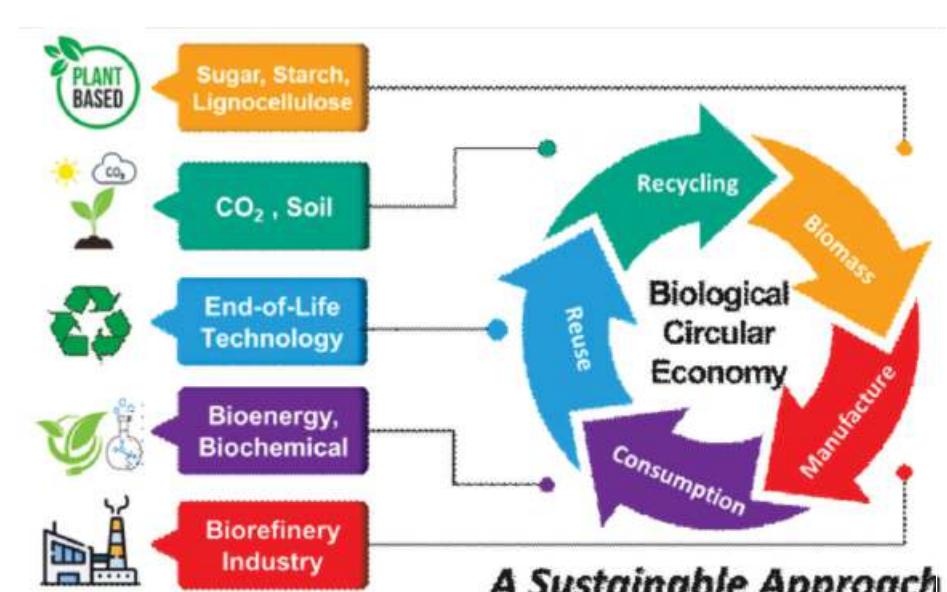
The development of bioplastics is a manifestation of low carbon footprint in the age of bio-recycling economy. As micro-plastics pose a health risk, a growing number of governments have

started to limit and reduce the use of plastics. Therefore, using biomass to produce bioplastics will create new industries and output values. This will lead to a reduction in the dependence on petrochemical plastics as well as indirectly reduce carbon emissions. In addition to being reused, bioplastics based on biomass can also be converted into renewable energy like briquette and organic fertilizers, making recycling and utilization of bioplastics more diversified.

Looking at post-COVID-19 pandemic, politicians, experts, and scholars in many countries have proposed this idea of developing an organic circular economy

pollution. Now the "5+2 industrial innovation program" of regional links will be implemented under the government's promotion of the New Southbound Policy (NSP) through Taiwan-India bilateral scientific and technological cooperation.

The Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) in India is willing to work with India in promoting green energy, organic circular economy industry, and create a bridge between India and Taiwan's technology. A closer and diversified connection can be greatly strengthened between Taiwan and India, agricultural waste can be reduced,



to expand emerging green industries and drive the growth of the green economy. At present, Taiwan has benefited from many years of technical green energy and promotional experiences in organic circular economic projects such as biomass energy, bioplastics, and various green technologies to fight air

farmers' income will increase, air quality will improve and organic circular economy business will create and meet diversified demand goals for the Indian government, by way of the opportunities and channels fostering bilateral technological exchange.



Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India

'Set up board to look into abortion plea'

STAFF REPORTER

The Delhi High Court has directed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) through which every Delhi citizen will get a health card detailing their entire medical history.

The government officials stated that the Ambassador said the Delhi government not only succeeded in dealing with COVID-19 but also provided good health facilities.

Mr. Kejriwal said the government adopted a method to deal with COVID under which only critical patients were admitted to the hospitals, while others were given treatment at home.



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- Master's in Furniture Design
- Master's in Building Products and Systems

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APRIL 05 LAST DATE TO APPLY FOR PG PROGRAMS

FOR ADMISSION ENQUIRIES

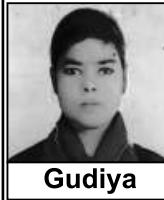
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Phone: +91-79-26302470 +91-79-68310000 Ext. 318/456/463

Email: admissions@cept.ac.in
Website: admissions.cept.ac.in

APRIL 12 LAST DATE TO APPLY FOR UG PROGRAMS

CEPT University, Kasturbhai Lalbhai Campus University Road, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad-380009, Gujarat, India

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Name**: Gudiya, D/o: **Bhola**, R/o: E-191, Yadav Nagar, Delhi has been missing/ kidnapped since **06.03.2021 at 03:00 pm**, from her house from the area of P.S. Samajpur Badli, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **FIR No. 141A U/s 363 IPC dated 09.03.2021** has been lodged at P.S. Samajpur Badli, Delhi. The description of the missing/kidnapped girl are as under: **Age**: 17 years, **Sex**: Female, **Face**: Round, **Height**: 5', **Complexion**: Fair, **Built**: Normal, **Wearing**: Black colour kurti-legging and cream colour sandal in her feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

Websites: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id: cdc@cbi.gov.in
Ph. No.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No.: 011-24368639
DP/886/ON/2021

SHO
P.S. Samai Pur Badli, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27854757, 7065036326

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that one boy was found in unconscious condition at Entry Gate, ISBT Anand Vihar, Delhi on dated **26.03.2021**. He is admitted in Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital for treatment after treatment declared dead by doctor. In this regard a DD No. **20A**, dated **26.03.2021** has been registered at P.S. Patparganj Industrial Area, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for identification at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, Mortuary Delhi for 72 hrs. The description of the person is given as under: **Name**: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, **Age**: About 26 years, **Height**: 5'5", **Complexion**: Sallow, **Built**: Thin, **Face**: Long, **Wearing**: Pink colour Shirt and Grey Colour Jeans. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead boy but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead boy please inform undersigned.



SHO
P.S. Patparganj
Industrial Area, Delhi
Ph. : 011-22146491, 8750870626

DP/449/ED/2021

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that this person **Name**: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, **Age**: 65 Years (Approx.), **Sex**: Male, **Height**: 5'3", **Complexion**: Wheatish, **Built**: Thin, **Identification Mark**: Wart on Middle of Forehead, **Wearing**: Orange Color Shirt and Hospital Cloth at Bottom, was admitted in AAA Hospital by CATS-36 I/c Mukesh vide MLC No. 560/21, During Medical Examination Doctor declared the Person as Brought Dead on 24.03.2021 in the area of PS Kotwali, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. **61A**, dated **24.03.2021** has been lodged at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform the following.

SHO
P.S. Kotwali, Delhi
DP/1057/N/2020(UIDB) Ph.: 011-23953442, 8750870121

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Razia Sultan, D/o: Md. Haider, R/o: H.No. C-134, Gali No.10, North Ghonda, Bhajanpura, Delhi has been kidnaped since **25.02.2021** from her house. In this regard FIR No. 120/21 dated 09.03.2021 u/s 365 IPC has been lodged at Police Station Bhajanpura, Delhi. The description of kidnaped girl is as under:

Name: Razia Sultan, **Age**: About 24 Years, **Height**: 5'2", **Face**: Long, **Complexion**: Fair, **Built**: Medium, **Wearing**: Black Colour Suit-Salwar and Slippers in Feet.

If anyone has any information about this kidnaped girl please inform P.S. Bhajanpura, Delhi.

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, **Email:** cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph. No.: 011-24368638/24368641, **Fax:** 011-24368639
SHO
Police Station, Bhajanpura, Delhi
Ph: 011-22561071, 8750870730

ENTERPRISE CONNECT**IRFC raises Rs 1,375 cr through issuance of domestic bond**

The Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC), the dedicated financing arm of the Indian Railways, on Friday, raised Rs. 1,375 crore through issuance of domestic bonds. The fund has been raised at 6.80 percent coupon rate with 20-year maturity which is about 18 basis points lower than the benchmark par yield Government security as per yesterday's close in CCL. This is one of the rare occasions when a top-rated government issuer has pierced the sovereign curve in the domestic market with such a huge margin. "The bond issuance received a very good response from the investors comprising long term / ultra-long-term investors including primarily the provident funds. The issue was oversubscribed by six times as compared to the base issue size of Rs 500 crore," said a company statement. The company has decided to retain a sum of Rs.1375 crore, based on the borrowing target mandated by the ministry of Railways for the current fiscal, it further said. he corporate bonds in the domestic market are liquid for tenor up to 10 years. Such large issuances by IRFC has deepened the corporate bond market for long / ultra-long tenors and has set a new benchmark yield curve for pricing similar issuances in the future.

IRFC has been playing a critical role in the growth, expansion and modernization of Indian Railways.

Punjab & Sind Bank allots equity shares aggregating to Rs 5500 crore on preferential basis

In the Extraordinary General Meeting of the shareholders of Punjab & Sind Bank held on 25.03.2021, the shareholders approved the special resolution for issue of 3,35,16,14,868 equity shares on preferential basis to Government of India. Accordingly, Bank has issued and allotted 3,35,16,14,868 Equity Shares of Rs.10 each of the Bank for cash at an issue price of Rs.16.41 per equity share (including premium) to Government of India (President of India) aggregating to Rs.5500 crore on preferential basis.

FCI and Quality council of India sign MoU

Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Quality Council of India (QCI) entered into an MoU on 25.03.2021 to work on transformation of central pool food grain management systems. The focus of MoU is introduction of technology in all areas of food supply chain using IT enabled transparent systems for which QCI will identify, develop and deploy solutions covering every aspect of food supply chain, starting from farmers to end consumers. Live monitoring of operations through a network of CCTV cameras and real time data management is envisaged. QCI will also undertake third party certification of food grains procured, stored and distributed. The

existing quality standards and processes will also be studied to bring them at par with global standards. This initiative is the outcome of the vision conveyed by Sh. Piyush Goyal, Union Minister for Railways, Commerce & Industry, Food, Consumer Affairs . Distribution in his address during 57th Foundation day of FCI held on 14.01.2021. The objective is to bring far reaching reforms in the way food grain procurement and distribution is done in the country by improving transparency and ensuring that real beneficiaries – farmers as well as end consumers of PDS, get the full benefits of Government of India schemes. Various projects under the MoU will be undertaken over the next 5 years. However major changes are expected to be achieved during first year itself. The MoU was signed by Sh. Sanjiv Kumar, CMD, FCI and Sh. R.P. Singh, Secretary General, QCI. While appreciating the initiative taken by FCI, Sh. Sudhanshu Pandey, Secretary (Food and Public Distribution) Govt. of India expressed his confidence that this shall bring in a new era in supply chain management of food grain in the country.

BHEL secures first ever overseas turnkey contract for grid connected Solar PV Power Plant

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has achieved yet another milestone in international business by securing its maiden overseas turnkey contract for a grid-connected 8 MW Solar Photovoltaic (PV) power plant.

The solar farm will be set up by BHEL

at Tamarind Falls, Henrietta (Phase II),

Mauritius on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) basis.

The contract for the same has been awarded to BHEL by CEB (Green Energy) Co. Ltd,

Mauritius, a wholly owned subsidiary of Central Electricity Board (CEB), Govt.

of Mauritius. The contract agreement for the project was exchanged between the Mauritian and Indian side during the visit of the Hon'ble Union Minister of External Affairs of India to Mauritius. Significantly, the project is funded under Govt. of India's Line of Credit (LOC) and has been secured by BHEL through a competitive bidding process. The project will be executed by BHEL's Solar Business Division, Bengaluru and International Operations Division, New Delhi. Notably, the solar project in Mauritius marks the consolidation of BHEL's presence in Africa, where it has been active for more than four decades with electricity generation projects (approx. 2,100 MW) and equipment supplies in 23 African countries.

NBCC signs MOU with NIT Patna

NBCC signed a MoU on March 5th, 2021 with National Institute of Technology (NIT), Patna at Bihta for supervision of construction and development of Institute Campus, Hostel and Residential Buildings at NIT Patna. According to the signed MoU, NBCC will be the Project Management Consultant (PMC) for

the mega project. Shri Asit Narayan, Registrar - NIT Patna signed the MoU on behalf of NIT Patna while Sh. Suman Kumar, CGM (Engg.) signed on behalf of NBCC in presence of P.K.Jain, Director, Professor (Dr.), NIT Patna, Senior faculty members from the Institute and Senior officials from NBCC.

SCOPE launches New Website

Constraining that change is the only constant, Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) launched its official website with a new look. Mr. Atul Sobti, Director General, SCOPE launching the refurbished website said that 'In line with our aim of being an Inspiring, Innovative and Impactful organisation, SCOPE decided to revamp its official website in line with the dynamic environment.' The new website www.scopeonline.in will provide enhanced interaction, information and swiftness in user interface.

TRIFED exchanges MoU with the Administration of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu for the implementation of MSP for MFP scheme and Van Dhan Yojana

Continuing with its efforts to take the benefits of its schemes and initiatives to far-flung areas of the country, so that each and every tribal across our country is positively impacted, TRIFED has recently entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Administration of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu on March 5, 2021 for the implementation of the MSP for MFP Scheme and the Van Dhan Yojana.

The Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and Minorities Financial and Development Corporation Limited has been appointed as the State Implementing Agency.

As a part of its mission to improve the livelihoods of the tribals (both forest dwellers and artisans) and work towards tribal empowerment, TRIFED has been carrying out several programmes and initiatives. Under this agreement, the Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP will be implemented in the union territory. To begin with there are plans to set up 1 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra in this Union territory. The MSP for MFP is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs that aims to provide remunerative and fair prices to tribal gatherers of forest produces. The fair prices provided is almost three times higher than what is available to them otherwise and trebles their overall income. Over the last year, it has succeeded in injecting 3000 crores in the tribal economy and has emerged as a beacon of change for the tribals. The Van Dhan Yojana (VDY), a programme for value addition, branding & marketing of MFPs by establishing Van Dhan Kendras to facilitate creation of sustainable livelihoods for the forest-based tribes is a component of the same scheme.

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that an boy was found in unconscious condition at Entry Gate, ISBT Anand Vihar, Delhi on dated **26.03.2021**. He is admitted in Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital for treatment after treatment declared dead by doctor. In this regard a DD No. **20A**, dated **26.03.2021** has been registered at P.S. Patparganj Industrial Area, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for identification at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, Mortuary Delhi for 72 hrs. The description of the person is given as under: **Name**: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, **Age**: About 26 years, **Height**: 5'5", **Complexion**: Sallow, **Built**: Thin, **Face**: Long, **Wearing**: Pink colour Shirt and Grey Colour Jeans. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead boy but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead boy please inform undersigned.



SHO
P.S. Patparganj
Industrial Area, Delhi
Ph. : 011-22146491, 8750870626

DP/449/ED/2021

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL
International School of Textiles & Management
Autonomous Institute, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India
1483, Avinash Road, Peelamedu, Coimbatore - 641004 Ph : 0422 - 2571675, 2592205
Advt. No.: SVPISTM/Recr./2021/01 Dated 17.03.2021

RECRUITMENT

Applications are invited for the following posts on ad-hoc basis.

Sl.No.	Name of the Post	Specialization	No. of Post
1.	Assistant Professor	Textiles/Apparel/Fashion	03
2.	Assistant Professor	Management	01
3.	Assistant Professor	Mathematics/Statistics	01
4.	Administrative Officer		01

For detailed information about qualification, experience and salary, visit www.svpistm.ac.in. Candidates can send their resume to recruitment@svpistm.ac.in in the prescribed format available in the website within 15 days from the date of publication of the advertisement. Retired professionals with outstanding contributions to the government/government institutions/industry may also apply for Sl.No.4.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Prince @ Bhura** S/o Jaibeer R/o H. No. 508, Sahari Pana, Village Kitewara, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 711/20 u/s 392/34 IPC** registered at P.S. Bhawana, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon that the said **Prince @ Bhura** could not be found and where it has been shown to my satisfaction that the accused **Prince @ Bhura** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Prince @ Bhura** is required to appear before the court to answer the said complaint on or before **03.06.2021**.

By Order
Sh. Vaibhav Mehta,
Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North),
Court Room No. 114,
1st Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/894/ON/2021
(Court Notice)

1st Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi

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ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021

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 Wednesday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Vidarbha and Telangana

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... -34.8	22.1	11.2	Kozhikode	20.4... -34.1	24.8	22.7
Ahmedabad	-39.8	23.1	11.2	Kurnool	-30.4... -26.7	24.8	22.8
Aizawl	-23.5	13.6	11.2	Lucknow	-40.4... -20.2	24.8	22.8
Allahabad	-42.1	21.6	11.2	Madurai	-40.5... -24.8	25.0	22.8
Bengaluru	-35.4	23.0	11.2	Mangaluru	-35.8... -21.5	25.0	22.8
Bhopal	-40.2	20.0	10.8	Mumbai	-32.6... -22.8	25.0	22.8
Blubaneswar	-39.8	25.5	11.2	Mysuru	-35.0... -19.4	25.0	22.8
Chandigarh	-37.8	18.2	11.2	New Delhi	-37.9... -19.0	25.0	22.8
Chennai	-41.3	26.1	11.2	Patna	-39.6... -21.8	25.0	22.8
Coimbatore	-27.6	24.3	11.2	Poorn Blair	-33.4... -26.2	25.0	22.8
Dehradun	-36.1	17.5	11.2	Puducherry	-38.0... -25.0	25.0	22.8
Gangtok	0.1	13.4	10.2	Pune	-37.9... -21.8	25.0	22.8
Goa	-34.3	27.7	11.2	Raipur	-41.6... -23.4	25.0	22.8
Guwahati	3.7	27.2	20.0	Ranchi	-39.2... -22.7	25.0	22.8
Hubballi	-35.0	23.0	11.2	Shillong	13.8... -19.9	25.0	22.8
Hyderabad	-39.8	25.6	11.2	Shimla	-28.3... -16.5	25.0	22.8
Impal	1.6	24.4	15.1	Srinagar	-22.5... -15.0	25.0	22.8
Jaipur	-38.8	27.7	11.2	Thiruvananthapuram	-22.8... -24.2	25.0	22.8
Kochi	9.3	33.8	23.0	Tiruchi	-40.9... -25.8	25.0	22.8
Kohima	-5.8	25.4	12.2	Vijayawada	-39.6... -25.8	25.0	22.8
Kolkata	-39.8	27.0	11.2	Visakhapatnam	-34.0... -26.8	25.0	22.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	22	47	.46	.92	.124	...
Bengaluru	14	52	.87	.118	.112	...
Chennai	2	30	.64	.24	.53	...
Delhi	12	35	.42	.384	.298	...
Hyderabad	2	59	.28	.144	.138	...
Kolkata	29	21	.29	.90	.108	...
Lucknow	4	63	.42	.321	.263	...
Mumbai	43	16	.101	.80	.126	...
Pune	7	70	.47	.113	.103	...
Visakhapatnam	6	64	.63	.86	.139	...

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

Source: CPCB

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded the overall air quality index (AQI) score of 342 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Bagalkot, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 36

2 mills deepen divide in poll-bound Assam

BJP promises to revive Nagaon Paper Mill in Brahmaputra Valley but not closed Cachar mill in Barak Valley

RAHUL KARMAKAR
SILCHAR/GUWAHATI

Two papers mills of the Hindustan Paper Corporation (HPC) had once united Assam's culturally disparate Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys industrially. The unity continued in the death of these mills since 2017, but Mandate 2021 appears to have deepened the divide between the valleys.

