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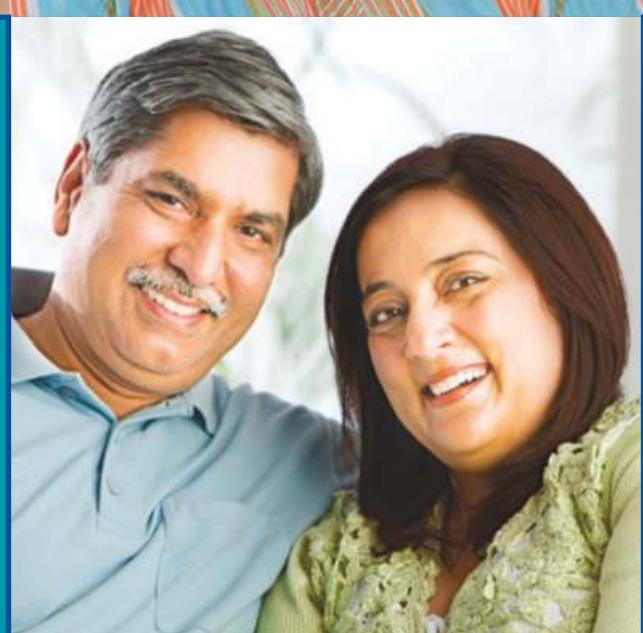
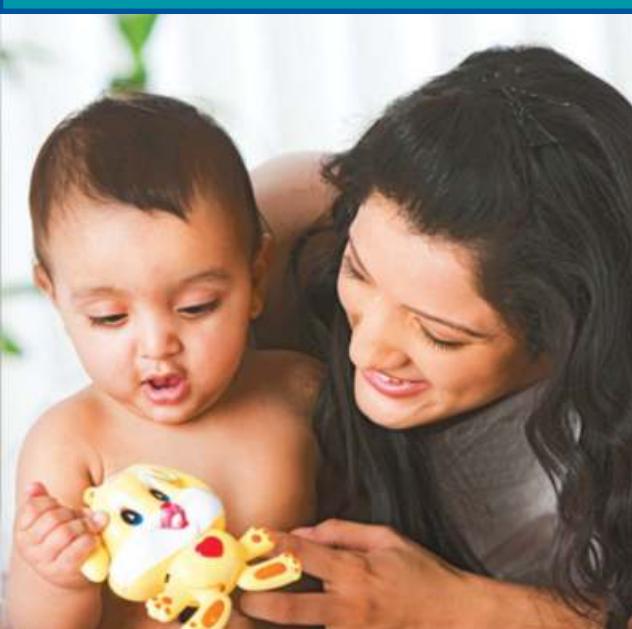
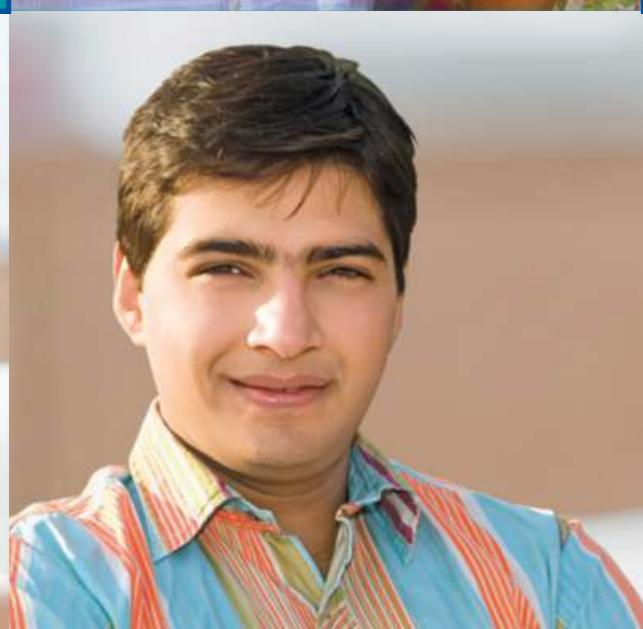
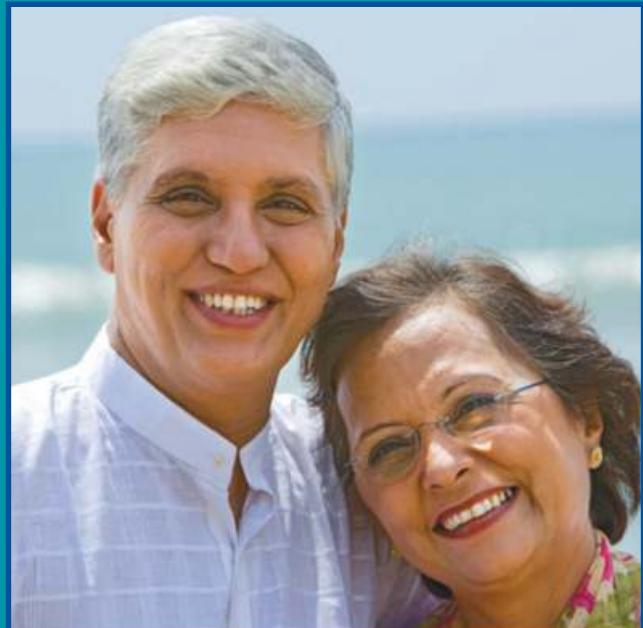
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LIC/AR/20/21/13/Eng



Shashi Tharoor, others move Supreme Court against sedition charges
page 9



Collection of DNA samples will lead to misuse: Justice Lokur
page 10



Myanmar's ousted leader Suu Kyi charged, remanded for 2 weeks
page 11



Have to play really well to beat England, says Ajinkya Rahane
page 13

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NEARBY



Saikia reinstated as Assam Leader of Oppn.
GUWAHATI
The Assam Assembly Secretariat on Wednesday reinstated Congress MLA Debabrata Saikia as the Leader of the Opposition. His status was withdrawn on January 1 after the number of Congress legislators House got reduced to 20. The minimum number required is 21.
NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

'Legislature panels can summon witnesses'

NEW DELHI
Committees formed by State legislatures have the power to summon witnesses and enforce their attendance through compulsory process. It is a tradition that travels back hundreds of years, the Delhi Assembly submitted in the Supreme Court.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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Massive gathering in Haryana demands repeal of farm laws

No change in panel holding talks: Tikait



Renewed enthusiasm: Thousands of farmers and Khap leaders at the mahapanchayat in Haryana on Wednesday. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

ASHOK KUMAR
JIND
With a massive "mahapanchayat" in Kandela village here on Wednesday, the farming community of Haryana signalled that it had jumped into the fray to seek the repeal of the farm laws with a renewed enthusiasm. Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said at the meeting that the farmers would emerge victorious if young people remained peaceful.

Amid resurgence of the farmers' agitation in Haryana in the wake of Mr. Tikait's recent emotional outburst, the "mahapanchayat" adopted a five-point resolution seeking repeal of the contentious laws, besides a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price, implementation of the Swaminathan Commission report, release of those arrested for the Republic Day violence and loan waiver. The participants

raised their hands to support the resolution.

Held at the behest of Kan-dela Khap, the meeting, addressed by Mr. Tikait and Balbir Singh Rajewal, head of a BKU faction in Punjab, saw participation of Khap leaders from across the State, besides thousands of farmers, including women.

Series of panchayats
A series of panchayats at village levels and Khap panchayats have been held across the State over the past few days reiterating support to the agitation.

Addressing the gathering,

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'No informal talks with farm unions'

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The Centre is not holding any informal talks with the protesting farmers, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Wednesday. He also termed the barricades and arrests of farmers a "law and order issue" and was not within his purview.

However, the unions said such police and government "harassment" are "human rights violations" linked to their original policy demands, and must be resolved before talks can resume.

Negotiations between the Centre and union leaders broke down on January 22 after 11 rounds of talks, when farmers rejected the government's offer to stay the implementation of the farm laws.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Govt. notice to Twitter on 'farmer genocide' hashtag

Refusal to remove content may invite penal action, it says

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The Union government has issued a notice to Twitter to comply with its order of removal of content related to 'farmer genocide'. The Centre alleged that the material was designed to spread misinformation to inflame passions and hatred, and warned that refusal to do so may invite penal action.

On Tuesday evening, Twitter restored over 250 accounts, hours after blocking them due to "legal demand". The platform, in a meeting with government officials, contested the order, arguing that these accounts were not in violation of Twitter policy, and declined to abide by the order.

A source in the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), which sent the notice to the U.S.-headquartered firm, said Twitter was an intermediary and was obliged to follow the directions of the government and refusal to do so may invite penal action.

"Twitter unilaterally unblocked accounts/tweets, including of Constitu-

India flays comments by celebrities

Internet not yet restored at Delhi borders

Protesters at Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri – the three locations bordering Delhi where farmer groups continue to swell to protest against the farm laws – said Net remained blocked on Wednesday as well. ▶ PAGE 9

tution benches, as to what is public order and what are the rights of authorities. The MeitY pointed out that the "prevailing situation" resulted into a "major public order issue" on Republic Day.

"The statutory authorities are doing everything possible to ensure that no adverse public order situation takes place, and no cognisable offences are committed. In light of these developments and as a part of due process, an order was passed..." the source added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to step down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK

Billionaire Jeff Bezos, who founded Amazon as an online bookseller nearly three decades ago, will step down as the CEO of the \$1.7 trillion global retail giant in the third quarter of 2021, with Andy Jassy being named his successor.

Amazon, which announced on Wednesday that 2020 net sales had increased 38% to \$386.1 billion, compared with \$280.5 billion in 2019, said Mr. Bezos, 57, will transition to the role of Executive Chair in the third quarter of this year.

FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 12

Aerial extravaganza



Taking off: IAF's aerobatic team Suryakiran performing at the inauguration of Aero India 2021 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Wednesday. ■ MURALI KUMAR K (REPORTS ON PAGE 8)

Bihar govt. won't hire protesters

Opposition criticises police directive, calls CM a dictator

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

rective issued on January 30.

The Bihar government has issued a directive stating that government jobs or contracts will not be given to those who stage violent protests or involve themselves in a criminal act against which chargesheets are filed.

"If anyone is found to be involved in a law and order situation, staging protest, road blockade, etc., and in a criminal act against which police file a chargesheet, that can be clearly mentioned in his certificate of conduct and character. These persons should be ready for grave consequences because they will not get government jobs and contracts," said a State police di-

means neither will jobs be given, nor will protest be allowed. How this hapless chief minister with 40 seats is frightened!" he said in a tweet, attaching the police directive.

Police verification is necessary for government jobs, licence for firearms, passports, etc.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav criticised the directive and accused Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of acting like a dictator.

"In a challenge to Hitler and Mussolini, Nitish Kumar says if someone uses his democratic right against the government by staging dharna-protest, he will not get a government job, which

Left party leaders, too, attacked the State government on the issue.

SC refuses to intervene in conversion laws

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to intervene immediately and examine the constitutional validity of the laws enacted by State governments like U.P. and Uttarakhand, which criminalise religious conversion through marriage and mandate prior official clearance before marrying into another faith.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde asked the petitioners to approach the respective High Courts. He said the SC would like to have the benefit of the HC's conclusions.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

A leopard that changed its spots

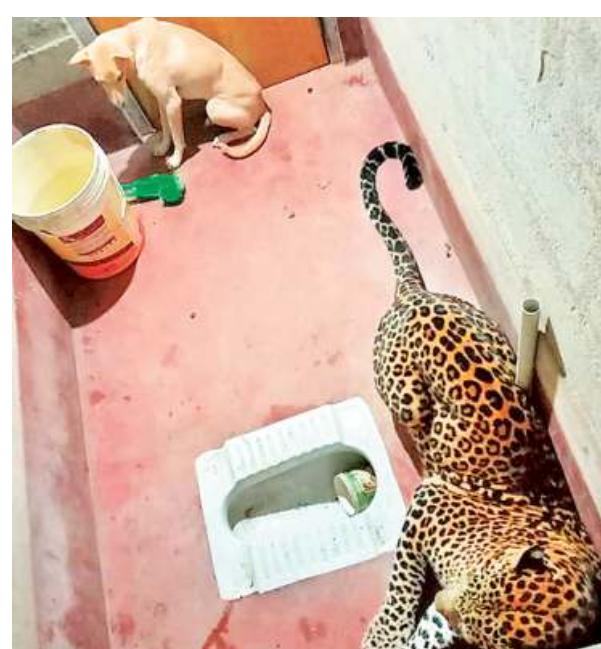
Predator spent hours with a dog in locked room, didn't harm it

RAGHAVA M.
MANGALURU

For nine hours, they sat across a few feet from each other, neither making a move. Leopard and dog, predator and prey. The cat had chased the stray dog and both ended up in a rudimentary wash room of a farmhouse in Karnataka.

Hearing the commotion, the farm owner locked up both animals together for about nine hours but finally, the cat made a fleet-footed escape and the dog emerged unscathed.

The adventure near Kukke Subrahmanyam on Wednesday surprised Forest Department officials. The dog ran into the toilet, pursued by the cat, at the farmhouse of Jayalakshmi in Kaikamba of Bilinile village, on the fringes of Kidu Reserve Forest, in Dakshina Kannada's Kadabu taluk. Deputy Conservator of Forests for Dakshina Kannada V. Karikalan said Ms. Jayalakshmi heard loud noises around 4 a.m. and found the leopard's tail sticking out near the door. She promptly locked the door and informed the Forest Department. Forest personnel who rushed to the



Locked in: The leopard and the dog seen in the washroom in Bilinile village on Wednesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

spot encountered an unusual sight from a window: the leopard and the dog sat opposite each other quietly. Mr. Karikalan said a cage was placed outside the washroom and a net was spread around it. An additional cage and net were also kept on standby. A darter and a veterinary doctor were summoned.

The leopard and the dog

'In Jamia, police should have shown restraint'

Delhi court dismisses university's plea

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

A city court on Wednesday remarked that though the Delhi police "used more force than necessary in some instances" while dealing with the December 2019 protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act at Jamia Millia Islamia, these were done in discharge of their official duties.

"Likewise, it could also be argued that the situation perhaps could have been handled by the respondents [Delhi police] in a better way and that some restraint should have been shown by the police/respondents..." Metropolitan Magistrate Rajat Goyal said in a 16-page order.

'Bid to control situation'
"However, the lack of such restraint exhibited by the police/respondents and excesses committed in trying to control the situation are very much related to official duties of the respondents," the judge said.

The court's observation came while dismissing a petition filed by Jamia Millia Islamia seeking to initiate proceedings against the police officers who stormed the university campus on Decem-



A ransacked JMI library after Delhi police stormed the campus in 2019. ■ FILE PHOTO

ber 15, 2019 without seeking any sanction and used "excessive and arbitrary force" while dealing with the anti-CAA protesters.

A number of videos had shown that Jamia students, including those in the library, were badly beaten up by Delhi police personnel who had entered the university campus.

Jamia Millia Islamia said that the police officers caused destruction of university property, fired tear gas shells and carried out lathi-charge.

After the incident, the university made a complaint at Jamia Nagar police station, but no action was taken. Following this, the university moved the court.

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AAP govt. issues list of 115 held in R-Day case

Will do my best to trace the missing: CM

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Wednesday released a list of 115 people lodged in various jails in the city after being arrested by the police in connection with the violence on Republic Day.

"Many people have contacted the city government in the past few days complaining that family members who had taken part in the farmers' agitation in the national capital have not come back, they do not have any contact with them and are missing," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in a video statement.

"Our government has made a list of people in various jails in Delhi, arrested in connection with the farmers' agitation," he said.

The Delhi police is under the ambit of the Central government and not the Aam Aadmi Party-ruled city government.

Mr. Kejriwal said the list has the name, father's name, address, age and



Arvind Kejriwal

date of 115 people, and it will be helpful for people trying to find their family members.

"If we continue to receive reports even after issuing this list, as the Chief Minister of the State, I have assured the farmers' unions that I will try my best to trace the missing persons and connect them with their families. If required, I will also talk to the L-G and the Centre in this regard," the Chief Minister added.

The list also has details of the FIR number in each case and the police station in which it was registered.

Police to ascertain location of over 9,000 phone users

Registered in Haryana, Punjab and U.P., they were active at Red Fort and ITO

SAURABH TRVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police is compiling details of over 9,000 mobile numbers that are registered outside of the city but were active in the heart of the Capital on Republic Day when violence broke out in several areas, said a senior officer on Wednesday.

The officer said that the SIT formed to investigate the violence that erupted at the Red Fort had identified 9,000 numbers that were registered in Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh but were active in Red Fort and ITO area on January 26.

Data analysis

In a similar pattern, details of protesters who indulged in violence will be obtained by analysing dump data of mobile calls at other locations in the city. The details of these numbers will be matched with their locations at the protest site to find out



The farmers' tractor parade turns violent at the Red Fort on Republic Day. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

if the number belongs to a protester who was present at Tikri, Ghazipur or Singhu borders," he said.

The officer added that after getting confirmation and details of the mobile user via the customer acquisition form (CAF), they will be issuing notices and asking the

mobile users to join the ongoing investigation.

The police said that till Wednesday they have obtained footage of the violence from around 4,000 CCTVs and mobile phones.

A team has been formed to analyse the footage and get photos of protesters with

the help of software.

They are also using facial recognition software to identify the people.

700 emails

"We have received 700 emails regarding the violence. They contain photos and videos. On WhatsApp, we have got around 1,300 videos and 50 audio clips. We are sorting through the videos in which policemen were attacked by protesters and identifying the accused. We are also getting CCTV footage from PWD and other government agencies," said a police officer.

The officer said they have identified around 200 vehicles, including tractors, cars and two-wheelers, that forcibly entered the Red Fort premises on Republic Day.

They have asked for details about vehicles owners from the transport departments of U.P., Haryana and Punjab, to serve notices.



Deep Sidhu

on Wednesday. His role in connection with hoisting of a flag at Red Fort is being ascertained, the police said.

Thousands of protesting farmers had clashed with the police during the tractor parade called by farmer unions on January 26 to highlight their demand for repeal of the Centre's three farm laws. Many of the protesters, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument.

On Tuesday, the police had released the pictures of at least 20 suspects allegedly involved in the violence.

Two activists get summons over tweets

My only crime is that I am supporting the protesting farmers: Yogita Bhayana

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Cyber Prevention Awareness Detection (CyPAD) unit of Delhi Police on Wednesday served a notice to activist Yogita Bhayana for alleged fake tweets she posted during the Republic Day violence in the Capital.

Responding to the development, Ms. Bhayana accused the Delhi police of "suppressing" her voice, and said her only "crime" was that she had been supporting the farmers protesting against the three Central agricultural laws.

The notice sent to Ms. Bhayana asks her to appear before the police in a case registered under Indian Penal Code Sections 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot),

C When I realised I had shared an old photo, I immediately deleted it on January 27. I received a police notice on Wednesday regarding the deleted tweet

CHAUDHARY ROHIT SINGH YADAV
Lucknow-based political analyst

153A (promoting enmity between different groups), and 505(I)(b) (circulating statement, rumour that may induce somebody to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquillity).

"This is to inform you that investigation of the case is being carried out. During investigation, it was found that the two allegedly

fake posts were uploaded from your Twitter account," read the notice.

"You are requested to inform the source and reason for uploading the posts. You are also requested to inform the date, time of place where you will be available for the investigation. Please inform the said details within two days from the receipt of this notice," it stated.

Another notice

Another notice has been served to Lucknow-based political analyst Chaudhary Rohit Singh Yadav.

He has been asked to appear before the Delhi police within two days. In his post, Mr. Yadav had shared an old photograph showing a Sikh man with injuries on his back. "When I realised that

the photograph I shared was old, I immediately deleted it on January 27. I received a police notice on Wednesday regarding the deleted tweet," he said.

Ms. Bhayana, in another tweet, said, "I feel Delhi Police is misgoverned and doing exactly opposite of what we expect from them. I am with farmers and I know I am fighting for truth."

On January 30, the Delhi police had filed a case against Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai, *The Caravan* magazine and others for allegedly misleading the public regarding the death of a protester at ITO during a tractor parade on January 26 which had turned violent. He was killed after his tractor overturned.

Another notice has been apprehended from Bharatpur, Rajasthan, for posting similar fake news.

The police have sent requests for removal of the "offensive and unlawful" posts.

4 cases lodged for sharing, uploading 'fake posts'

One arrested, another apprehended from Rajasthan, and several others 'identified'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Cyber Prevention Awareness and Detection (CyPAD) unit of Delhi Police has registered four cases against several social media accounts in connection with sharing and uploading of alleged fake posts during the Republic Day violence, officials said on Wednesday.

Om Prakash Dhetarwal, 29, a resident of Churu district in Rajasthan, has been arrested for allegedly posting an old video along with fake news of resignation of 200 police personnel.

Another person has been apprehended from Bharatpur, Rajasthan, for posting similar fake news.

The police have sent requests for removal of the "offensive and unlawful" posts.

Several others indulging in such activities have been identified and efforts are underway to arrest them, the police said.

Notices to join the investigation have been issued to four persons. Further action against them will be taken on the basis of their deposition, the police added.

Generating resentment

Police said they have noticed some social media behaviours in the last few days.

Fake news about police firing on protesters is widely being circulated. "Old images and videos of law and order action unrelated to the current situation in Delhi are being peddled to generate resentment against the administration," Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswas said.

