



Arvind Subramanian  
quits as Professor of  
Ashoka University  
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EU regulator says  
AstraZeneca vaccine  
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Biyani-led Future Group  
restrained from going  
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Suryakumar shines as  
India wins fourth T20I  
to keep series alive  
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## NEARBY



PM Modi takes a dig  
at Trinamool slogan

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday took on the Trinamool Congress election slogan "Khela hobe" (the game will be played), and said that it was "Khela sesh" (game over) for Mamata Banerjee.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 6

## Din in Haryana House over 'pay damages' Bill

CHANDIGARH

Heated arguments were witnessed in the Haryana Assembly between Treasury benches and the Opposition as 'Haryana Recovery of Damages to Property During Disturbance to Public Order Bill, 2021' was passed.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 6

## Vaccinations in Delhi to be increased 3 times: CM

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said his government plans to increase the number of vaccinations in the city from 30,000-40,000 per day to 1.25 lakh per day in the next few days.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4

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## SC to hear plea against sale of electoral bonds

NGO seeks stay on scheme ahead of election in key States

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde agreed with advocate Prashant Bhushan on Thursday to urgently hear a plea by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms to stay the sale of a new set of electoral bonds on April 1, before the Assembly elections in crucial States such as West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

Responding to an urgent mentioning made by Mr. Bhushan via videoconference, Chief Justice Bobde said the matter would require a detailed hearing and posted the case for March 24.

Mr. Bhushan said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Election Commission had both said that the sale of electoral bonds had become an avenue for shell corporations and entities to park illicit money and even proceed of bribes with political parties. "Every time there is an election, the sale is opened. Every time this happens, we have moved the Supreme Court to stay it," he submitted.

"But hasn't stay been refused earlier?" Chief Justice Bobde asked.

"Not so, but parties had been asked to submit records in sealed cover... But a proper stay has to be consi-

### Flow of funds

A look at what the petition filed by the NGO says:

- The Finance Act of 2017 introduced the use of electoral bonds, which are exempt from disclosure under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, opening doors to unchecked, unknown funding to parties
- The amendments have removed the existing cap of 7.5% of net profit in the past three years on campaign donations by companies and have legalised anonymous donations

**The Election Commission**  
vide letter dated May 26, 2017 and RBI in letters on 31.01.2017, 14.09.2017, 27.09.2017 had objected to electoral bonds and advised against the issuance of electoral bonds as a mode for donation to political parties

dered. There are two documents from the RBI and the Election Commission that say the electoral bonds scheme is detrimental to democracy," Mr. Bhushan replied.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta informed the Chief Justice that Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal would be appearing in the case. "His submissions in the Maratha quota case will start today [March 18] and he may finish it by Wednesday [March 24]," Mr. Mehta said.

"Surely, he will find time in a matter like this!" Chief Justice Bobde retorted.

The NGO, also represented by advocate Neha Rathi,

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

voiced serious apprehensions about the sale of electoral bonds before elections.

**Illegal sale windows'**  
"Data obtained through RTI has shown that illegal sale windows have been opened in the past to benefit certain political parties... There is a serious apprehension that any further sale of electoral bonds before the upcoming State elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam would further increase illegal and illicit funding of political parties through shell companies," the NGO submitted.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

## India has assured Sri Lanka of support

Ahead of UNHRC vote, Foreign Secy. says Colombo 'appreciates' the stance

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
SUHASINI HAIDAR  
COLOMBO/NEW DELHI

India has assured Sri Lanka of its support at the UN Human Rights Council, Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Jayanath Colombage said, just days before member countries vote on a new resolution on the island nation's rights record.

India's Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on the Sri Lanka Foreign Secretary's statement.

Sources in the government told *The Hindu* that no decision on the vote had been "conveyed" yet, while Mr. Colombage said Sri Lanka "greatly appreciates" India's position, "being the superpower they are".

The state-run *Daily News* on Thursday reported the senior Foreign Ministry official's remarks, made at a recent "digital dialogue" hosted by Sri Lanka's Media Centre for National Development, a month-old initiative



Jayanath Colombage

aimed at publicising the government's efforts locally and internationally.

Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva usually invoke sharp responses from nationalist forces within Sri Lanka's Sinhala Buddhist

majority, who see the process as "targeting" their country and "interfering with its sovereignty".

The Rajapaksa government, whose core support comes from Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, has "categorically rejected" the UN Human Rights chief's latest report, while accusing the Council of being "politically motivated", even as a "core group" comprising the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, North Macedonia, Malawi and Montenegro tables the new resolution.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

## Roads to be freed of toll booths in a year, says Nitin Gadkari

'GPS-based system being put in place'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India will implement a GPS-based toll collection system and do away with all toll booths within a year, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

He also shared details of the vehicle scrapping policy, first announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22, according to which the automobile industry in India will see a jump in turnover to ₹10 lakh crore from ₹4.5 lakh crore.