The Nagaon Paper Mill, about 70 km east of Guwahati and the Cachar Paper Mill, about 30 km from Barak Valley's main town Silchar, were not just two of Asia's largest paper plants. They were the fulcrums around which two towns – Jagiroad in Morigaon district and Panchgram in Hailakandi district – grew and prospered.

Jagiroad has been more fortunate because of connectivity; it reaps other benefits of being located on Asian Highway 1. Panchgram has been



Closed Cachar Paper Mill in Barak Valley. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

reduced almost to a ghost town.

But the 2,400 employees of both have been suffering equally without pay since January 2017 (Cachar Mill) and March 2017 (Nagaon Mill). So have some 4 lakh people who have been directly and indirectly been dependent on the two mills.

More than 80 employees have died too, many of them without money for treatment, some due to starvation.

The Joint Action Committee of Recognised Unions (JACRU) of the two mills have been unhappy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for failing to live up to their 2016 promise – to infuse fresh life into the two mills.

"Contrary to the PM's call for atmanirbhar, India has been importing paper from China, Indonesia, Bangladesh at high prices. If that were not enough, the government siphoned off ₹4,141-crore from

2014-2018 meant for the mills besides ₹107 crore of the employees' provident fund money," JAKRU president Manobendra Chakraborty told *The Hindu*.

'Didn't spare the dying'
What has angered the employees of the Cachar Mill is the BJP's manifesto promising to revive only the Nagaon Mill and clear the arrears of the employees there. "They have not even spared the dying employees of two sick mills by playing on the divide between the two valleys," he said.

The Nagaon Mill employees are not amused too. "The Nagaon and Cachar mills were commissioned in 1985 and 1988 and prospered together. We will not let one be revived and the other killed, although we know the BJP does not mean to help the Nagaon Mill," JACRU's Nagaon Mill leader Ananda Bordoloi said.

Ex-militant group to back BJP in Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Members of a disbanded extremist group comprising Bengali Hindus have pledged their support to the Bharatiya Janata Party and its regional allies in Assam.

Altogether 301 members of the National Liberation Front of Bengal were among 644 of eight groups who had given up arms in January 2020. They met at Tamulpur in western Assam's Baksa district on Tuesday to air their preference.

The organisation's leader Krishna Poddar said the decision to support BJP, more specifically its ally United People's Party Liberal in Bodoland Territorial Region, followed assurances that their issues would be resolved, if the alliance retains power in Assam.

Defeat 'undemocratic' TMC, 'communal' BJP, says ex-CM

State facing a serious danger from the two parties'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Former Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya on Tuesday urged the people of West Bengal to defeat the "undemocratic" TMC and "communal" BJP in the ongoing assembly elections, asserting that the State was facing a serious danger from the two parties.

In an audio message, the veteran CPI(M) leader claimed that the Trinamool Congress's ten-year-rule has led to an unprecedented crisis in the State's industrial

Buddhadeb Bhattacharya ■

and agricultural sectors.

"The lawlessness during undemocratic TMC regime and the aggressive politics of communal BJP have together brought the State to a new crisis situation and only the Joint Front of the Left, Con-

gress and ISF can save it," he said.

"A deathly silence is prevailing over Singur and Nandigram," he said, claiming that with not a single industry coming to the State since 2011, the youths are faced with an uncertain future and forced to migrate to other States.

Mr. Bhattacharya had also issued a statement on Monday, urging the people to vote for the Left-led alliance candidates, while taking on those indulging in politics over religion.

Bitter and sweet



Sweets in the likeness of PM Narendra Modi, CM Mamata Banerjee and other leaders at a shop at Howrah in West Bengal on Tuesday ■ PTI

NORTH

Punjab extends restrictions till April 10

With 40 women in Nabha jail testing positive, CM orders vaccination drive in prisons

VIKAS VASUDEV
CHANDIGARH

As COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to increase, with the U.K. strain emerging the most prevalent in the State, the Punjab government on Tuesday decided to extend the ongoing curbs till April 10.

Reviewing the situation with top officials, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said all restrictions that were in place till March 31 will now remain in force till April 10, after which they would be again reviewed.

The Chief Minister also ordered the launch of a vaccination drive in the prisons, in the wake of 40 women in Patiala's Nabha open jail testing positive for the coronavirus.

He asked Chief Secretary



Amarinder Singh. ■

65 deaths reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 2,210 fresh COVID-19 cases on Tuesday and reported 65 more deaths, according to an official statement. The number of confirmed cases reached 2,36,790 in the State.

On account of being over 45 years of age, said the Chief Minister.

U.K. strain

The latest data shows the U.K. strain of the virus to be the most prevalent in the State. An official statement said that during the meeting

it was informed that the COVID-19 positive cases and deaths were rising rapidly in some of the districts, with projections presented by Christian Medical College in Ludhiana showing steep rise in the number of cases and peak around April 6. The number would be decreasing by mid or late May 2021, as per the estimates, which suggest that Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala are expected to contribute more cases and positivity is likely to be high in the younger population of 40 years of age or less.

Dr K.K. Talwar, Adviser Health and Medical Education, suggested that routine non-Covid treatment in some private hospitals may be deferred by 2-4 weeks.

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Good neighbours

People on both sides need to be aware of the sensitivities in India-Bangladesh ties too

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the war of liberation and the centenary year of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and his meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina showcased the deep history the two nations share, their future plans and the challenges ahead. At the events, which included an emotive ceremony in Dhaka, a cultural programme, India's conferring of the Gandhi Peace Prize posthumously on Mujib, and a visit by Mr. Modi to the Bangabandhu (Mujib) memorial at his hometown in Tungipara, the leaders paid homage to the nation's founders, millions massacred by the Pakistani military regime in 1971, and those who died fighting for Bangladeshi freedom, including nearly 4,000 Indian soldiers. India's role in the creation of Bangladesh was highlighted by Ms. Hasina as she thanked India for its aid, and later, for providing her shelter when members of her family, including her father Mujib, were assassinated. Mr. Modi wrote in an editorial of the hope for a *Shonali Adhyaya* (Golden Chapter) in South Asia that Bangabandhu may have brought about had he not been killed. The two leaders built on their December 2020 (virtual) meet by bolstering plans for connectivity and infrastructure projects with a framework for cooperation on trade, along with other MoUs on sports, education and disaster management. India-Bangladesh ties in the past 15 years, since Ms. Hasina was elected, have been marked by new areas of cooperation and an ability to resolve specific differences. Ms. Hasina's decision, beginning 2009, to shut down anti-India terror camps and to hand over nearly two dozen of India's "most wanted", reversed mistrust. Mr. Modi's push to conclude the long-pending Land Boundary Agreement in 2015, and to accept an international tribunal verdict in favour of Bangladesh that resolved a 40-year-old maritime dispute, built confidence as well. Other issues, if unresolved, could pose challenges.

The joint statement noted the need to resolve the dispute over Teesta water sharing, and six other rivers. The problem of Bangladeshi civilians being killed at the border has dented relations. The Modi government's concerns over the treatment of Hindus, an impetus for the CAA, were highlighted as the PM performed two temple *poojas* and addressed a rally of minority Matua Hindus. The visits raised eyebrows in India as they took place even as West Bengal went to vote, but it became clear they will have repercussions in Bangladesh as well: protests against Mr. Modi's visit turned violent, with at least 11 members of the Hefazat-e-Islam shot dead by police, and reprisal violence against the Hindu minority by Islamist mobs. The events only underline the need for a deeper understanding on both sides of the sensitivities of the India-Bangladesh relationship, even as its many successes are counted and celebrated.

Territorial battle

In Puducherry, the BJP is trying to leverage its position as the ruling party at the Centre

A month after the Congress government in Puducherry was brought down through engineered resignations of its legislators, the Union Territory is preparing for an Assembly election that could transform its political landscape. It is a battle that would primarily test wounded Congress's ability to woo the electorate by playing the victim card and the BJP's strength on the ground. A political non-entity till then, the BJP had only token political representation through three nominated MLAs. Five years ago, 29 of its 30 candidates forfeited their deposit. Now, it is contesting in nine seats in an alliance led by the All India N.R. Congress (16 seats); the AIADMK gets five seats. The Congress has ceded ground to its allies, allotting 13 seats to the DMK and one each to the CPI and the VCK. It is contesting only in 14 of its 15 constituencies – seven fewer than in 2016. In Yanam, the second seat from where AIIRC leader and former CM N. Rangasamy is contesting, it has skipped fielding anyone. In an election season where perceptions somewhat influence public reception, the Congress has done itself little good by not fielding former CM V. Narayanasamy. The BJP has gone to town claiming he is scared to face the people.

The battle is essentially between these two alliances. The BJP with its insatiable political appetite is not merely fancying its chances on the strength it draws from the Central government. Irrespective of the outcome, it is in mission mode hoping to make electoral inroads. The manner in which its leaders, parachuted from Karnataka, camped for months to not only wean away Congress and DMK MLAs but also engage with voters through its 'page pramukhs', points to its determination. It has allegedly begun directly contacting voters using phone numbers linked to Aadhaar cards, which the Madras High Court has directed the UIDAI to probe. Projecting the erstwhile Congress government as being incapable of delivering on its promises, the BJP is pushing the development agenda. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised to make Puducherry the 'BEST' – a Business hub, Education hub, Spiritual hub and Tourist hub. Though Mr. Rangasamy has declared himself the CM candidate, the BJP is stubborn that legislators will elect the head of government. Given this political game plan, the Congress cannot hope to win sympathy by merely screaming about the "murder of democracy" and the governance hurdles posed by former Lt. Gov. Kiran Bedi. It will have to work with the DMK, leaving behind the bitterness over conceding more seats, if it wants to earnestly challenge the BJP. For the people, the attraction of the BJP is the access it provides to central funds. But the tenure of Ms. Bedi was not the best advertisement for what the ruling party at the Centre can do.

India does not shine when only some gleam

A new architecture of economic growth, which begins from the ground, is required to create better lives for the majority



ARUN MAIRA

Several lucky Indians have taken their vaccine shots and flown abroad. With relief, they are getting back to their own normal lives. A year ago, all Indians were startled to be locked in. And shocked too that millions had to break out of the Lakshman Rekha for shelter, food, and even water to drink. The novel coronavirus pandemic had exposed the precariousness of their lives. Relief was rushed for them, and vows taken that when the pandemic passes, we must "build back better", and create a new, more resilient, and more just economy.

Global indices

In the country's march to a \$5 trillion economy, the Indian government and its advisers are keen to recover the many lost quarters of GDP growth. Have they lost sight of how poorly India's economic growth has been serving its citizens? A Union Minister pooh-poohed the Global Hunger Index which places India 94 amongst 107 countries (<https://bit.ly/2Pi6NO>). International observers are wrong, he said, because Indians are very kind people, who even give sweets to a dog when she delivers her puppies, and such kind people would never allow a human being to go hungry.

The WHR20 Happiness Report released in March 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3u6N6ml>) by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network compares citizens' own per-

ceptions of their well-being in 153 countries. According to the report, Indian citizens are amongst the least happy in the world: India ranks a very low 144th. Perhaps the Minister will say that Indian citizens themselves do not know what is happening in India.

Inequities have widened

Like aerodynamic stress-tests reveal structural weaknesses in the designs of aircraft, the pandemic has revealed structural flaws in countries' economies. According to a report released by the World Bank, while India's stock markets rose during the pandemic and the very rich became even richer, the number of people who are poor in India (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) is estimated to have increased by 75 million. This accounts for nearly 60% of the global increase in poverty, the report says.

While the rich are beginning to buzz around their global world again, a new architecture of economic growth is required to create better lives for the majority in India. The old global economy was very good for migrant capital, which could move around the world at will, its life made easier by countries vying to attract foreign capital, even bending their environmental and labour regulations to make it easier to do business. The pandemic has revealed that the old economy was not good for migrant workers, however. Their "ease of living" was often sacrificed for capital's "ease of doing business".

The Indian economy must grow to create more incomes for its billion-plus citizens. Until the incomes of all rise, India will be a poor country from the perspective of the majority of its citizens, no matter how large its GDP. Moreover, economic growth must no longer



V. RAJU

be at the cost of the environment. According to global assessments, India ranks 120 out of 122 countries in water quality, and 179 out of 180 in air quality.

Think of new frameworks

India urgently needs a new strategy for growth, founded on new pillars. One is broader progress measures. GDP does not account for vital environmental and social conditions that contribute to human well-being and the sustainability of the planet. These factors are ignored as externalities by economists; they are trampled upon in a rush to grow the economy. Several frameworks are being developed now to measure what really matters including the health of the environment, and the condition of societies (public services, equal access to opportunities, etc.).

Most of these frameworks seek to define universally applicable scorecards. The items measured are given the same weightages in all countries to arrive at a single overall number for each country. This 'scientific' approach does enable objective rankings of countries. However, as the Happiness Report explains, this 'objective' approach misses the point that happiness and well-being are always 'subjective'. What matters to people depends also on the conditions of others around them. Wealthy people can be unhappy

when they have less wealth than other wealthy people. Moreover, everywhere, fairness, and trust in others and in institutions, contribute greatly to well-being. Therefore, countries in which the spirit of community is high, such as the 'socialist' countries of Northern Europe, come top of well-being rankings even when their per capita incomes are not the highest.

The analysis of sources of well-being leads to the conclusion that the universal solution for improving well-being is for local communities to work together to find their own solutions within their countries, and in their villages and towns. Leo Tolstoy begins *Anna Karenina* with the observation that all unhappy families are unhappy in their own ways. Locals know which factors in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals matter the most to them. Therefore, standard global solutions will neither make their conditions better nor make them happier.

Lapsing to the old ways

New ways must be adopted to create a new post-pandemic normal. Sadly, the old ways are returning. The government is back to chasing its \$5 trillion GDP target. Wealth creators (large companies and wealthy individuals) are being touted as the solution for growth. Power is being centralised. Governance of the many by a few politically and economically powerful persons may work for a few, stroke-of-the-pen, bold reforms. However, like insufficiently tested vaccines and medicines, the side-effects of these bold solutions can cause great harm to the overall health of the system. The best medical treatments are those that help the system to heal itself. Therefore, communities must be allowed to, and assisted to, find their

own solutions to complex problems.

What India and the world need to create a better world, post-pandemic, is a vaccine against indifference to the conditions of those less well off. The backwardness of backward classes is their god-given lot according to the religion of India's majority. The purpose of their lives is to do the dirty work necessary to keep the upper castes clean. The philosopher Michael J. Sandel says in *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* that the ideology of 'individualism' – which believes that a person's successes and failures are entirely that person's own responsibility – is a disease that has infected societies in the West. It justifies indifference to the conditions of those less well off. It denies that societal conditions are responsible for the difficulties poor people have. It also conveniently hides that societal conditions have contributed substantially to the wealth of those well-off.

When only some shine, India does not shine. The government of India has begun a massive "India@75" campaign to celebrate, in 2022, the 75th anniversary of India's independence. What is the scorecard of progress against which it will report whether India has reached the 'trust with destiny' that it set out to achieve in 1947? The size of its GDP, the numbers of billionaires, the numbers of Indian multinationals, and the reach of its rockets in space? Or the condition of our holy Mother Earth ravaged by economic progress, and the conditions of hundreds of millions of citizens left behind?

Arun Maira is the author of 'A Billion Fireflies: Critical Conversations to Shape a New Post-pandemic World'

Remoteness is no hindrance to academic excellence

Excellence in education depends on the quality of mentorship and not on the size or location of campuses



MABEN RABI

How many Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) should India have, and what should these institutes try to achieve? In their article, "Too many IITs, unrealistic expectations" (*The Hindu*, February 20), Philip G. Altbach and Eldho Mathews (<https://bit.ly/3ubAri5>) suggest that there should be between 10 to 12 IITs, that these institutes ought to be situated in big urban areas, and that they should focus on being "crown jewels".

Excellence in education depends on the quality of mentorship; not on the size or location of campuses. To improve, faculties should be made bigger, and recruitment yardsticks should focus on quality and not quantity.

Core functions

The core functions of an engineering school are to: guide students along as they inquire and discover their interests in science and engineering; engage students with the interactions between technology, society, economics and the environment; prepare students for working careers as designers and gadget-makers, but also as entrepreneurs; invent new gadgets and discover new science, and enmesh all of these activities with local developmental needs.

Overall, education at the higher secondary and college levels is really a nourishment that society produces to meet and bless the intense energies of young adults. A lack of language and study skills causes some students to fal-

ter. Anecdotally, about a quarter of the incoming undergraduates need extra training and confidence-building measures in using the English language. Because the admission system is a testocracy, almost all the incoming students need to be dissuaded away from a mindset that focuses on strategic maximisation of points on multiple choice questions, and instead need to be goaded toward free inquiry and whole-problem tackling. A key problem in most engineering colleges is that the students should not only become skilled engineers but should also train to speak and write clearly.

Helping the new

The solution at many IITs has been to set aside time and resources towards initiating incoming students into college level education. At IIT Mandi in Himachal Pradesh for example, a five-week induction programme gently welcomes them into the academic setting and helps them feel at home. This phase also breaks the ice between students and faculty, making it easy for the students to get in touch with their teachers. This useful programme requires time and mentorship effort from faculty members.

The curriculum at IIT Mandi includes courses from a design and innovation stream, which includes a mandatory socio-technical practicum (<https://bit.ly/2PbJpNy>). This particular course has seen significant enrolment of visiting international students.

A substantial final year project can be nourishing and fulfilling for anyone completing an academic degree, because it presents an opportunity for focused work bringing together different strands of knowledge and skills on a concrete problem. Sadly, at many IITs, including the "crown jewels", this final project is no longer mandato-



ry. One of the key reasons for this regression is that the student strength has been increased without an accompanying proportionate increase in faculty strength.

For all these reasons, and because our faculty salaries are lower than the international norms, it makes sense to hire many more faculty members than we do now. In a labour-surplus country like India, just as Arun Maira has suggested for the economy at large, we should readily use all the skilled labour that we can muster.

Recruitment and retention

Prof. Altbach and Prof. Mathews claim that faculty recruitment is such a big problem; that only around a dozen IITs can be comfortably staffed with world-class faculty. If faculty recruitment was indeed such a big problem, then why would sensible organisations dare to invest in private institutions such as Jio University, Mahindra Ecole Centrale, Shiv Nadar University, Krea University, and SRM University to name a few?

There are two existing problems with recruiting and retaining faculty members; both are self-made, and both can be solved.

The first problem is that not enough faculty members are hired, and that those hired are burdened with additional tasks such as running the canteen, etc. If there is indeed a scarcity of qualified faculty applicants, then would it be reasonable to burden the

hired researchers with non-academic responsibilities such as: running the canteen, managing the placement cell, and managing tenders for various campus building works?

The second problem is that of inconsistency and group think in the hiring committees. Typically, recruitment has two stages: shortlisting by the hiring institute, and an interview in front of a panel that consists of mostly professors from outside the hiring institute.

If at the first stage, the shortlist is done mechanically, then good and sometimes even excellent candidates can be weeded out. In specific, if shortlisting is done on the basis of the number of papers, size of grants won and the like, then those hired may be mediocre, paper-manufacturing mills. A better alternative is possible by reversing the existing two stages in recruitment, and explicitly flagging quality as a merit.

First, the external experts should prepare a short shortlist, and then the local hiring committees should attempt hiring from within this shortlist. The applicants should be required to submit information demonstrating the best aspects of their work. Each applicant should be asked to provide, in addition to their full curriculum vitae, their two best research publications, and their two best pedagogic materials such as a homework assignment or examination.