Public safety measures such as barricading and preventive steps such as restrictions of 4G Internet are being projected as preparation for large-scale crackdown, Mr. Biswas said.

Bot accounts
We have noticed that several social media accounts spreading the fake posts have no account biodata, which is behaviour generally observed in bot accounts, said the officer.

In many posts, the attached media file is edited and manipulated, and pushed in the guise of news reports along with inciteful and alarming hashtags, Mr. Biswas said, adding: "As part of the probe, the accounts or handles that have posted created, they said.

The malicious social media propaganda undertaken by vested interests is primarily aimed at regaining support after the public backlash caused due to the unprovoked violence perpetrated by the protesters during the tractor rally at ITO, Red Fort and other places throughout the national capital, in which more than 500

NGT: build warehouses on platforms for cement bags

Take steps, Northern Railway told

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Northern Railway to construct warehouses on platforms for the handling of cement bags in a bid to curb air pollution resulting from loading and unloading of the cement bags.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the Northern Railway to furnish an action plan to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and take requisite steps. "The CPCB and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) may further monitor compliance of environmental norms in exercise of their statutory powers, following due process of law," the Bench said.

The directions came on a plea moved by petitioner Anubhav Kumar alleging air pollution in and around Rani Bagh, Shakurbagh railway station, Raja Park and surrounding areas as a result of unscientific loading and unloading of cement.

The tribunal also dismissed a plea of the Northern Railway, which sought setting



aside a previous order of the DPCC imposing a fine of ₹71.62 lakh for failing to curb pollution.

"The amount of compensation may be spent for the restoration of the environment in coordination with the Northern Railway," the Bench said.

The directions came on a plea moved by petitioner Anubhav Kumar alleging air pollution in and around Rani Bagh, Shakurbagh railway station, Raja Park and surrounding areas as a result of unscientific loading and unloading of cement.

Front-line workers to get jab on a trial basis from today

7,365 more beneficiaries took COVID-19 vaccination: govt.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A total of 7,365 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Wednesday. However, 17 Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) were reported, according to the Delhi government.

The number of people vaccinated was only 40.2% of the daily target of 18,300, which is the lowest percentage till now.

Also, front-line workers, including police personnel and teachers, will be vaccinated on a pilot basis on Thursday following the Central government's directions, according to officials.

"Tomorrow [Thursday] front-line workers will be vaccinated on a pilot basis. Their vaccination drive will start from Saturday. About 3.4 lakh front-line workers have been registered till



now," an official working with the Chief Minister's office said.

Delhi uses both vaccines for COVID-19, Covaxin and Covishield. Of the 17 AEFI, 14 were from using Covishield and three were from Covaxin.

The number of days of vaccination has been increased to six a week from four till last week. The num-

ber of vaccination sites were increased to 106 from 81. Each site has a target of 100 healthcare workers.

The government started the vaccination drive by inoculating about 2.4 lakh healthcare workers whose names have been registered with them.

150 new cases

Delhi witnessed 150 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,35,481, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

Also, six more deaths have been reported, taking the total number of deaths to 10,864.

A total of 56,658 tests were done in the past 24 hours. Of the total cases, 6,23,409 people have recovered and there are 1,208 active cases.

Civic body not giving dry ration in schools: AAP

'It has corrupt nexus with industrialists'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

AAP on Wednesday alleged that the BJP-ruled North Delhi Municipal Corporation has not released dry rations provided by the Delhi government in corporation-run schools for the last several months.

The party claimed that the BJP has a "corrupt nexus" with industrialists and they were diverting the dry ration.

"The Delhi government is providing this dry ration from its own budget. The North Corporation has not provided dry ration to the children of the schools under their purview for the last eight months. It is utterly shameful," AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said.

'Back-door deal'

AAP also alleged that the Congress has made a "back-door deal" with the BJP to not raise the issue of farmers' protests separately and aggressively inside Parliament.

"AAP MPs were thrown out of Parliament and the Congress saw everything but did not speak a single word in favour of the farmers. This clearly shows that there is a back-door deal between the BJP and the Congress regarding the farmer issue," AAP leader Sanjay Singh said.

Air quality may improve today: SAFAR

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida improved slightly but continued to remain in the 'very poor' category on Wednesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

"Delhi's AQI is likely to improve to the lower end of 'very poor' to 'poor' category in the next two days. AQI is forecast to marginally deteriorate but stay in the lower end of 'very poor' category on Saturday," said a statement by government-run monitoring agency SAFAR.

The AQI of Delhi was 330 on Wednesday.

Keep tabs on clearance conditions for projects: NGT

Panel directs Ministry to take urgent steps to revamp monitoring mechanism

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Union Environment Ministry to take urgent steps in revamping the monitoring mechanism for compliance of conditions mentioned in the environmental clearances granted to projects and industries.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh

Kumar Goel directed the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to ensure monitoring of compliance of environmental clearances conditions of at least "red" category industries, not less than once in a quarter.

The directions came when the green panel also directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State pollution control boards to take measures in

safety and health of the citizens and protection of the environment so as to ensure monitoring of compliance of environmental clearances conditions of at least "red" category industries.

The directions came when the green panel also directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State pollution control boards to take measures in

conducting monitoring of environmental clearances conditions at their level, once every quarter, for all "red" category industries.

The directions came when the green panel also directed the Central Pollution Control Board (C

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, FEB. 04
RISE 07:08 SET 18:03
RISE 00:00 SET 11:29
FRIDAY, FEB. 05
RISE 07:07 SET 18:04
RISE 00:55 SET 12:08
SATURDAY, FEB. 06
RISE 07:07 SET 18:05
RISE 02:01 SET 12:53

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Delhi City	26 10
Safdarjung	26 10
Palam	24 13

Delhi Pilm Today
25°C Rain and thunderstorm with gusty winds may occur over some places. Hailstorm may be a chance in pockets.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
22°C One or two spells of rain and thundershower with gusty winds and cloudy sky would continue.

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Farmers being denied water, power: DPCC legal dept.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Wednesday said its Legal and Human Rights Department has filed a complaint before the National Human Rights Commission against the Delhi, U.P. and Haryana governments, and the Delhi Police Commissioner for cutting off water, power, medical and toilet services to the farmers protesting at Delhi borders.

The delegation of Legal and the Human Rights Department of the DPCC met NHRC officials and apprised them of the plight of the farmers at the Delhi borders. It appealed to the commission to immediately constitute a team to visit the borders and assess the poor condition of the farmers. The team also requested the Commission to issue necessary directions to the Delhi, Haryana and U.P. governments and Delhi Police to give the farmers access to basic facilities.

"It is inhuman to deny basic facilities to the farmers, who have been protesting since November 23 2020," Sunil Kumar, who heads the legal team, said.

Padyatra

The Delhi Congress also said it will be launching a 'Pol Khol' padyatra to expose the misdeeds and corruption of the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) governments in Delhi on February 4 as part of its campaign for the forthcoming by-election to the corporation seats.

Protesters at Singhu border welcome global lens on stir

Farmers praise American singer for support, but many did not know who she is

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

"Ik American singer aa Rihanna, jine sadde lai tweet kitti ae... ode tweet de baad, 5.5 lakh lokkan ne sadde baare gal kitti ae (There's an American singer Rihanna who has tweeted about us after which 5.5 lakh people have talked about us)," announced a speaker from the main stage at the Singhu border protest site.

On Wednesday, the global icon was repeatedly mentioned in several speeches in front of a crowd where the majority didn't know who she was but lauded her for her support and for bringing the protest onto the international stage.

The speaker said the singer supported the protest on social media following which many international social activists and personalities also spoke up in favour of the farmers.



Farmers protesting against the new farm laws at Singhu border on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Owing to Internet suspension around Delhi's borders, most protesters are unaware of what the nation's take is on the agitation. If there is some important information to share, we do it through announcements on the stage, said Charanjeet Singh, a volunteer.

"Why aren't we talking about this? #FarmersProtest", Rihanna had tweeted on Tuesday.

Dalbir Singh from Moga

said he doesn't know who Rihanna is. "I haven't heard of this name. Who knows about big English artists in our villages? but if she is talking about us then it's great because any help for our struggle is welcome," he said.

Coordination problem
Stage management committee member Arshdeep Singh Atwal, 22, from Jalandhar, said they have WhatsApp groups for duty roster and

Road occupied by farmers at Tikri border cut off from residential lanes

Locals forced to walk on dirt path to reach Rohtak Road

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The main road towards Haryana's Bahadurgarh, which has been occupied by agitating farmers at the Tikri border, has now been cut off from all nearby residential lanes with police-manned barricades even as security arrangements leading to it are being fortified further.

While access to the protest site was regulated earlier too, attempts to this end were limited to the periphery of the site and not a bustling market right in the middle of it to ensure that only one person can enter or exit the main market area at a time. Though razor mesh wire fencing is limited to a small patch of land behind the immediate protest site, large metallic frames resting on heavy trucks have been procured to prevent vehicular movement towards the national capital.

"They have blocked our entry into any lane connected to the protest site. Police have asked us not to go to the market in groups," said Harmeet Sandhu from Punjab's Moga.

More earthmoving machines are now stationed next to police riot control vehicles at a little distance from where agitating farmers have erected



Policemen at the entrances of all lanes where barricades cannot be placed at Tikri border on Wednesday. ■ JATIN ANAND

ed a stage on the main road and concrete slabs have been installed in the middle of the local market to control access to it under the eyes of police personnel.

Residents complained they have to walk over a kilometre through a dirt road around the restrictions to be able to reach Rohtak Road, where the police have stepped up deployment since January 26, and more DTC buses and concrete barriers have been installed to block access towards Delhi near the Tikri border metro station.

"There is much more police presence in the area after what happened on January 26," said a local resident requesting anonymity. "Police men have been stationed at the entrances of all the lanes

where barricades cannot be put or won't fit," he also said.

Not just entry to the vicinity of the protest site, local residents are, they complained, not allowed to exit the area except from one point - a dirty road ostensibly serving as a parking lot for small goods and passenger carriers behind a slum on the main road. "Things were already inconvenient for us since the farmers came but they have gotten more inconvenient since what happened on Republic Day. Elderly residents cannot walk as much as needed to go to the main road and vehicles from outside will cause a jam if they enter the bylanes," said Hari Shankar Sharma, a local shopkeeper who stays on rent in the area with his family.

Ensure strict implementation of TRAI regulations: HC

Court's direction came on a plea claiming phishing activities on mobile networks

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to ensure "complete and strict" implementation of the regulation issued by it in 2018 for curbing unsolicited commercial communications (UCC).

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh also directed the telecom service providers (TSPs), including Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL), Reliance Jio, Airtel and Vodafone, to ensure strict compliance with the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preferences Regulations (TCCPR) 2018.



TCCPR 2018 was issued for curbing unsolicited commercial communications. ■ FILE PHOTO

2018 issued by TRAI.

The court's direction came while disposing of a plea by One97 Communications Ltd, which runs Paytm, claiming that millions of its customers have been de-

frauded by the phishing activities over the mobile networks and the failure of the telecom companies to prevent the same has "caused financial and reputational loss".

"We expect respondent 2 [TRAI] to strictly implement the regulations and in case of any violation, action would be initiated in accordance with the regulations," the High Court said.

Customers defrauded

Paytm had, in its plea, alleged that telecom operators are not blocking those who are defrauding its customers by "phishing" activities over various mobile networks. Paytm had contended that

the telecom majors are violating their obligations under the TCCPR 2018, to curb problem of unsolicited commercial communications

Paytm claimed that under the regulations, the telecom companies are required to verify purported telemarketers seeking registration (called registered telemarketers or RTMs) with them before granting access to their customer data and also take action immediately against all fraudulent RTMs. It contended that the telcos "failure" to undertake proper verification prior to such registration enables fraudulent telemarketers to carry out phishing activities.

Nine firms bid for railway station redevelopment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The telecom majors are violating their obligations under the TCCPR 2018, to curb problem of unsolicited commercial communications

Paytm claimed that under the regulations, the telecom companies are required to verify purported telemarketers seeking registration (called registered telemarketers or RTMs) with them before granting access to their customer data and also take action immediately against all fraudulent RTMs. It contended that the telcos "failure" to undertake proper verification prior to such registration enables fraudulent telemarketers to carry out phishing activities.

These companies will now undergo technical evaluation and in the next stage, RLDA will float the Request for Proposal (RFP) for parti-

cipants who get qualified in the technical process, the Railways said.

The redevelopment of New Delhi Railway Station is expected to incur a capital expenditure of around \$680 million and will be developed on a Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer (DBFOT) model.

"The redevelopment of the New Delhi Railway Station has attracted interest from various national and international stakeholders. The project will be instrumental in augmenting the local economy, generating employment opportunities and boosting the tourism potential of Delhi-NCR," Ved Parkash Dudeja, Vice Chairman, RLDA, said in a statement.

These companies will now undergo technical evaluation and in the next stage, RLDA will float the Request for Proposal (RFP) for parti-

IN BRIEF

AAP files complaint against BJP, Sambit Patra for sharing 'forged' video of Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party has filed a police complaint against the BJP and its spokesperson Sambit Patra, stating that Mr. Patra had allegedly tweeted a "forged" video of AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal purportedly supporting the farm laws, as per the complaint. The complaint, dated Tuesday, has been filed at the IP Estate Police Station.

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Legislature panels have the power to summon witnesses, SC told

Delhi Assembly justifies committee's summons to FB officials

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Committees formed by State legislatures have the power to summon witnesses and enforce their attendance through compulsory process. It is a tradition that travels back 100s of years, the Delhi Assembly submitted in the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

"We have resorted to making calls to coordinate, but it's not as efficient," he said.

He added that lawyers who are collecting data on arrested and "missing" persons are also facing trouble coordinating among themselves, and sending lists to other lawyers.

"We need to send out information on missing persons on WhatsApp groups and we haven't been able to do so," he said.

Jay Sandhu, 30, from Amritsar, who runs a tea-pakoras langar said he hasn't been able to contact his family members in Canada and London. "I can connect with those who are in Amritsar but not those abroad. I can't send them pictures of what we are doing here and how we are doing," he said.

Mr. Mohan said the Committee had no power or jurisdiction to summon a pri-



Committee, he said, had merely followed a standard form of notice".

Mr. Singhvi said, "Riots had happened in Delhi. After sometime, if the NCT of Delhi wants to look into it, it is unhealthy that Facebook does not co-operate."

But Justice Kaul asked why the Committee had specifically asked for Mr. Mohan. By issuing notice to Mr. Mohan, he was being compelled to appear under the threat of breach of privilege. It should have been, as senior advocate Harish Salve for Mr. Mohan pointed out, left to Facebook to choose its representative to be sent before the Committee.

To this, Mr. Singhvi said, to his knowledge, the Committee wanted a "senior competent person" from Facebook to testify.

"I have never said that apart from Mr. Ajit Mohan anyone else cannot be recognised before us," Mr. Singhvi submitted.

58-year-old serves tea at Singhu border all night

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

a day and at times, rests for just an hour during the day. This is his routine on most days barring a few, Mr. Singh said.

Prakat Singh, a 58-year-old man from a Patiala village, arrived at Singhu border on December 29 with his wife and has been staying here since. He walks all night providing tea to volunteers.

He carries a rather big flask filled with tea and disposable glasses and walks around 15 km in about 20 hours. He sleeps three hours

said.

An event in his life three years ago, pushed him into people's service, he believes.

"I suffered an electric shock. I was attached to the wire for nearly 10 minutes but God saved me. The after-effects have stayed, but I survived. After that I started serving people more seriously," he said. Mr. Singh was seen shivering while walking.

At the protest site on Wednesday,

the voice of the farmers as well as how activists arrested during the CAA-NRC-NPR protests were silenced by slapping the UAPA on them".

The march soon turned into a public meeting and protesters raised slogans "against the way in which the government was trying to suppress the

Karam and Navjot, two of those present at the protest site, said that they had returned recently from Canada and were supporting the

"Number of speakers at the stage is huge and not everyone can pour their heart at the stage. I have started this so that people can come here and say what they want," he said, adding that he then records and uploads videos on YouTube.

Wednesday, 30-year-old Prabhjot Singh, a Delhi resident, has put up a kiosk with a mike-holder inviting people to speak their mind and heart.

"Number of speakers at the stage is huge and not everyone can pour their heart at the stage. I have started this so that people can come here and say what they want," he said, adding that he then records and uploads videos on YouTube.

The Aam Aadmi Party has filed a police complaint against the BJP and its spokesperson Sambit Patra, stating that Mr. Patra had allegedly tweeted a "forged" video of AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal purportedly supporting the farm laws, as per the complaint. The complaint, dated Tuesday, has been filed at the IP Estate Police Station.

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Published by N. Ravi at Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860, Anna Salai, Chennai-60002 and Printed by S. Ramanujam at HT Media Ltd. Plot No. 8, Udyog Vihar, Greater Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. 201306, on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-60002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act).</

Saikia reinstated as Assam Leader of the Opposition

It was withdrawn after dip in Cong. tally

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam Assembly Secretariat on Wednesday reinstated Congress MLA Debabrata Saikia as the Leader of the Opposition.

His status was withdrawn through a notification on January 1 after the number of Congress MLAs in the 126-member House got reduced to 20. The minimum number required is 21.

In a fresh notification, the Assembly Secretariat said all facilities entitled to the Leader of the Opposition have been reinstated for Mr. Saikia, who had challenged the withdrawal of his status in the Gauhati High Court.

The court had on January



Debabrata Saikia •

12 stayed the operation of the January 1 notification issued by the Assembly Secretariat.

The Congress had won 26 seats in the 2016 Assam Assembly election. The party's current strength in the House is 19.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Mrs. BERNICE PHILBERT
W/o Late Mr. Roland Philbert
Died on 03.02.2021 at 10 AM
Funeral Mass
On 04.02.2021 at 10 AM
at Votive Shrine, Kilpauk,
Chennai.

Deeply Mourned By
Capt. Ian Philbert, Karen,
Masha, Larissa, Katya.
Ph: 98400 57725

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For further details visit Ch.P.T. website www.chennaitport.gov.in and www.eprocure.gov.in

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RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, north Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, east & west Uttar Pradesh and west Madhya Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	26.8	9.4	Kozhikode	—	34.0	24.8
Ahmedabad	—	32.2	13.6	Kurnool	—	32.4	18.7
Aizawl	—	22.7	6.7	Lucknow	—	28.5	9.2
Allahabad	—	29.3	8.5	Madurai	—	32.0	22.7
Bengaluru	—	28.5	17.9	Mangaluru	—	35.6	20.1
Bhopal	—	32.7	11.2	Mumbai	—	34.6	18.6
Bhubaneswar	—	31.0	13.3	Mysuru	—	31.0	17.6
Chandigarh	—	24.9	12.2	New Delhi	—	26.1	10.4
Chennai	—	29.4	22.0	Patna	—	23.8	7.4
Coimbatore	—	30.3	20.6	Pondicherry	—	30.6	23.6
Dehradun	—	23.7	7.0	Puducherry	—	30.6	21.3
Gangtok	—	19.3	6.1	Pune	—	30.7	13.4
Goa	—	34.9	21.3	Raipur	—	31.5	12.6
Guwahati	—	27.5	10.0	Ranchi	—	25.2	8.4
Hubballi	—	29.0	18.0	Shillong	—	17.2	5.7
Hyderabad	—	29.8	15.0	Shimla	—	12.6	4.5
Imphal	—	24.8	6.0	Srinagar	0.8	2.5	—1.3
Jaipur	—	29.0	12.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.1	24.4
Kochi	—	32.0	24.4	Tiruchi	—	31.7	22.4
Kohima	—	18.7	5.0	Vijayawada	—	30.8	20.0
Kolkata	—	25.2	11.2	Visakhapatnam	—	31.2	20.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

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Bengaluru	10	85	30	.118	.109	■■■■■
Chennai	—	9	22	.83	.94	■■■■■
Delhi	41	114	61	.377	.327	■■■■■
Hyderabad	10	73	23	.245	.245	■■■■■
Kolkata	38	29	60	.363	.282	■■■■■
Lucknow	8	122	60	.306	.354	■■■■■
Mumbai	55	137	34	.224	.222	■■■■■
Pune	—	100	22	.148	.70	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	16	92	50	.175	.199	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded the overall air quality index (AQI) score of 398 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Nandesar, Gujarat, recorded a healthy AQI score of 32.

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

Kolse-Patil says AMU student leader's remarks a 'mistake'

BJP's sole aim is to defame Elgaar Parishad 2, says retired Bombay HC judge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

While admitting that Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) student leader Sharjeel Usmani should not have generalised against the Hindu community in his speech made on the occasion of the second edition of the Elgaar Parishad in January, retired Bombay High Court judge B.G. Kolse-Patil, one of the organisers of the event, accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to defame the event by filing a case against Mr. Usmani.

"While his speech was fine, he ought to have used the words 'Manuwadi' or 'Brahmanwadi' that would have conveyed the kind of patriarchal and casteist mentality we are fighting against instead of generalising the entire Hindu community. That was a mistake. If anybody's sentiments have been hurt, then I apologise," said Mr. Kolse-Patil.

At the same time, he



If anybody's sentiments have been hurt, then I apologise
B.G. KOLSE-PATIL
Retired Bombay High Court judge

lashed out against the BJP for demanding action against the AMU student leader.

'Needless issue'
"The BJP is needlessly making an issue out of this with the sole aim to defame the Elgaar Parishad like they had done the first time around," he said.