Separately, the Minister also expressed concern over the number of accidents and asserted that road accidents

had taken away more lives in 2020 compared with the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Don't stereotype women in court rulings, says SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday forbade judges from making gender-stereotypical comments like "good women are sexually chaste", women who drink and smoke "ask" for sexual advances or presume that a sexually active woman consented to rape while hearing cases of sexual offence.

A Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and S. Ravinder Bhat stopped judges from trying to mandate marriage or compromise between a molester and his victim.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 11



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# दशकों में जो न हो पाया 4 वर्ष में कर दिखाया

## कानून- व्यवस्था हुई बेहतर



- जीरो टॉलरेंस नीति से अपराधों में रिकॉर्ड गिरावट
- माफिया एवं अपराधियों द्वारा अवैध रूप से अर्जित 1000 करोड़ रु. से अधिक की संपत्तियां जब्त/घरस्त
- उत्तर प्रदेश विधि विरुद्ध धर्म संपर्चितर्वतन प्रतिबंध विधेयक को मंजूरी
- सी.ए.ए. के विरोध-प्रदर्शन के दौरान सरकारी सम्पत्तियों को क्षति पहुंचाने वाले व्यक्तियों से क्षतिपूर्ति वसूली
- एण्टी रोमियो स्कॉर्यांड का गठन
- सभी 1535 थानों पर महिला हेल्प डेस्ट की स्थापना
- महिला एवं बाल सुरक्षा संगठन (WCSO) का गठन
- 218 नये फास्ट ट्रैक कोर्ट घटित
- उत्तर प्रदेश स्पेशल सिक्योरिटी फोर्स (UPSSF) का गठन
- पुलिस अधीक्षक कार्यालयों में भी एफ.आई.आर. काउन्टर
- 213 नये थानों एवं 16 परिशेषीय मुख्यालयों पर साइबर क्राइम पुलिस थानों की स्थापना
- 1 लाख 37 हजार पुलिसकर्मियों की भर्ती

## शिक्षा से छुले प्रगति के द्वारा



- मुख्यमंत्री अभ्युदय योजना में प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के लिए निःशुल्क कोचिंग
- बालिकाओं के लिए स्नानातक स्तर तक निःशुल्क शिक्षा
- 3 नए राज्य विश्वविद्यालय, 51 राजकीय महाविद्यालय, 194 राजकीय माध्यमिक विद्यालय, 28 इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज, 26 पॉलीटेक्निक, 79 आईटीआई, 248 इंटर कॉलेज और 771 कस्टरूग विद्यालयों की स्थापना
- कक्षा-1 से कक्षा-8 तक के सभी बच्चों को निःशुल्क इंस, जूते-मोजे, स्कूल बैग एवं पाठ्य-पुस्तकों का वितरण
- श्रमिकों के बच्चों की निःशुल्क शिक्षा के लिए 18 मंडलों में अटल आवासीय विद्यालयों की स्थापना
- कोरोना कालखण्ड में विद्यार्थियों के लिए वर्चुअल क्लास की व्यवस्था

## महिला सम्मान एवं सशक्तिकरण को प्राथमिकता



- 1 लाख से अधिक महिलाओं को सरकारी नौकरी
- 58,758 महिलाओं की बैंकिंग कॉर्सेस्पॉन्डेंट सर्की के रूप में नियुक्ति
- मिशन शक्ति अभियान में 7.30 करोड़ लोगों को जागरूक किया गया
- प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना योजना से 36.16 लाख महिलाएं लाभान्वित
- 6.94 लाख बेटियों को मुख्यमंत्री कन्या सुमंगला योजना का लाभ
- 'बेटी बचाओ-बेटी पढ़ाओ' योजना में 1 करोड़ 80 लाख बेटियां लाभान्वित
- ग्रामीण आवासीय अभिलेख (घरौनी) परिवार की महिला सदस्य के नाम होगा
- पौत्री (पुत्र की पुत्री), भतीजी (सगे भाई की पुत्री) और भाजियों (सगी बहन की पुत्री) को भी राजस्व सहिता में भौमिक अधिकार
- महिलाओं एवं बालिकाओं की सुरक्षा हेतु सेफ सिटी परियोजना

## किसान हुए खुशहाल



- मंडी शुल्क में 1% की कमी
- 45 कृषि उत्पाद मण्डी शुल्क से मुक्त
- प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना में रु. 1910 करोड़ की क्षतिपूर्ति
- कृषि निवेशों पर देय रु. 1803 करोड़ की अनुदान राशि किसानों के खाते में हस्तांतरित
- रु. 3 लाख 58 हजार करोड़ का फसल ऋण वितरित
- रु. 36 हजार करोड़ से 86 लाख किसानों का ऋण माप
- 20 चीनी मिलों का आधुनिकीकरण एवं विस्तारीकरण
- बाण सागर परियोजना सहित 11 सिंचाई परियोजनाएं पूर्ण कर एवं अन्य सिंचाई स्रोतों से 3.77 लाख हेक्टेयर अतिरिक्त सिंचाई क्षमता में वृद्धि
- वरासत अभियान के अंतर्गत 8,87,617 प्रकरण निस्तारित
- स्वामित्व योजना के अंतर्गत 2,09,016 घरौनी वितरित
- 5 लाख 66 हजार से अधिक गोवंश संरक्षित, गोवंश रखने पर प्रति गोवंश प्रतिमाह रु. 900 की सहायता