At the first stage, the external professors could prepare a shortlist based solely on the two best publications and sample pedagogic materials. The statistics of the external expert assessments can also supply clearer indications, of whether or not there is really a shortage of qualified applicants.

A waning fantasy is that only large companies and organisa-

tions can invent new technologies. This belief has been demolished by so many start-ups in the past few decades, that nowadays, even Prime Ministers preach the virtues of a start-up culture. So, why would anyone have low expectations from the smaller IITs, or from small but well-funded private colleges?

According to the *Times Higher Education* ranking for the last year, the IITs at Ropar (Punjab) and Indore (Madhya Pradesh) are within the top 100 young universities of the world. But even ignoring such superficial rankings, the details are promising – the growth of IIT Mandi, for example (<https://bit.ly/3dybybAg>). This IIT has as international a resident faculty body as any other IIT. In the last year, this IIT was seventh in the Atal innovation ranking (<https://bit.ly/3m5i6Qj>); an IIT Mandi project that developed a landslide warning system won the SKOCH award (<https://bit.ly/39rcxa9>).

Examples abroad

Remoteness is not a hindrance to excellence. Cornell University is located in the heart of rural New England, and has been excellent from even before the Internet age. And Cornell has a thriving start-up scene, even though the campus is not surrounded by industries. Japan's newest world class University, the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, is in the most remote corner within its territory, Okinawa island. In the coming post-COVID-19 future, remoteness that is hand-in-hand with connectedness may even attract start-ups.

Maben Rabi is a Professor at the Østfold University College, Norway. He received a B.Tech. degree from IIT Madras, and has worked as an Assistant Professor at IIT Mandi

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.

Electoral bonds scheme

The electoral bond scheme has many inherent dangers. It may promote elections but unless it promotes democracy and constitutional values such as secularism, socialism and the like, it may become counterproductive. As the scheme stands, there is absolutely no transparency as to who the contributors and beneficiaries are. There is also no cap on the funding. Today, in the context of growing monopoly capital with every other public

sector being given away, contributions will be made liberally by vested interests to political parties as a *quid pro quo* to the detriment of basic services needed in a welfare state. Second, with religious majoritarianism on the rise, the bonds may be used to strengthen divisive forces in the country. The Supreme Court of India, noticing such dangers to constitutional values, should have stayed the scheme or at least imposed strict restrictions including disclosure of the

identity of the donors and intended beneficiaries keeping in mind the spirit of the Right to Information Act. An institution is known when it responds to a crisis. Here, it is a crisis to the Constitution and the Supreme Court has, so far, failed to contain it. N.G.R. PRASAD, Chennai

upward trajectory (Page 1, "India registers 53,250 new cases", March 30). The tepid response of the government to introduce new vaccines and pandemic inappropriate behaviour are the prime factors responsible for this surge. The latest update in India shows that vaccinations are half of China. The vaccination drive needs acceleration and checks on the age factor should be removed. The Chinese government's priority to inoculate those in the 18-59 age group first

seems to have paid off. The Sputnik V, Zydus-Cadila, and Novavax vaccines must be added to the list of current vaccines. D. Biju C. MATHEW, Thiruvananthapuram

Inensitive
It was shocking to read about a pregnant woman

Of police and political quagmires

The Mumbai muddle casts doubts on the integrity and autonomy of the entire force



R.K. RAGHAVAN

What is currently happening in the Mumbai Police, a premier force with a manpower of around 50,000, cannot be brushed off as it raises questions about the very integrity of the police force.

On March 17, a duly appointed Commissioner of Police, Param Bir Singh, was shifted from his prestigious post after a tenure of just 13 months, though he was to serve a mandated two years. The move was seemingly for reasons other than incompetence or misconduct, but government sources cite mishandling of the Ambani explosives case by him, as a retaliation against Mr. Singh, who had gone to town with many charges against the State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

An enraged Mr. Singh approached the Supreme Court seeking a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against Mr. Deshmukh and getting the transfer order quashed. The court, however, declined to intervene and asked him to go to the Bombay High Court.

Extraordinary situation

Why has this chain of events received such adverse publicity nationally? Perhaps because the dimensions of the incident are too large to ignore, both by the government and the public. What also makes it different from other murky episodes in the past is that a senior officer chose to rattle the establishment.

We do not yet know enough about Mr. Singh's reputation or his motive. Whatever be the case, it is likely that he received support from the Opposition in Maharashtra to carry the struggle into higher forums. Even if he had been provided a plan charted out by the adversaries of the present State government, it required extraordinary fibre to go against the government. Some may look upon his conduct as unpardonable indiscipline; others could endorse it on the ground that an "unethical" government deserved such treatment.

Coming down to brass tacks, it has



A strong whirlpool: BJP workers protesting against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in Pune on March 21. ■ PTI

been alleged that the State Home Minister had fixed up a quota for the police to collect money from restaurants and similar joints. Apart from this, Mr. Singh accused the Minister of systematic interference in day-to-day police administration, especially in postings of lower functionaries.

The Minister is also said to have supported an infamous low-ranked police officer, Sachin Vaze, who has now been arrested in the Mukesh Ambani bomb scare case. Mr. Vaze had been under suspension for over a decade, which was revoked under the current government. He is said to have had access to the highest levels in the State hierarchy, which he abused to his own advantage. The kid-glove treatment for such issues raises questions about the police administration in Maharashtra.

Some charges against Mr. Deshmukh can be proved only partially, while others may remain disputed. One can also expect the State government to launch an offensive against Mr. Singh, who may have some influential friends in Delhi and the Opposition in the State Assembly. The episode, hence, naturally, has acquired huge political overtones. We can expect some fireworks for the next few weeks in the form of mutual trading of charges. And in such an environment, the common man's trust in the police administration is irretrievably eroded.

The cynical truth is that perhaps none of the 30-odd police forces in India can claim that it is corruption-free or that its personnel policies are so transparent that they cannot be tinkered with by the political bosses. The difference between States in degrees of maladministration is, hence, only marginal.

The point, however, is that the fair name of the Maharashtra Police has been besmirched beyond repair by the mudslinging. A Supreme Court-monitored investigation may reasonably be expected to clear the air. The question is, how can such an investigation be fair with the accused Home Minister still in the saddle? The Maharashtra Chief Minister cannot shirk his responsibility in the matter. He needs to ask his Home Minister to step aside till he is cleared by an impartial high-level enquiry.

SC's intervention

Although the Supreme Court has declined to intervene, public interest may soon demand that the court take *suo motu* cognisance of what has been going on in the Mumbai Police. This is because the episode has serious implications for the police nationally. It will be ideal if the court orders a probe by a team comprising primarily officers from outside Maharashtra. The model prescribed by the court in 2008 in the 2002 Gujarat riots cases should work in Maharashtra.

tra as well. Anything short of this will not seem credible and may not be able to ferret out the truth.

Complex questions

It may be remembered that in 2006, in *Prakash Singh vs Union of India*, the top court led by Chief Justice Y.K. Sabharwal went quite far in issuing specific instructions, including a fixed two-year tenure for the Director-General of Police (DGP) to ensure the independence of police from the executive. It is an entirely different matter that many States were slow to act on these directives. It is again debatable whether a rigid procedure for the appointment of a DGP and a fixed tenure of two years have helped make the latter a fearless entity, who would dare to ignore illegal directions from the executive.

Furthermore, even if the DGP is firm and honest, an unscrupulous political executive can just circumvent him and operate directly through the District Superintendent of Police (SP) or police station staff, who are highly vulnerable to threats. There is no remedy for this yet.

Ultimately, one may be inclined to believe that public expectations of police autonomy are hard to reach. Operating in a highly politicised atmosphere, where, at the drop of a hat, the ruling party can pressure the police to foist cases against those in the opposition, how can the force be completely insulated?

There is, however, no point in lambasting the political class without talking about the lack of integrity within the police forces themselves. India has often seen shocking episodes of individual policemen, including those in the coveted Indian Police Service (IPS), indulging unabashedly in large-scale corruption. This is despite the fact that police salaries have improved considerably, along with other welfare measures like healthcare and housing.

Even more striking is the fact that the IPS has many bright and dedicated officers with commendable idealism and high professional standards. If these young men and women themselves have not been able to give us honest policing, the future is indeed bleak. Mere finger-pointing at politicians will not salvage the Indian police from its current sorry plight.

The author is a former CBI Director

The fine print in Hindutva

There is a need to acknowledge the project's appeal and the intricacies of representation in order to counter it



ANSHUL TRIVEDI

Modern democracies are erected upon the twin pillars of rights and representation. While rights define the minimum due of individuals and communities vis-à-vis the state, representation enables the diverse voices in a polity to be heard. However, most critiques interrogate Hindutva through the limited lens of representation, arguing that it essentially represents interests of upper-caste Hindus. This is a misleading claim.

A case in point is West Bengal, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 18 seats in the last Lok Sabha election and secured 40.3% of votes, including five out of 10 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and both the seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. This is not an exception. Earlier, the BJP registered victories in Tripura and Uttar Pradesh and has continually dominated Madhya Pradesh and Bihar on the back of widespread subaltern support. Even then, academia is in denial about the ideological resonance of Hindutva among the subaltern sections because of a flawed understanding of the Hindutva project and its relationship with the politics of representation.

A tool for mobilisation

The claim that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) aspires to revive an old, ritually sanctioned, caste-based social order is incorrect. Often, examples like the introduction of policies like reservations for Economically Weaker Sections are advanced to bolster this claim, ignoring the fact that parties like the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, and the Janata Dal (United), which were catapulted to power by the Mandal agitation, put up only a tokenistic opposition to it. The ambition of Hindutva is not restricted to pushing a certain policy – it is to convert Hinduism into an ethnic order and reconstitute it as a race, a term repeatedly employed by Savarkar. This entails the process of simultaneous inclusion of the marginalised within Hinduism and the exclusion of the Muslim and Christian 'other'. As a result, Hindutva has always nurtured a disdain for rituals. They are only a means of political mobilisation and reinforcing the Hindu identity, bereft of any innate sanctity. This is apparent in the party's duplicitous stance on eating beef, a practice it opposes in the Hindi belt but condones in the northeast.

Democratisation has increased the thrust towards ritualistic inclusion within Hinduism, and hence, it seems unlikely that mere representational rejigging will dent Hindutva's hegemony. A challenge to Hindutva requires a complete reorientation of politics from demographic imperatives to democratic ones, for which the opposition needs to foreground issues of rights and transparency along with representation.

The author is a former PhD Scholar at the Centre for Political Studies, JNU

A road to progress

For women dairy farmers, cooperatives and unions are a pathway to financial stability

ATUL CHATURVEDI

The achievements of women dairy farmers in contributing to India's 'White Revolution' are perhaps the greatest cause for celebrating the Women's History Month in March. That this has happened despite around a majority of dairy farmers owning only small landholdings – typically households with two to five cows – is also a testament to the success of the dairy cooperatives models that were at the heart of Operation Flood.

The approach made it possible to enhance backward and forward linkages in the dairy value chain, paving the way for freeing small farmers from the clutches of middlemen, and guaranteed minimum procurement price for milk. A study by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) indicates that 93% of women farmers who receive training alongside financial support succeed in their ventures, compared to the 57% success rate of those who receive financial aid alone. Institutionalising such inputs, the National Dairy Development Board (NIDDB) now organises farmer's orientation programmes across the country, under which women farmers are trained in scientific best practices on animal health, fodder quality, clean milk production, and accounts management.

Enhanced incomes

According to latest data, there are more than 1,90,000 dairy cooperative societies across the country, with approximately 6 million women members. A study conducted on Women Dairy Cooperative Society (WDCS) members across Rajasthan showed that with the income generated through dairying, 31% of the women had converted their mud houses to cement structures, while 39% had constructed concrete sheds for their cattle. Importantly, women-led cooperatives also provide fertile ground for grooming women from rural areas for leadership positions. In many instances, this becomes the first step for women in breaking free from traditional practices.

These testimonials of individual women dairy farmers are all the more remarkable for the fact that many of them have not had a formal education, but through the process of dairying and working with larger collectives, such as milk unions and cooperatives, they have mastered the nuances of finance and marketing.

Dairying on the International Women's Day earlier this month. Among the many stories that stood out, it was heartening to hear the account of Prem Bai from Rajasthan who never had access to education or formal employment but experienced a life transformation after she became a member of the Bhilwara Milk Union. She is now the main breadwinner in her family and recently bought 25 acres of land with the income she earned through dairy farming.

Another major challenge in this sector is information asymmetry among farmers. Statistics indicate that small and marginal farmers have access to only 50-70% of the resources that large and medium farmers have. Once again, the presence of collectives in the form of cooperatives and milk unions plays a significant role in enhancing the knowledge and bargaining power of women.

Women-led companies

Recent years have seen the rise of women-led dairy unions and companies. To this end, the NIDDB has played a proactive role in setting up women-led producer enterprises like Shreeja Mahila Milk Producer Company, which was started with 24 women and now has more than 90,000 members, with an annual turnover of approximately ₹450 crore.

Last year, Amul Dairy released a list of 10 women dairy farmers who became millionaires by selling milk to the company. For instance, Navalben Dalsanghchai Chaudhary from Vadgam earned almost ₹88 lakh by selling 2,21,595 kg of milk in 2019-20, and Malvi Kanubeni from Dhanera earned about ₹74 lakh by selling 2,50,745 kg of milk. Innovation in organisational structures has also spurred consistent growth in this sector.

These testimonials of individual women dairy farmers are all the more remarkable for the fact that many of them have not had a formal education, but through the process of dairying and working with larger collectives, such as milk unions and cooperatives, they have mastered the nuances of finance and marketing.

Atul Chaturvedi is Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. Views are personal

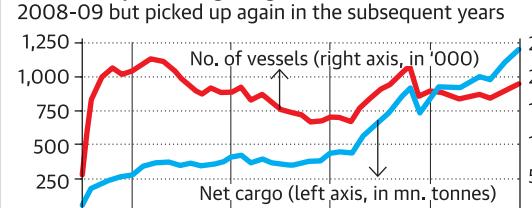


DATA POINT

Vital artery

After almost a week, the stuck container ship MV Ever Given was refloated and traffic resumed in the Suez Canal on Monday. The 193-km-long canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Red Sea in the south, saves thousands of nautical miles for ships sailing from Asia to Europe and vice versa. The volume of cargo sailing through the canal has surged in recent years, with more than a billion tonnes navigating through it in 2019. That year, 17% of the major commodities that sailed southbound on the canal were headed to Indian ports, while 12% of products that sailed northbound originated from India. By Sumant Sen, Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Naresh Singaravelu

ANNUAL CARGO | In 2019, nearly 19,000 vessels carried 1.2 billion tonnes of cargo through the canal, the highest on record. The volume of cargo transported reduced substantially following the global financial crisis in 2008-09 but picked up again in the subsequent years



A SHORTCUT | The tables compare the distance (in nautical miles) between key ports when sailing via the Suez Canal and around the Cape of Good Hope. Sailing via the Suez Canal reduces the distance between the ports in Mumbai and New York by over 3,200 nautical miles, compared to sailing around the Cape of Good Hope

From	To	Distance via Suez (NM)	Distance via Cape (NM)	Distance saved (NM)
Jiddah	Piraeus	1,316	11,207	9,891
Jiddah	Rotterdam	3,997	10,797	6,800
Ras Tanura	New York	8,281	11,794	3,513
Singapore	Rotterdam	8,288	11,755	3,467
Mumbai	New York	8,165	11,368	3,203
Tokyo	Rotterdam	11,192	14,507	3,315

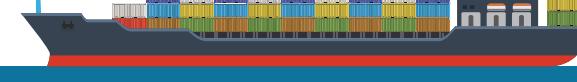
* Liquified natural gas | Source: Suez Canal Authority

INDIA CONNECT | The tables show the volumes of various products carried across the canal in two directions – southbound towards destination countries and northbound from nations of origin. For instance, of the 24,930 tonnes of coal and coke that sailed towards the south of the canal, 67% went to India, the highest volume among all importing countries in the southbound direction. Of the 11,137 tonnes of oil products that sailed from the south to the north of the canal, 17% were from India, the third-highest among exporting countries in the northbound direction

SOUTHBOUND TRAFFIC - IMPORTING COUNTRIES

Product	Total cargo ton	India's % share
Oil products	1,27,221	19.61 (2nd rank)
Coal and coke	24,930	66.98 (1)
Fertilizers	16,780	38.68 (1)
Fabricated metals	10,558	3.59 (10)
LNG*	8,113	21.42 (1)

Product	Total cargo ton	India's % share
Oil products	1,11,372	17.12 (3rd rank)
LNG*	23,312	0.05 (2)
Chemicals	15,112	3.49 (8)
Fabricated metals	12,404	19.35 (2)
Vegetable oils	12,393	3.91 (5)



The Hindu
FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 31, 1971

Dacca falls

Dacca was captured by liberation forces of Bangla Desh to-day [March 30], a secret radio broadcast monitored here [KRISHNAGAR] said. The West Pakistan troops had pulled out of Dacca after days of heavy fighting, it said. The freedom-fighters, broadcasting from a newly set up radio station in Dacca, reported that the Pakistani martial law administration had shifted its headquarters to some other place, and announced that the headquarters of the sovereign People's Republic of Bangla Desh would be established in the liberated former provincial capital soon. The radio said, "Dacca has been conquered by the liberation forces and the People's Republic of Sovereign Bangla Desh established." It asked freedom-fight

FROM PAGE ONE

Surge in cases a cause for concern, says Centre

Mr. Bhushan said Maharashtra was showing a weekly average positivity rate of 23.4%, Punjab (8.82%), Chhattisgarh (8%), Madhya Pradesh (7.82%), Tamil Nadu (2.50%), Karnataka (2.45%), Gujarat (2.2%) and Delhi (2.04%).

In a letter to the Chief Secretaries of all the States and the Union Territories, the Union Health Ministry said: "Many districts are seeing clusters of cases emerging because of specific events, crowding coupled with lack of COVID-appropriate behaviour." It added that some districts which saw a high number of cases in August-November last year were again witnessing

a high growth rate of cases. In addition, a number of districts that saw limited prevalence earlier, were also showing a surge in cases.

Mr. Bhushan said, as per a government survey, 97% people were satisfied with the overall vaccination experience. The Ministry had not received any specific request from the Maharashtra government to carry out door-to-door vaccination, he added.

Six States – Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat – reported 78.56% of the new cases reported on Tuesday, a statement from the Health Ministry said.

Manipur retracts letter on Myanmar refugees

The letter drew sharp reactions from various sections on social media.

A State government official said the government was now supporting those seeking refuge.

Mizoram move

Rajya Sabha member from the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) Vanlalvena told *The Hindu* that the refugees living in Mizoram would have to work to earn a living till the situation improved.

"More than thousand refugees have come; they are living in villages across the State. Work will be allocated to them under NREGS," Mr. Vanlalvena said.

The MGNREGS is a Central scheme meant only for Indian citizens, but the rules are notified by the State go-

vernment. Asked if providing work would violate the norms, Mr. Vanlalvena said, "The State government can decide the projects and the people who can be employed through the scheme. We do not know for how long they [refugees] will have to stay here. They cannot live here for free so this decision has been taken."

He added that Chief Minister Zoramthanga has granted ₹1 lakh from the CM relief fund to provide for food and relief to the refugees.