The Swargate police had filed an FIR against Mr. Usmani on Tuesday based on a complaint by Bharatiya Jana-

ta Yuva Morcha leader Pra-deep Gawade.

After a number of hiccups, permission was finally given for the conclave to be held on January 30 at the city's Ganesh Kala Krida Mandir. The event saw the attendance of writer-activist Arundhati Roy and former IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan, among others.

Mr. Kolse-Patil had co-organised the Elgaar Parishad held on December 31, 2017, in Pune's Shaniwar Wada. More than 250 progressive social outfits, including several left-leaning and Ambedkarite groups across Maharashtra, as well as people like Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mevani, Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh chief Prakash Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader Umar Khalid, among others, had participated in the event.

"A case has been registered against Sharjeel Usmani for his offensive remarks. He is currently not in Maharashtra, but we will arrest him from whichever State he is in, be it Bihar, Uttar Pradesh or Gujarat or elsewhere," he said.

'Will arrest Sharjeel'

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday said the Maharashtra police have registered a case against Aligarh Muslim University student leader Sharjeel Usmani after scanning the video clippings of the Elgaar Parishad held in Pune on January 30.

"A case has been registered against Sharjeel Usmani for his offensive remarks. He is currently not in Maharashtra, but we will arrest him from whichever State he is in, be it Bihar, Uttar Pradesh or Gujarat or elsewhere," he said.

No Cabinet expansion in Rajasthan, says Cong.

Party workers to be appointed to panels'



Senior Congress leader Ajay Maken arriving to attend the party executive meeting in Jaipur on Wednesday. ■ PTI

shortly.

The Congress faces the challenge of maintaining balance among different factions in the political appointments, as the loyalists from the camps of both Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot expect to be accommodated in the Cabinet and other bodies. Mr. Gehlot is said to be having reservations about certain leaders proposed to be inducted into various bodies.

Bid to strengthen party

Mr. Maken said the ruling party would perform well in the Assembly by-elections in Rajsamand, Vallabh Nagar, Sahara and Sujangarh. He said the party structure would be strengthened in the State by involving the district and block levels within the party structure later this month. The senior party leaders have been asked to prepare the panel of names for appointment of District Congress Committee presidents.

Mr. Maken, who addressed a meeting of the newly formed Pradesh Congress Committee executive here, said about 25,000 party workers would be accommodated in the district and block level committees, with preference to be given to Dalits, backward classes, minorities and women. A disciplinary committee of the PCC will also be constituted

DCP files criminal complaint against Arnab, wife

He alleges defamatory attacks in connection with death of Sushant Singh Rajput

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Mumbai Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Abhishek Trimukhe on Wednesday filed a criminal complaint against Republic TV editor-in-chief and owner Arnab Goswami and his wife Samyabrata before the City Civil and Sessions Court, alleging defamatory attacks in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Mr. Trimukhe, DCP, Zone IX, has filed the complaint pursuant to the sanction granted by the Home Department as he is aggrieved by the defamatory attacks on him while he was discharging his official functions.

The complaint said, "The defamatory attacks have been made with a singular view of assassinating his official character and thereby maliciously and deliberately causing undue humiliation of the Mumbai Police Department." It added, "Mr. Goswami has made grossly

false, malicious and defamatory statements/averments, which have been telecast on his channel 'Republic Bharat' and thereby published on YouTube on August 7, 2020. The same purports to be a panel discussion pertaining to the phone records of Ms. Rhea Chakraborty, in connection to the death of Mr. Sushant Singh Rajput. However, far from being a discussion conscribed by journalistic ethos, the defamatory telecast has Mr. Goswami breaking into a tirade of defamatory statements against Mr. Trimukhe. He is convinced that the same was done with an intention to not just drag his name through the mud, but also to cast aspersions on the conduct of the Mumbai Police as a whole in the context of the investigation into the death of Mr. Rajput."

Mr. Trimukhe has urged the court to take cognisance of the offence and issue a warrant against the accused.

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION Storm Water Drain Department

S.W.D.C.No.B2/0113/2021

E - Tenders are invited for the following works in Two Cover System as detailed below the Tenderers may submit separate tenders for each of the following works:

S.W.D.C.No.B2/0113/2021 Construction of Flood protection Retaining wall including canal lining, Shared pathway, cycle track Reach - 2 to Reach - 5 from chainage 1773 to 4290 mtr. for the portion of Formation of park and Green packets including Electrical works and Landscape of Mambalam Canal (1) Work Value (with GST 12%) Rs.13.03 Crores EMD Rs.13,03,000/- (2) Work Value (with GST 12%) Rs.11.21 Crores EMD Rs.11,21,000/- (3) Work Value (with GST 12%) Rs.14.21 Crores EMD Rs.14,21,000/- (4) Work Value (with GST 12%) Rs.3.27 Crores EMD Rs.3,27,000/-

Tender Last Date & Time of Submission: 18.02.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.

Bidding documents are available online on: www.tntenders.gov.in

Tender open Date & Time: 19.02.2021 at 3.30 P.M.

DIPR/796/Tender/2021 Superintending Engineer /SWDD (i/c)

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION Storm Water Drain Department

S.W.D.C.No.B2/0205/2021

E-Short Tenders are invited for the following work in two cover as per details furnished below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Package Value of work (with GST)	EMD Rs.	Eligible Class
1	Construction of Missing link Storm Water Drain in Chennai City as identified during the North East Monsoon 2020 which were severely affected in various location in Zone-4 to 13 - 27 Packages	Rs.200.64 Lakhs to Rs.790.73 Lakhs	1% of work value	Class-I

1. Tender last date and time of submission: 18.02.2021 upto 3.00 pm.

2. Bid document will be available in website https://tntenders.gov.in

3. Tender open date and time: 19.02.2021 at 3.30 pm.

DIPR/798/Tender/2021 Superintending Engineer /SWDD

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B



Urban visions

Metro Rail and buses help with mobility, but sound urbanisation needs policy reform

With a clear focus on expansion of Metro Rail and bus services through Central funding, Budget 2021 has recognised a core component of urbanisation. Comfortable, safe and affordable commuting has well-recognised multiplier effects for the economy and more generally for public health, although COVID-19 has had the perverse effect of driving people away to the safety of personal car and two-wheeler bubbles. There is little doubt that when the pandemic is under control, more people will return to clean and green mass mobility. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement of Central funding of ₹1,957 crore, ₹63,246 crore and ₹14,788 crore for the Kochi, Chennai and Bengaluru Metro projects, respectively, gives these big cities greater certainty that they can meet targets. Less certain, however, is the impact of the proposed ₹18,000 crore plan to augment public bus transport using a PPP model that will enable private sector players to finance, acquire, operate and maintain over 20,000 buses. India's ratio of buses to population is a low 1.2 per 1,000 people, compared to 8.6 in Thailand and 6.5 in South Africa, although some States like Karnataka are well ahead of the national average, as per NITI Aayog data. Licensed private urban bus services remain a politically sensitive topic in many States, where State monopolies coexist with unregulated parastatals, and it will take a major effort to convince them that a bus renaissance is a good post-pandemic recovery strategy. The amended Motor Vehicles Act has provisions for the Centre to take the lead here.

The challenge of urbanisation goes beyond stand-alone interventions such as Metro and bus system grants. State governments, which retain effective control over urban development rather than city administrations, have failed to operationalise the umbrella authorities to regulate transport. Common mobility cards that would help citizens use bus, train and feeder networks seamlessly were largely in pilot project mode even before the pandemic. There is valid criticism that the existing paradigm is one of "exclusionary urbanisation", which makes Metro and bus services expensive for the majority, particularly for those forced to live in the suburbs due to housing costs, and sometimes making the per kilometre cost of using a two-wheeler more attractive. Moreover, Census 2011 showed that the number of Census Towns, which are urban for census purposes but not named urban local bodies, grew tremendously over a decade. They lack access to funding, infrastructure and capacity to meet the needs of large populations even now. Enhanced ambition, therefore, requires the Centre to work with State governments to integrate key areas with its transport vision, such as affordable inner-city housing, including rental projects, access to civic services and health care, and enhanced sustainability, greenery and walkability. All these are covered by Central budgetary schemes for cities. Only integration can bring about inclusive urbanisation.

All to play for

India and England are fighting for a place in the final of the World Test Championship

Arivalry going back to 1932 will get a fresh chapter as India and England gear up to play the first Test at Chennai's M.A. Chidambaram Stadium from Friday. The first game of a four-match series would eventually pave the way for the frenzied thrills of five Twenty20Is and three ODIs in a long tour that will conclude on March 28. Besides the angst caused by essential COVID-19 protocols, the bio-bubble and the need to play the first contest behind closed doors, there is a lot at stake for the teams. Australia's postponement of its tour to South Africa, pitch-forked New Zealand to the World Test Championship final at Lord's in June. India and England will now tussle for a berth in the summit-clash. India has to secure this series and win a minimum of two Tests and for England, Joe Root's men have to triumph in three matches. Fresh from its stunning 2-1 Test series triumph in Australia, and bolstered with the return of regular skipper Virat Kohli and key players such as R. Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Hardik Pandya, India holds the edge. That a second-string outfit under the unflappable Ajinkya Rahane, upset the more fancied Aussies at Brisbane will hold the Indians in good stead especially in their backyard replete with the tales of spin and other turns.

History might suggest home dominance, but India would remember that over the last four decades, some of its strong outfits emerged second-best to the visitors from the Old Blighty. In the 1984-85 and 2012-13 seasons, England stunned India. For many of those at Chennai's ground, Chepauk in 1985, the memory still rankles: seamer Neil Foster's match-haul of 11 wickets and double tons by Mike Gatting and Graeme Fowler that ambushed Sunil Gavaskar's men. India's present coach Ravi Shastri featured in that match. Cut to the present, Root's troops would step in with the extra confidence gleaned from the 2-0 verdict in the two Tests against Sri Lanka at Galle. The captain himself was in prime form – Root struck a 228 and 186 – and the bowling arsenal has the pace troika of James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Jofra Archer while Ben Stokes lends the x-factor. Yet, it is India that would step out with a halo in the city on the Coromandel Coast. A strong batting unit and a Bumrah-headlined attack with Ashwin's guiles could test England's resolve. The last time the rivals clashed in Chennai (2016), Karun Nair's triple ton and Ravindra Jadeja's bowling exploits humbled the visitors. This time around, India would seek fresh heroes while the cricket caravan moves from Chennai to Ahmedabad and Pune.

Weighing in on the Biden presidency

While it could be a curate's egg for New Delhi, for the world, a return to Obama-era policies may prove inadequate



M.K. NARAYANAN

Dispelling very real concerns that existed about disruption of the Inauguration ceremony, Joseph R. Biden Jr was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States on January 20. Memories of the unprecedented events a fortnight earlier, when unruly mobs ran amuck in the Capitol building, seemed to haunt not only those present at the ceremony but also the world at large; Washington had been turned into a fortress for the event. Ultimately, democracy triumphed.

Celebration of democracy

In his Inaugural Address, President Biden struck the right note, delivering a message of unity and hope, while not ignoring the enormous challenges the nation faced. His declaration that the nation was celebrating the triumph of a cause – the cause of democracy was most timely. Among Mr. Biden's strengths are that he detests bigotry, and abhors identity politics. He tends to be idealistic, and is deeply committed to democratic values. He is a multilateralist, unlike his predecessor, Donald Trump.

As the ultimate Beltway insider, he knows better than most, that opposition to many of his ideas and views exist just beyond the horizon. Also, in that seeking to restore the prestige of America's democracy and revive its economy, he would face many obstacles. He has, however, chosen to gamble on the throw of the dice by issuing a spate of Executive Orders, almost immediately intended to give expression to his initiatives, and also by announcing a series of initial measures which are, as likely as not, to provoke a great deal of opposition. Among these are his proposed \$1.9 trillion relief plan to

stem the novel coronavirus pandemic, his proposed expansive unemployment benefits package, and raising of the minimum wage, etc.

Policy reset and China

The new President would very soon come to realise that the global environment today is very different from the one that he knew as Vice-President. A return to erstwhile Obama-era policies may, hence, prove inadequate. The world has moved on and several policies will need a reset. The changed scenario, notwithstanding, under President Biden, one can expect the U.S. to rescind the 'militarisation' of foreign policy reverting to erstwhile traditional diplomacy. Opportunities for a fresh look at many contentious foreign policy issues could well open up as a result, incorporating elements of both competition and cooperation.

The acid test of this would be on how to deal with China. Rising China is not merely the single most serious challenge the U.S. faces at present, but it poses a diplomatic, economic and technological threat to U.S. pre-eminence. Persisting with old-time remedies such as devising an inclusive security architecture in Asia to check an expanding China threat in East Asia could prove counterproductive. Few countries in Asia are willing to line up against neighbouring China. This would, thereafter, beg the question as to whether the U.S. should persist with confrontation or attempt conciliation. If the latter, it would require the U.S. to soft-pedal its present antagonistic posture towards China. This could well have global implications.

Next, would be on how best to deal with Russia. The depth of antagonism between the two countries, the U.S. and Russia, remains unchanged, aggravated further by the growing strategic congruence between Russia and China. Initial reactions seem to point to U.S. relations with Russia continuing to remain cold, but as Russia flexes its muscles in Eurasia, the U.S. will



need to come up with new policy directives, rather than surrender the initiative to the former.

Ties with Europe, West Asia

President Biden faces an uphill task when it comes to repairing America's ties with Europe. The days when Europe and the U.S. were tied literally to the same policy cart are over, and Europe is no longer likely to give in to U.S. dictats. Germany is possibly emerging as Europe's new centre of gravity, dictating Europe's relations with countries such as China and Russia. Germany, while being highly critical of Russia's human rights record, including the most recent incident of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, is not hesitating to go ahead with Nord Stream 2, the Russia-led gas pipeline project, despite the U.S.'s objections. The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, again despite the U.S.'s objections, is another indication of Europe's new independent thinking. European leaders seem more inclined to heed Chinese President Xi Jinping's warning to global leaders – at the virtual World Economic Forum at Davos, in late January – against 'starting a new Cold War', than listen to the U.S.'s Biden.

Problems abound for the new U.S. Administration in West Asia as well. With the civil wars in Syria and Yemen not having ended, the U.S.'s efforts to find a political settlement here will prove difficult. How to deal with a Saudi Arabia that is on a Biden 'watch-list', adds to the complexity of dealing with West Asia. The 'Abraham Accords', forged during the dying days of the Trump Administration,

have further complicated the situation for the incoming Biden government. Dwarving this would be finding ways and means to deal with the Iran problem, including Iran's capacity and potential for nuclear mischief. Return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the Iran nuclear deal framework, may not be a realistic option in the wake of the 'Abraham Accords', which have imparted a new dynamic and given a sharper edge to the existing Israel-Iran divide.

The outlook for India

India's pious hope is that the Biden Administration will prove even more favourable to it than the preceding Republican Administration. This may, however, turn out to be like the proverbial curate's egg – good in parts. Mr. Biden as Vice-President was well known to some of us, as having played a critical role as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in pushing through the iconic U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement, and also as a firm proponent of the India-U.S. strategic partnership. Hence, under a Biden Administration, defence and security cooperation between India and the U.S. are likely to be further enhanced, at least till such time as U.S.-China relations improve.

However, a Biden Administration will be far less supportive of India on several issues. India must brace itself to heed concerns being expressed about issues such as Kashmir, the so-called travails of the Muslim minority in India, treatment of non-governmental organisations and the like. This may take place behind closed doors, so as not to embarrass the Indian government, but Biden's commitment to human rights is, by far, much stronger than that of many recent U.S. Presidents. He can be expected to satisfy his traditional constituency even at the risk of upsetting partners such as India.

What may, however, be far more disconcerting for India, if one were to analyse the statements and views of U.S. Secretary of State Antony John Blinken and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is that while the emphasis on a free and open Indo-Pacific region will continue, countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are likely to have a far more critical role to play than India in achieving security in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. could also be less forthcoming in its open support to India and in its ongoing confrontation with China in Eastern Ladakh.

The Afghan plan

Unsatisfactory again from an Indian standpoint are the implications of Mr. Biden's Afghanistan policy. From positions taken by Mr. Sullivan, it would appear that while some rethinking from the positions taken by the Trump Administration is possible, there is little room for India in the latest plans on the table. Mr. Biden is an ardent advocate of ending the war in Afghanistan – dating back to his years as Vice-President – and he is likely to implement this with vigour, not excluding a deal with the Taliban, the possible exit of elected President Ashraf Ghani, and giving Pakistan an even bigger role in acting as the mid-wife of any new arrangement. Not only would this mean that India's efforts of the past two decades to restore democracy in Afghanistan would come unstuck, but Pakistan would also gain a degree of legitimacy that had been denied to it by the Trump Administration, encouraging it to act with still greater impunity in carrying out terror strikes on India.

From a restricted standpoint, if India were to balance the positive with the negative, and compare the incoming Biden Administration with the previous Trump Administration, the balance sheet could be marginally negative.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

No to vaccine nationalism, yes to global cooperation

India's approach only reinforces the need for coordinated international efforts to bring COVID-19 under control



THANKOM ARUN & REJI JOSEPH

Since the worldwide inoculation process is going strong, vaccine diplomacy has become a hot topic. As this pandemic has spared no country and everyone needs access to vaccines, how is vaccine production and distribution being managed?

While the leading and advanced countries have been mindlessly selfish in amassing approved vaccines, it is the Global South countries, India and China, which have provided a ray of hope to most countries.

Advance purchase contracts

In their quest for ensuring vaccine security, a report by *The New York Times*, based on the data on vaccine contracts compiled by Duke University (<https://nyti.ms/3pKym69>), shows that the advance purchase contracts made by some advanced countries for potential vaccines would vaccinate their population many times: the European Union, two times, the United States and the United Kingdom, four times, and Canada, six times. And, 82% of Pfizer's production in 2021 and 78% of Moderna's have already been advance purchased by rich countries.

The expectation that an early vaccination will bring back normalcy and a required push to economic growth fuelled many advanced countries to engage in vaccine battles. The arguments of public good and global cooperation have gone out of the window now.

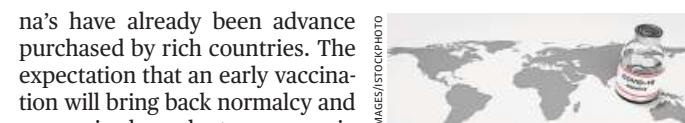
While advanced countries have turned their back on the need of poor countries to access COVID-19 vaccines, India has displayed empathy to their needs. India has taken a position that a significant percentage of the approved doses will be permitted for exports. While its exports to neighbouring countries will be under grant mode, initial shipment of vaccines to least developed countries will be free of cost. And, shipments of vaccines from India have already started reaching different parts of the developing world.

Brazil has received 2 million doses of vaccine from India (as of January 23). While India is in its first phase of vaccination to cover health-care workers, exports from India are helping other countries also in initiating phase one of their vaccination programme – a gesture well-appreciated globally. In a democracy, one can expect the backlash of sending vaccines abroad without vaccinating its population.

Nevertheless, India's approach only reinforces the need of having long speech delivered extempore at the Central Hall of Parliament in May 2014, the leader of this country said: "Villagers, farmers, Dalits and the oppressed, this government is for them, for their aspirations and this is our responsibility." If the top leader was sincere about his words, farmers would not be protesting still against farm Bills they do not want, and the national capital will not be the battleground it is today.

SUKUMARAN C.V., Palakkad, Kerala

■ It seems that the rulers of India have virtually turned the national capital into a warfront, with trenches, spikes and barbed wire barricades. In his 32-minute



coordinated global efforts in bringing COVID-19 under control. This response manifests India's unstinted commitment to global development and has consolidated its name as the world's pharmacy.

Although China has also been enthusiastic in promising vaccines and their delivery, the lukewarm response by countries such as Nepal has slowed down the ambition of China. The release of efficacy data in Brazil raises concerns about the effectiveness of the Sino-vac vaccine.

Keep track of SDGs

The attitude of India towards vaccinating the populations in the poorer countries has generated discussion in the richer countries about the necessity for more proactive measures to roll out vaccines to the developing nations. The reversal of progress on many Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>), such as SDG 3 ("Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages") could affect the health of the world population, and global growth itself. Even before COVID-19, projections have shown that 6% of the global population would be in extreme poverty,

which has gone up by 71 million, thereby causing enormous challenges to SDG 1 ("End poverty in all its forms everywhere"). According to estimates by the International Monetary Fund, over 50% of emerging markets and developing economies that were converging toward advanced economies per capita income over the last decade are expected to diverge over the 2020-22 period.

COVAX as a pathway

The COVAX project is a global risk-sharing mechanism for pooled procurement and fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, an ambitious programme based on funding from high and middle-income countries. Although the funding was not enough for the project, U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to join the project has raised expectations significantly. However, since high and middle-income countries are buying up large amounts of the vaccine directly from suppliers, the promise by COVAX to deliver 2 billion doses by the end of 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3cAGSp8>) seems to face new challenges. COVAX is a unique case of global cooperation and a strategic shift to enhance global development outcomes.

Furthermore, since most of the vaccines are purchased from the global south for developing nations, the COVAX project can draw new pathways for global development.