"The civil society groups, with the help of local television channels have so far raised more than ₹16 lakh to help the people. India is a good country, we cannot let them down. If they go back they will be killed," the MP said.

Mr. George had said that Mr. Gandhi visited only wo-

+ Kerala betrayed for a few pieces of gold: Modi

The Prime Minister accused the two fronts of directly attacking the State's culture. "These parties are ashamed of the culture of our land. Their leaders abuse our tradition and ethos. The LDF government should be ashamed of 'showering' *lathis* on innocent devotees, and the UDF should be ashamed of remaining silent," he said, adding that the BJP could not be intimidated by *lathis* and would not remain a silent spectator.

According to Mr. Modi, the nation's politics was afflicted by five diseases – corruption, casteism, communalism, cronyism (both nepotism and dynasticism), and criminalism. "And the root cause of this disease is a

super disease called vote-bank politics," he said.

Political killings

Alleging that the UDF and the LDF had erected a large number of road blocks to Kerala's development, the Prime Minister proposed a FAST path of development for the State. "F stands for fishery and fertilizers, A for agriculture and Ayurveda, S for skill development and social justice, and T for tourism and technology," he said. He said the BJP would give thrust to these areas to achieve fast development for the State.

The BJP, if elected to power in Kerala, would also stop the culture of political killings in the State, he said.

LDF following 'corporate manifesto', says Priyanka

Kerala was witnessing three different types of politics this election. "The first being the politics of the CPI(M) and it's the politics of violence, repression and scams. The politics of BJP that spreads hate and divisiveness is the second. Then there is the politics of the Congress that is building a future vision for Kerala," she said.

"The LDF claims it that they are representing a democratic political alternative. If that is the case, then why are they instilling fear in the people of Kerala? Many young Congress workers have been killed and the government has spent money to defend their killers. They have lathicharged members of their own alliance. The greatest gift our Constitution has given is freedom. Any government irrespective of left wing or right wing that tries to suppress the voice of people cannot be called democratic."

Drawing parallels between the stand taken by the

and the

Woman in CD case records statement before magistrate

She accuses Jarkiholi of sexual assault and says she was not kidnapped

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

After 28 days of suspense, the victim in the CD case, allegedly involving BJP leader and former Karnataka Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, appeared before the metropolitan magistrate and recorded her statement on Tuesday.

She was later escorted to the technical cell of Adugodi by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) where her statement was recorded.

The woman reportedly reiterated her statement given earlier in a series of videos and a handwritten complaint she filed with the Cubbon Park police through her lawyer, accusing Mr. Jarkiholi of cheating and sexual assault.

She also deposed that she had not been kidnapped as alleged by her parents.



KARNATAKA



High drama: Police guarding an auditorium in Bengaluru, where the woman recorded her statement. ■ MURALI KUMAR K

The SIT officials are learnt to have taken her voice sample. The official posed over 50 questions and recorded her statement in camera in accordance with Section 161 of the CrPC. "She replied to all the questions confidently and

also submitted a set of evidence in the form of pictures, videos and gifts to corroborate her claim," an official source said.

The SIT officials assured her protection. The woman also requested the SIT to help her family which is allegedly "under the control of

accused Ramesh Jarkiholi".

After recording the statement, the victim was later escorted to a location of her choice, where she will remain amid tight security.

It was a day of high drama at the magistrate court on Tuesday. While the police deployed personnel in large numbers there, the venue was changed to the special court at Gurunanak Bhavan in Vasanth Nagar, where the woman's statement was recorded before the magistrate.

Her advocate, Jagadish Kumar, said the accused should be arrested immediately. "This is a high-profile case and the accused is very influential and may disturb the ongoing investigation," he said.

The police had registered an FIR against Mr. Jarkiholi after the woman submitted a complaint accusing him of sexual assault.



A.K. Antony

ment, he said. In Assam, the situation of the Congress had improved and the fight was between equals. "The performance of the Congress will not be pathetic as before in Assam," he said.

Mr. Antony, who was thrice Chief Minister of Kerala, is hopeful that the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) will be voted to power.

Congress ally Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) would win the majority in Tamil Nadu and M.K. Stalin would form the govern-

Former MP withdraws remarks about Rahul

Congress seeks Joice George's arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

IDUKKI

After coming under fire for his sexually coloured remarks about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, former MP from Kerala Joice George on Tuesday withdrew his comments and expressed regret publicly, even as the Congress demanded his arrest, while the ruling CPI(M) distanced itself from the remarks.

"I hereby unconditionally withdraw the inappropriate remarks made by me while addressing an election rally at Iratayara here on Monday. I also express regret over that," Mr. George said.

Mr. George had said that Mr. Gandhi visited only wo-

men's colleges, and that the girls should be 'careful' while dealing with the former Congress president. "Rahul Gandhi is a bachelor and troublemaker... so girls should be wary of him," he had said.

Mr. George had won as CPI(M)-supported Independent in the 2014 Lok Sabha poll.

Leader of the Opposition and Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala demanded that the police register a case against Mr. George.

Distancing himself from the comments, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said attacking Mr. Gandhi personally was not the Left Democratic Front's stand.

Special judge K. Kamanees tendered the accused pardon on condition that they would make "full and true disclosure of whole of circumstances and facts within their knowledge relating to the offence and to every other person concerned" in the case.

NIA court pardons five in gold case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

Five accused in the Kerala diplomatic channel gold smuggling case – Sandeep Nair, Musthafa, Abdul Azeez, Nandagopal and Mohammed Anwar – were tendered pardon by a special court of the National Investigation Agency here on Tuesday and made approvers in the case.

These accused would now become NIA witnesses in the case.

A bench led by Justice Indira Banerjee admitted the case of a man accused of rape while he was 18 years old by a girl who was 17. The duo were in a "relationship" in school. He, however, refused to marry her, following which a complaint was filed against him in 2015. The case is based in Tamil Nadu.

SC to study if POCSO Act can be used against minors

Teen in 'consensual relation' was later accused of rape

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has decided to examine whether the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act can be employed to punish teenagers for "consensual" physical relationships which later turn "sour."

A bench led by Justice Indira Banerjee admitted the case of a man accused of rape while he was 18 years old by a girl who was 17. The duo were in a "relationship" in school. He, however, refused to marry her, following which a complaint was filed against him in 2015. The case is based in Tamil Nadu.

The trial court found the man guilty and sentenced him to 10 years' imprisonment under the POCSO Act in 2019. This was despite the fact that the girl had changed her stance during the trial and stated in court that they were in a consensual relationship.

The man, represented by advocate Rahul Shyam Bhandari, approached the Supreme Court after the Madras High Court too refused to accept the girl's stand that they were in a consensual relationship. Mr. Bhandari argued that his client and the girl were both "less than 18 years of age at the time of relationship".

"The boy was a juvenile at the time. Now, the girl and the boy want to settle in life," Mr. Bhandari submitted before Justice Banerjee's Bench in the apex court.

Notice to T.N. govt.
The Bench has issued notice to the Tamil Nadu government.

The man's appeal in the apex court has sought clarity on the law for punishing minors under the POCSO Act for consensual sex. It said the objective of the Act was not to punish adolescents who are in a live-in or physical relationship.

The top court ordered the State police not to take any coercive action against the appellant.

Bear attacks five near Bengaluru

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

A bear attacked five people on the outskirts of Bengaluru early on Tuesday. It first attacked a person near a godown in Kachanayakanahalli, behind Narayana Hudralaya on Hosur Road. The incident happened around 3 a.m. Then the bear moved towards Chandapura KEB quarters. It attacked two persons near Thattanahalli in Attibele Hobli and three persons in Shettahalli.

Out of the five, two suffered severe injuries and are getting treatment at a hospital, while the other three were treated at outpatient wards.

Forest Department officials said the attacks took place when the people went to attend nature's call or while working on the farm.

An official said, "We received information about the movement of the animal near Chandapura and our staff rushed there. The staff spotted the movement of the animal near Shettahalli and the bear tried to attack them but they managed to escape. After that we could not trace the animal and the search is on."

"If Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister came here for campaigning, he would bring up issues such as love jihad, but now CPI(M)'s own alliance partners are talking in the same language. In the Jhansi incident, where the nuns were harassed, Union Home Minister said it was wrong only because it is election time. Rest of the time they fully encourage this behaviour," she said.

She alleged that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his government were too busy dealing with foreign gold and giving out fishing contracts to multinationals. "Instead of safeguarding the livelihood of fishers, the government sold their interests to the corporates for ₹5,000 crore."

Four fatalities in Telangana; cases rise in Bengaluru

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala and Karnataka together added 37 fatalities to the COVID-19 toll as of Tuesday, and Bengaluru remained a city of concern as fresh positive cases were close to 2,000.

In Kerala, 2,389 new cases were reported when 58,557 samples were tested. The test positivity rate (TPR) was 4.08%.

COVID-19

The addition of 16 more deaths that took place in the past few days to the official list on Tuesday took the cumulative toll to 4,606. Alappuzha reported three deaths, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Kannur reported two each and Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Malappuram and Wayanad one each.

Kozhikode district reported 325 new cases, followed by Ernakulam with 283.

Karnataka reported 2,975 new cases and 21 fatalities, the Health department said on Tuesday when 1,06,917 samples were tested. Bengaluru accounted for 1,984 fresh cases.

First line of defence

With COVID-19 cases galloping, masks are in high demand again. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Busy again: Tailors stitching masks at a market in Vijayawada on Tuesday. ■ V. RAJU

*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Monday | **Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths | ***Kerala has a mismatch of 310 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

STATE	TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED CASES	DEATHS
TELANGANA*	3,07,205	3,00,833	1,694	4,678
TAMIL NADU	8,84,094	8,56,548	12,700	14,846
ANDHRA PRADESH	9,00,805	8,86,978	7,213	6,614
KARNATAKA**	9,92,779	9,54,678	12,541	25,541
KERALA***	11,21,931	10,92,365	4,606	24,650

*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Monday | **Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths | ***Kerala has a mismatch of 310 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

In view of the rise in cases,

the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to reduce the Sarva Darshan tokens issued for devotees visiting the Lord Venkateswara temple from the present 22,000 to 15,000 a day.

Telangana recorded 874 new cases. The 16 fatalities included a 23-year-old woman from Coimbatore. She had no co-morbidities and was hospitalised on March 26. She died the next day owing to bilateral bronchopneumonia and respiratory failure.

In view of the rise in cases, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to reduce the Sarva Darshan tokens issued for devotees visiting the Lord Venkateswara temple from the present 22,000 to 15,000 a day.

All eyes on Nandigram in Bengal Phase 2

Mamata facing former party colleague-turned-rival Adhikari; 171 candidates in the fray for 30 seats

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

Campaigning has wound up in 30 constituencies in four districts of West Bengal which go to the polls on April 1. However, all eyes will be on one seat – Nandigram – where Trinamool Congress chief and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is contesting against former party colleague-turned-rival Suvendu Adhikari, who switched to the BJP ahead of the polls.

Of the 30 seats, nine each are in Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur, eight in Bankura and four in South 24 Parganas. A total of 171 candidates are in the fray, including 30 from the Trinamool, 30 from the BJP, 15 from the Communist Party of India (Marxist), two each from the Communist Party of India and the All India Forward Bloc and nine from the Congress. Eight seats, including three in Paschim Medinipur and Bankura, and one each in South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur are reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates.

A total of 75,94,549 voters will exercise their franchise across 10,620 polling booths, Election Commission sources said.

Second leg

Thirty constituencies will go to polls in the second phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections on April 1. A demographic and socio-economic profile of the seats:

2016 PERFORMANCE IN PHASE 2 SEATS

Party	Seats won	Vote %
AITC	21	47.9%
BJP	1	7.4%
CPI	1	4.0%
CPM	4	19.3%
INC	3	11.4%

Source: Lokdhaka, devdataab

SC/ST POPULATION SHARE

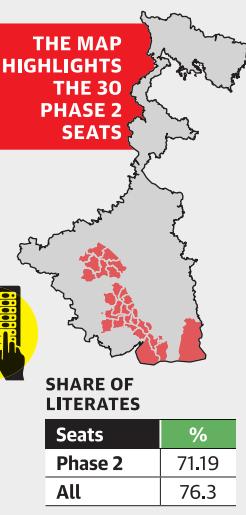
Seats	SC (%)	ST (%)
Phase 2	22.5	4.6
All	23.5	5.8

SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH MAIN INCOME FROM CULTIVATION

Seats	%
Phase 2	24.1
All	19.94

RURAL/URBAN POPULATION SHARE

Seats	Rural %	Urban %
Phase 2	87.6	12.4
All	68.1	31.9



For the past three months since January 7, when the Chief Minister announced that she might contest from Nandigram, the constituency has been the centre of high-voltage politics with the BJP fielding former Trinamool leader Suvendu Adhikari, who had represented the constituency for the past five years.

The seat is being viewed as a 'prestige fight' among the two major political parties and has seen some of the most frenetic campaigning that the State has witnessed. The drama was heightened after Ms. Banerjee suffered a

leg injury on March 10 during campaigning, which she has attributed to an 'attack' from her rivals. She has continued to campaign in a wheelchair and has held almost a dozen public meetings and roadshows in Nandigram.

On the other hand, the constituency has seen the presence of high-profile campaigners from the BJP including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who held a rally at Kanthi in Purba Medinipur and spoke about Nandigram, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah who participated in a road-

show on Tuesday as campaigning closed. The BJP has also roped in star campaigners like Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and actor Mithun Chakraborty.

The other interesting constituencies up for grabs on April 1 are Kharagpur Sadar, Debra in Paschim Medinipur district, Bankura in Bankura district and Sagar in South 24 Parganas.

The Kharagpur Sadar seat, which BJP State president Dilip Ghosh won in 2016, was wrested by the Trinamool in a by-election in 2019, in spite of the BJP having a lead of over 45,000

votes in the Lok Sabha election. The BJP has this time fielded actor Hiranmay Chattopadhyay, a former Trinamool youth leader.

The contest for the Debra seat has turned out to be interesting with two former officers of the Indian Police Service – Humayun Kabir of the Trinamool and Bharati Ghosh of the BJP – competing against each other. The Trinamool won this seat in 2016. Ms. Ghosh, who joined the BJP in 2019, contested the Ghatal Lok Sabha seat but lost to Deepak Adhikari of the Trinamool. While Mr. Kabir was senior to Ms. Ghosh in the police service, she is senior to him in politics. With stated assets of ₹19 crore, the former police chief of Paschim Medinipur is among the wealthiest candidates in the fray.

Another seat to look out for is Bankura where the Trinamool has fielded actor Sayantika Banerjee. She is up against Niladri Sekhar Dana of the BJP, which had a lead here in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. In Sagar, on the southernmost tip of West Bengal, three-time Trinamool MLA Bamkum Chandra Hazra is facing BJP new-comer Bikash Chandra Kamila.

As the campaign has been mostly quiet, the focus is on the three seats that have been contested by the Trinamool.

The focus is on the Bengali-dominated Barak Valley where support for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is high among the Hindus, unlike in the Assamese-dominated

Brahmaputra Valley. The Barak Valley has 15 seats across three districts, and the BJP had won eight of these in 2016.

Unlike in West Bengal, the

BJP has been vague about implementing the CAA in Assam. This may not affect the party's Hindu vote bank, as many think it is a strategy not to annoy the party's As-

samese voters in Brahmaputra Valley.

The Congress, on the other hand, is believed to have gambled with its anti-CAA stand to appeal to a section of Hindu voters that are sceptical of the BJP's intentions.

This approach is expected to work in the seven Muslim-dominated constituencies in the valley, where the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and the Congress had won four and three seats respectively in 2016. The two parties are allies this time.

The BJP is also hoping to retain all the five seats across the three hill districts of Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong

and Western Karbi Anglong.

The party has changed all but one candidate this time.

In the remaining 19 seats spread across central, and parts of northern and western Assam, the BJP and the AGP had won 12 seats in the last election. Erstwhile ally Bodoland People's Front, the Congress and the AIUDF had won four, two and one respectively.

There are a total of 345 candidates, including 26 women, in the fray in the second phase, and 37 of them have criminal records. Their

fate would be decided by a total of 73,44,631 voters, including 36,09,959 women and 135 transgenders.

The report, which is submitted each year to the U.S. Congress, is retrospective and contains a country-wise discussion of the state of human rights.

"The government generally respected this right, although there were several instances in which the government, or actors considered close to the government, allegedly pressured or harassed media outlets critical of the government, including through online trolling," the report says.

It also details cases against individual journalists and NGO activists, including Siddharth Varadarajan of *The Wire* (case by U.P. government) and Anirban

voters in the Lok Sabha election. The BJP has this time fielded actor Hiranmay Chattopadhyay, a former Trinamool youth leader.

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High-decibel campaign ends in prestige seat

BJP and Trinamool trade charges of several malpractices

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
SUDIPTA DATTA
NANDIGRAM



Last mile: Home Minister Amit Shah with Suvendu Adhikari attending a roadshow in Nandigram on Tuesday. ■AP

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee held three public meetings at Sonachura, Basuli Lock gate and Tengua More. She urged people not to be afraid and come out and vote in large numbers for the "Bhoomi Kanya" (daughter of the soil).

Mr. Shah participated in a roadshow from Bhetturia to Reya Para for party candidate Suvendu Adhikari. Hundreds of supporters, including women, gathered in the scorching heat. Mr. Shah greeted them from an open vehicle with Mr. Adhikari by his side raising slogans rhyming "Nandigram with Jai Sri Ram".

"The overwhelming response at the roadshow clearly tells us that Suvendu Adhikari will win with a majority. One of the easy ways to bring change [parivartan] is to defeat Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram," Mr. Shah said.

As dusk descended, the

situation turned volatile with the BJP supporters alleging that they were attacked by the Trinamool activists in some areas. The Central armed police forces had to stage a march in some areas to bring the situation under control.

Amidst campaigning, Mr. Shah alleged that the wife of a BJP supporter was raped in Nandigram. "Within 5 km of where the Chief Minister is staying, a woman has been raped. The incident speaks volumes about the security of women in the State."

At one of her rallies, Ms. Banerjee said the BJP planned to incite a riot by killing their own party supporters.

Barak Valley in focus in Assam Phase 2

Polling will be held in 39 of the 126 constituencies across 13 districts in the State on April 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI



AGP and BJP supporters at a election rally in Guwahati on Tuesday. ■RITU RAJ KONWAR

Campaigning for the second phase of Assembly election in 39 of 126 constituencies in Assam ended at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Polling to these seats across 13 districts in southern, central, and parts of northern and western Assam will be held on April 1.

The BJP and its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) won 25 of these 39 seats in 2016.

The focus is on the Bengali-dominated Barak Valley where support for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is high among the Hindus, unlike in the Assamese-dominated

Brahmaputra Valley. The Barak Valley has 15 seats across three districts, and the BJP had won eight of these in 2016.

Unlike in West Bengal, the

BJP has been vague about implementing the CAA in Assam. This may not affect the party's Hindu vote bank, as many think it is a strategy not to annoy the party's As-

samese voters in Brahmaputra Valley.

The Congress, on the other hand, is believed to have gambled with its anti-CAA stand to appeal to a section of Hindu voters that are sceptical of the BJP's intentions.

This approach is expected to work in the seven Muslim-dominated constituencies in the valley, where the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and the Congress had won four and three seats respectively in 2016. The two parties are allies this time.

The BJP is also hoping to retain all the five seats across the three hill districts of Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong

and Western Karbi Anglong.

The party has changed all but one candidate this time.

In the remaining 19 seats spread across central, and parts of northern and western Assam, the BJP and the AGP had won 12 seats in the last election. Erstwhile ally Bodoland People's Front, the Congress and the AIUDF had won four, two and one respectively.

There are a total of 345 candidates, including 26 women, in the fray in the second phase, and 37 of them have criminal records.

The report, which is submitted each year to the U.S. Congress, is retrospective and contains a country-wise discussion of the state of human rights.

"The government generally respected this right, although there were several instances in which the government, or actors considered close to the government, allegedly pressured or harassed media outlets critical of the government, including through online trolling," the report says.

It also details cases against individual journalists and NGO activists, including Siddharth Varadarajan of *The Wire* (case by U.P. government) and Anirban

Watch out for mischief after voting: Akhil Gogoi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Akhil Gogoi, the jailed president of Rajojar Dal workers to keep a watch on the strongrooms so that their hard work is not spoilt by some miscreants. I also appeal to the people to keep an eye on the EVM strongrooms so that the BJP cannot manipulate them," he said.

voting machines (EVMs) and manipulating results.

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"I appeal to Rajojar Dal

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Jab minimises chance of hospitalisation'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There are only a few rare cases wherein people contracted COVID-19 after taking vaccines, said Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Tuesday. He was speaking to the media after receiving his second dose of the COV-19 vaccine.

Dr. Vardhan took the second dose of Covaxin at the Delhi Heart and Lung Institute. He was accompanied by his wife Nutan Goel, who also took the second shot.

The Minister added that even if someone tests positive after taking vaccines, it minimises the chances of their hospitalisation or admission to the ICU (Intensive Care Unit) wards.

Over 6.24 cr. vaccine doses administered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 6.24 crore on Tuesday, said a statement issued by the Health Ministry. On Tuesday, a total of 12,94,979 vaccine doses had been given till 7 p.m.

Covishield shelf life extended to 9 months, shows document

DGCI expands prescribed term of six months

REUTERS
NEW DELHI



Patient wait: People sit under observation after receiving a dose of Covishield vaccine in Ahmedabad. ■REUTERS

Onsite registration after 3 p.m.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Advance registration for COVID-19 vaccination will be available for all those above 45 years from April 1 through cowin.gov.in.

Those opting for walk-in registration for their dose can go to their nearest vaccination centre after 3 p.m., Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Tuesday.

transported and handled at normal refrigerated conditions for at least six months. The World Health Organization website also gives the shelf life of Covishield and the South Korean-made AstraZeneca shot as six months.

Reuters has reviewed Mr. Soman's approval, which has been communicated to some African countries, but could not determine if his recommendation applied to unused vials. Each vial typi-

cally contains five millilitre of vaccine, or 10 doses.

A source, with direct knowledge of the matter but not authorised to discuss it publicly, said the approval was given based on data submitted by the SII. The source did not specify what kind of data was shared by the company, the world's biggest vaccine maker.

Mr. Soman, the SII and AstraZeneca did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

cally contains five millilitre of vaccine, or 10 doses.

A source, with direct

Largest share under COVAX stays in India

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

India itself has received more than a third of the nearly 28 million Indian-made AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses delivered so far by the global programme for poor countries.

The revelation that the largest allocation of doses India has supplied to the COVAX programme never actually left the country could add to criticism of India and COVAX, after New Delhi decided this month to delay big exports of vaccines that poor countries around the world had been counting on.

India had supplied its doses early, as COVAX had to wait for the vaccine to be

approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization before it could start exports.

Canada limits AstraZeneca shot to those above 55 years

Manufacturers asked to assess risk of drug by age, gender

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN
CHENNAI

Following reports of an extremely rare adverse reaction to the AstraZeneca vaccine which causes blood clots, several countries have set age limits for the use of the vaccine and Canada is the latest to follow suit.

Health Canada, a Canadian federal department responsible for helping citizens maintain and improve their health, on March 29 recommended that the AstraZeneca vaccine be used only on people above 55 years.

This guidance was given after scientists in Europe said they had identified a mechanism that was responsible for the vaccine causing blood clots in rare cases.

Earlier on March 24, Health Canada had issued a label change and guidance on the AstraZeneca vaccine following reports from European studies of rare but serious events of blood clots associated with low platelet count (thrombocytopenia).

The Canadian federal body has asked the manufacturers to conduct an assessment of the risks and benefits of the vaccine by age and gender in Canada.

Until then, it has recommended pausing the use of the vaccine on people under 55 years of age.

lar to treatment of HIT.

Given the wide roll-out of the AstraZeneca vaccine in India, some scientists believe the decision of the Canadian Agency need not be emulated.

According to Vineeta Bal, retired scientist from the National Institute of Immunology, Delhi, and currently with IISER Pune, "Given that the number of infected [in India] is increasing rapidly, and that there are not very many reports of reinfections, but new people getting infected, there is an urgent need to vaccinate the people. This [VIPIT] is a very rare side-effect and when crores of people around the world have been vaccinated, this particular adverse reaction has been seen in about 30 people. I hope our government does not take a cue from others and issue a directive, as that would only confuse people."

While other countries have a choice of several vaccines, India has only two right now. There is also no data on such adverse effects in India. "I would recommend both vaccines equally and not worry about decisions made by other countries which are based on a risk-benefit analysis," Prof. Bal adds.

President undergoes successful bypass surgery

He is being monitored by doctors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind underwent a cardiac bypass surgery successfully on Tuesday morning at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

"Surgery was successful. He is stable and is being closely monitored by a team of senior doctors," it said.

"I congratulate the team of doctors for the successful operation. Spoke to Director AIIMS to enquire about Rashtrapatiji's health. Praying for his well-being and speedy recovery," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Twitter.

Last Friday, Mr. Kovind



Ram Nath Kovind

visited the Army's Research and Referral (R&R) Hospital following chest discomfort. He underwent routine check-up and was kept under observation.

A day later, he was shifted to AIIMS where the doctors advised him to undergo the planned bypass procedure.

Hopes crushed by degrees of extortion in Philippines

Indian medical students fleeced by agents, colleges

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Anjali (name changed on request) is one of the 15,000 Indian students who head to the Pacific island nation for a medical education every year, lured by easier admission criteria and lower fees than in India's private medical colleges.

But the promises soon turned sour for Anjali and several other Indian students.

Embassy advisory

Having received a slew of complaints of exploitation by colleges and agents, the Indian Embassy in Manila issued an advisory to prospective students earlier this month, warning them of the pitfalls on the road to medical qualifications.

Anjali finished Class 12 in 2014 without the scores to get a medical college seat in

India. She chose the Philippines for its widespread use of English, temperate weather, and promise of low fees.

However, the agent kept delaying her departure claiming that her visa could not come through until she paid \$12,000 in fees for the pre-medical course. Taking a bank loan, she complied.

Like most Indian medical students in the Philippines, Anjali entered the country on a tourist visa on the agent's advice, who tutored her to tell immigration officials she was entering the country only for a few weeks to write an exam.

The embassy advisory said it had received complaints about agents who confiscated students' passports and then charged them exorbitant fees for immigration procedures to



Around 15,000 students go to the Philippines every year. ■GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

agent, but they would not accept it. The agent had gone missing," she said.

RP, another student who wanted to be identified only by his initials, said his agent had not told him that he had to first complete a pre-medical Bachelor's degree and score well in a medical entrance test before joining the medical programme.

"In India, the agent talks to you with honey in his mouth," said the Chennai native. "Once you are in the Philippines, there are so many conditions, so many ways for them to fleece you. The reality is different."

The Embassy said it had received complaints of an "education mafia" of agents and colleges who conspired to extort money.

Its advisory urged students to deal directly with colleges,

but students say some colleges insist on using agents.

In Anjali's case, the college allowed her to complete the pre-medical course, medical degree and clinical internship before it brought up the issue of the missing fees again, in August 2020. The college authorities later dropped another bombshell, claiming that the annual medical degree fees of \$3,750 which she had paid for four years should have actually been \$5,000.

Without the money being paid, it refused to release her degrees or support her visa extension request.

In December 2020, with Anjali facing threats of deportation from the Philippines, her brother took a loan from the factory he works in to help meet the university's additional demands and finally return home.

Jaishankar says India backs Afghan-Taliban dialogue

Minister calls for 'double peace' at Heart of Asia meet

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Calling for a "double peace" both inside Afghanistan and in the region, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said India supports the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN), in a rare direct reference to the Taliban at the 9th Heart of Asia conference in Tajikistan.

Mr. Jaishankar attended the meet along with Foreign Ministers of 15 countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Central Asian states.

"India has been supportive of all the efforts being made to accelerate the dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban, including intra-Afghan negotiations," the Minister said and referred to his participation in the inaugural virtual session of the Doha talks in September 2020.

Speaking at the same conference, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Pakistan "feared that any space gained by ISIS and Al-Qaeda could accentuate the threat of terrorism," and cautioned against the role of "spoilers", both "within and outside Afghanistan".

In a departure from the recent past, however, Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Qureshi were present for each other's speeches during the conference, unlike previous boycotts by the two sides at

a number of conferences since 2019.

However, despite speculation over an ongoing India-Pakistan peace process and a back-channel dialogue, Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Qureshi did not make any public contact during the day-long conference, and were seen avoiding eye contact during the joint photo opportunity they both participated in.

Speaking at the conference in Dushanbe, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, who spoke to both foreign ministers in separate meetings, thanked neighbouring countries for their support.

He also lauded a number of regional connectivity initiatives including India's air corridor programme and Chabahar port project, as well as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline.

Plea in SC to save academic freedom

Teachers say data in devices taken during police raids contain a lifetime of work

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked the government to respond to a plea by five teachers to protect "academic freedom" from raids and seizures of police and investigating agencies.

The past few years have seen raids on and seizures of electronic evidence from academics, researchers, lawyers and activists.

Now, a group of educationists have asked the court to frame guidelines so that the police treat the academic work and research, usually stored in computers they seize during raids, in a "civilised manner".

A Bench led by Justice

Sanjay Kishan Kaul issued notice to the Centre and sought a reply in four weeks.

Professors Ram Ramaswamy, Sujata Patel, M. Madhava Prasad, Mukul Kesavan and Deepak Malghan said academics lose their life's work when police carry off their computers and hard drives after a raid. What may be stored in these devices would be their life's work. At the hands of the police, their work runs the risk of damage, loss, destruction or even distortion.

Data that is stored digitally by academics may have been collected through extensive field work spanning decades or the results of scientific experiments or cal-

culations similarly representing major effort. If these are tampered with or damaged, the loss to research in the sciences and social sciences is considerable and often irreplaceable. A lifetime's work is life as much as livelihood. Patentable material may exist or work that runs the risk of being pla-

ted. The petition also said some "recent news reports" suggested remote tampering with devices.

The petition also said some "recent news reports" suggested remote tampering with devices.

The OCI card gives them a visa free travel to India.

In a March 26 press release, the Indian missions in the U.S. said the "timeline for re-issuance of OCI cards... has been extended until 31 December, 2021."

The OCI card issued to people of Indian origin globally gives them almost all

MV tax rebate proposed for scrapping vehicles

Draft notification seeks suggestions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The draft proposes up to 25% concession in motor vehicle tax for non-transport vehicles and up to 15% in case of transport vehicles upon submitting a "Certificate of vehicle scrapping". The concession will be valid for a period of 15 years for non-transport vehicles and for 8 years for transport vehicles. The concession is among several incentives planned by the Centre.

The notification dated March 29 invites objections and suggestions to the proposal for a period of 30 days.

OCI card holders need not carry old passports

Time for card re-issuance extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON/NY

People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards will not have to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as was required earlier, according to a government notification.

The OCI card issued to people of Indian origin globally gives them almost all

Pawar admitted to hospital in Mumbai

MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar was admitted to the Breach Candy hospital in Mumbai on Tuesday. He had been experiencing abdominal pain and it had been earlier said that he would be admitted on March 31 for surgery.

Justice Chandwali to probe Param Bir letter

MUMBAI

Retired Justice Kailash U. Chandwali of the Bombay High Court was on Tuesday appointed by the Maharashtra government to probe a letter written by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh against Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

Life sentence awarded to 12 persons in terror case

JAIPUR

A sessions court here on Tuesday awarded life sentence to 12 persons, stated to be Indian Mujahideen members, in a case of a terror module unearthed after the arrest of some persons by the NIA in Delhi in 2014.

Councillor injured in militant attack dies

SRINGAR

Shams-ud-Din Peer, a municipal councillor who was injured in a militant attack on Monday in north Kashmir's Sopore succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday, taking the toll to three.



SAUMIL SHAH

The Mercedes-Benz GLC is one of the most popular premium mid-size SUVs. Despite being one of the oldest offerings in the segment, it is still a strong seller for the brand.

In 2019, Mercedes-Benz gave the GLC range a mid-life refresh, and now for 2021, the carmaker has stuffed it with some new features. Priced at ₹57.36 lakh for the petrol and ₹63.13 lakh for the diesel, this 2021 version sees a price hike of ₹1.50 lakh and ₹2 lakh over the respective 2020 versions.

We get behind the wheel of the GLC 200 petrol, and touch upon all that is new across the 2021 range.

What's new?

The GLC carries forward its contemporary styling from the 2019 update, so it still sports LED lights, a large two-slat grille flaunting an oversized three-pointed star, stylish 19-inch wheels and some butch-looking elements to go with its SUV persona.

What is new is that Mercedes is now offering two new paint shade options in 2021 – High-tech Silver and Brilliant Blue (as seen in this review). Our test car came with all-black interiors.

One of the talking points about the interiors is the new 12.3-inch all-digital instrument cluster (which it shares with other models) that offers multiple display options for the speedometer, tachometer, navigation, and more. Mercedes has also added a 360-degree camera to the equipment list, and what is nice is that the camera quality and display are top-notch.

When it comes to seat comfort, the already plush front seats of the GLC now boast a massaging function; and while it is barely as intense and as effective as what you would expect from a 'massage' seat, it is still a nice option to have.

What is more is that the brilliant MBUX infotainment system that made its debut on the 2019 GLC, goes a step further in terms of connectivity. In addition to the connected car features via the 'Mer-

A touch of star quality

Is the Mercedes GLC petrol the pick of the range? A close look at the 2021 version...



MERCEDES GLC 200 SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE 1991cc, 4 cyls, turbo-petrol

MAX POWER 197hp at 5500-6100rpm

MAX TORQUE 320Nm at 1650-4000rpm

GEARBOX 9-speed automatic

LENGTH 4658mm

WIDTH 1890mm

HEIGHT 1644mm

WHEELBASE 2873mm

BOOT CAPACITY 550 litres



New lease of life Minor updates enhance the appeal of the Mercedes GLC 200 along with a whole lot of kit ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

this motor makes 80Nm of torque lesser. So, does the torque deficit hamper performance significantly? The simple answer to that is – no.

Mercedes offers the GLC 200 petrol only in a two-wheel-drive configuration (power is transmitted to the rear wheels), compared to the all-wheel-drive diesel. This makes the petrol much lighter, and therefore the torque deficit is scarcely noticeable.

The engine feels just as sprightly and as energetic as the diesel right from the get-go; it is smoother too and does its job in a silent, refined manner. Even the build-up of speed is linear, and it has got more than adequate performance to keep most users satisfied.

Complementing this engine is a 9-speed automatic transmission that performs seamlessly, and the flexibility of nine ratios means the turbo-petrol engine will spin lazily at lower revs at cruising speeds, thus aiding fuel efficiency to a certain degree.

This 2021 version carries forward the same suspension tweaks that featured in the 2019 facelift. So, even though it wears tall 19-inch wheels, its suspension has been softened, and strikes a good balance between ride comfort and driving manners.

Should I buy one?

The GLC is a well-rounded SUV packing in space and comfort, equipment, mature driving manners and wears the very desirable three-pointed star.

While the 2019 refresh leased the GLC a new life, this 2021 update, although minor, certainly enhances its appeal with a 360-degree camera, digital speedometer console, front seat massagers and new connected car features.

If your usage is strictly on the beaten path, the two-wheel-drive GLC 200 petrol is not only more refined and smoother than the diesel, but it is also cheaper by ₹5.77 lakh, thus making a strong case for itself.

AUTO SNIPPETS



Hyundai Alcazar previewed in sketches

Hyundai has previewed its upcoming Alcazar SUV with sketches of its interior and exterior, ahead of its debut in early April 2021. The exterior sketch, depicting the Alcazar SUV from its rear three-quarters, reveals that major modifications seem to have been made to accommodate the third row of seats. The Alcazar gets a longer rear overhang and a thicker C-pillar, with notable creases above the wheel arches. Additionally, the Alcazar will get a unique tailgate design. The interior sketch reveals that the Alcazar will come with captain's seats in the middle row. While engine details are yet to be confirmed, the Alcazar is expected to come with the same petrol and diesel engine options as the Creta.



Jaguar launches I-Pace electric SUV

Jaguar has launched its all-electric I-Pace SUV in India, with prices starting from ₹1.06 crore (ex-showroom, India). The I-Pace SUV is powered by two electric motors that produce a combined 400hp and 696Nm of torque. It is equipped with a 90kWh battery pack that gives it a claimed range of up to 470km (WLTP) on a single charge. With an 11kW home charger, the I-Pace's battery takes 12.9 hours to charge to full, though a 50kW charger is said to deliver up to 270km of range per hour. Jaguar has partnered with Tata Power to provide charging options across over 23 cities with 35 DC fast chargers across 22 of its dealerships in 19 cities.



Mercedes A-Class Limousine, AMG A35 launched

Mercedes has launched the A-Class Limousine in India, with prices starting at ₹39.90 lakh (ex-showroom, India). The new sedan is available in both, standard and hot AMG spec, with the former available in a single, fully-loaded Progressive Line trim. Engine options include a 163hp, 1.3-litre turbo-petrol (A 200) or a 150hp, 2.0-litre diesel engine (A 200D). The petrol engine comes paired to a 7-speed DCT automatic gearbox, while the diesel features an 8-speed DCT automatic. Powering the A35 is a 2.0-litre turbo-petrol engine developing 306hp and 400Nm. Power is sent to all four-wheels via a 7-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox.



Volkswagen Polo TSI

Out goes the old 1.2-litre TSI and in comes the new 1.0-litre TSI. The good news? The drop in displacement has not been accompanied by a drop in power. The 1.0's 110hp power figure is actually 5hp up on the old 1.2 TSI unit while peak torque is unchanged at 175Nm. A 6-speed manual is standard fit and you also have the option of a 6-speed torque converter. The Polo 1.0 TSI is entertaining to drive, though it is not as spacious as its premium hatchback rivals. Higher variants are also not the best-equipped for the price. The recently introduced TSI Turbo Edition brings down the asking price for the turbo-petrol Polo by ₹1.35 lakh, making it the most affordable turbo-petrol currently on sale.

Volkswagen Polo TSI price: ₹ 6.99-9.92 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)

Renault Kiger

Renault's push into the compact SUV space came with the aggressively priced Kiger compact SUV – prices range between ₹5.45-9.72 lakh. The Kiger comes across as a fantastic value proposition, given its well-equipped and spacious cabin, responsive turbo-petrol engine and impressive ride quality. Buyers also get a choice of gearboxes – either a 5-speed manual or a CVT automatic. The Kiger is just edged out by the Nexon in terms of starting price, though one should keep in mind that the turbo-petrol Kiger is only available from the mid-spec RxL variant onwards.