Most of these vaccines are cost-effective and affordable to the global south. For instance, Covishield, the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine produced in India costs only \$3 per dose; Covaxin is priced at \$4.2. A recent study by *The Lancet* based on Covaxin's Phase 1 data (<https://bit.ly/3ty8wte>) shows tolerable safety outcomes like any other vaccine. The intranasal version of Covaxin, which has been approved for phase I could further facilitate vaccinating the global population. The lower price of the vaccines is what has attracted many commercial buyers globally, including emerging economies such as Brazil and South Africa. The ability to produce large volumes of vaccine at an affordable cost underlines India's importance to developing countries when it comes to drug access.

The development of vaccines is a classic story of global cooperation between the North and the South. Unfortunately, the increasing nationalist tendencies of the democratic world during the pandemic have challenged the positive narrative on global cooperation.

Thankom Arun is a professor of Global Development and Accountability at the University of Essex, UK. Reji Joseph is an Associate Professor, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

No entry

The irony cannot be missed – while India loses land, soldiers and resources to China, it is cutting off protest sites from farmers by using barbed wire, spikes and trenches. Where is the spirit of dialogue and protection for farmers who provide 'food for all Indians', irrespective of party, religion, race, region and language?

PAUL DHANASEKARAN, Chennai

long speech delivered

extempore at the Central Hall of Parliament in May 2014, the leader of this country said: "Villagers, farmers, Dalits and the oppressed, this government is for them, for their aspirations and this is our responsibility." If the top leader was sincere about his words, farmers would not be protesting still against farm Bills they do not want, and the national capital will not be the battleground it is today.

SUKUMARAN C.V., Palakkad, Kerala

to deal with our farmers.

Why cannot the Centre take a cordial and genial step towards our farmers?

Dr. JAYASEKHARAN V.P., Payyanur, Kannur, Kerala

■ The borders of Delhi are beginning to resemble a hostile international border. What is the government apprehensive about? Is it privy to some information that the rest of the country is not aware of? The government's narrative continues to be that it can do no wrong and that it is the farmers, from two or three States who are protesting, and who need to be forced to accept what the government believes is right. Is this the

way a democracy is supposed to function?

HEMACHANDRA BASAPPA, Bengaluru

■ The government's offer of talks has not found takers. Things seem to be turning worse. Both sides – the farmers and the government – would do well to find a

middle path to resolve the stalemate.

N.J. RAVI CHANDER, Bengaluru

Shifting sands and the Owaisi effect

The rise of the AIMIM chief as a prominent Muslim leader points to many political intricacies



SAJJAN KUMAR

Asaduddin Owaisi, president of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM), complicates political equations. He stirs the easy fit between mainstream secular parties and their hold over Muslim voters. In terms of the popularity index in India, he comes close to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) triumvirate of Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath. Recently, the AIMIM's electoral gains in Bihar and Mr. Owaisi's visits to poll-bound West Bengal (2021) and Uttar Pradesh (in 2022) have revived the debate around his exact intention, emerging Muslim voting patterns and their implications for the BJP and its rivals.

Mr. Owaisi's national avatar is a conjunction of the political dynamics that were induced by the Sachar Committee report and the Bata House encounter case, wherein while political Hindutva was on the decline, the interplay of the backwardness of Muslims and their insecurities exposed the failures of secular mainstream parties in catering to the community's aspirations. This created a secular paradox, where, comforted with the decline of the BJP and the electoral ascendency of the Congress and other regional parties, many Muslim outfits and leaders blamed secular parties for failing Muslims. Thus began a new, although cluttered, phase of the community's experiments with Muslim parties and a growing clamour for more representation. The Peace Party of India and the Rashtriya Ulama Council in U.P., the AIUDP in Assam, and the popular resonance of the Pasmanda movement led by Ali Anwar Ansari in Bihar, and, since 2012, that of the AIMIM in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar, U.P., and now in West Bengal, point to the churn within the Muslim community.

Here, it is important to note that initially, the AIMIM had its limitations. Firstly, it was just a city-based party. Secondly, until the 2004 Andhra Pradesh Assembly poll, the party's electoral tally had plateaued at a



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

maximum of just four seats. Thirdly, whenever the party tried to venture outside Hyderabad – like in the 1989 and 1994 Assembly elections, where it contested 35 and 20 seats respectively and forfeited its deposit on 28 and 15 seats – it fared poorly. Thus, Mr. Owaisi had the ardent task of strengthening the party's foothold in its home turf before venturing outside. Hence, he chose the safe path of aligning with the UPA and defended the Congress in 2008 in the wake of the confidence vote sought by the Manmohan Singh-government after the Left Front withdrew support over the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal.

National ambitions

By 2009, two factors were helping Mr. Owaisi. His parliamentary interventions established him as an eloquent spokesperson for the Muslim question at the national level, and the delimitation exercise making more Assembly constituencies in Hyderabad, like Malakpet and Nampally (previously Asifnagar AC), Muslim-dominated seats, raised the electoral tally of the AIMIM, thereby empowering Mr. Owaisi at the regional level. This fuelled his national ambitions. By 2012, the party had set its eyes on two neighbouring States – Maharashtra and Karnataka – and particularly regions that were part of the Hyderabad State during the Nizam's rule and had significant Muslim populations. A significant breakthrough for the party's national ambitions came in October 2012, when the AIMIM won 11 of the 25 seats it contested in the Nanded municipal polls in eastern Maharashtra. Now, Mr. Owaisi followed the template of the secular paradox theory – accusing the Congress of favouring Hindu communal forces and acting against the interests of the

Muslims, he withdrew support from the Congress government in Andhra Pradesh and at the Centre.

A closer look at Mr. Owaisi's political moves reveals his calculations. In his quest to find an alternative to the BJP and political Hindutva in future, he is working towards the creation of a national third front, a non-Congress, non-BJP alliance, wherein AIMIM would be an indispensable part, acting as a magnetic pull for minority votes away from traditional claimants like the Congress and other parties. For instance, in 2018, Mr. Owaisi supported the JD(S) over the Congress in Karnataka; in Maharashtra in 2014 and 2019, he targeted the Congress and the NCP more than the BJP. The same template was repeated in 2015 and 2020 in Bihar and in 2017 in Uttar Pradesh. Now, in West Bengal, the ruling Trinamool Congress and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee are the prime targets, and predictably, the Samajwadi Party, the BSP and the Congress would be in Mr. Owaisi's line of fire in the run-up to the 2022 U.P. Assembly election.

Political psychology

No wonder, parties that are at the receiving end of Mr. Owaisi's politics label him as being hand-in-glove with the BJP. However, the underlying reason for Mr. Owaisi's attack on mainstream secular parties is a necessary evil he must embrace. The seats AIMIM aims to win in every State happen to be minority-dominated constituencies mostly controlled by these parties. Wrestling those seats leaves Mr. Owaisi with no other option but to train his guns at them rather than the BJP. However, navigating the Muslim electorates' maze is also contingent on the community's political psychology.

Let's take three states: Bihar, West

Sajjan Kumar is a political analyst associated with People's Pulse

'Smart walls' for Indian borders

A virtual surveillance system may help India secure its boundaries even in difficult locations

SIDHARTH KAPOOR & SHREYASHI

United States President Joe Biden stopped the construction of the much-publicised "border wall" between the U.S. and Mexico as part of a series of executive actions, in a development that was long-awaited. It was confirmed, however, that an alternative has been offered – a 'smart' wall that replaces the physical and armed patrolling with advanced surveillance tech is the proposed future of border security now.

The 'smart wall' technology could solve border security issues without the need for a physical barrier. The wall would use sensors, radars, and surveillance technology to detect and track border break-ins, and technology capable of performing the most difficult tasks dedicated to border security.



of terrorists and smugglers infiltrating into the country and efforts are ongoing to secure our borders and curb cross-border infiltration. Therefore, it is proposed that it is high time we start envisaging the use of technology to help India secure its borders.

Other benefits

A critical factor that must be considered to enable the usage of such a system along Indian borders is that the terrain in the region is rugged, and, furthermore, not even clearly defined. Hence, erecting fences, walls or any physical structures is extremely difficult. A "smart" wall, however, makes use of systems that would be designed in such a way that they can operate even in rugged areas. Imperatively, in the U.S., various other benefits, such as cost-effectiveness, less damage to the environment, fewer land seizures, and speedier deployment are being noted that give the "smart wall" concept an edge over traditional physical borders.

Notably, such a system, even if not feasible for our long boundaries, may still be deployed to enhance critical security establishments of the country and complement the already-existing physical fencing and walls. The attack on the Pathankot Air Force base highlighted that often, it may become difficult to secure establishments due to their vast size. Further, it is imperative for Indian armed forces to be well-equipped and simultaneously have the latest technological advantage over its enemies.

Experts must explore this idea to effectively counter the problem of cross-border infiltration. Is it unfathomable to deploy a security system that clubs technology with traditional set-ups due to terrain and other problematic factors? This is a question for Digital India to answer.

Sidharth Kapoor is an Associate at Sarvada Legal. Shreyashi is an Advocate at the Delhi High Court

A question that now arises is whether such a project can be undertaken to secure Indian borders. India has been struggling with the

problem

CM

YK

DATA POINT

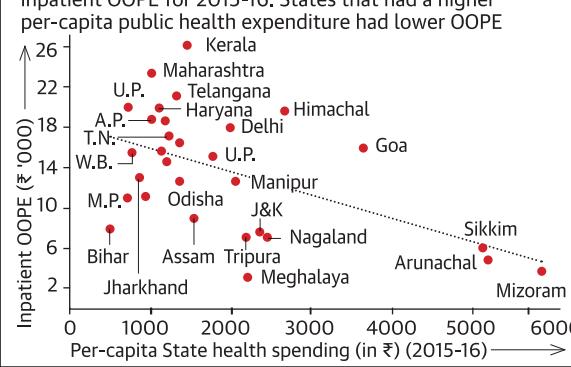
Need for a booster dose

The Economic Survey 2020-21 has recommended that government spending on healthcare should be increased to reduce the burden of out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) for patients in India, which is among the highest in the world. However, compared to FY21RE, the Centre's outlay for health dropped in the Union Budget for 2021-22. It is important to note that 66% of spending on healthcare is done by States in India. Data show that OOPEs for patients are relatively lower in States which spend more on public health. However, the survey pointed out that private hospitals, which charge significantly more, continue to dominate the healthcare sector

1. CASE FOR MORE GOVT. SPENDING

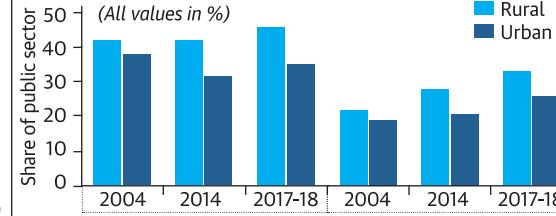
The horizontal axis plots a country's spending on health as a % of its total expenditure. On the vertical axis, OOPE of patients as a % of their total spending on health is plotted. Both figures are for 2018

2. STATE OF THE MATTER | The trend held true when similar figures were analysed for Indian States. The chart plots a state's per capita health expenditure against inpatient OOPE for 2015-16. States that had a higher per-capita public health expenditure had lower OOPE

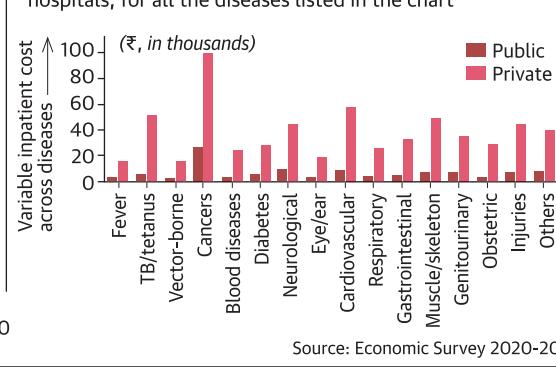


3. PRIVATE DOMINATES

Around 74% of outpatient care and 65% of inpatient care is provided by the private sector in urban India. The chart shows the share of public sector in providing inpatient and outpatient hospital care across three years in rural and urban areas



4. HIGHER BURDEN | The cost of treatment was significantly higher (nearly seven times for cardiovascular diseases) in private hospitals compared to government hospitals, for all the diseases listed in the chart



Towards sustainable growth

The economic models of today must be reimaged to take into account biodiversity and natural ecosystems



RAVI CHELLAM

Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh alone, in the Meerut-Muzaffarnagar-Saharanpur region, one finds castes like Muley Jats, Tyagi Muslims, and Gujar Muslims, besides the Sheikhs, Sayyids, Quraishis and others; in Rohilkhand region, the Turks, Pathans, Saifis, Ansaris, etc., maintain their caste identifications; in Braj, particularly in Aligarh town, the upper-caste Pathans, who have lost their political clout, are present in pockets; further, in the Poorvanchal region, both south and north of the Ghaghara river, the OBC Ansari Muslims constitute a majority but lack political representation. In Bihar, the OBC Ansari Muslims are politicised and dominate the Bhojpuri and Mithila-speaking districts; in the Seemanchal region, where the AIMIM recently made electoral gains, the rivalry among the upper-caste Surjapuris and OBC Kulhaiya and Shershahwadi Muslims is well-known. Further, in parts of north Bengal like Coochbehar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, the Nasha Shaikh Muslims, who are also found in Dhubri, Kokrajhar and Goalpara districts of lower Assam, have a significant presence; similarly, in districts like DinaJPur and north Malda, the Muslim universe mirrors the composition of Seemanchal Bihar, i.e., the Surjapuris and Shershahwadis; in south Bengal, while a majority of Muslims identify themselves as Sheikhs, they fall in the OBC category and are divided along sectarian and religious lines of being either the followers of Furfura Sharif or of the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind.

In this context, the Muslim psychology is about accentuating these internal differences when the fear of an aggressive Hindutva discourse is not the prime factor affecting their minds. However, when elections are polarised and the fear of the BJP's imminent victory is paramount, Muslims close ranks and vote for mainstream secular parties. Hence, it can be expected that in the 2021 West Bengal election or the 2022 Uttar Pradesh election, the aggressive Hindutva push and the prospect of a BJP victory may ensure that Muslims would reject Mr. Owaisi and consolidate behind the traditional claimants. In the meantime, the AIMIM chief would keep analysts guessing.

We have to recognise that there would not be an economy without the natural environment. Global studies documenting human ecological footprint, the decline in wildlife populations, and the conversion rates of natural ecosystems for other uses, place India among countries experiencing the highest rates of negative change. This increases our vulnerability towards catastrophes, including pandemics. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between human density, richness of biodiversity, and the emergence of zoonotic pathogens of wild origin, which renders India particularly vulnerable. With high human densities – among the highest diversity of mammals in the world – and a saturated interface between humans and wildlife, India is considered to be among the hotspots for zoonotic emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.

The WEF's Global Risks report for 2021 states that environmental risks continue to threaten the global economy. The top five risks are extreme weather, climate action failure, human environmental damage, infectious diseases and biodiversity loss. In terms of impact, infectious diseases top the list, followed by climate action failure. The top two risk response blind spots are climate action failure and biodiversity loss.

Our models of development and our notions about them have to change. Destruction of environment should no longer be justified in the name of development. Like all pandemics, COVID-19's emergence has been entirely driven by unchecked activities in the

name of development. Rampant destruction of natural habitats, especially due to mining and infrastructure development, continued expansion and intensification of agriculture and animal husbandry as well as untrained consumption have disrupted nature, increased contact between wildlife, livestock, pathogens and people, setting the stage for the pandemic to take hold of our lives. Pandemic risk can be significantly lowered by reducing human activities that drive the loss of biodiversity as it will help prevent the spillover of new diseases.

A study by Swiss Re Institute published in 2020 introduces a new biodiversity and ecosystem services index. It found that globally, 20% of countries, including India, have fragile ecosystems. It also states that 55% of the global GDP depends on high-functioning biodiversity and ecosystem services.

It is evident that policymakers should factor biodiversity and ecosystems into their economic decision-making. This will accelerate the transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to sustainable, equitable, inclusive and just development models. *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*, commissioned by HM Treasury and released on February 2, 2021, highlights the grave risks faced by the world because of the failure of economics to take into account the rapid degradation of nature. The review stresses the need to find new measures for growth and development to avoid a catastrophic breakdown. The world's governments need to come up with a form of national accounting that is different from the GDP model, and the new system has to account for the depletion of nature and natural resources.

New models

The evidence is overwhelming. All budgets need to reduce investments, including subsidies, in activities that will further degrade our natural habitats. By orders of magnitude, we should enhance investment in research in sustainability science.

A National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being has been approved by the Prime Minister's Science Technology and Innovation Advisory Council. The overarching objectives are to restore and enhance biodiversity, strengthen its sustainable use, generate thousands of green jobs and encourage the Indian public to appreciate the natural and associated cultural treasures that we have collectively inherited. This initiative has the potential to enable India to play a global leadership role in linking conservation with tangible human well-being outcomes.

Ravi Chellam is CEO, Metastring Foundation and is associated with Biodiversity Collaborative, Bengaluru

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 4, 1971

Lessons of the hijacking

(From an editorial)

If any doubts had existed anywhere about Pakistan's active complicity in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane and in the acts of sabotage and subversion witnessed now and again in Kashmir, Pakistan itself has cleared them. The government-controlled Pakistan Radio's approbation of the hijacking, Islamabad granting asylum to the two air pirates and its allowing the plane to be blown up – and all this in flagrant violation of the U.N. General Assembly's resolution, to which it had pledged unqualified support, condemning plane hijackings and calling on all governments not to encourage such crimes and to return the snatched plane and cargo to the owner-country – should convince even the most naive among Pakistan's apologists of what that country is upto and what one can expect from it in future. Now that all the wraps are off, it is upto the Indian authorities to take steps to prevent any further acts of air piracy and sabotage. It is obvious that both the Central and State Governments have so far not been vigilant enough. The loyalty of one of the hijackers, Qureshi, was obviously suspect for some time and yet nothing seems to have been done to checkmate him.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 4, 1921

Anti-Drink Campaign

(Associated Press of India.)

Calcutta, January 3:– Encouraged by their success in the suburbs, the men carrying on an anti-drink campaign raided in large numbers all grog shops in Calcutta and appealed to men not to drink. In some places uncouth men fell at the feet of the men and implored them not to enter grog shops. More than half the regular visitors of shops yielded to the persuasions and kept away from grog shops. A number of men were seen leaving licensed premises with cheeks smeared with coal tar and lime and garlands of discarded shoes hanging round their necks. There was some disturbance yesterday at Kidderpore in front of an excise shop. In spite of repeated requests, some uncouth men purchased gunja and an altercation ensued between the parties resulting in a free fight in which several men were injured. The Police dispersed the crowd and removed the injured men to hospital. No arrest was made. Almost all grog shops in mill districts between Baerangore and Naihati have been deserted by regular customers.

CM

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FROM PAGE ONE

'Mahapanchayat' seeks repeal of farm laws

Mr. Tikait said Haryana and Uttar Pradesh stood firmly behind Punjab to support the agitation and Mr. Rajewal was their leader. "There will be no change in the committee holding talks with the government. You don't change horses in the middle of a battle," said Mr. Tikait, stressing unity among the unions spearheading the agitation.

Referring to the heightened security and barricading at the protest sites, Mr. Tikait said it showed that the ruler was scared.

Mr. Rajewal said they had proved to the government that the farmers were right in seeking repeal of the laws, but the government didn't want to listen to them. "It is the stubbornness of the ruler," said Mr. Rajewal. He added,

No informal talks with farm unions: Minister

Positions have hardened after a section of farmers clashed with police on Republic Day, and police have since fortified the border protest sites with crippling security measures.

Asked about the farm unions' stance that they will not hold talks with the government until the multi-layered cement and barbed wire barricades are removed and farmers in police custody are released, Mr. Tomar said he did not want to comment on a law and order issue. "That is not my job," he told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a press conference. He suggested that the unions talk to the Police Commissioner regarding such concerns instead.

Farm union leaders disagreed. "It's not a law and order issue. The whole issue started with the three Acts and the MSP [or minimum support price for crops] issue. That is why we started our dharna. There was a programme on 26, where they have arrested many innocent people, so all these issues are connected with our main core issues," said Darshan Pal Singh, president of the Krantikari Kisan Union.

"What we demand is that harassment should be stopped, the barricades on

the ways going to the dharna should be removed. Electricity, water problems, these Internet problems, these are not law and order problems. So if they want talks in a good conducive atmosphere, they should stop all these oppressive and repressive measures which are violating our basic human rights," he added.

In the early days of the protest in November and December, several farm union heads engaged in informal, backchannel conversations with multiple BJP leaders and Ministers, even before formal talks began. However, when asked whether such informal engagement with the unions was happening now, Mr. Tomar said, "No. We will inform you when formal talks will be held."

The unions also welcomed international support for their agitation. "On the one hand, it is a matter of pride that eminent personalities of the world are showing sensitivity towards the cause of farmers, while on the other hand, it is unfortunate that the Government of India is not understanding the pain of the farmers and some people are even calling peaceful farmers terrorists," said an SKM statement.

Govt. notice to Twitter on 'genocide' hashtag

"...under the scheme section 69A & the rule as applicable, only the subjective satisfaction of the Secretary, MeitY & the Committee is relevant and the satisfaction/judgement of the intermediary itself has no relevance. Further, there is no onus of proof on MeitY and Twitter being an intermediary cannot assume the role of a Court in contravention of the statutory rules as applicable," the notice said.

Section 69A[3] provided for specific penal consequences in case of non-compliance of the directions issued under section 69A of the Act. It was "unfortunate"

that though the order was received immediately, Twitter chose not to comply till nearly 3 pm on February 1 -- the time fixed for the meeting of the committee, the MeitY said.

The government noted that Twitter's assertion in its letter dated February 1 that stock phrases and exaggerations / crude emotional appeals did not constitute inflammatory speech in the light of the judgments of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, was "meritless as the content attached to the said hashtag has been found to be directly falling foul of section 69A of the Act".

SC refuses to intervene in conversion laws row

"We have come to know that the Allahabad and the Uttarakhand High Courts are already seized of the matter. It would be advantageous to know what they have to say... We have already, in another case, declined the transfer of the case to us from the Allahabad High Court."

The top court recently denied a plea by the Uttar Pradesh government to transfer a plea challenging the religious conversion ordinance from the State HC to the SC.

The Bench, on Wednesday, was hearing petitions filed by NGO PUCL and ad-

vocate Vishal Thakre against the implementation of the Prohibition Of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018.

Senior advocate Sanjay Parekh, appearing for PUCL, argued that more States, like Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, were passing identical laws. Mr. Thakre's petition said "rampaging mobs are lifting off people in the middle of wedding ceremonies" buoyed by the enactment of these laws.

In December last, the apex court refused to stay the two laws.

HAL gets contract for 83 LCAs in ₹48,000 cr. deal

\$130 bn will be spent on military modernisation, says Rajnath

DINAKAR PERI
BENGALURU

At the 13th edition of Aero India in Bengaluru, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) was awarded the contract to manufacture 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas for the Indian Air Force (IAF) at an estimated cost of ₹48,000 crore, while India showcased a range of indigenous military platforms to the world.

Speaking at the inaugural event, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said: "We have long witnessed unfortunate attempts to employ force to change the status quo along our unresolved border and India is vigilant and prepared to counter and defeat any misadventure and defend our people and territorial integrity at all costs. Our resolve towards this is shown by our growing defence capabilities... We plan to spend \$130 bn on military modernisation in the next 7-8 years."

He urged global defence companies to set up manufacturing units.



Power-packed show: A Sukhoi Su-30, centre, flying in formation with other aircraft at Aero India 2021 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Wednesday. ■ MURALI KUMAR K.

India faced threats and challenges emanating from multiple fronts and it was a victim of state-sponsored terrorism, which was now a global threat, he pointed out.

Mr. Singh will hold an Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' conclave during the show, which has been restricted to three business days due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Deliveries in 8 years
On the LCA contract, he said: "This contract is the biggest Make in India defence con-

tract till date." The contract includes 73 LCA Tejas Mk-IA fighter aircraft and 10 LCA Tejas Mk-1 trainer aircraft at a cost of ₹45,696 crore along with design and development of infrastructure sanctions worth ₹1,202 crore.

"The deliveries of all 83 aircraft shall be completed in eight years from now. HAL will be delivering the first three aircraft in the third year and 16 aircraft per year for subsequent five years," a Defence Ministry statement said.

Speaking at the Air Chiefs

conclave, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria said, "globally we are facing unprecedented levels of 'uncertainty, volatility and interconnected threats'." In this regard he pitched for greater regional coordination.

As part of efforts to boost defence exports, HAL displayed an 'Amanirbhar formation' consisting of its platforms – LCA trainer, HTT-40 trainer, Intermediate Jet Trainer, Advanced Hawk Mk-132 and Civil Dornier Do-228.

BEL makes modules for radar on Rafales

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

As part of the offset commitments under the Rafale deal, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has manufactured and delivered Transmit and Receive Modules (T/R) for the Advanced Electronic Scanned Array (AES-A) radar on the jet, said Thales of France on Wednesday.

"In November 2020, the first RBE2 AESA radar with a front end manufactured by BEL in India was delivered by Thales to Dassault Aviation. BEL implemented a set of rigorous processes at its Bangalore facility in order to achieve this key milestone," the statement at Aero India said.

India has contracted 36 Rafale jets in fly-away condition under a ₹7.87 billion Inter-Governmental Agreement signed with France in September 2016. It has a 50% offset clause to be discharged by French companies in India.

The T/R modules are key to the RBE2 radar's active electronic scanning performance, enabling it to steer the radar beam with the speed of an electronic chip.

Transfer of technology
Initiated at the end of 2017, the transfer of technology to BEL included validation of the company's technical capacity to deliver prototypes, qualify the various technologies involved in the wiring process, set up a dedicated SMC wiring production line with a preproduction run, train BEL engineers in France and install test benches for microwave characterisation at the BEL facility, Thales said.

The modules produced in India are then integrated with the RBE2 radar in France.

"We're delighted to see our collaboration with BEL delivering results," said Emmanuel De Roquefeuil, vice president and Country director, Thales in India.

Sivasankar gets bail in dollar smuggling case

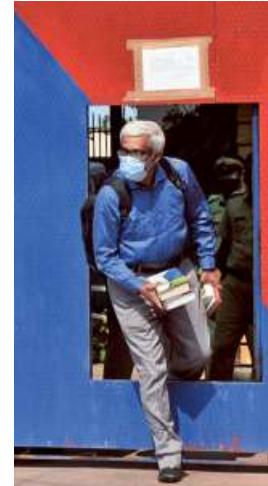
He was aware of the crime but didn't alert authorities: court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

After being incarcerated for 98 days, M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, walked out of the District Jail, Kakkadan, on bail on Thursday.

C. Deepu, judge of the Economic Offences Court, Ernakulam, while granting bail to Mr. Sivasankar in a dollar smuggling case, noted that he had "sufficient knowledge with regard to the smuggling of foreign currencies perpetrated with the help of prime accused".

The court felt that "such knowledge and his culpable failure to bring the smuggling to the notice of appropriate authority despite the fact that he was a senior civil servant during relevant time shall be viewed seriously."



M. Sivasankar leaving the District Jail in Kakkadan on Wednesday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

His further detention was no longer essential for successful future investigation, the judge said.

Earlier, the same court granted him statutory bail in the diplomatic channel gold smuggling case booked by the Customs Department after the agency failed to file the final charges in the case. The Kerala High Court, too, decided in favour of Mr. Sivasankar in his bail application filed in the money laundering case booked by the Enforcement Directorate.

The prosecution case in the dollar smuggling case is that Khaled Mohamed Ali Shoukry, former finance head of the UAE Consulate, Thiruvananthapuram, smuggled dollars valued at ₹1.9 crore to Muscat from the Thiruvananthapuram international airport with the help of Swapna Suresh and P.S. Sarith. The Customs arraigned Mr. Sivasankar as fourth accused in the case.

Initially, it was planned to construct the temple with ornamental brick work and the Rajagopuram with stone. The total cost of the project was pegged at ₹5.75 crore. Tenders were also finalised.

TTD trust board member and president of Local Advisory Committee at Chennai, A.J. Sekhar, suggested using granite for the construction

TTD to build Padmavati temple in Chennai

Land donated by actor Kanchana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to construct a temple for goddess Padmavati in Chennai on an estimated budget of ₹6.85 crore. The temple is proposed to be built on a 14,880 sq ft site on G.N. Chetty Road in the heart of the city.

The land, with a present market value of more than ₹30 crore, was donated by noted South Indian actor P. Kanchana.

According to sources, the women protection secretary alerted the officials, who rushed to the spot. Police shifted the body to a government hospital.

Samisragudem Child Development Project Officer M. Asha Rohini told *The Hindu* that the incident occurred four days ago.

Newborn mauled to death by dogs

STAFF REPORTER
CHAGALLU

In a shocking incident, a woman reportedly gave birth in an open place at Unagala village in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district a couple of days ago. The infant was mauled to death by stray dogs.

According to sources, a villager noticed a dog trotting on the road with the body of the infant in its mouth. When he raised an alarm, the dog fled, leaving the body of the newborn girl.

Anganwadi staff and the women protection secretary alerted the officials, who rushed to the spot. Police shifted the body to a government hospital.

Samisragudem Child Development Project Officer M. Asha Rohini told *The Hindu* that the incident occurred four days ago.

Efforts were on to trace the mother, an official said.

MP takes Andhra temple attacks to RS

Home Ministry must seek report from State govt.

STAFF REPORTER
VIZHAWADA

BJP Rajya Sabha member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao has requested the Ministry of Home Affairs to seek a detailed action taken report from the Andhra Pradesh government on the recent attacks on temples in the State.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour on Wednesday, Mr. Rao said the State saw more than 140 instances of

attacks on Hindu temples involving demolition and desecration of idols and crimes of other nature in the last 19 months, but the State government had not shown any seriousness in arresting the culprits.

The latest incident of 'severing' of the 400-year-old idol of Lord Sri Ram at the Ramateertham temple in Vizianagaram district had deeply hurt the sentiments of Hindus all over the State and beyond, Mr. Rao said. "The attacks have intensified in the last six months as the criminals have become em-

ployed and disfigured silver lions at the Kanaka Durga temple in Vizianagada had not been probed in a timely manner, he alleged.

Mr. Rao said it was only after a massive outrage that the State government started making "half-hearted attempts" to investigate the cases by setting up a Special Investigation Team. Instead of apprehending the real culprits, the police had been arresting political workers for making comments in the social media posts criticising such incidents, he stated.

Major incidents such as torching of ancient chariots at the Bitragunta and Antar-

Telangana shepherd's organs give new lease of life to five

Green corridor created to transport organs to 4 hospitals

STAFF REPORTER

HYDERABAD

Organs harvested from a 51-year-old shepherd of Telangana were used to save the lives of five critically ill patients. Almost all vital organs, including the heart, liver, two kidneys, and lungs, were harvested after he was declared brain-dead and his family members consented to donate the organs.

The shepherd, B. Balaiah, from Kodair mandal, Nagar-kurnool, met with a road accident on January 31 and was rushed to Continental Hospital, where he was diagnosed with intra-cerebral haemorrhage. Though doctors operated on him, the patient's condition continued to deteriorate. He was declared brain-dead on Wednesday morning.

Doctors from the hospital harvested all possible functioning organs. With help of the police, a green corridor was arranged and the organs were transported to four hospitals. Balaiah's heart was transferred to the Care Hospital here, the

Jail inmates get facilities for a price, says report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Officials and security personnel of the Bengaluru Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara are in the dock for alleged corrupt activities.

According to an exposé aired by regional media, the inmates pay the security staff to get cigarettes, liquor, non-vegetarian dishes and food from outside, and mobile phones. The report alleged that inmates pay hefty amounts to stay in a cell that has facilities like a stove, wa-

ter heater, fan and even a separate washroom.

Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Director General of Prisons Alok Mohan have sought details from officials concerned and promised to initiate action. An internal inquiry was ordered on Wednesday.

Senior IPS officer D. Roppa, formerly DIG (Prisons), had said earlier that prison officials were providing special facilities to VIP inmates, including expelled AIADMK leader V.K. Sasikala.

IN BRIEF



Man pours motor oil on judge's vehicle, arrested KOCHI

A man poured motor oil on the SUV of a judge of the Kerala HC on Wednesday and was arrested. It was allegedly in protest against the delay in the probe into the disappearance of Jasna Maria, a college student, in March 2018.

Murder accused sent to mental care hospital
VISAKHAPATNAM
The couple who allegedly murdered their daughters in Chittoor over occult practices recently are being shifted to a mental care hospital in Visakhapatnam for evaluation.

Voters of Kerala caught between CPI(M), Cong'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Wednesday said the Congress and the CPI(M) were friends in West Bengal and "make-believe" foes in Kerala. He is in Kerala for two days to finalise the BJP's Assembly election campaign strategy and discuss candidate selection.

At a press conference here, Mr. Nadda said the voters of Kerala were caught in a vicious circle. They had to alternate between the CPI (M) and the Congress every five years.

The BJP, as in West Bengal, had emerged as a disruptive political force for the good in Kerala. It was a potential game changer that

LS disrupted over farm laws

Minister Pralhad Joshi accuses Opposition of going back on its word

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After the Lower House witnessed multiple adjournments over the farm laws, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday accused the Opposition of going back on its word that the House would be allowed to first take up the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President for his address to the joint session of Parliament.

As soon as the Lok Sabha convened at 4 p.m., Question Hour proceedings were disrupted as Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, wanted to raise the issue of the farm laws. Bhagwant Singh Mann, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP from Punjab, was also heard raising loud slogans demanding an immediate discussion on the farm laws.

Speaker Om Birla urged



Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. • PTI

Mr. Mann to return to his seat, and said that he would be forced to take strict action against members who repeatedly violated parliamentary decorum and dignity.

As the Opposition MPs did not relent, he adjourned the House until 4.30 p.m. When the House resumed its proceedings, Mr. Chowdhury suggested that separate time slots be allotted for discussion on the farm laws, and

the Motion of Thanks debate.

Question Hour

Mr. Birla asserted that the Question Hour was a matter of right for the MPs and the House should be allowed to function. But the advice went unheeded as more than 20 members, including from the Congress, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the AAP and the Shi-

romani Akali Dal (SAD), trooped into the Well of the House to protest.

The SAD leader and former Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal, holding a poster against the farm laws, was among the protesting MPs who were in the Well.

The Speaker then adjourned the House until 5 p.m.

Identical scenes were witnessed once the proceedings were resumed. Mr. Birla once again reasoned with the Opposition members to go back to their seats as he wanted to start the Zero Hour. By then, Mr. Joshi informed the House that he had held discussions with Opposition leaders. He said that "these leaders" had agreed to start a discussion on the Motion thanking the President. "Now, they have made a U-turn and that is also like an insult to the President," Mr. Joshi said.

Don't make farm laws a prestige issue, says Azad

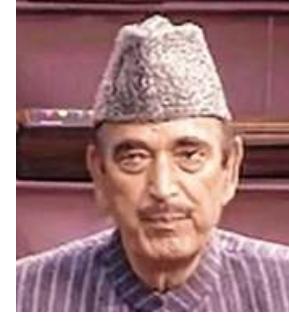
'Even British government had to bow to farmers' movement'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad appealed to the government not to make the 'confrontation' with farmers a prestige issue and called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself to make an announcement repealing the disputed farm laws. He condemned the violence at the Red Fort on January 26 during the farmers' tractor rally.

After a washout on Tuesday, the Rajya Sabha functioned smoothly on Wednesday barring a six-minute-long adjournment forced by sloganists from Aam Aadmi Party members after the Treasury benches and the Opposition came to an understanding on suspending Question Hour and Zero Hour to discuss the Motion of thanks to the Presi-



Ghulam Nabi Azad

dent's address. Speaking in Mr. Modi's presence, Mr. Azad, who is the Leader of the Opposition, said that no government in the past had benefited from fighting farmers, and cited instances when even the British government had to bow to farmers' movement.

He also raised the issue of registration of cases under stringent provisions against

leading journalists and his party colleague Shashi Tharoor.

Earlier in the day, despite the consensus arrived at between the government and the Opposition, three AAP members continued with their protest, walking into the well of the House raising slogans. Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, quoting Rule 255 for withdrawal of members for gross disorderly conduct, had them removed from the House. Sanjay Singh, Sushil Kumar Gupta and Narain Dass Gupta were marshalled out.

DMK's Tiruchi Siva objected to how the farm Bills were passed in the Rajya Sabha in the last session.

Mr. Naidu said all processes were followed and all parties were allotted time to debate the laws.

India flays comments by celebrities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday said comments from Western celebrities in support of the farmers' protest were "neither accurate nor responsible".

The official statement was issued in response to a series of social media posts by singer Rihanna, activists Greta Thunberg and Meena Harris, niece of U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris.

"Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, a proper understanding of the issues at hand be undertaken. The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others, is neither accurate nor responsible," said the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in a detailed response.

The response came hours after Ms. Rihanna said, "Why aren't we talking about this [farmers protest]?"

The comment was followed by Swedish activist Ms. Thunberg. She said, "We stand in solidarity with the farmers protest in India."

Ms. Meena Harris commented, "It's no coincidence that the world's oldest democracy was attacked not even a month ago, and as we speak, the most populous democracy is under assault. This is related."

"We all should be outraged by India's internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters."

The comments were followed by U.S. lawmaker Jim Costa of California. He described the developments around the farmers' protest as "troubling".

Take quick action as situation is dangerous, says Rahul

He says India's international reputation has taken a hit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said India's international reputation had taken a "massive hit" because of the way the government was treating its own people, and asserted that the country was in a "dangerous condition" and the Prime Minister should take quick action to lead it.

At a press conference at the party headquarters, the Congress leader attacked the Narendra Modi government over its handling of the farmers' agitation and the Budget, which, he claimed, not

only sends a wrong signal to China but also caters to 1% of the population.

He also asked why the government has made Delhi into a fortress with barricades. He said the farmers are not going to back off and ultimately, the government will have to withdraw the laws.

"The reputation of India has taken a massive hit. Not only on how we are treating our farmers [but] how we treat our own people, how we treat journalists; it has taken a massive hit. Our biggest strength, you can call it soft power, has been shattered by the BJP and the RSS," Mr. Gandhi said.

Asked about international pop singer Rihanna tweeting about the farmers' protests, the Congress leader, however, called it "our internal matter".

"The country requires the Prime Minister to take quick action. It requires that the Prime Minister put money immediately into the hands of our people and start the economy. It requires that he protects the small and medium businesses who give us jobs... it requires a clear message to China that 'you cannot do this with us'. You cannot be sitting inside our land and expect that nothing is going to happen," he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted that "no propaganda can deter India's unity! No propaganda can stop India to attain new heights! Propaganda can not decide India's fate only 'Propaganda' can. India stands unit-

Rahul is spreading fake narratives'

He goes abroad to hatch conspiracy with anti-India elements, says Sambit Patra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After the unprecedented statement by the Ministry of External Affairs referring to outsiders (including international celebrities) commenting on the protests against contentious farm laws, the BJP on Wednesday said it was the opposition Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi who were complicit in spreading "fake narratives" and "hatching anti-India" conspiracies while abroad.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted that "no propaganda can deter India's unity! No propaganda can stop India to attain new heights! Propaganda can not decide India's fate only 'Propaganda' can. India stands unit-

ed and together to achieve progress." Tweets with the hashtags "#IndiaTogether and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda were put out by senior Ministers like Prakash Javadekar and BJP president J.P. Nadda.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra addressed a press con-

ference at the party headquarters in New Delhi and said the meet was titled "Rahul, Rihanna and Racket," referring to pop idol Rihanna who tweeted about the protests by farmers' unions.

'Anti-India propaganda'

"He [Rahul Gandhi] goes abroad to hatch conspiracy with anti-India elements as to how to defame India and drag the country into controversies," Mr. Patra alleged.

"Be it Rihanna, an international pop singer, or former adult star Mia Khalifa or others like them who have tweeted, Rahul Gandhi meets these people for anti-India propaganda," Mr. Patra claimed.

Mr. Gandhi on Wednesday

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Mr. Gandhi on Wednesday

No Internet yet at Delhi borders, say protesters

Suspension order has not been extended: senior official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry did not extend an order to suspend Internet beyond 11 p.m. on February 2 at Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri – the three locations bordering Delhi where farmer groups continue to swell to protest against the three farm laws passed by Parliament last September.

However, protesters at the three locations said Net remained blocked on Wednesday as well.

International artist Rihanna and author Meena Harris, niece of U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris, had through tweets criticised the Internet shutdown at the protest site.

The Ministry invoked the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety Rules 2017) of the Indian Te-

legraph Act, 1885 to suspend Internet in Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri from 11 p.m. on January 31 to 11 p.m. on February 2.

The emergency provisions were invoked on January 26 and January 29 during the farmers' protest. Before this, the provision was used only twice – during the anti-CAA protests on

December 19 and 20, 2019. The rules framed in 2017 empower the Union Home Secretary and a State's Home Secretary to pass directions to suspend the telecom services, including Internet in an area "due to public emergency or public safety".

A senior government official said the Net suspension order that was effective till 11 p.m. on February 2 had not been extended.

"There is still no Internet at the Singhu border today. It is still suspended, despite whatever the Home Ministry is saying," said Harinder Singh, media coordinator for the Samyukt Kisan Morcha.

"It's just another attempt to defame the farmers. They know very well that farmers at Singhu are not aware of these claims and can't counter these claims," he stated.

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Sr. Procurement-Cum Store Officer
AIIMS, Bhubaneswar

Directorate of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business

Tamil Nadu Supply Chain Management Project

Reference Number : TNSCM/15703/2019_Dated 03.02.2021

On behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, the Director of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business now invites the Re-Tender for Technical Qualification and Price Bid (Two cover system) from Joint Venture Entity or Registered Business Partnership formed by private entity with Farmer Producer Organisation/s or Private entity as sole applicant to be a Market Integration Partner for operationalising Primary Processing Centre in Mannachanallur-I, Tathaiyangarpettai, Asasur, Pidaramgamal, P.K.Agaram & Uppilipuram (South) PPCs in Tiruchirappalli District under Tamil Nadu Supply Chain Management Project for Fruits, Vegetables and other Perishables.

Sl. No. Description

1 To identify Market Integration Partners for Operating 6 Primary Processing Centres for fruits, vegetables and other Perishables Under Tamil Nadu Supply Chain Management Project.

Government of Tamil Nadu

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Tamil Nadu Supply Chain Management Project

CIPET Road, Thiru.Vi.Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600032.