Renault Kiger turbo-petrol Price: ₹7.14-9.72 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)



Tata Kiger

Tata's compact SUV is currently the most affordable turbo-petrol compact SUV with prices for the entry-level XE standing at ₹7.10 lakh. The Kiger received a facelift early last year which also saw it receive a 10hp power boost, along with an upgrade to BS6. Its new 120hp output makes it one of the most powerful options on this list with a 6-speed manual or AMT gearbox. It is one of the most affordable cars to come with a factory-fitted sunroof and is also a Global NCAP-rated 5-star car.

Tata Kiger turbo-petrol price: ₹7.10-10.86 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)

Tata Altroz

The Altroz iTurbo is a fair step up over its naturally aspirated sibling, as far as performance goes. However, the 1.2-litre, three-cylinder unit is not the most high-tech one around nor is it the most powerful. The iTurbo carries forward all the strengths of the standard Tata Altroz with its spacious cabin, well sorted ride and handling, and striking looks. Tata's turbo-petrol premium hatchback is available in three well-equipped variants. **Tata Altroz turbo-petrol price:** ₹7.74-8.86 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)

RIVAN RS

Since the roll-out of BS6 emission norms, small-capacity turbo-petrol engines have increased in the Indian market, with several carmakers introducing these peppier engine options. While there are a wide number of cars to choose from, here's a list of the five most affordable turbo-petrol cars on sale in India, based on their starting price.

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Nissan Magnite

If you are looking at something that is value for money then the Nissan Magnite stands out. The Magnite is spacious, comfortable and well equipped. Its 100hp, 1.0-litre turbo-petrol engine offers brisk performance, regardless of whether the unit is paired with the manual or CVT gearbox. At its starting price of ₹7.29 lakh, the Magnite is one of the most affordable turbo-petrols on sale – as with its cousin from Renault, the turbo-petrol is available from the mid-spec variants onwards. Even prices for the fully-loaded automatic fall under the ₹10 lakh-mark.

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Since the roll-out of BS6 emission norms, small-capacity turbo-petrol engines have increased in the Indian market, with several carmakers introducing these peppier engine options. While there are a wide number of cars to choose from, here's a list of the five most affordable turbo-petrol cars on sale in India, based on their starting price.

Tata Nexon

Tata's compact SUV is currently the most affordable turbo-petrol compact SUV with prices for the entry-level XE standing at ₹7.10 lakh. The Nexon received a facelift early last year which also saw it receive a 10hp power boost, along with an upgrade to BS6. Its new 120hp output makes it one of the most powerful options on this list with a 6-speed manual or AMT gearbox. It is one of the most affordable cars to come with a factory-fitted sunroof and is also a Global NCAP-rated 5-star car.

Tata Nexon turbo-petrol price: ₹7.10-10.86 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)

Nissan Magnite

If you are looking at something that is value for money then the Nissan Magnite stands out. The Magnite is spacious, comfortable and well equipped. Its 100hp, 1.0-litre turbo-petrol engine offers brisk performance, regardless of whether the unit is paired with the manual or CVT gearbox. At its starting price of ₹7.29 lakh, the Magnite is one of the most affordable turbo-petrols on sale – as with its cousin from Renault, the turbo-petrol is available from the mid-spec variants onwards. Even prices for the fully-loaded automatic fall under the ₹10 lakh-mark.

Nissan Magnite turbo-petrol price: ₹7.29-9.89 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)

Jaguar I-Pace

Jaguar has launched its all-electric I-Pace SUV in India, with prices starting from ₹1.06 crore (ex-showroom, India). The I-Pace SUV is powered by two electric motors that produce a combined 400hp and 696Nm of torque. It is equipped with a 90kWh battery pack that gives it a claimed range of up to 470km (WLTP) on a single charge. With an 11kW home charger, the I-Pace's battery takes 12.9 hours to charge to full, though a 50kW charger is said to deliver up to 270km of range per hour. Jaguar has partnered with Tata Power to provide charging options across over 23 cities with 35 DC fast chargers across 22 of its dealerships in 19 cities.

Jaguar I-Pace price: ₹ 1.06 crore (ex-showroom, India)

Mercedes A-Class Limousine, AMG A35

Mercedes has launched the A-Class Limousine in India, with prices starting at ₹39.90 lakh (ex-showroom, India). The new sedan is available in both, standard and hot AMG spec, with the former available in a single, fully-loaded Progressive Line trim. Engine options include a 163hp, 1.3-litre turbo-petrol (A 200) or a 150hp, 2.0-litre diesel engine (A 200D). The petrol engine comes paired to a 7-speed DCT automatic gearbox, while the diesel features an 8-speed DCT automatic. Powering the A35 is a 2.0-litre turbo-petrol engine developing 306hp and 400Nm. Power is sent to all four-wheels via a 7-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox.

Mercedes A-Class Limousine, AMG A35 price: ₹ 39.90 lakh (ex-showroom, India)

Volkswagen Polo TSI

Out goes the old 1.2-litre TSI and in comes the new 1.0-litre TSI. The good news? The drop in displacement has not been accompanied by a drop in power. The 1.0's 110hp power figure is actually 5hp up on the old 1.2 TSI unit while peak torque is unchanged at 175Nm. A 6-speed manual is standard fit and you also have the option of a 6-speed torque converter. The Polo 1.0 TSI is entertaining to drive, though it is not as spacious as its premium hatchback rivals. Higher variants are also not the best-equipped for the price. The recently introduced TSI Turbo Edition brings down the asking price for the turbo-petrol Polo by ₹1.35 lakh, making it the most affordable turbo-petrol currently on sale.

Volkswagen Polo TSI price: ₹ 6.99-9.92 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)

Renault K

Kung fu kindness



SUNALINI MATHEW

The Buddhist nuns of the 1,000-year-old Drukpa (dragon) lineage have been learning Kung Fu for 13 years now. It is a novelty that gets them media coverage and makes for stunning photographs and videos: a group of short women in spartan clothes and sports shoes working a machete or a fan traditionally armed with a blade, against the backdrop of the Himalayas. About 500 nuns live on the premises of the Druk Amitabha Mountain Nunnery that overlooks the Kathmandu valley.

Now, they are getting recognition for the work they do in the hours outside of Kung Fu and their spiritual practice.

The group has been nominated as one of the three finalists for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize 2020 that "rewards outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond".

At 26, both Jigme Konchok Lhamo and Jigme Migyur Palmo, from Lahaul and Ladakh respectively, say they are excited, but "nuns don't have phones or access to the Internet," so they had to explain to their fellow members about what the prize means.

"We're very happy just to be nominated and that around the world people know who we are and what we're doing," says Palmo, who works at the office and has administrative duties.

On Facebook, the nuns document their work. They are currently landscaping the mountain on which they live. "Everything from tree cutting and rock removal, to brick-laying are part of the specialised physical work being performed by the Gyalwang Drukpa [the leader] and the Drukpa nuns," says a message along with pictures.

Lhamo says most of the work they do is physical, whether it is eco *padyatras* covering about 650 kilometres on foot to pick up plastic litter and talk to people about Nature-based ways of living, or cycling *yatrás* to promote green transportation.

The main agenda for both though, is to advocate against human trafficking.

The Drukpa order of Buddhist nuns that performs the marital art has been shortlisted for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize 2020



ABOUT THE PRIZE

WHO WAS VACLAV HAVEL? Born in 1936, Vaclav Havel was a "playwright, poet, and political dissident" according to *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He went on to become the president of Czechoslovakia (1989-92) and of the Czech Republic (1993-2003), after the fall of Communism.

WHAT IS THE PRIZE?

The prize consists of €60,000, a trophy, and a diploma, and is open to individuals, NGOs, and organisations working in the human rights space. It is awarded each year by PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe), in partnership with the Václav Havel Library and the Charta 77 Foundation. PACE is made up of 324 parliamentarians from the national parliaments of the human rights organisation, Council of Europe's 47 member states.

WHO ARE THE NUNS UP AGAINST?

This year, the other two nominees are also women: Saudi women's rights activist Loujain Alhathloul, currently imprisoned; and Congolese women's rights activist Julienne Lusenge. The prize will be announced on April 19 in an online event.

The nuns reach out to people in unreachable places, especially in disaster situations, like in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake in 2015. In COVID times, they have travelled, sometimes walking through the day or sending essential supplies, to reach about 2,500 families in Nepal.

In the monastery itself, women are trained to maintain the facility. "We don't have to call the plumber or the person for the generator, or people to do the solar lights... We sometimes ask for help, but mostly we are self-reliant," says Lhamo, who at 12 heard the head of the monastery speak about women's equality and was so inspired that



Women of strength The nuns train young women in self-defence; their daily practice extends to two hours
■ LIVE TO LOVE INTERNATIONAL

she decided to join the nunnery. Her parents wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer, but, "I cried for three days. At last they sent me."

At the time, she was studying at the Our Lady of the Snows School in Kullu, where she was enrolled from the age of three-and-a-half. Today, she handles IT and communications for the nunnery.

She enjoys the sense of equality in the sect, not just with the teaching of Kung Fu, but also in the spiritual practices that often see women left out.

In the world outside, nuns and monks are not often seen as equals. Here, it is the women who learn the martial art form, not the men. The men "are very good at cricket and football," says Lhamo, laughing, adding that they are very supportive of the women.

Feminism in a monastery

While the award may be for humanitarian work, there is a hidden impact that Kung Fu has had. Introduced from the sect's Vietnam branch, it has built a sense of confidence in body and mind. In fact, the nunnery now has a waiting list, because it is aspirational, even for people internationally.

They receive about five or six enquiries daily from school-goers and seniors, from as far off as villages in Germany and Ireland. "Kung Fu has changed our lives in terms of belief-

ing that we can do anything we want to do," says Lhamo.

Of the 500 nuns on the premises – there are 300 more scattered all over the Himalayan region and in about eight locations around the world – about 80 are currently actively practising Wushu Kung Fu. It is compulsory for women below 35, unless they have physical health conditions, so most have had a brush with it.

In 2008, the Vietnam nuns came down to do some basic training. In 2012, the nuns in Kathmandu entered the intermediate phase, with Truong Kha Nguyen, an instructor who comes down from Vietnam every year for two to three months to train them. Those days are rigorous, with 10 hours of practice daily.

The rest of the year the women work on the teachings, until he comes back to evaluate and train again. Now, those who have been training for over eight years are able to guide newcomers. They also take self-defence classes for women. At these, the nuns aim at understanding the world the girls live in. "We try and make them feel encouraged and inspired – by themselves, not by us."

"Many people say, 'You're breaking stereotypes.' We are not breaking anything," says Lhamo laughing, "but yes, we are changing the rules."

Leading up to Easter Pesaha appam; (right) hot cross buns ■ BINDU JOY; PEIXELS



Breaking BREAD together

In many Kerala homes, unleavened appams are still made on Maundy Thursday, despite laborious cooking processes, to keep traditions alive

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

For Marina Charles, the flavours of Lent are unfermented, steamed *Indri appam* or *Pesaha appam* and *kurukku*, made at her home in Thiruvananthapuram. That was not all. "Since my mother, Thelma Gomez, hails from St. Andrews near Menamkulam in the capital city, she also used to make sweet hot cross buns, rich in spices like nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon and all-spice powder. St Andrews had a unique culture with traces of Portuguese influence and so she used to bake the hot cross buns for Easter. My paternal grandmother, Lydia Gomez, was the one who made the *Indri appam* (or *Pesaha appam*) and *kurukku*, which is also called *pesaha paal*," says Preethi. Nowadays, Preethi cooks the *paal* and a friend of hers makes the appam and they share it.

Wayanad-based Babu Stephen, son of YouTuber Anamma Pulivelil aka Annamma *chedathi* (Annammachedathi Special) explains that in their parish, the *Indri appam* is steamed in banana leaves while the *Pesaha appam* is called *Kurushu appam* as it has the palm leaf cross embedded in the middle.

As with all things food, each region and Christian denomination in Kerala has its own flavours for Lent. What is common is the simple food that is usually served on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday after the church service is over. While it is invariably *kanji* (rice porridge) and *payar* (green mung) on Good Friday, on Maundy Thursday it is the *Pesaha appam*, an unleavened bread made of rice flour that is cooked in many Christian households all over Kerala.

Lent is a period of fasting, prayers and abstinence for many Christian families. Although Easter eggs and bunnies are getting increasingly popular, many families continue the tradition of making or buying *Pesaha* appams. "Although we make Easter eggs, cakes and hot cross buns, what is much in demand is the *Indri appam* that is served on the day of Maundy Thursday," says Reina Thomas, one of the partners of Square One Homemade Treats, a bakery in Thiruvananthapuram.

Marina says that since cakes are easier to make, many of the ethnic snacks that were traditionally made during the Holy Week have been forgotten as they involve a great deal of time consuming, laborious stirring and cooking, mostly with rice flour. To keep the tradition going, Marina makes it a point to make the *Indri appam* every year.

Preethi Abraham, a home cook, recalls that during her childhood in Ranni, Pathanamthitta, the service on Maundy Thursday used to be early in the morning at around 3 am. The *Indri appam*, made with rice flour

Some might add a bit of jaggery to the *Pesaha appam* and that gives it a brownish tone

In Kollam, the dough, made of rice flour, coconut and jaggery, is filled in *vaya na* leaves (bay leaves) folded into cones and steamed, says Jessie Ignatius, a former school teacher from Kollam.

"However, my mother in Thrissur used to make 'pulikatha appam' (unfermented appam) made without yeast. It is made with rice, urad dal, shallots and coconut and made as soon as the mixture is ground. My mother made *kurukku* with rice powder, coconut milk, jaggery, a bit of ghee and roasted cumin. I used to love the flavour of the cumin."

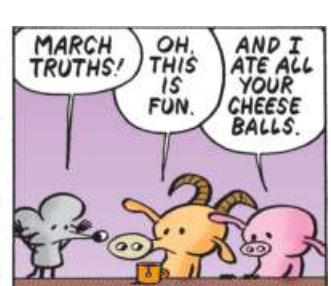
Some people might add a bit of jaggery to the *Pesaha appam* to darken the colour says Marina. And the *paal* could be seasoned with cardamom. She adds, "Kalathappam, a bread made in a pot, is also made on Maundy Thursday by some families. Made of rice flour and lightly spiced, it has fried shallots and coconut."

The ingredients and names might differ but not the solemnity of the occasion when families break bread together for Maundy Thursday, symbolising the Last Supper of Jesus Christ.

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



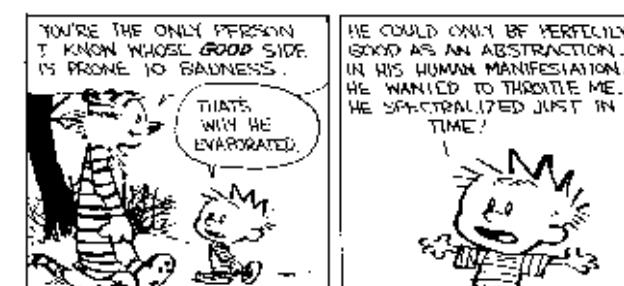
PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



China cuts Hong Kong's elected seats

Beijing tightens control over the city after sweeping changes to its electoral system were approved

ANANTH KRISHNAN
China's legislature on Tuesday formally approved sweeping changes to Hong Kong's electoral system that will see a sharply reduced share of directly elected representatives and a tightening of Beijing's control in the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

The changes, first announced earlier this month at the annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, were on Tuesday passed by the 167 members of the NPC Standing Committee. President Xi Jinping signed orders to promulgate the amended annexes to Hong Kong's Basic Law, the constitution that has governed the SAR under the "one country, two systems" model since its return to China in 1997, official media reported.

Sweeping change
The amendments mark the biggest changes to Hong Kong's political system since the handover, and reduce the share of directly elected representatives in its Legisla-



Giving a statement: Officials in Hong Kong attending a press conference on the electoral system reform on Tuesday. ■ AP

tive Council (LegCo). While previously 35 of its 70 members were directly elected, that number has been reduced by 15.

Now, Hongkongers will only be able to directly vote for 20 representatives while the size of LegCo has been expanded to 90, thereby drastically reducing the share of elected representatives. The 70 others will be broadly chosen from pro-establishment bodies. A 1,200-

member Election Committee that chooses Hong Kong's Chief Executive has been expanded by 300 members, and will include Hong Kong's representative to the NPC, the Communist Party-controlled legislature in Beijing. It will also choose 40 members of LegCo, while the remaining 30 will be chosen by what are called functional constituencies, representing a range of industry, trade and other interest groups.

Erosion of autonomy
Pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong have seen the political changes, as well as last year's national security law that punishes "subversion" as the most significant

The other big change is the setting up of a Candidate Eligibility Review Committee "for reviewing and confirming the eligibility of candidates" and a "Committee for Safeguarding National Security" that "will make findings as to whether a candidate for Election Committee member or for the office of Chief Executive meets the legal requirements". There will be no scope for legally challenging the findings. District councillors, who are directly elected, will no longer have a place either in the Election Committee or in LegCo. In 2019, the pro-democracy opposition swept district elections in Hong Kong, following which they controlled 90% of the seats. Now, the district councillors will only be involved with local-level civic issues without representation in government.

changes in the "one country, two systems" model and as dramatically eroding the autonomy enjoyed by the SAR previously. The changes have also all but ended any prospect of realising the demands of the 2019 protest movement for universal suffrage and direct elections to choose the Chief Executive.

The 2019 protests were seen by Beijing as a direct challenge to its authority. Zhang Yong, deputy head of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, told the official Xinhua news agency the changes, including for a candidate review committee, were "to ensure 'patriots administering Hong Kong' and prevent anti-China, destabilising elements from entering the body of power of the HKSAR." "It fixes the loopholes in the electoral system and ensures patriots administer Hong Kong," he said. "Whoever elected to administer must be patriots. This is a fundamental premise of any political system and electoral system in any country and region."

Presidents Xi, Gotabaya speak over phone, reaffirm ties

'China will stand firm with Sri Lanka in the face of the unjust pressure it faces in the multilateral arena'

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO
In his first officially publicised telephonic conversation with a world leader following the UN Human Rights Council's adoption of a resolution on Sri Lanka last week, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Monday spoke to Chinese President Xi Jinping, a statement from his office said.

"The Chinese President stated that the government of China will continue to support in achieving sustainable

development goals of Sri Lanka and will stand firm with Sri Lanka in the face of the unjust pressure it faces in the multilateral arena," the statement issued by the Presidential Media Division said on Tuesday, a week after China, along with 10 other member countries, voted against the resolution, backing Sri Lanka.

Mega infra projects
China's official Xinhua news agency reported that President Xi suggested that the

two countries "steadily push forward" the billions-worth, mega infrastructure projects such as the Colombo Port City, being built reclaimed land by the seafront in the capital, and the southern Hambantota Port, and "promote high-quality collaboration" in jointly building the Belt and Road.

Assuring Sri Lanka of "as much assistance as China's capacity allows", in the fight against COVID-19, the Chinese President suggested that the two sides seek to "gradually carry out cooperation" in fields such as aviation and education, while "continuously exploring" new channels and areas of collaboration.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka said Beijing had approved a 10 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion) currency

swap, a move aimed to boost the island nation's dwindling foreign reserves.

AIIB loan
Further, the Beijing-headquartered Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) cleared Sri Lanka's request for a \$180 million loan. Last year, China sanctioned an emergency \$500 million loan to Sri Lanka to cope with the economic impact of the pandemic. So far, Sri Lanka owes China over \$5 billion in loans.

Hefazat-e-Islam, the group behind Bangladesh protests

They called widespread protests against PM Modi's visit

STANLY JOHNY

At least 11 people were killed in Bangladesh over the weekend as protesters clashed with police during demonstrations called by Islamist groups against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Dhaka visit. Mr. Modi was in Bangladesh to attend the country's Golden Jubilee celebrations of independence. The main group behind the violent protests was Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh that had in the past clashed with the Awami League government.



Hefazat-e-Islam activists during a recent protest. ■ AP

juring over a dozen, and announcing the arrival of a new Islamist group in Bangladesh.

Roots of Hefazat

Hefazat-e-Islam, literally 'protector of Islam', was formed in 2010 when the country was taking gradual measures to undo the Islamisation of its polity by the military rulers in the late 1970s and 1980s. In 2008, the military-backed caretaker government had proposed the Draft National Women's Development Policy Bill, promising equal rights to women in property. In the December 2008 election, the secular Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, was brought to power. The secularists had demanded repealing the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which had made sweeping changes to the country's original Constitution during the years of military rule (Later in the year the Supreme Court ruled the amendment was illegal). The Islamist groups saw these developments as a threat to their core interests, and came together on one platform to form Hefazat-e-Islam.

In February 2010, Hefazat called a demonstration in Chittagong against the Women's Bill and the bid to cancel the Fifth Amendment. When the pressure mounted, the government acted swiftly. In the early hours of May 6, 2013, security forces launched a crackdown on Hefazat activists to oust

them from Dhaka. At least 11 people were estimated to have been killed.

Pressure group

Since the failed "Dhaka siege", Hefazat was careful not to run into a direct showdown with the government. But it remained an important hardline voice that often put pressure on the government with its Islamist agenda. For example, when the Fifth Amendment was repealed, the government restored secularism and some other articles of the original Constitution but Islam continued to remain the state religion. The government had also made changes in school texts under pressure from Hefazat and other Islamists. In 2017, giving in to Hefazat's demands, the government removed the statue of the Greek Goddess Themis from the premises of the Supreme Court. In 2018, the Hasina government passed a Bill recognising Dawra-e-Hadith, a top degree of Hefazat-controlled Quami madrasas, as equivalent to a Master's degree in Islamic studies and Arabic.

Ms. Hasina's government may have found Hefazat a lesser problem than Jamaat-e-Islami, the militant religious party. The government did not give in to Hefazat's key demands that would alter the secular character of the state, but offered small concessions to the group to avoid trouble. These concessions, however, appeared to have made them stronger over the years. And the protests they carried out against the visit of the Indian Prime Minister, at a time when both countries are trying to deepen ties, pose a new challenge to both Dhaka and New Delhi.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Their demands included enactment of an anti-blasphemy law with provision for death penalty, cancellation of the women's development law, a ban on erecting statues in public places, a ban on mixing man and woman in public and declaration of Bangladesh's Ahmadiyas, a persecuted minority in Islam, as "non-Muslims".

The Awami League government initially ignored the protests. But Hefazat members organised many marches to the capital to push for their demands. When the pressure mounted, the government acted swiftly. In the early hours of May 6, 2013, security forces launched a crackdown on Hefazat activists to oust

Global leaders push for new pandemic treaty

Pact to avoid scramble for vaccines

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA
World leaders pushed Tuesday for a new international treaty to prepare for the next global pandemic – and avoid the unseemly scramble for vaccines hampering the COVID-19 response.

Leaders from 25 countries, the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO) sought to get the ground rules down in writing to streamline and speed up the reaction to future global outbreaks.

The treaty would aim to ensure that information, virus pathogens, technology to tackle the pandemic and products such as vaccines are shared swiftly and equitably among nations.

"The time to act is now. The world cannot afford to wait until the pandemic is



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

over to start planning for the next one," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

Without an internationally-coordinated pandemic response plan, "we remain vulnerable," he warned.

The call came in a joint article published in international newspapers on Tuesday, penned by leaders from five continents.

IN BRIEF



Sisi promises funding to avoid Suez issue repeat

ISMAILIA
Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi promised Tuesday that his country would buy equipment to avoid any repetition of the past week's closure of the Suez Canal as he visited Ismailia, en route to the vital trade artery. ■ AP

Nepal gets vaccine from China, to restart drive
KATHMANDU
Nepal is set to restart COVID-19 inoculations after receiving shots from China, resuming a campaign put on hold after India slowed vaccine exports. India and China have sought to use vaccine diplomacy to extend influence during the pandemic. ■ AP

IS attack survivors stranded around Mozambique town

Jihadists launched raid on coastal town Palma last week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PEMBA
Thousands of Palma residents remained stranded on Tuesday, hiding around the besieged northern Mozambique town and scrambling to escape the area overrun by violent jihadist militants last week, sources said.

Insurgents affiliated with the Islamic State group (IS) launched a raid on the coastal town last Wednesday, ransacking buildings and murdering and beheading civilians. Dozens have been killed in what witnesses describe as a coordinated attack, just 10 km from a multi-billion dollar gas project led by France's Total.

Shaken survivors have since streamed into the

neighboring town of Mueda and regional capital Pemba. But sources told AFP thousands were still wandering around Palma, desperate to find refuge.

Total ferries 1,400

Some trudged days through surrounding forest, walking west towards Mueda and north to reach the Tanzanian border. Hundreds more travelled to the Afungi peninsula, the site of the gas exploration project, where they gathered outside Total's fortified complex, UN workers said. Total ferried around 1,400 people, including both gas and government workers, to Pemba on Sunday, but has since been accused of turning its back

on desperate residents.

Only a few dozen other survivors have reached the regional capital, mainly on small fishing boats, raising concern among humanitarian aid workers who did not wish to be named.

"We are worried that so far very few are coming," she said, adding that 5,000 escapees had reportedly assembled close to a lighthouse on the peninsula. "Those are probably not the only ones," she added.

Total said it has organised "emergency support", including food and water, for people arriving at its site.

SPORTSTAR



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MARKET WATCH

	30-03-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	50137	+2.30
US Dollar	73.38	-1.19
Gold	44113	+0.07
Brent oil	64.27	-0.34

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Anil Ports	710.55	+7.50
Asian Paints	2578.05	+72.90
Axist Bank	695.35	-2.85
Bajaj Auto	3666.70	+66.65
Bajaj Finance	9502.35	+34.90
Bajaj Finance	5193.55	+10.50
Bharti Airtel	521.50	+1.00
BPCL	430.80	+6.60
Britannia Ind	3616.00	+11.40
Cipla	812.20	+24.75
Coal India	132.95	+3.35
Divis Lab	3584.25	+119.30
Dr Reddys Lab	4518.20	+112.20
Eicher Motors	2639.95	+79.40
GAIL (India)	132.35	+0.55
Grasim Ind	1422.60	+17.00
HCL Tech	995.80	+37.25
HDPC	2605.65	+72.90
HFDC Bank	1553.70	+62.40
HFDC Life	687.75	+16.05
Hero MotoCorp	2963.85	+26.05
Hindalco	326.30	-0.85
Hind Unilever	2398.75	+80.85
ICICI Bank	591.45	+12.90
IndusInd Bank	961.05	+8.30
Infosys	1385.30	+49.10
Indian Oil Corp	91.55	+0.65
ITC	214.55	+3.65
JSW Steel	467.45	+22.25
Kotak Bank	1781.25	+10.20
L&T	1423.55	+25.25
M&M	795.00	+4.35
Maruti Suzuki	6851.80	+67.35
Nestle India Ltd.	17165.00	+593.25
NTPC	107.70	+3.50
ONGC	103.50	+1.10
PowerGrid Corp	221.35	+6.75
Reliance Ind	2029.30	+34.65
SBI Life	872.15	+1.80
State Bank	360.80	+3.60
Shree Cement	29094.45	+978.25
Sun Pharma	597.70	+10.50
Tata Motors	297.05	+0.65
Tata Steel	800.00	+33.15
TCS	3158.55	+91.75
Tech Mahindra	1016.90	+25.90
Titan	1552.20	+46.35
UltraTech Cement	6785.60	+50.35
UPL	627.95	+42.55
Wipro	418.10	+14.20

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.18	73.50
Euro	85.84	86.22
British Pound	100.50	100.97
Japanese Yen (100)	66.30	66.59
Chinese Yuan	11.13	11.18
Swiss Franc	77.64	78.02
Singapore Dollar	54.28	54.55
Canadian Dollar	57.91	58.17
Malaysian Ringgit	17.62	17.72

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

ALSTO
Alstom bags ₹1,854-cr. order for metro cars

MUMBAI Alstom has bagged a contract from Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority for design, manufacture, supply, test and commission of 234 metro cars, including personnel training for Line 4 and the extension corridor (Wadala-Kasarvadavali-Garmukh). The order is valued at €200 million (₹1,854 crore).

Centre likely to extend foreign trade policy

NEW DELHI The government is expected to further extend the existing foreign trade policy, which is scheduled to lapse from April 1 this year, for a few more months, an official said. On March 31, 2020, the Centre had extended the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 for one year till March 31, 2021, amid the pandemic and lockdown. FPT provide guidelines for enhancing exports to push economic growth. PTI

SPORT

Time for a rotation policy as another full year looms for India

Such a system will ensure a bigger pool of players to choose from, greater care for those chosen and longer careers



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESHE MENON

England's policy of rotating their players is one that India should follow. In the two important series recently, in Australia and at home against England, rotation was forced upon India by injuries. Only Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane played all eight Tests.

The IPL is set to commence on April 9 and before the next round in 2022, India are scheduled to play 14 Tests (six away), 12 ODIs and 22 T20Is. These, besides World T20 in India in October. If the Asia Cup is held in Sri Lanka in June, India might send a second string team which is as capable of winning as their first as the recent matches have shown.

All that is a lot of cricket. It is particular-

ly harsh if quarantines and secure bio bubbles remain. Managing players' workloads will have to be priority. Skipper Virat Kohli has suggested that players need to be spoken to and consulted before tours are finalised. "Otherwise," he has been quoted as saying, "it will be a case of who can last through difficult times like these."

Through a combination of well-planned bubbles, player discipline, and good fortune, India played through the pandemic year without casualties, and without, so far as we know, significant mental issues. But the pressures of playing in such conditions cannot be exaggerated.

India discovered some fabulous performers in this period, and whatever the format, a newcomer did enough to leave the management with the comfortable feeling that the conveyor belt is moving smoothly.

Back on the comeback trail

Already some heroes of recent seasons – Prithvi Shaw, Mayank Agarwal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav – have had to move on to the comeback trail from the clear

path they had made for themselves. Wriddhiman Saha, till recently the No. 1 wicket-keeper, has had to stand behind Rishabh Pant in the queue as both keeper and batsman.

So well have the newcomers from Axar Patel to Mohammed Siraj and Shubman Gill to Ishan Kishan performed that it is difficult to decide which is the country's first eleven in any format. That regulars like Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja were hardly missed is a tribute to the Indian system which seems to be training specialists in the manner of a superior professional college.

Yet, it is when things are looking their best that we tend to get complacent and believe that the conveyor belt will never stop. As Kohli has hinted, good things do not happen by accident. They have to be planned for.

The fact that replacements are readily available means that players will be reluctant to take a break mid-series. The think tank, consisting of the coaches, captain and selectors will have to chart out a rest-and-recuperation plan and communicate

this to the players to win their support for the scheme.

India have been playing as a team for a while now, but some individuals – has been traditionally the case – are more equal than others. You only have to imagine a Test match (or any match) without Virat Kohli. Television and sponsors (and later, spectators) will actively discourage that. And if India don't win, there will be hell to pay.

When Ed Smith, the England selector, first proposed rotating the players (although other have talked about it but given it up when it came to the crunch), there were misgivings. As I am sure there will be should India decide to take that route. But players need to be looked after. Jimmy Anderson is convinced that the system has extended his career. From 'Anderson and (Stuart) Broad', England are a team of 'Anderson or Broad'.

Crucial

In times of pandemic and uncertainty, the rotation policy is especially crucial. As England's head coach Chris Silverwood said,

"We have to look after our players. I don't think it's acceptable to push somebody until they break and then try and pick them up."

Jonny Bairstow was probably speaking for the players when he said, "The benefit is that you get to go home, sleep in your own bed, cook your own food, be with your family, and have a complete mental refresh. You know how tough it is not being able to leave the hotel, dining at separate tables..."

Indian players have traditionally been wary of missing a match, sometimes even hiding injury in case the chance never came again. A system of rotation ensures a bigger pool of players to choose from, greater care for those chosen and longer careers. It is acknowledgement that cricket is a team game, and individual records are not as important as team performances.

It is useful to remember that none of the bowlers who won India the final Test in Australia (Brisbane), and maybe a couple of batsmen too might have played had the full team been fit and available. You can't know these things till you know.

IN BRIEF



Harmanpreet Kaur tests positive for COVID-19

Indian women's T20 team captain Harmanpreet Kaur has tested positive for COVID-19. Harmanpreet, who did not play the T20I series against South Africa following an injury, was tested on Monday after developing mild fever. PTI

Irfan also tests positive after Road Safety series

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan on Monday became the fourth Indian cricketer to test COVID-19 positive, having recently taken part in the veterans' Road Safety World Series in Raipur. He joins brother Yusuf, Sachin Tendulkar and S. Badrinath.

Inflation at worrisome levels, oil prices will keep up pressure'

India expected to retain current inflation targeting framework: Moody's Analytics

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Inflation has breached comfort levels and assumed 'worrisome' proportions in India, Moody's Analytics on Tuesday said in a note on Asia's inflation worries driven by rising oil prices.

Stressing that India's retail inflation has been breaching the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) 4% inflation target for the past eight months, the financial intelligence firm said India and Philippines are the two notable exceptions – in Asia – where inflation is beyond the comfort level.

"Volatile food prices and rising oil prices led India's CPI (consumer price inflation) to exceed the upper



Weighing in: Food is a key driver of inflation representing 46% of the CPI basket, says Moody's Analytics. ■REUTERS

band of 6% several times in 2020, inhibiting the RBI's ability to keep accommodative monetary settings in place during the height of the pandemic. Higher fuel prices will keep upward pressure on headline CPI

and keep the RBI from offering further rate cuts," said the firm, which operates independently of Moody's Investors Service, the credit rating agency.

The firm said that India is

retail inflation targeting framework for monetary policy, with a target of 4% and a margin of 2% above and below that. The framework is due to be revised from April 1 this year. "The government is reportedly mulling small amendments, including increasing flexibility in exceptional times."

Terming the rise in India's retail inflation worrisome, the firm said India's core CPI (excluding food, fuel and light prices) rose to 5.6% in February from 5.3% in January, even as food and beverage price inflation quickened to 4.3% from 2.7%. "Food is a key driver of inflation, representing 46% of the CPI basket," Moody's Analytics said.

Mistry signals end to tussle

Tata Sons ex-chairman unlikely to seek review of SC verdict

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Former Tata Sons Chairman Cyrus P. Mistry on Tuesday signalled he was bringing the curtain down on the four-year-long legal battle with the Tata Group over his abrupt ouster in October 2016 as he expressed 'personal disappointment' with the Supreme Court's verdict in the case while adding he and his family would "take the knobs on our chins".

Mr. Mistry said in a statement.

"As a minority shareholder of Tata Sons, I am personally disappointed by the outcome of the judgment with respect to our case. Although I will no longer be able to influence the direction of governance of the Tata Group directly, I hope that the issues I have raised, will cause deeper reflection and influence individuals con-

cerned to catalyse change. I sleep with a clear conscience," he added.

'Board driven system'
Expressing gratitude for the opportunity to lead the Tata group, he said, "My aim at Tata... was to ensure a robust board driven system of decision making and governance that is larger than any one individual.

"A key focus was to enable the directors on various boards to discharge their fiduciary duties without fear or favour, while still ensuring that shareholders views were reflected in strategy and actions," he said.

"It continues to be my belief that it is by such a model, that one would protect value for all stakeholders in Tata Sons and its various Group companies," he added.

Auto payment rule to take effect April 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI Come April there will be no automatic recurring payment for various services including recharge and utility bill as RBI has made Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) mandatory after March 31.

However, banks and payment gateways are seeking additional time to comply. On December 4, RBI had directed all banks that the processing of recurring transactions under practices not compliant with AFA would not be continued beyond March 31. Non-readiness of some players could hit recurring payments such as for utility bills, DTH and OTT.

Work with India on funding infra, Sitharaman urges NDB

Pant appointed DC skipper

The 23-year-old, who replaces the injured Shreyas, says it's a dream come true

IPL 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Star India batsman Rishabh Pant was on Tuesday named captain of Delhi Capitals in place of an injured Shreyas Iyer for the IPL beginning on April 9.

"Under Shreyas' captaincy, our team reached newer heights, and he is going to be missed immensely. In his absence, the franchise has collectively picked Rishabh to lead the team this year," DC chairman and co-owner Kiran Kumar Gandhi said in a release.

This will be the 23-year-old Pant's debut as IPL captain. The wicketkeeper-batsman has captained Delhi's State team in the past.

"Delhi is where I grew up, and where my IPL journey began six years ago. To lead this team one day is a dream I've always harboured. And today, as that dream comes true, I feel humbled," Pant said.

Shreyas described Pant as the best player to lead the Delhi side. "When I sus-



Shining star: Rishabh Pant, who has been in a rich vein of form, has the full backing of the Delhi Capitals think-tank as he takes over the reins. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

tained the shoulder injury, and Delhi Capitals needed a leader for this edition of the IPL, I had no doubt that Rishabh would be the best man for the job," he said.

Head coach Ricky Ponting said Pant's success in the series against Australia and England will give him the confidence needed to take on a new role that comes with a lot more responsibility," the former Australian captain said.

Co-owner Parth Jindal said Pant embodies DC's passionate and fearless brand of cricket.

"Delhi Capitals as a team plays a passionate and fearless brand of cricket, and Rishabh Pant embodies that best. The Delhi team has played an important role in his growth as a cricketer."

QUICK SINGLES

Punjab Kings unveils new jersey

Punjab Kings on Tuesday revealed its jersey for the upcoming season of the IPL. The primary colour for the jersey will continue to be red, with golden stripes forming the edges of the design, while the lion crest will be sported below the primary sponsor's logo. The players will also wear golden helmets.

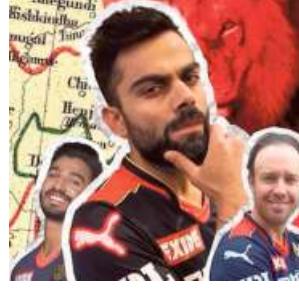


South African stars to miss openers

Five South Africans — Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje (Delhi Capitals), Quinton de Kock (Mumbai Indians), Lungi Ngidi (Chennai Super Kings), and David Miller (Rajasthan Royals) — are set to miss the opening games for their sides as they are part of the ODI squad for the upcoming series against Pakistan.

Puma to be RCB's official kit partner

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) on Tuesday signed a strategic long-term partnership with global sports brand Puma. Under the terms of the deal, Puma will be the official kit partner of RCB from the upcoming season of the league. Puma already has an on-going association with RCB skipper Virat Kohli.



"It's great to welcome PUMA to the RCB family! A global brand with a strong sporting vision and great quality products, their extensive distribution network through offline and online channels will ensure fans have access to RCB merchandise across the country," Kohli was quoted as saying in a media release.