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IN BRIEF



183 still in detention in J&K, says Minister

More than a year after the special status of J&K was revoked, 183 persons are still in detention in Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre said on Wednesday. Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy informed the Rajya Sabha in a written reply, "Since August 1, 2019, 613 persons were detained at various points of time. Out of these, based on regular review and ground situation, 430 persons have been released till date."

No accurate data on Rohingyas: Centre

The Centre informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that there was no accurate data regarding the number of Rohingya migrants living in the country. In a written reply, Union Minister of State for Home Nitinand Rai said, "Illegal Rohingya immigrants are presently staying mostly in Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Karnataka and Kerala."

Banned Jamaat-e-Islami chief remains in jail

Banned Jamaat-e-Islami (Jei) chief Abdul Hameed Fayaz, whose detention was quashed under the Public Safety Act (PSA) on Tuesday, remains in jail in a separate case, according to the organisation. "Fayaz was rearrested in a case pending before a Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act court in Budgam. The lawyers are pleading for a bail in the court," an associate said, on condition of anonymity.

Sri Lanka's ECT move unilateral: Japan

Tokyo reacts sharply, says 'looking into the details' of Colombo's announcement on terminal

SUHASINI HAIDAR
MEERA SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI/COLOMBO



In protest: Port workers taking part in a demonstration outside the harbour in Colombo in January. • AFP

Two days after Sri Lanka decided to scrap a 2019 agreement with India and Japan for operating the East Coast Terminal (ECT), Japan says the decision was "unilateral and regrettable".

Japan's Ambassador Akira Sugiyama also met with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena to discuss the issue on Wednesday, after a flurry of meetings between the Indian High Commissioner to Colombo Gopal Baglay and the top leadership of Sri Lanka, including Mr. Gunawardena, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, to protest the decision. The ECT project was expected to showcase India-Japan cooperation in a part of South Asia where Chinese infrastructure projects have

been prominent.

In Delhi, an official of the Japanese Embassy said the Japanese government was "looking into the details" of the announcement made by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa after a Cabinet meeting on Monday.

"Japan, India and Sri Lanka signed the Memorandum of Cooperation for the development and operation of ECT in May

2019," the official told *The Hindu*, referring to the tripartite agreement signed by India and Japan with the former Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena's government.

"It is regrettable that the government of Sri Lanka unilaterally made a Cabinet decision and announced the development and operation of ECT as a wholly owned

container terminal of Sri Lanka Ports Authority," the official added.

New Delhi and Tokyo have been in talks with the Rajapaksa government over the last few months after protests by Port union workers over allowing any foreign role or investment in the ECT project cast a shadow over progress in the agreement.

During a visit to Colombo on January 6 by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, the ECT had been high on the agenda, and India had been hopeful of a firm commitment from Sri Lanka on the project.

After his meeting with Mr. Jaishankar, President Gotabaya told protesting Port worker unions that India's Adani Group would invest in the project, and Sri Lanka was not selling or leasing the national asset, that was seen

Delayed second Oxford dose helps'

Study finds 3-month gap raises efficacy

India to get 97 million doses from COVAX

NEW DELHI
India is likely to get nearly 97 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, nearly half of it by March end, under an agreement with the international COVAX facility. This is subject to the vaccine getting a pre-clearance from the World Health Organization under Emergency Use Listing.

standard dose was 76% from day 22 to day 90. The antibody levels were maintained during this period with no evidence of significant waning of protection.

However, the first dose did not provide protection against asymptomatic infection in the same period. But the overall cases of PCR positives reduced by 67% after the first, suggesting the potential for a substantial reduction in transmission.

Participants aged 18-55 years who received the second dose more than 12 weeks after the first had antibody titres that were two-fold higher than those who received the second dose within six weeks.

The researchers also found that neutralising antibody titres measured by pseudovirus were higher after a longer interval before the second dose.

The researchers say "vaccination programmes aimed at vaccinating a large proportion of the population with a single dose, with a second dose given after a three-month period may be an effective strategy to reduce disease, and may be the optimal for a pandemic vaccine when supplies are limited in the short term".

DMK asks PM to speak on fishermen deaths

It's not enough for External Affairs Ministry to send a demarche to the Sri Lankan High Commissioner'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP Tiruchi Siva urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to send a strong message to the Sri Lankan government on the death of four fishermen from Tamil Nadu whose bodies were found on January 23.

Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, Mr. Siva said this was not the first such incident.

"We have been raising such issues in the House every now and then, and fishermen in Tamil Nadu are compelled to quit their pro-

fession because of harassment by the Sri Lankan Navy," he said.

On January 19, four fishermen from Tamil Nadu were reported missing. Four days later, on January 23, the Sri Lankan Navy claimed to have found their bodies in the Palk Strait. The Sri Lankan Navy claimed that the fishermen's boat rammed into its vessel.

'Brutally attacked'

Mr. Siva contended that this was not the case and, in fact, the fishermen had been brutally attacked and killed.

He said it was not enough for

them to return with their catch or if it was their bodies that would be sent home.

"The Prime Minister should condemn, as our leader has requested, this incident. This should not happen again. I hope you will take this issue very seriously and give hope and confidence to the fishermen that nothing would happen henceforth when they go fishing," Mr. Siva added.

er they would return with their catch or if it was their bodies that would be sent home.

"Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has written a letter to the Prime Minister requesting him to take necessary action against the Sri Lankan authorities. Sir, on behalf of the AIADMK party, the Tamil Nadu government and also the Tamil Nadu fishermen, I condemn the Sri Lankan Navy for doing these kinds of atrocities and killing our fishermen. This is going to affect the relationship between India and Sri Lanka," Mr. Thambidurai said.

245 fishermen

All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) leader M. Thambidurai also

spoke on the issue. He said, so far, 245 fishermen from Tamil Nadu had been killed.

"Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has written a letter to the Prime Minister requesting him to take necessary action against the Sri Lankan authorities. Sir, on behalf of the AIADMK party, the Tamil Nadu government and also the Tamil Nadu fishermen, I condemn the Sri Lankan Navy for doing these kinds of atrocities and killing our fishermen. This is going to affect the relationship between India and Sri Lanka," Mr. Thambidurai said.

Tiruchi Siva
the External Affairs Ministry to send a strong demarche to the Sri Lankan High Commissioner.

He said the families of fishermen did not know whether

they would return with their catch or if it was their bodies that would be sent home.

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GAUTAM SUNDER

Gautham Vasudev Menon is a pop-culture phenomenon.

He grins when I suggest it, like how he grinned a few weeks ago when I told him his debut film *Minnale*, which released on February 2, 2001, was turning 20 – as does his journey in cinema.

His tastefully-decorated office in Alwarpet (the same house that was featured in the *Avarum Naanum, Avalum Naanum* segment of Amazon Prime's *Putham Pudhu Kaala*) pops with his now-familiar aesthetic in every corner – from the many bookshelves teeming with film literature to a sketched silhouette portrait framed on the wall simply titled 'Dad'.

Apart from a few cursory glances at his email every half hour, I have his undivided attention. "That is because I am always waiting to see if I get a mail from [AR] Rahman sir. It could be anything; the link to a song, ideas for a future project, or what he thinks of my albums with other composers," he explains.

A history of romance

You sense that he is itching to work with the Mozart of Madras again. It is not that Gautham has been anything less than busy over the past 12 months. In fact, a case could be made for him being the country's most productive filmmaker during the pandemic: a slew of music videos and a couple of anthologies hit OTT platforms.

"Filmmakers have had such a huge role to play during the pandemic. Entertainment has helped people take their minds off their worries, and I am glad to have been part of it," he says, adding that he quite enjoyed all the creative challenges that have come his way lately, such as *Vaanmagal*, his most recent work for the Netflix anthology *Paava Kadhaigal*.

Is Gautham pleased with his evolution as a filmmaker over the years? "The guy who made *Vaanmagal* is definitely better than the guy who made *Minnale* in terms of growth, technique, and understanding the medium. But the guy who made *Vinnaithaandi Varuvaaya* is the best. The chemistry I shared with the team

The lightning EFFECT

With his debut work *Minnale* completing two decades, filmmaker Gautham Menon looks back at his career and choices

and cast during the making, the thought process inhabiting me then... I haven't been in that space since. Which is why I want to make the sequel."

But back to him being an integral part of Tamil pop-culture as we know it today, why does brand GVM and his history with romance attract so much interest? Could it be because most of his protagonists derive their traits from his own personality?

"My wife also keeps telling me that I am the problem. She tells me that when I work with people, I put so much of myself out there that when I later move on from them they can't handle it and come after me adversely. I have actually spent a lot of time thinking about this: do I really give away too much?"

Gautham may have gone through a rickety phase since his last genuine commercial success – *Yennai Arindhaal* in 2015. "First of all, there are no regrets. I am built like that. I have generally understood that this is how the industry works. I look up to very few people in films, and even their careers have gone through lean phases," he says.

But if the "business of cinema" could ultimately affect even an accomplished filmmaker like Gautham, what does that say about the industry being a welcoming space for aspirants?

"The difference is that I talk about my problems, but nobody else does. There are definitely lessons to be learnt here for newcomers: make yourself safe, work with producers who won't cite you liable for the film's box-office



numbers or hold you responsible with a contract. That is how you get sucked into the vicious cycle," he says, adding with a grin, "The world of cinema is absolutely a fantastic place to be in if you have great content and know how to communicate, but it is important to be wary."

Keeping up with the times
The general perception around GVM is that he is still waiting for a financial crunch to be resolved. When will he breathe a sigh of relief and move on?

"That time is now. I am genuinely in a very happy space at the moment. People are calling me, and new doors and windows are opening every other day. A meeting with Anwar Rasheed and Fahadh [Faasil] for *Trance* has led to me becoming an actor! I have the liberty now to write a script and then cast an actor, not the other way round."

He adds, "Also, I am not at all insecure about my work and ac-



From the heart
Gautham Menon; stills from *Minnale* and *Kaaka Kaakha*
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cept everything happening around me. I only ask for strong shoulders to lean on. I have learnt that from people like Rahman sir."

There is someone else he calls his biggest mentor in the industry; the reason he became a filmmaker in the first place. "Speaking to Mani (Ratnam) sir has helped me deal with the rough patches. The biggest lesson I learnt from him was to not read reviews. I remember him telling me, 'Gautham, you've made a film with all your heart. The numbers matter to the people, not to you. So why let it even reach you in the first place?'" he says.

Minnale at 20
Considering the interview is to celebrate 20 years of his debut, I ask him if a film like *Minnale*, as

quintessentially charming as it is, could be made today. Would the 'woke' gene in him prevent him from writing a character who essentially masquerades as someone else to woo a lady?

"Yes, he does stalk her initially, but he never crosses the line at any point. Even at the end of 'Vaasegai', there is a point when he could get physical with her, but he chooses not to," he says.

"Having said that, I think the criticism around films today for not being woke takes it a bit too far. Trying to be politically correct sometimes hampers the creative process. Vetti Maaran, in fact, is someone who is actually very conscious of these things, and I keep admiring him for it. My point is, it is a film and that is all it is always. Watch out for a scene in *Navarasai*; I make a little dig at this," he smiles.

A new way to learn

Niha Mansoor's interactive binder helps toddlers and parents cope with being cooped up at home

ANASUYA MENON

The pandemic impasse has been difficult for parents with young children. Keeping them off gadgets has been one of the most challenging of tasks, says pre-school teacher Niha Mansoor. Her solution is an interactive learning binder for children aged between two-and-a-half and five years.

Niha thought up the idea while conducting online classes. "Children

haven't been to the kindergarten and are stuck at home. Online teaching helps in orienting them towards learning, but I realised the importance of touch-and-feel and the role it plays in learning all over again," she says of her experience.

"Working with the hands helps pre-schoolers understand concepts faster and better."

She started work on the binder a few months into the lockdown and came up with the LittleBlooms interactive learning binder with 22 activities.

"It took me three to four months to do my research, organise my ideas, find a designer and a printer," says Niha, who experimented with it first on her three-year-old daughter.

"She took to it surprisingly well, identifying emotions and weather. I found that she loved playing with it. I wanted other children too to be able to do that," she adds.



While researching the binder, Niha learnt that it is a popular concept in West Asia and catching on in India.

A hands-on resource for young children, the book is aimed at encouraging self-learning. Hard-bound, it is provided with Velcro stickers, which children would enjoy peeling off and sticking back. This would aid the development of children's motor skills too.

The sheets of the binder are laminated, which allows them to be reused. It comes with a pouch of markers and erasers too.

LittleBlooms includes basic, essential concepts such as being able to identify days of the week, emotions, numbers, weather, colours, fruits and vegetables, farm animals, wild animals, transport, and body parts. It also includes life skills such as brushing teeth, braiding hair and tying shoe laces. "It is ideal for quiet playtime at home," adds Niha.

"The idea is to help create an opportunity for toddlers to explore concepts on their own. Each day, the child can learn something new even if he or she is not in a classroom environment. It also guides the parents through what the child can imbibe," says Niha, who has been running Sundale School in Kochi for 12 years.

The book can be ordered on Instagram @littleblooms.binder

+ A whisker away

The fishing cat in India is under threat. This month, the Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance kick-starts a worldwide campaign



In search of home
Habitat loss and conflict with humans are some of the reasons behind the dwindling numbers of fishing cats; Murthy Kantimahanti at an awareness camp ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

■ NIVEDITA GANGULY

The highly elusive fishing cat, a lesser-known feline species, is facing several threats due to its depleting habitat. Listed as 'vulnerable' on International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List, the species has a high probability of becoming endangered unless circumstances threatening its survival and reproduction improve.

Fishing cats have a patchy distribution along the Eastern Ghats. They abound in estuarine floodplains, tidal mangrove forests and also inland freshwater habitats. Apart from Sundarbans in West Bengal and Bangladesh, fishing cats inhabit the Chilika lagoon and surrounding wetlands in Odisha, Coringa and Krishna mangroves in Andhra Pradesh.

"Our team also reported the presence of the species for the first time in a completely inland freshwater riverine habitat in Srikakulam a couple of years ago. The conservation threats to fishing cats in the Eastern Ghats are mainly habitat loss [wetland degradation and conversion for aquaculture and other commercial projects], sand mining along river banks, agricultural intensification resulting in loss of riverine buffer and conflict with humans in certain areas resulting in targeted hunting and retaliatory killings," says Murthy Kantimahanti, a part of Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance and

founder of Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society, India.

The Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance is a team of conservationists, researchers and enthusiasts across the world working to achieve a single dream – a world with functioning floodplains and coastal ecosystems that ensure survival of the fishing cat and all species with which it shares a home. With its regional group of conservationists and researchers, it has initiated an

Know your feline

The fishing cat is confident and content in water, they tap the surface to lure prey, plug their ears when they dive, and emerge from the water with dry skin due to a double coat.

Some compare the vocalisations of the fishing cat to a quack, a bark, even a chuckle and a gurgle.

In Cambodia, where images of fishing cats are found carved in the walls of ancient structures, they are known as Kla Trey, 'Tiger fish'.

understanding of the bio-geographical distribution of the fishing cat in the unprotected and human-dominated landscapes of the northeastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. The project will use techniques like ecological niche modelling, camera trapping, signs and tracks survey, interviews with locals and documentation of historical records.

We know nothing about their population dynamics, and very little about their ecology and habits in the wild. Therefore, it's very difficult to say the impact without such data. Although fishing cats are predominantly associated with wetlands, these highly elusive cats are adaptable to live even in human dominated landscapes and relatively drier habitats," Murthy adds.

Another major component is promoting awareness among people living near fishing cat habitats. "The goal is to ensure healthy populations of fishing cats living in close harmony with humans in these areas," says Murthy.

The Alliance will kick-start a worldwide month-long campaign in February to raise awareness and garner support across the globe. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Fishing Cat Species Survival Plan in conjunction with the Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance will be sharing their expertise via cartoons, videos and other material.

A good crush



PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

That empty glass bottle, which once played host to a bubbly beverage, has lived a full life. But it is not done yet.

In its afterlife now, it is part of the DNA of various buildings that are coming up across Delhi – thanks to Glass2Sand, an initiative by 19-year-old Udit Singhania that gives purpose to discarded glass. "Started in 2018, it's a zero-waste ecosystem that stops glass bottles from being dumped in landfills and crushes them into commercially valuable silica sand," explains Udit, who in September 2020 was selected by the United Nations as one of 17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Through the two-year honorary appointment, my work is to galvanise the youth towards the SDGs by driving awareness, emphasising the need to facilitate engagement at a young age, and encouraging the community to embrace a better civic sense to create sustainable living spaces. So far, the 'Young Leader' has been actively developing strategies to turn attention to the growing menace of

waste and make #noglassolandfills a movement.

Indestructible for years

The idea came to Udit when he saw empty bottles piling up at home. A 16-year-old then, he observed a looming crisis in Delhi and concluded that bulk of the glass waste, despite being recyclable and reusable, was not being segregated and was being dumped into already scarce landfills space "where it won't decompose for a million years!"

"I imported the innovative technology that crushes bottles into sand from New Zealand. It is as large as a washing machine and consumes household electricity," says Udit, who received a special grant from the New Zealand High Commissioner to India. It takes the machine a few seconds to complete the process.

"The sand doesn't harm the fingers when touched. It's used in construction, foundry linings, roads and other

applications. With bottles changing form to sand, any possibility of counterfeiting is also 'crushed,'" adds the 19-year-old who is currently studying at University College London.

So far, 14,000 glass bottles have already been stopped from entering landfills and crushed into 8,400 kilograms of high-grade silica sand, says Udit.

Glass bottles are the only input for this process. "Bottle-collection is managed through a volunteer network that responded to Glass2Sand's Internet and social media campaign. The volunteer network is growing in Delhi," he says, adding that an awareness campaign,

"Drink Responsibly, Dispose Responsibly" has also been launched. Glass2Sand recently tied up with tonic water company Sepoy&Co. Its clients have been requested to contact Glass2Sand



Ideas galore Udit with the machine that turns glass into sand ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

for "correct" disposal as soon they have a lot of 50 bottles. In addition, it has also partnered with eight diplomatic missions and a number of institutions.

All the bottles received have come from volunteers. "We pay ₹2 per kilo for bottles that come to our facility. So far, none of our volunteers have charged us for the bottles. They tell me that this is their commitment to this social cause," says Udit, who now receives about 700 glass bottles every month.

One kilogram of bottles (including ones that are chipped, broken, coloured and dirty) is equal to one kilogram of sand. While currently the project runs out of Udit's garage, discussions are on with like-minded organisations to replicate it in other cities.

For details, log on to www.glass2sand.in

GOWRI S

"When I painted my first wall without any permission, I waited for the day when it would make it to the news. When my work started getting featured on the news, I decided I wanted to sell my paintings... Tomorrow, the doors open for my solo exhibition and I have nothing more to strike off now," writes Mumbai-based anonymous artist Tyler in a rather emotional Instagram post addressed to his 67.9K followers on January 13.

Tyler's first solo exhibit in India, currently on display at Method, Bandra and Kala Ghoda, is perhaps a sign that graffiti and street art, largely considered "anti-art", has found a place in the mainstream. The exhibit literally brings street art into a white cube space shining light on the fact that as much as it is a statement, it is also nothing less than 'high' or 'fine' art.

Public art destination

About a year ago, Chennai's Kannagi Nagar (Off Mahabalipuram Road), one of the largest resettlements in India housing those who have been rehabilitated from river beds and slums, saw a dramatic transformation as 16 artists etched murals on multiple walls, in a bid to make it a public art destination.

The art sought to bring the community together. In locations across India, public art welcomed a similar response as more art destinations cropped up, courtesy St+art India, a non-profit collective that collaborates with governing authorities to drag art out of galleries and into a public space.

This kind of accessibility and reach that public art provides is what still intrigues budding ar-

tists and collectives, despite the risks involved. Celebrated Kochi-based anonymous artist, Guess Who, who is dubbed as 'India's own Banksy' asks, "Isn't that the beauty of it? It demystifies the aura around art and makes it approachable for everyone."

However, there is a running risk of the work being tampered with. How do artists respond to that? "I would prefer to see the tampering as a response to the artwork or maybe as part of the conversation the art is trying to provide," Guess Who adds. The artist began commenting on events, political or otherwise, on walls in Fort Kochi, Bengaluru, Chennai and other parts of the country, as early as 2012. By the artist's own admission, the kind of work they do "technical fails under street art".

In graffiti, however, self expression takes precedence; in fact it is a form of narcissism, says Chennai-based graffiti writer, A-Kill. "Graffiti is ultimately a call out to the public saying that I exist," says A-Kill who believes that the art form asserts a certain sense of individuality while street art relies heavily on a narrative.

In the country, however, the inception point of this form of art is difficult to trace. At varied points, around the turn of the 20th Century, is when street culture in India started emerging. But, the starting point of it all is believed to be simple, unassuming wall art mostly used for commercial purposes.

Veteran banner artist and art critic V Jeevananthan from Coimbatore remembers seeing his first wall art around 1967 as a child: The wall held lettering and motifs that etched out campaign promises by political par-



Writing on the WALL



The facade is my canvas (Clockwise from above) A wall from Chennai's Kannagi Nagar; children in front of a mural by artist A-Kill, a work by anonymous artist Guess Who • M KARUNAKARAN AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Street art and graffiti in India inch closer to the mainstream, now being used as tools to brighten cities, transform neighborhoods and bring communities together

ties contesting for elections at the time. "That is the first time I saw a colourful graffiti," says the artist who recently collaborated with St+art India Foundation to paint a mural in Coimbatore on human/animal conflict.