Knight Riders make the WROGN choice

Two-time champion Kolkata Knight Riders on Tuesday announced sportswear brand 'WROGN ACTIVE' as its official merchandise and lifestyle partner. WROGN is also the official merchandise partner of Delhi Capitals.

In the thick of it, again



Happy tidings: Suresh Raina, who is back in the Super Kings fold after missing the last edition, in a relaxed mood.

■ TWITTER/CHENNAI IPL

DC stars Ishant, Rahane, Umesh begin training

ANI
MUMBAI

Delhi Capitals players including Ishant Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, Amit Mishra, and Umesh Yadav took part in their first nets session on Tuesday evening at the Cricket Club of India here.

On Monday, star Indian batsman Rishabh Pant and

England players Sam Billings and Tom Curran joined Delhi Capitals camp for the IPL. Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting and bowling coach James Hopes have already joined the squad. Delhi Capitals will begin its campaign against CSK at the Wankhede Stadium on April 10.

RCB starts conditioning camp



Lettin' it rip: Mohammed Siraj in action during RCB's nine-day conditioning camp in Chennai.

SPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore began its nine-day conditioning camp ahead of the Indian Premier League, at the Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research in Chennai on Tuesday.

Yuzvendra Chahal, Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj were among 11 players who started training under the watchful eyes of Mike Hesson (Director of Cricket Operations), Simon Katich (Head Coach) and Sanjay Bangar (batting consultant).

Skipper Virat Kohli is expected to fly into Chennai on April 1.

Front and centre



Focused: Mumbai Indians' new recruit Arjun Tendulkar hard at work during the team's practice session. ■ TWITTER/MIPALTAN

KKR's Karun Nair gets into the groove

ANI
MUMBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) batsman Karun Nair has begun preparation for the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

The right-handed batsman on Tuesday hit the nets to get into the groove ahead of the cash-rich league. "Feels so great to get back to the grounds after what seemed like an eternity. Gearing up for the season ahead, let's get rolling. Korbo, Lorbo, Jeetbo," Karun tweeted.

KKR will play its first game on April 11 against Sunrisers Hyderabad.



Karun Nair has a hit in the nets. ■ TWITTER/KARUN126

Bumrah preparing in earnest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has got down to physical training after returning from his wedding break.

Bumrah, currently serving the seven-day mandatory quarantine, was seen lifting weights inside his team hotel room in the video uploaded by him on Twitter. "Quarantining and getting those reps in," wrote the pacer. The 27-year-old missed the final two Tests and the whole of the white-ball leg of the series against England. +

Brathwaite, Cornwall take WI to 354

The two add 103 for the eighth wicket; Lakmal scalps four

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NORTH SOUND
(ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA)

Kraig Brathwaite completed a ninth Test century and was eventually last out for 126 on the stroke of lunch as the West Indies totalled 354 in its first innings on the second day of the second and final Test against Sri Lanka on Tuesday. Brathwaite's innings lasted 311 deliveries and had 13 hits to the fence.

Seamer Suranga Lakmal finally broke through for the tourists in morning session when he ended a 103-run eighth-wicket partnership between Brathwaite and Rahkeem Cornwall (73, 92b,



Fine knock: Kraigg Brathwaite's ninth Test hundred contained 13 fours. ■ AFP

10x4, 1x6). Lakmal finished with four for 94 off 28 overs. **The scores:** West Indies 354 (Kraig Brathwaite 126, Rah-

keem Cornwall 73, Kyle Mayers 49; Suranga Lakmal 4/94) vs Sri Lanka 60/1 (Lahiru Thirimanne 40 batting), at tea.

New Zealand seals series

Confusion reigns as chase begins without target being set

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NAPIER

New Zealand defeated Bangladesh by 28 runs in a rain-affected second T20I here on Tuesday to secure the three-match series and complete a home sweep against all comers.

New Zealand made 173 for five in 17.5 overs after being asked to bat, before the weather ended the innings prematurely.

Bizarre scenes

As a result, Bangladesh's run chase was set at 170 from 16 overs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern

(DLS) formula.

There were bizarre scenes as Bangladesh began its innings without a clear target being set, then officials halted play after 1.5 overs while they worked out the sums.

The tourists made 142 for seven before the required run rate proved too much and their innings petered out.

The scores: New Zealand 173/5 in 17.5 overs (Glenn Phillips 58 n.o., Daryl Mitchell 34 n.o.) bt Bangladesh 142/7 in 16 overs (Mohammad Naim 38, Soumya Sarkar 51) under DLS method.

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TV PICKS

FIFA WC European qualifiers: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m.; Sony Ten 1, 2, 3 & Sony Six, 12.15 a.m. (Thursday)

IN BRIEF



Smith wants to be back at Australia helm

SYDNEY Steve Smith is interested in becoming Australia captain once again. "I've certainly had a lot of time to think about it and I guess now I've got to a point where if the opportunity did come up again I would be keen," Smith told News Corp. PTI



Ronaldo's tossed away armband up for auction

BELGRADE The captain's armband that Cristiano Ronaldo tossed in anger after his 'winning' goal was disallowed in a World Cup qualifier against Serbia was put up for online auction on Tuesday. A charity group was trying to raise money for a six-month-old boy's surgery for spinal muscular atrophy. Ronaldo's armband from a stadium worker who picked it up after the match. AP

Chelsea-Porto CL tie to played in Spain

Both legs of the Champions League quarterfinal between Portuguese club Porto and Premier League side Chelsea will be played in Seville, Spain, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. UEFA confirmed on Tuesday. The matches will be played at Sevilla's Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium, with the first leg on April 7 and the return on April 13. AFP

Riya advances

SPORTS BUREAU
DUBAI

Qualifier Riya Bhatia beat Sofya Lansere of Russia 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 to move into the second round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament on Tuesday.

However, the country's No. 1 player, the second seeded Ankita Raina, retired midway through the second set after winning the first against qualifier Shalimar Talbi of Belarus. The results:

\$25,000 ITF women, Dubai, UAE: First round: Riya Bhatia bt Sofya Lansere (Rus) 3-6, 6-3, 6-3; Shalimar Talbi (Blr) bt Ankita Raina 1-6, 4-1 (retired).

Gritty Abhay knocks out Bonmalais

Mahesh brooks no resistance from El Kattan; Sebastien and Urvashi bow out

SQUASH

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

India's Abhay Singh, ranked 149th in the world, has shown promise and potential.

The 22-year-old, unseeded here, provided yet another glimpse of his growing stature by shocking fourth-seeded Frenchman Sebastien Bonmalais 11-7, 11-7, 11-8 to progress to the quarterfinals in the PSA Challenger Tour squash tournament here on Tuesday.

Against Bonmalais, ranked 87 places higher than him, Abhay played a largely error-free game.

"I was playing my best squash before the lockdown and I feel like I've just picked up from there," he said after the match.



In cruise mode: Abhay did not lose a game against fourth seed Bonmalais. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Abhay and Mahesh Mangaonkar, the top seed, are the only Indians remaining in the men's draw.

Mahesh eased past Omar El Kattan of Egypt 11-7, 11-7,

11-5 in the pre-quarterfinals. It was a day when all the seeded players, barring Sebastien and the fifth-seed Urvashi Joshi (women), sailed into the last eight.

The results (round-of-16, Indians unless mentioned otherwise):

Men: Yahya Elnawasany (Egy) bt Seif Shenawy (Egy) 11-7, 11-9, 11-9; Karim El Hammamy (Egy)

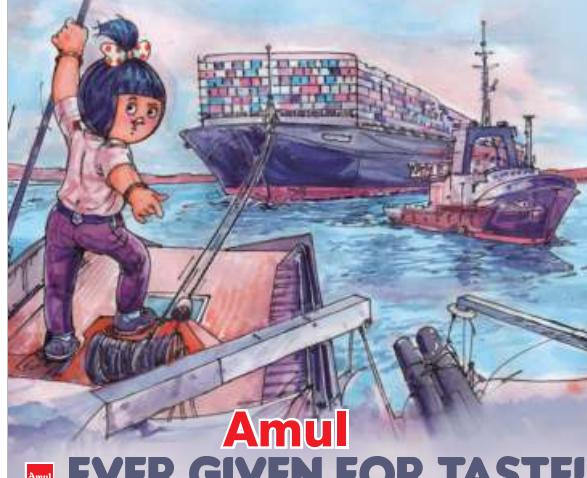
bt Aadit Zaveri 13-11, 12-10, 11-3; Abhay Singh bt Sebastien Bonmalais (Fra) 11-7, 11-7, 11-8; Moustafa El Sirty (Egy) bt Velavan Senthilkumar 3-11, 10-12, 11-6, 11-9, 11-10; Mahesh Mangaonkar bt Omar El Kattan (Egy) 11-7, 11-7, 11-5.

Todd Harrity (USA) bt Vladislav Titov (Rus) 11-1, 11-9, 11-5; Mazen Gamal (Egy) bt Navaneeth Prabhu 11-6, 11-8, 9-11, 12-10; Aly Hussein (Egy) bt David Baillargeon (Can) 6-11, 13-11, 11-4, 14-12.

Women: Parajitha Balamurugan bt Yashna Singh 11-9, 17-19, 11-6, 11-6; Malak Kamal (Egy) bt Urwashi Joshi 12-10, 11-5, 11-5; Tanvi Khanna bt R. Pooja Arthi 11-7, 11-7, 11-2; Hana Moataz (Egy) bt Abhisheka Shannon 11-2, 11-5, 11-1.

Sachika Balvani bt Janet Vidhi 11-9, 11-7, 11-5; Sunayna Kuruvilla bt Vasudha Surange 11-5, 11-4, 12-10; Rana Ismail (Egy) bt Varvara Esina (Rus) 11-5, 11-9, 11-2; Sanika Choudhari bt Shameena Riaz 11-5, 11-9, 11-4.

ISSUEZ RESOLVED!



Amul
EVER GIVEN FOR TASTE!

daCunha/AB/34

Manpreet returns to lead India against Argentina

HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Indian men's hockey team skipper Manpreet Singh returned to the side for the FIH Pro League games against Olympic champion Argentina next month. Manpreet had opted out of the recent European tour due to personal reasons.

Experienced drag-flick specialist Rupinder Pal Singh and Varun Kumar, who had missed out the previous tour owing to rehab, are also back.

Hockey India announced a 22-member squad which will take on Argentina in Buenos Aires on April 11 and 12. India will also play two practice matches against the home team on April 6 and 7,

followed by two more on April 13 and 14.

"We are taking a 22-man squad attempting to provide a good balance between giving experience to those players who need it and opportunities for players to perform on the international stage in the lead-up to the Tokyo Olympics," chief coach Graham Reid said in a statement.

The squad: P.R. Sreejesh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Amit Rohidas, Gurinder Singh, Harmanpreet Singh (vice-capt.), Surender Kumar, Rupinderpal Singh, Varun Kumar, Birendra Lakra, Jaskaran Singh, Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh (capt.), Vivek Sagar Prasad, Raj Kumar Pal, Sumit, Nikalanta Sharma, Shamsher Singh, Gurjant Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay and Shilanand Lakra.

Ingale overcomes Arjeria

NATL. JR. TENNIS

SPORTS BUREAU
INDORE

Prasad Ingale defeated seventh seed Kush Arjeria 4-6, 6-0, 6-4 in the boys first round of the National junior tennis championship at the Indore Tennis Club on Tuesday.

In the girls section, the 16 seeded players, with Reshma Maruri and Sanjana Sirmilla as the top two, were given a bye into the second round.

The results (u-18, first round):

Boys: Krishan Hooda bt Jaishnav Shinde 6-0, 6-3; Saheb Sohdi bt Shourya Singh 6-1, 6-1; Rakshit P. Dhankar bt Md. Arib Afzal 7-5, 6-0.

Pragathesh Shivshankar bt Mahashri Patel 1-6, 6-3, 6-0; Sarthak Gandhi bt Param Chandra 6-0, 6-1; Parv Nage bt Tanishq Jadhav 6-2, 6-4.

Rishi Jalota bt Parth Deoruk-

hakar 3-6, 6-2, 6-4; Prasad Ingale bt Kush Arjeria 4-6, 6-0, 6-4; Aayush Bhat bt Daksh Agarwal 6-1, 6-1.

A.S. Shyamsundar bt Sahil Tambat 1-6, 7-6(5), 7-5; Abhay Chhabra bt Sourish Singh 7-5, 6-2; Adhirit Awal bt Yash Baghel 7-6(4), 6-0; Sandesh Kurale bt Arjun Premkumar 6-3, 7-5; Vishesh Patel bt Prabjeet Chandok 6-2, 6-2.

Niraj Ravi bt Aryan Thakur 6-3, 6-3; Aditya Nandal bt Rakeshwar Patlolla 6-0, 6-4; Torous Rawat bt Dhananjay Athreya 7-5, 2-6, 6-1; Nikhil Mittal bt Yugraj Singh 6-3, 3-6, 6-3; Daksh Prasad bt Suresh Keerthivassan 6-1, 5-7, 7-5.

Anup Bangargi bt Aditya Balda 6-1, 6-1; Lokesh Pun bt Manas Sinha 6-1, 6-4; Manas Dhamne bt Nishit Rahane 4-1 (retired); Debasis Sahoo bt K.S. Kavin Karthik 6-1, 6-4, 6-3.

Nithilan Eric bt Aryan Arora 6-7(5), 7-6(3), 6-4; Denim Yadav bt Shivam Kadam 2-6, 7-6(3), 6-2; Rushil Khosla bt Raghav Harsh 6-2, 6-2.

Prajwal Tewari bt Ajnabi Dahiya 6-1, 6-0; Deep Munim bt Mukil Ramanan 6-2, 6-1; Skandha Rao bt Ansh Kundu 6-2, 4-6, 6-1.

Bharat Phulwaria bt Tushar Mittal 6-3, 6-2; Yashvardhan Singh bt Jasmeet Duhu 6-2, 6-1; Karan Singh bt Moham Kaif 6-1, 6-2.

Girls: Deepalakshmi Vanaraja bt Suyash Chaudhary 6-2, 6-0; Tejasvi Dabas bt Sakshi Thakkar 6-2, 6-2; Gia Alana Pereira bt Neha Reddy Dandu 6-4, 6-1; Kanupriya Rajawat bt Anoushka Sharma 6-3, 5-7, 6-3.

Harleen Kaur Dhanda bt Tamanna Narwal 6-3, 6-2; Ruma Kaiwaiari bt Niyati Kukreti 7-6(4), 6-0; Apurva Vemuri bt Surayoshi Tanwar 6-3, 6-0; Radhika Mahajan bt Radhika Vasudeva 6-2, 6-1; Abhaya Vemuri bt Diva Bhatia 6-2, 6-1.

Double for Tejas and Riya

ASIAN U-14

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Tejas Ahuja and Riya Sachdeva won the boys' and girls' titles respectively in the Asian under-14 tennis tournament at the Tennis Project, Baliawas.

It was a double crown for Tejas as he won the doubles title with Siddhant Sharma.

Similarly, it was a double delight for Riya Sachdeva who had earlier won the doubles title with Raja Sarvagna Kilaru.

Results: **Boys (final):** Tejas Ahuja bt Siddhant Sharma 6-3, 6-3. **Semifinals:** Siddhant Sharma bt Hitesh Chauhan 6-2, 6-3; Tejas Ahuja bt Dhruv Sachdeva 6-0, 6-3. **Doubles (final):** Tejas Ahuja and Siddhant Sharma bt Hitesh Chauhan & Dhruv Sachdeva 6-1, 6-0.

Girls (final): Riya Sachdeva bt Thaniya Sarai Gogulamanda 6-0, 6-1. **Semifinals:** Riya Sachdeva bt Ashwarya Jadhav 6-1, 6-3; Thaniya Sarai Gogulamanda da bt Snigdha Kanta 1-6, 6-1, 6-2. **Doubles (final):** Raja Sarvagna Kilaru & Riya Sachdeva bt Snigdha Kanta & Mehak Kapoor 6-3, 7-6(2).

Poonacha moves up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former national champion Niki Poonacha subdued the spirited challenge from young Nishant Dabas 6-2, 3-6, 6-2 in the first round of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex here on Tuesday.

The results: **First round:** Niki Poonacha bt Nishant Dabas 6-2, 3-6, 6-2; Lorenzo Bocchi (Ita) bt Luca Castelnovo (Sui) & Dominik Palan (Cze) 6-2, 6-4.

Rishi Reddy & Abhinav Sanjeev Shanmugam bt Sahil Gaware & Gunjan Jadhav 6-3, 6-1; Manish Sureshkumar & V.M. Ranjeet bt Vijay Sundar Prashanth & Vishnu Vardhan 7-6(5), 1-6, [10-7].

Dalibor Srvcina (Cze) & Zsombor Velcz (Hun) bt S.D. Prajwal Dev & Nitin Kumar Singh 6-4, 6-7(7), [10-6]; Jonathan Binding & Henry Patten (GBr) bt Filip Bergevi & Jonathan Mridha (Swe) 6-2, 6-4.

Rishi Reddy & Abhinav Sanjeev Shanmugam bt Sahil Gaware & Gunjan Jadhav 6-3, 6-1; Manish Sureshkumar & V.M. Ranjeet bt Vijay Sundar Prashanth & Vishnu Vardhan 7-6(5), 1-6, [10-7].

Westbrook enters record books

NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Washington's Russell Westbrook and Brooklyn's James Harden delivered impressive triple-doubles on Monday, sparking their clubs to NBA victories and making some personal history for themselves.

Westbrook unleashed 35 points, a career-best 21 assists and 14 rebounds to power the Wizards over the visiting Indiana Pacers 132-124 for the 162nd triple-double of his career.

Phenomenal

It was the first triple-double in NBA history with 35 or more points and 20 or more rebounds. Only Magic Johnson and Oscar Robertson had previously produced triple-doubles of 30 points,

20 rebounds and 10 assists. It was Westbrook's 16th triple-double with the Wizards, the 32-year-old setting a club one-season record in only his 38th outing for Washington.

In New York, Harden scored 38 points, passed off 13 assists and pulled down 11 rebounds, while Kyrie Irving added 27 points in his return as the Nets beat visiting Minnesota 112-107.

The results: Wizards 132 bt Pacers 124; Pelicans 115 bt Celtics 109; Nets 112 bt Timberwolves 107; Heat 98 bt Knicks 88.

Pistons 118 bt Raptors 104; Mavericks 121 bt Thunder 106; Grizzlies 120 bt Rockets 110; Kings 132 bt Spurs 115.

Jazz 114 bt Cavaliers 75; Warriors 116 bt Bulls 102; Clippers 129 bt Bucks 105.

Despite living abroad for 16 years, Dzeko keeps close ties with Bosnia.

He does humanitarian work with his wife Amra, focusing on sick children in the poor Balkan country.

In 2012, he was at Manchester City when someone reported that a seriously ill Bosnian teenager was being treated in Manchester.

"I was dozing in bed ... At one point I saw Dzeko, him, his mother and his father. At first I thought I was dreaming," Aner Zelic, who is now 24, told AFP.

Dzeko took care of the boy's family financially, but above all, provided "moral support".

"Whenever he had time, he came to spend time with me in the hospital."

"We played board games, PlayStation, cards. We didn't talk about my illness, but about other things, especially sports, to make me forget all that," the young man recalled.



A long journey: Edin Dzeko's foray from concrete football pitches to playing in the World Cup has been nothing short of remarkable. ■ AP

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