"Wall paintings used to be done widely for commercial and political purposes before that. It was an employment opportunity for many who went around hunting for large walls to paint on, after agreeing upon a contract with the owner. Street art in its true sense, however, is a new trend especially in Coimbatore, perhaps only four years old," he adds.

Rooted in the political

Political writing on public walls seem to be the starting point for street art in Kerala as well.

Guess Who adds, "You wouldn't call it graffiti but their distinctive styles of hand painted letters have a lot of character-



istics that are similar to graffiti culture. Unfortunately, there isn't much of an individual artistic expression."

The artist says that though there are individuals and collectives like Trespassers who paint public walls, there are too few takers for urban art in the State. "The size of it is too negligible for it to be called a collective movement," says the artist.

However, it seems like Chennai has a different story to tell. The graffiti culture in the metro-polis started picking up around 2014, and was a movement that rose in parallel to the hip hop and b-boying scene.

A-Kill who is also part of T3K Collective says, "In Chennai, cinema and politics play a vital role in the societal fabric. For instance, if you go out and paint a wall, people automatically assume that they are political ads or something related to cinema." But street art is neither.

Seven years on, the works are more original, and are actively used to beautify the city, says A-Kill, who had recently finished a mural (65 feet by 903 feet) on the facade of Chennai's Indira

Nagar MRTS, in a bid to create awareness about HIV/AIDS.

"That is what graffiti is moving towards," he says, adding that a lot of commissioned works for cafes, restaurants and private walls that his crew receives, is testament to the same. Even in events, live graffiti is being commissioned for an "experience", where people can see artists paint live, almost as though it is a performance.

"Now, many young artists are interested in learning the basics; from tagging (signing one's name) to throwing up (a more elaborate version of the tag with multiple colours and styles) and even piecing (their masterpiece in a legal spot). Whenever they see us paint, they stop to ask us about the work," says A-Kill, whose crew tries to claim a wall wherever they travel to.

Commercial or otherwise, street art is a response to the world around and will continue to be so. Concludes Guess Who, "Like every individual who responds to the realities around them, artists too respond, react and question the world they live in, through their art."

NIVEDITA GANGULY

After a hiatus of nearly a year following the COVID-19 pandemic, the scuba divers of Visakhapatnam made a fascinating discovery when they plunged into the sea off Rushikonda Coast, last week.

A team of four scuba divers from Livein Adventures who were exploring dive sites chanced upon a rare rock formation in the shape of an arch about 30 feet below sea level near Rushikonda. According to Balaram Naidu, founder of Livein Adventures, accessibility makes the area appealing to scuba divers. "This is the first time I have seen such an arch in this part of the coast. There is good presence of underwater life surrounding the arch," he says.

The natural arch is about one metre in height and one-and-a-half metre in width. The scuba divers say that a person can easily wade through it. The arch also makes for an excellent frame for wide-angle diver shots.

Secrets of the ocean

A team of scuba divers discovered a natural arch under the sea bed off Visakhapatnam Coast



World of music



Old is gold Tanvi Shah and Girishh • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

Tanvi Shah is known for the international flavour she brings to her tracks. Every time a music composer calls her, it is probably to bring in the 'world music' vibe to a number.

When composer Girishh Gopalakrishnan called her one day during the pandemic-induced lockdown, the request was something similar, but it had to do with a Tamil classic number. For Carvaan Lounge Tamil, a concept by Amazon Prime Music and Saregama, which re-imagines hit retro Tamil numbers, Tanvi and Girishh have taken on a 1965 track, 'Unnai Kaanadha'

Kannum' from *Idhaya Kamalam*, sung by P Susheela and composed by KV Mahadevan.

"I was very scared because it was a Susheela *amma* classic. The minute you think remix, you think EDM and club music. But composer Girishh has an eclectic musical sensibility. He understood my strengths as a singer and has combined that with the aesthetics of the Tamil classic," says Tanvi, adding, "We kept it soft and gave it an old-school Latin feel. Even the harmonies were tuned that way."

Tanvi, whose recent work can be heard in the Yuvan Shankar Raja composition 'Scream of Darkness' song from the Vishal

Winter is said to be the best time for the good visibility of this particular arch. "Now is a perfect time to explore this arch. This season, the visibility has been particularly excellent," says Naidu. Here, underwater life consists of barracuda, stone fish, Goliath groupers, sweetlips fish, puffer fish, parrot fish, moray eels, electric rays, Napoleon fish, star fish, lion fish and feather stars among other species.

Located at a shallow depth, the site of the arch is easily accessible for even novice scuba divers and non-swimmers. "A 15-minute breathing practice in shallow waters is enough to take the dive at Rushikonda Coast to have a glimpse of this fascinating rock formation," says Naidu. According to the scuba divers, the underwater natural arch is similar to the famous arch at Mangamaripe-

ta beach, which geologists say dates back to the last Ice Age, around 10,000 years ago.

Last month, scientists from Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, visited the coast for underwater explorations and study of marine life. "This part of the coast remains largely unexplored. Researchers are now showing interest," says Naidu, a former naval officer.

About three years ago, the team of Livein Adventures had made a rare discovery of a centuries-old shipwreck under the sea bed, near Visakhapatnam. The unearthing of the sunken vessel had opened up a world of wonders for the scuba diving community in India. Says Naidu, "The Visakhapatnam Coast can be one of the most intriguing diving destinations with every new diving site having the potential to throw up surprises."

Challenging young eco-warriors

In a bid to encourage eco-friendly and conservation practices from a young age, Sony BBC Earth and Bollywood actor Bhumi Pednekar – via her Climate Warrior initiative – are holding a nation-wide contest titled Young Earth Champions for school students who can come up with innovative ideas to build a sustainable future for our cities and communities. Open to students from Class V to IX, entries for the competition will be received till February 15. The entries will be judged by Bhumi alongside a subject expert and the panel will select one participant as champion, who will be rewarded with a cash prize of ₹50,000 and be given an opportunity to appear on the channel. The top 10 entries will also get to interact virtually with Bhumi and engage in a conversation about preservation.

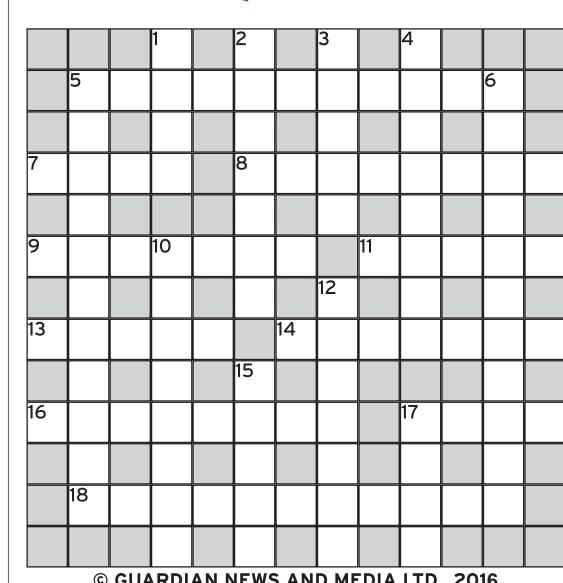
Says Bhumi, "Climate change is upon us and its real. Through my initiative, I try to highlight the seriousness of the crisis and its repercussions. Young Earth Champions



is a great platform to trigger exchange of creative ideas among kids who have the power to bring about change."

For details, log on to sonybbcearth/youngearthchampions

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13398



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

native to North America (7,4)

10 Peering-through-fingers game (8)

12 Cover

completely (7)

15 Tremor (5)

17 Gag (4)

The solution will appear on February 11, 2021

Solution No. 13397

- Across
 - 5 A turf event (4,7)
 - 7 Scottish family (4)
 - 8 Island just south of Corsica (8)
 - 9 Baffle (7)
 - 10 Monastery (5)
 - 11 Thread used in surgery to stop internal bleeding (8)
 - 12 Cover completely (7)
 - 13 Tremor (5)
 - 14 As 'happy' is to 'sad' or 'long' to 'short' (7)
 - 15 Revolving window screen (6,5)
 - 16 Four-wheel-drive (7)
 - 17 Gag (4)
 - 18 Item banged when seeking entry (4,7)
- Down
 - 1 Read over quickly (4)
 - 2 Beauty (7)
 - 3 Lively – slightly drunk (5)
 - 4 One coming from Manila? (8)
 - 5 Dangerous animal (7)

M ND-NDE

Suu Kyi charged, remanded for 2 weeks

Ousted leader charged with 'violation' of import-export law; Army asks people to stay away from protests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi was formally charged on Wednesday, two days after she was detained in a military coup, as calls for civil disobedience to oppose the putsch gathered pace.

The Southeast Asian nation was plunged back into direct military rule when soldiers arrested key civilian leaders in a series of dawn raids on Monday, ending the Army's brief flirtation with democracy.

Ms. Suu Kyi, who has not been seen in public since, won a huge landslide with her National League for Democracy (NLD) last November but the military – whose favoured parties received a drubbing – declared the polls fraudulent.

On Wednesday, the NLD's press officer said the 75-year-old Ms. Suu Kyi was formally charged with an offence under Myanmar's import and export law, with a court signing off on remand for two weeks.



Show of support: People from Myanmar staging a protest in Tokyo on Wednesday. ■ REUTERS

The unusual charge stemmed from a search of her house following her arrest in which walkie-talkies were discovered, according to a leaked police charging document seen by reporters.

A similarly unorthodox charge under the country's disaster management law against President Win Myint revolved around him allegedly breaching anti-coronavirus measures by meeting voters on the campaign trail.

With soldiers and armoured cars back on the streets of major cities, the takeover has not been met by any large street protests. But signs of public anger and plans to resist have begun to flicker.

The new government has already issued a warning telling people not to say or post anything that might "encourage riots or an unstable situation".

On Wednesday, the NLD

Military junta to probe poll

ASSOCIATED PRESS
YANGON

Myanmar's new leader said the military government plans to investigate alleged fraud in last year's elections and will also prioritise the COVID-19 outbreak and the economy, a state newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing announced the moves on Tuesday at the first meeting of his new government in the capital, the state-run *Global*

announced the military had committed "unlawful acts" in the coup's aftermath, raiding their party offices across the country and seizing documents and computers.

International censure

The actions have been met with a growing chorus of international condemnation.

On Tuesday, the State Department formally designated the takeover as a coup, meaning the U.S. cannot assist

New Light of Myanmar newspaper said.

The military has said that one of the reasons for ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi was because it failed to properly investigate its allegations of alleged widespread electoral irregularities. The Union Election Commission declared four days before the military takeover that there were no significant problems with the vote.

sist the Myanmar government. Any impact will be mainly symbolic, as almost all assistance goes to non-government entities and Myanmar's military was already under U.S. sanctions over its brutal campaign against the Rohingya minority.

The Group of Seven largest developed economies condemned the coup on Wednesday and said the election result must be respected.

Joe Biden's Homeland Security chief confirmed

President seeks to roll back Trump's immigration policies

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Joe Biden's immigration reform push received a boost on Tuesday when the Senate confirmed his pick to head the Department of Homeland Security, as the U.S. President seeks to roll back Donald Trump's hardline policies.



Alejandro Mayorkas

U.S. immigration policy after four years of Mr. Trump's 'America First' approach.

democratic President is aimed at streamlining the U.S. immigration process, officials said, with Mr. Biden to order a review of all the legal obstacles to immigration and integration put in place under Mr. Trump. "The review will likely lead to dramatic changes in policies," according to a senior government official, who said the goal is "to restore faith in our legal immigration system, and promote integration of Americans".

President Trump was so focused on the (Mexico border) wall that he did nothing to address the root cause of why people are coming to our southern border," the official said. "It was a limited, wasteful and naive strategy, and it failed."

"We are going to work to undo the moral and national shame of the previous administration that literally, not figuratively, ripped children from the arms of their families...," Mr. Biden said.

Medics lead sprouting civil disobedience calls



Public resistance: Medical workers protesting against the coup at Yangon General Hospital on Wednesday. ■ REUTERS

Signs of public anger and plans to resist have begun to flicker

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Calls for a civil disobedience campaign in Myanmar gathered pace on Wednesday as the United States formally declared the military's takeover a coup and vowed further penalties for the Generals behind the putsch.

Doctors and medical staff at multiple hospitals across the country announced that they were donning red ribbons and walking away from all non-emergency work to protest against the coup.

"Our main goal is to accept only the government we elected," Aung San Min, head of a 100-bed hospital in Gangaw district, said.

Some medical teams posted pictures on social media wearing red ribbons – the colours of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy – and raising a three-finger salute, a protest gesture used by democracy activists in Thailand.

"My protest starts today by not going to the hospital... I have no desire to work un-

der the military dictatorship," said Nor Nor Wint Wah, a doctor in Mandalay.

Activists were announcing their campaigns on a Facebook group called "Civil Disobedience Movement" which by Wednesday afternoon had more than 15,000 followers within 24 hours of its launch.

The clatter of pots and pans – and the honking of car horns – also rang out across Yangon on Tuesday evening after calls for protest went out on social media.

British-Iranian academic says he fled Iran while out on bail

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

A British-Iranian academic said on Wednesday that he fled Iran across a mountain border after being sentenced to nine years in jail for collaborating with a hostile government.

Kameel Ahmady, a social anthropologist studying female genital mutilation and child marriage in Iran, told the BBC and The Guardian newspaper that he escaped while on bail after being sen-

tenced, as he feared he would not see his young son again. "I just simply left. I packed my bag with shaving kit, a few books of mine and a laptop and I think pyjamas... and warm clothes," he said.

After being detained for suspected links with foreign intelligence services, he spent three months in Tehran's notorious Evin prison, where he said he was subjected to "so-called white torture,

pressure they put on you".

He was then released on bail and later sentenced in December last year and fined €600,000 for receiving "illegitimate funds" and working on projects with "subversive institutions", Iran's Tasnim news agency reported.

British media reported that he escaped while on bail pending his appeal. He described the journey as "very cold, very long, very dark and very scary".

U.S. extends New START nuclear treaty with Russia

Committed to arms control: Blinken

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration on Wednesday extended the New START nuclear treaty with Russia by five years, saying it hoped to prevent an arms race despite rising tensions with Moscow.

One day before the treaty was set to expire, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States was extending New START by the maximum allowed time of five years.

"President Biden pledged to keep the American people safe from nuclear threats by restoring U.S. leadership on arms control and nonproliferation," Mr. Blinken said in a statement.

"The United States is committed to effective arms control that enhances stability, transparency and predictability while reducing the risks of costly, dangerous arms races."

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off on legislation extending the accord on Friday, meaning that the treaty – signed by then-President Barack Obama in 2010 – will run until February 5, 2026. The last remaining arms reduction pact between the former Cold War rivals, New START caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads that can be deployed by Moscow and Washington.

Former President Donald Trump's administration tore up previous agreements with Moscow and unsuccessfully sought to expand New START to cover China.

Mr. Blinken said the U.S. would use the coming five years to pursue diplomacy that addresses "all" of Russia's nuclear weapons and to "reduce the dangers from China's modern and growing nuclear arsenal".

ANDHRA PRADESH POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED
VIDYUT SODHA :: VIJAYAWADA
TENDER NOTICE
NIT.No:61000718/APGENCO/2021
APGENCO invites tenders for "Maintenance of APGENCO offices in Vidyut Sodha, Gunadala, Vijayawada for the period from 01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022" through APGENCO e-Procurement platform. Estimated Value of Work : Rs.55,00,026/-, Bid Schedule Available Date & Time : From 6.00 PM on 03.02.2021 onwards, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time : up to 3.00 PM on 19.02.2021 For further details visit website: www.apgenco.gov.in or <https://etender.apgenco.gov.in/rj/portal>

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY - e-Tender Notice

Tender No : 93 to 96/20-21/SE/PHC/PKD Jal Jeevan Mission- 2020-21- Providing FHTCs in Thachampatti, Chanthanakurara, Alanalur Kottappadam, Anangaladi, Chalavara, Thrikadeeri, Karimba, Kongad and Mundur panchayaths - Construction, commissioning and maintenance of WTP OHSR GLSR, Supplying and laying raw water pumping main and clear water pumping main, Clear water gravity main, Supply and erection of Transformer, Construction of raw water intake well cum pump house, Supply and erection of pump sets and flow meters EMD : Rs. 200000/- to 500000/-, Tender fee : Rs. 11200-16800/-, Last Date for submitting Tender : 25-02-2021, 03:00:pm, Phone : 0491-2544927 Website : www.kwala.kerala.gov.in Superintending Engineer www.etenders.kerala.gov.in KWA-JB-GL-6-982-2020-21 PH Circle, Palakkad

BELAGAVI DISTRICT CO-OP MILK PRODUCERS SOCIETIES UNION LTD. MAHANTESH NAGAR BELAGAVI-590017, KARNATAKA.

Phone: 0831-2405756 E - mail: belmul.pur@gmail.com

IFT No: 148/Pur/Tender File/2020-21/2999 Date : 02-02-2021

"SHORT TERM RE-TENDER NOTIFICATION"

The Belagavi Milk Union Ltd., Invites tenders' from eligible tenderers for Providing Civil Tender in two cover system (Technical & Commercial) through E-Portal.

SI.No:01:E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NO:KMF/2020-21/BD//WORK_INDENT1337/CALL-2,ITEM DETAILS PRICES ARE INCLUSIVE OF GST (GST & others taxes shall be shown separately as per e-portal):TENDER FOR NEW HULIKATTI C.C. FOUNDATION, FABRICATION STRUCTURE & HARD PARK WORKS,EMD Amount in Rs.:1,00,000/-,LAST DATE:18-02-2021, E-procurement website : www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in Sd/- Managing Director BEMUL

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
Regd. Office: 10-152/1, 4th Floor, Sri Sat Towers, Beside SIRIS company, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520007.

Lr.No.PDS/31/8275/2021

KMML The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.
(An ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 & SA 8000 Certified Company)
SANKARAMGALAM, CHAVARA-691 583
KOLLAM, KERALA, INDIA
Phone: 0476-266722 to 266733 (12 lines), 2651000.
Fax: 91-476 - 2680101, 2686721
Email: contact@kmml.com, URL: www.kmml.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Competitive Tenders are invited for following. For more details please visit the E-Tendering Portal [https://etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://etenders.kerala.gov.in) or www.kmml.com

No	Tender ID	Name of the Work
1	2021_KMML_411532_1	For excavating the iron oxide from third pond to old ponds in KMML as is where is condition.

Chavara 04-02-2021
Our Products: Titanium Dioxide, Titanium Tetra Chloride, Nano Titanium, Titanium Sponge Sd/- HOUT)

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
Regd. Office: 10-152/1, 4th Floor, Sri Sat Towers, Beside SIRIS company, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520007.

Dt: 03.02.2021

TENDER NOTICE - 2nd Call

APSCCL desires to recall separate tenders for three districts of AP i.e., Visakhapatnam, Krishna & Chittoor for appointment of stage I transport contractors for transportation of food grains/ food products from the designated buffer godowns to the MLS Points/ other godowns within the district or any other work as entrusted by the Corporation form time to time, for the period upto 31.03.2023 under Public Distribution System.

Applications are invited from the interested transporters for registration as tenderers to participate in the e-reverse auction to be conducted separately through separate tenders for three districts through e-procurement platform.

For registration, interested transporters may visit <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> and should obtain Digital Signature Certificates from any Certifying Authority in India. The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature Certificates are mentioned in the website <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> contact the helpdesk of e-procurement platform, Phone Number : 08645-246370 71/ 72/ 73/ 74. The information on tender schedule will also be available in APSCCL website : www.apsccl.in

Last date for registration and completion of formalities for the e-auction shall be up to 5.00 PM of 11.02.2021.

Sd/- VC & Managing Director

**GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
Department for the Empowerment of the Differently Abled and Senior Citizens.**

V.V.Tower, Podium Block, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore-01. Ph.No. 080-22866066, 28860907, Website: www.dwdsc.kar.nic.in

No: VIHIN/SIBBANDI/SI/1/2020-21 Date: 02.02.2021

Short term Tender Notification (Through E-Procurement only)

Tender is invited by the Director, Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, under e-Procurement platform/e-portal in two parts (i.e., Technical bid and Financial bid) system from the original vehicle equipment manufacturers or their authorized dealers for supply of 1500 Motorised Two Wheeler 124CC and above (Gearless) (BS-VI) With Retrofitment of additional two wheels attachment for the use of severely affected orthopedically handicapped persons, to the Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, The interesting bidders may see further details and may login in website : www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in

The tender can be submitted on or before 16.02.2021 till 04.00pm.

The technical bid will be opened on 17.02.2021 at 05.00pm and the financial bid will be opened on 19.02.2021 at 11.00am. Department reserves all rights to accept, reject, incorporate changes and re-tender without giving any reasons. The details can be obtained from the Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, Podium Block, V.V. Tower, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-560001, Phone No:080-22

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	50,256	+0.92
US Dollar	72.95	0.00
Gold	47,387	-0.66
Brent oil	58.50	1.19

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	560.10	9.30
Asian Paints	2453.65	-10.00
Axis Bank	733.80	19.60
Bajaj Auto	4236.35	34.90
Bajaj Finserv	9536.05	59.75
Bajaj Finance	5245.10	71.90
Bharti Airtel	608.85	9.50
BPCL	414.90	6.90
Britannia Ind	3516.50	15.25
Cipla	849.25	27.65
Coal India	137.25	6.00
Divis Lab	3680.25	131.65
Dr Reddys Lab	4649.55	167.05
Eicher Motors	2916.90	12.05
GAIL (India)	130.45	0.75
Grasim Ind	1190.85	0.85
HCL Tech	595.90	5.25
HDFC	2703.55	44.55
HDFC Bank	1574.80	14.25
HDFC Life	689.20	8.15
Hero MotoCorp	3380.80	86.95
Hindalco	257.25	1.90
Hind Unilever	2232.85	2.40
ICICI Bank	622.35	5.00
IndusInd Bank	1048.55	72.90
Infosys	1284.65	13.40
Indian Oil Corp	101.85	3.05
ITC	216.75	-1.45
JSW Steel	392.90	3.90
Kotak Bank	1852.20	-9.10
L&T	1528.55	8.35
M&M	833.20	16.35
Maruti Suzuki	7589.20	-65.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17166.40	-23.90
NTPC	96.95	2.80
ONGC	93.35	0.50
PowerGrid Corp	206.50	12.30
Reliance Ind	1930.65	4.85
SBI Life	866.15	0.80
State Bank	335.95	2.85
Shree Cement	25994.40	-438.15
Sun Pharma	629.20	19.75
Tata Motors	331.00	9.00
Tata Steel	653.15	11.50
TCS	3200.05	-3.40
Tech Mahindra	981.45	24.25
Titan	1525.15	39.70
UltraTech Cement	6074.70	-48.85
UPL	558.25	-8.05
Wipro	433.50	5.15

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar.....	72.76	73.08
Euro.....	87.47	87.87
British Pound.....	99.23	99.68
Japanese Yen (100).....	69.25	69.57
Chinese Yuan.....	11.26	11.31
Swiss Franc.....	80.94	81.31
Singapore Dollar.....	54.57	54.82
Canadian Dollar.....	56.89	57.15
Malaysian Ringgit.....	17.95	18.05

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Ramco Cements Q3 net profit jumps to ₹201 cr.

CHENNAI The Ramco Cements Ltd.'s third quarter standalone net profit more than doubled to ₹201 crore due to cost-control measures and premiumisation of products. Revenue from operations grew by 4% to ₹1,324 crore, the company said in a filing. Cement sales dipped by 8% to 2.61 MT due to extended monsoon in southern markets, and registered good growth in eastern markets.

GEPC, BLP Industry AI in pact to help wind farms

CHENNAI GE Power Conversion (GEPC) has entered into a pact with BLP Industry AI to provide next generation artificial intelligence technology and asset performance management solutions to help wind farm operators. GEPC's engineering design centre in Chennai will leverage its asset performance management solutions for sector-specific applications, the firm said.

Airbus, Flytech sign MoU to train drone pilots

BENGALURU Airbus has signed an MoU with Flytech Aviation Academy, an aviation training firm, to explore collaboration opportunities in remotely piloted aircraft system training. Airbus has experience in aviation training, courseware development, safety and quality standards, while Flytech is into aviation training services, including piloting of UAVs.

SEBI bans Biyani from market for one year

NEW DELHI SEBI on Wednesday barred Kishore Biyani and certain other promoters of Future Retail Ltd. from the securities market for one year for indulging in insider trading in the shares of the company. Apart from Mr. Biyani, who was the CMD and promoter of Future Retail Ltd. (FRL), others facing the ban are Future Corporate Resources Pvt. Ltd., Anil Biyani and FCRL Employee Welfare Trust. PTI

Interest on PF contributions of over ₹2.5 lakh must in I-T filing'

CBDT's Mody says interest calculable on annual basis, should be taxed that year

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

Employees making contributions of more than ₹2.5 lakh a year into their Provident Fund (PF) accounts, will have to include the interest on the investments exceeding ₹2.5 lakh in their annual income starting 2021-22 and file tax returns accordingly, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief P.C. Mody said.

The Union Budget has proposed tax on interest income on PF contributions exceeding ₹2.5 lakh a year. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday that some people were investing as much as ₹1 crore each month into PF and sug-



Higher math: Tracking interest on only employee contribution across years will be a challenge, says an analyst. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

gested it was unfair that they get tax concessions.

"The interest portion is calculable on a year-to-year basis... so that is taxable on your calculations in that particular year," Mr. Mody said.

"If I am contributing into the GPF [General Provident Fund for government employees], I know how much interest I have received that year. That should be brought to tax in that very year. That

India's weak fiscal position to remain a key credit challenge'

Moody's sees increased transparency on subsidy spending

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Union Budget's focus on higher capital expenditure, financial sector reforms and asset sales would help to stimulate growth and supply broad-based credit support, but India's weak fiscal position would remain a key credit challenge compared with its rating peers, Moody's Investors Service said.

The budget projects a narrowing of the central government's fiscal deficit to 6.8% of GDP in fiscal 2022 from an estimated 9.5% in fiscal 2021.

"We previously expected a smaller central govern-

ment deficit target of about 5.5% of GDP for fiscal 2022 down from around 7.5% of GDP in fiscal 2021," Moody's said on Wednesday.

"However, compared with previous budgets, the gap between our forecasts and the government's largely reflects increased transparency on subsidy spending

and more credible overall assumptions," it added.

The ratings agency said the widening of the deficit in fiscal 2021 was driven almost entirely by expenditure to support Indian households and the economy from the pandemic shock.

"Given India's very high debt burden...this gradual pace of consolidation will prevent any material strengthening in the government's fiscal position over the medium term, unless nominal GDP growth were to pick up sustainably to historically very high rates," the credit ratings agency added.

The company, which had registered a loss of ₹1,035.3 crore in the year-earlier period, posted its highest ever consolidated quarterly revenues of ₹26,518 crore, an increase of 24.2% from ₹21,344 crore in the same quarter of 2019-20.

"Despite the unprecedented volatility that we have confronted through the year, we delivered another strong performance this quarter," Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, India & South Asia, said.

Mr. Vittal added that the highlight of the quarter was the addition of more than 13 million 4G customers, following which revenue grew by about 25%.

The consolidated net loss before exceptional items for the quarter stands at ₹298 crore. The consolidated net income after exceptional items for the quarter stands at ₹854 crore, the company said.

The company, which had registered a loss of ₹1,035.3 crore in the year-earlier period, posted its highest ever consolidated quarterly revenues of ₹26,518 crore, an increase of 24.2% from ₹21,344 crore in the same quarter of 2019-20.

Mr. Vittal added that the highlight of the quarter was the addition of more than 13 million 4G customers, following which revenue grew by about 25%.

Amazon's Bezos to step down as CEO, sales top \$100 bn first time

Andy Jassy to take over, Bezos set to be executive chairman

REUTERS

Amazon.com Inc on Tuesday said founder Jeff Bezos would step down as CEO and become executive chairman, as the company reported its third consecutive record profit and quarterly sales above \$100 billion for the first time.

The transition, slated for the third quarter, will make current cloud computing chief Andy Jassy Amazon's next chief executive officer.

Holiday shopping Net sales rose to \$125.56 billion as consumers turned to the world's largest online retailer for holiday shopping, beating analyst estimates of \$119.7 billion, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.

Mr. Bezos, who started the company 27 years ago as

an Internet bookseller, said in a note to employees posted on Amazon's website, "As Exec Chair I will stay engaged in important Amazon initiatives but also have the time and energy I need to focus on the Day 1 Fund, the Bezos Earth Fund, Blue Ori-

INTERVIEW | P.C. MODY

'Small tax disputes account for substantial pendency'

₹95,000-cr. disputes resolved in larger scheme: CBDT head

VIKAS DHOOT

The government's focus in

Budget 2021-22 is to make tax compliance easy and simple so as to boost voluntary compliance even while cracking down on tax evaders, said Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairperson P.C. Mody. Excerpts:

Q The whole idea

is to make the process of compliance easy and simple

It will be a dispersed set up, as you can't expect taxpayers to be moving to and fro. But it would be again a faceless mechanism. Faceless is the new normal. Out of my current pendency, a substantial portion of the tax disputes are in this category.

Really speaking, they didn't have an alternate mechanism except for the appellate process. The whole idea is to make the process of compliance for the taxpayer as easy and simple as possible so as to promote voluntary compliance.

How many cases have been resolved through the larger tax dispute resolution scheme, Vivad Se Vishwas?

It's been a great success. I have so far received almost 1.18 lakh forms, resolving 1.32 lakh disputes with a quantum of nearly ₹95,000 crore. This entire month is still left. [Those] who have not yet made a decision, can still go for this. This is almost one-fourth of the total 5 lakh such cases.

Citizens aged 75 years or older don't have to file tax returns in some cases. How will this work?

A senior citizen normally has pension income, and out of that if he has been able to save something, he will put it in a financial instrument like a fixed deposit. Both attract TDS. So once TDS has been done, there is no need for a paper return. The caveat is, it has to be from the same bank. If there are deposits in multiple banks, then you will have to do the calculation because banks don't have that infrastructure.

Bharti returns to black with ₹854 cr. Q3 net profit

Telco added 13 million 4G subscribers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After six straight quarters of losses, telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Wednesday posted a consolidated net profit of ₹854 crore for the October-December 2020 quarter, mainly due to a one-time gain along with higher mobile data traffic.



The company, which had registered a loss of ₹1,035.3 crore in the year-earlier period, posted its highest ever consolidated quarterly revenues of ₹26,518 crore, an increase of 24.2% from ₹21,344 crore in the same quarter of 2019-20.

"Despite the unprecedented volatility that we have confronted through the year, we delivered another strong performance this quarter," Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, India & South Asia, said.

Mr. Vittal added that the highlight of the quarter was the addition of more than 13 million 4G customers, following which revenue grew by about 25%.

STEP for Competitive Exams is a 40-day custom-built course to help you improve your English skills and crack competitive exams. It includes relevant video lessons, interactive practice sets & exercises on key topics:

• Grammar - Extensive coverage of concepts like reported speech, direct & indirect speech, subject and verb agreement

'We have to play really well to beat England'

My job is to visualise the flow of the game and offer suggestions to Virat whenever he asks me, says Rahane

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Big things come in small packages. Ajinkya Rahane is rather diminutive but packs a hefty cricketing punch.

Whether slicing open an attack with rapier-like strokes – cutting, pulling, or drilling the ball through the gaps with a surgeon's precision – or leading the Indian team with tactical nous and steely resilience, Rahane does it all and more.

After heroically captaining India in the last three Tests Down Under for a remarkable 2-1 Test series triumph following the disastrous 36 all out in the first Test, Rahane is settling in his role as the vice-captain. "Virat is the captain. My job as vice-captain is to visualise the flow of the game and offer suggestions to Virat whenever he asks me," he said modestly during an interactive chat with the media on Wednesday.

Not complacent

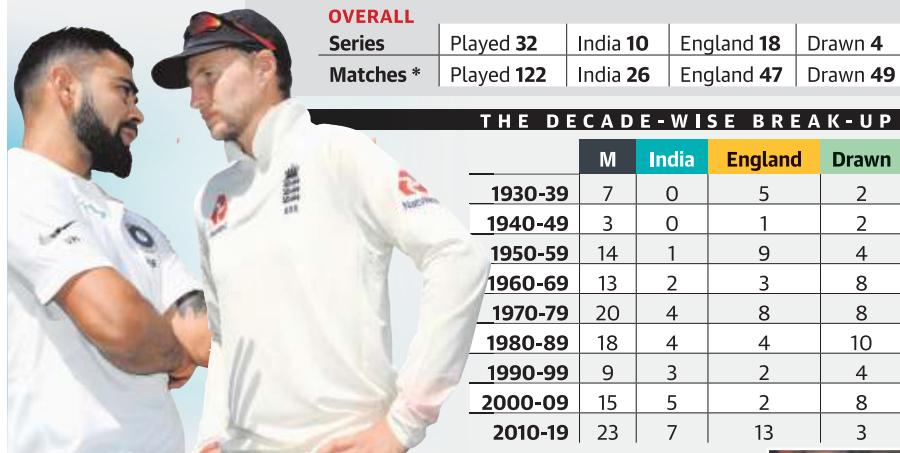
The first Test against England looms on Friday at Chepauk and Rahane said the Indian team was not complacent after the high of Australia. "Australia was awesome and I remember the celebrations that went into the night at Brisbane. But we have to live in the present and England is a very good side. We have to play really well to beat them," he said.

The 32-year-old Rahane has 4,471 runs in 69 Tests at 42.58 and most of his contributions have come when his team needed him to score.

Always flexible for the team's cause, Rahane is making the adjustments needed to bat No. 5 again, with Kohli

Clash of the titans

As Kohli's India and Root's England gear up for what promises to be a high-voltage series, here's how contests between the two have panned out



IN INDIA

Series		Played 14	India 7	England 4	Drawn 3
Matches *		Played 60	India 19	England 13	Drawn 28

*Includes one-off Golden Jubilee Test in Mumbai, 1980

TOP PERFORMERS IN INDIA

FOR INDIA		M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	50s	100s
Most Runs		22	39	1331	172	35.97	8	2
Most Wickets		14	23	64	8/79	24.03	60.6	6/0
B.S. Chandrasekhar								

SUNIL GAVASKAR

FOR ENGLAND		M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	50s	100s
Most Runs		13	26	1235	190	51.45	4	5
Most Wickets		16	29	54	5/84	26.51	78.0	1/0
Derek Underwood								

DEREK UNDERWOOD

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN AND G. PRASAD

returning to the side. "It should not be difficult, it is a mental switch," he said.

In a team-game you have to play different roles and at different slots and Rahane is someone who believes in togetherness. "It is not about individuals. You have to play together as a team."

He said the Indian players could stay for long periods in the bubble because "we en-

joy each other's company."

More so on a pitch that offers turn. Asked about the surface for the first Test, Rahane replied, "There will be spin. We will play to our strengths."

England won the recent series against Sri Lanka 2-0 but its batsmen struggled against the left-arm spin of Lasith Embuldeniya, who picked up 15 wickets in the

two Tests.

Under the circumstances, would India play left-arm spinning all-rounder Axar Patel as a like-for-like replacement for Ravindra Jadeja in the first Test?

The vice-captain kept his cards close to his chest, not revealing the team composition. The indications are that Washington Sundar will play here in a three-pronged spin



Familiar position: With Kohli returning to the side, Rahane will bat at the No. 5 slot in the England series. ■ GETTY IMAGES

The schedule

TESTS
February 5 to 9, Chennai, 9.30 a.m.

February 13 to 17, Chennai, 9.30 a.m.

February 24 to 28, Ahmedabad (Day-Night), 2.30 p.m.

March 4 to 8, Ahmedabad, 9.30 a.m.

T20Is
March 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 All at Ahmedabad, 7 p.m.

ODIs
March 23, 26 and 28 All at Pune, 1.30 p.m.

Crawley injures right wrist

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

England opener Zak Crawley is a doubtful starter for the first Test beginning here on Friday.

A media release from the England camp on Wednesday said, "Zak Crawley did not train today during England's practice session in Chennai. He slipped outside the dressing room yesterday [Tuesday] and has injured his right wrist.

"We are awaiting the results of the scans and will know more on Thursday ahead of our final practice," the release added.

Playing as much with his head as his willow, Rahane is up for the English challenge. He's a big guy in a small package.

First-innings runs very important, says Trott

England batting consultant feels it's tough playing catch-up in India

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

England batting consultant Jonathan Trott said on Wednesday that big first-innings totals were vital if touring sides wanted to succeed in India, adding that deep batting line-ups helped in this regard.

"Playing catch-up against India, who are so good in their home conditions, is always tough. You have to make sure you start the game well, whether it is with bat or ball. And you have got to be clinical with the ball as well. You are trying to find that balance all the time. Someone like Ben Stokes adds that balance and we are very lucky to have him."

"It is key for all the lower-order batters to make sure they have a good gameplan and chip in and hold up an end. Working with those guys is always enjoyable for me as a batting coach. It is important to make sure they are ready to perform when called upon," he added.

On the lessons learnt



Influencer: Given the form he is in, Root will look to drive England forward in the Test series against India. ■ ECB

TV PICKS

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

ATP Cup: Eurosport (SD & HD), 4 a.m.

PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

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

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

SHORT TAKES



CA to deal case by case for IPL-bound players

MELBOURNE
Cricket Australia, on Wednesday, said it will grant No Objection Certificates to its IPL-bound players on a "case-by-case" basis. "As and when applications are made, we will consider each of those case-by-case, on their merits," said CA interim CEO Nick Hockley.

The announcement comes a day after CA postponed the tour of South Africa due to a fresh COVID-19 outbreak in that country.

Pandemic nixes Asian mixed team badminton event

NEW DELHI
Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship, scheduled to be held in Wuhan in China next week, was on Wednesday cancelled due to travel restrictions and strict quarantine protocols imposed by many countries in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. PTI

Vaughan slams Australia for pulling out of SA tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan, on Wednesday, questioned Australia's decision to postpone its tour of South Africa and expressed doubts if it would have done the same with a powerful cricket nation like India.

Cricket Australia announced its decision to postpone the trip to South Africa, citing "unacceptable health and safety risk" in that country because of a fresh COVID-19 outbreak.

Vaughan said it was not a good precedent set by Australia.

"The Aussies pulling out of the tour of SA is a huge worry for the game... Would they have pulled out of a tour to India is the question ???" Vaughan wrote on his Twitter handle.

The former captain said the three big cricketing nations – India, England and Australia – should instead help the cricket boards, which are feeling the heat of the pandemic.

"It's so important in these times that the big 3 do everything they can to help out those without the financial clout," his tweet read.

The visiting bowlers managed to strike whenever a partnership started to flour-

Shadman and Warrican shine

Opener scores a half-century, left-arm spinner scalps three

WI IN BANGLADESH

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CHATTOGRAM

Opener Shadman Islam struck a patient half-century and left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican claimed three wickets for 48 as Bangladesh and the West Indies shared the honours on the opening day of the first Test on Wednesday.

The hosts ended the day on 242 for five, with Shadman leading the way with 59 off 154 balls – and several others chipping in with useful knocks.

Mushfiqur Rahim (38), Mominal Haque (26) and Najmul Hossain (25) all got modest starts after Bangladesh opted to bat first, but could not march on.

The visiting bowlers managed to strike whenever a partnership started to flour-

ish, keeping Bangladesh in check. Kemar Roach made the breakthrough when he bowled opener Tamim Iqbal. Warrican claimed the first of his three wickets by setting a trap for Bangladesh skipper Mominal Haque,



Shadman. ■ AFP

SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh – 1st innings:

Shadman Islam lbw b Warrican 59, Tamim Iqbal lbw 9, Nazmul Hossain run out 25, Mominal Haque c Campbell b Warrican 26, Mushfiqur Rahim c Cornwall b Warrican 38, Shakib Al Hasan (batting) 39, Liton Das (batting) 34; Extras (b-2, lb-2, nc-2, w-3, w-5); 12; Total (for five wkts. in 90 overs): 242.

Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-66, 3-119, 4-134, 5-193.

West Indies bowling: Roach 16-5-44-

Italy, Russia seal semifinal spots

Alexander Zverev and Stefanos Tsitsipas open their season with fighting wins

ATP CUP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Italy and Russia ensured a place in the semifinals of the ATP Cup with identical 2-1 wins over France and Japan respectively on Wednesday.

In Group C, Fabio Fognini bounced back to battle past Benoit Paire 6-1, 7-6(2) and give Italy a 1-0 lead. Matteo Berrettini clinched the tie with a comfortable 6-4, 6-2 victory over Gael Monfils.

In the Russia-Japan match, World No. 8 Andrey Rublev crushed Yoshihito Nishioka 6-1, 6-3 before fourth-ranked Daniil Medvedev cruised past Kei Nishikori 6-2, 6-4.

Alexander Zverev and Stefanos Tsitsipas opened their seasons with fighting wins.

The results:
Group A: Germany bt Canada 2-1 [Jan-Lennard Struff bt Milos



Pulling through: Germany's Zverev had to dig deep to overcome Canada's Shapovalov. ■AP

Raonic 7-6(4), 7-6(2); Alexander Zverev bt Denis Shapovalov 6-7(5), 6-3, 7-6(4).

Struff & Kevin Krawietz lost to Peter Polansky & Steven Diez 6-7(4), 7-6(6), 3-10].

Group B: Australia bt Greece 2-1 [John Millman bt Michael Pervolarakis 6-2, 6-3; Alex de

Minaur lost to Stefanos Tsitsipas 3-6, 5-7; John Peers & Luke Saville bt Pervolarakis & Tsitsipas 6-3, 4-6, 10-5].

Group C: Italy bt France 2-1 [Fabio Fognini bt Benoit Paire 6-1, 7-6(2); Matteo Berrettini bt Gael Monfils 6-4, 6-2; Simone Bolelli & Andrea Vavassori lost

to Nicolas Mahut & Edouard Roger-Vasselin 3-6, 4-6].

Group D: Russia bt Japan 2-1 [Andrey Rublev bt Yoshihito Nishioka 6-1, 6-3; Daniil Medvedev bt Kei Nishikori 6-2, 6-4].

Evgeny Donskoy & Askan Karatsev lost to Nishioka & Ben McLachlan 6-4, 3-6, 10-12].

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