## बुनियादी सुविधाओं का विकास



- पूर्वांचल एक्सप्रेस-वे, बुदेलखण्ड एक्सप्रेस-वे, गंगा एक्सप्रेस-वे व गोरखपुर लिंक एक्सप्रेस-वे का तेजी से निर्माण, बलिया लिंक एक्सप्रेस-वे को मंजूरी
- ग्रेटर नोएडा में इंटरनेशनल थीनफील्ड एयरपोर्ट, अयोध्या एवं कुशीनगर में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय एयरपोर्ट
- 8 एयरपोर्ट संचालित, 13 अन्य एयरपोर्ट एवं 7 हवाईपट्टी का विकास
- प्रदेश के 10 नगरों का भारत सरकार तथा 7 नगरों का राज्य सरकार के वित्त पोषण से स्मार्ट सिटी के रूप में विकास
- प्रधानमंत्री ग्राम सड़क योजना में 56,862 किमी. सड़कों का निर्माण
- 3,32,804 किमी. सड़कों का गड़बाजुकित्करण
- 13,189 किमी. नई सड़कों का निर्माण
- 13,613 किमी. सड़कों का चौड़ीकरण/सुदृढ़ीकरण
- 428 छोटे-बड़े पुलों का निर्माण
- 1.21 लाख गांवों तक निर्बाध बिजली आपूर्ति
- जिला मुख्यालयों को 24 घंटे, तहसील मुख्यालयों को 22 घंटे तथा ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 18-20 घंटे बिजली की आपूर्ति
- हर घर नल योजना में 30 हजार ग्राम पंचायतों को शुद्ध पेयजल

## निवेशकों की पहली पसंद



- निवेश फ्रेण्डली 21 नीतियां लागू
- इंवेस्टर्स समिति में रु. 4.68 लाख करोड़ निवेश के एम.ओ.यू. हस्ताक्षरित
- सिंगल विंडो पोर्टल 'निवेश भित्र' के माध्यम से 96% निवेश प्रस्तावों का निस्तारण
- रु. 3 लाख करोड़ के निवेश से परियोजनाएं शुरू
- डिफेंस इण्डिस्ट्रियल मैन्युफैक्चरिंग कॉरिडोर का निर्माण, रु. 50 हजार करोड़ का निवेश
- फिल्म सिटी से निवेश और रोजगार के बढ़े अवसर
- ओडीओपी योजनात्तर्गत 25 लाख से अधिक लोगों को रोजगार, निर्यात में 38% की वृद्धि
- स्वरोजगार हेतु उद्यम सारथी एप संचालित

## जट्टरतमंदों को मिला सरकार का साथ



- मुख्यमंत्री सामूहिक विवाह योजना में 1.52 लाख निर्धान कन्याओं का विवाह
- निर्माण श्रमिकों की पुत्रियों के लिए संचालित कन्या विवाह सहायता योजना के अन्तर्गत 11,581 कन्याओं का विवाह
- 51 लाख से अधिक वृद्धजन, 28 लाख निराश्रित महिलाओं व 22 लाख विवाह महिलाओं को रु. 500 प्रतिमाह की पेशन
- मुख्यमंत्री आवास योजना (ग्रामीण) में 72 हजार 302 आवासों का निर्माण/स्वीकृति
- वनटांगिया/मुसहर/कोल एवं थारु समूह के 38 गांवों को राजस्व गांवों का दर्जा एवं बुनियादी सुविधाएं
- अल्पसंख्यक वर्ग, अनुसूचित जाति/जनजाति, पिछड़ी जाति व सामाज्य वर्ग के कुल 1 करोड़ 78 लाख से अधिक छात्र-छात्राओं को कुल रु. 13,690 करोड़ से अधिक की पूर्वदशम एवं दशमोत्तर छात्रवृत्ति वितरित
- 40 लाख कामगारों की स्किल मैपिंग कर रोजगार उपलब्ध कराया गया
- 101 करोड़ से अधिक मानव दिवस सृजित कर 1.50 करोड़ श्रमिकों को रोजगार
- पी.एम. स्वनिधि योजना में 8 लाख 32 हजार स्ट्रीट वेण्डर्स आचादित

## आस्था का सम्मान पर्यावरण के लिए अभियान



- प्रयागराज कुम्भ में 24 करोड़ से अधिक श्रद्धालुओं व पर्यटकों का आगमन, यूनेस्को द्वारा सराहना
- अयोध्या में दीपोत्सव, वाराणसी में देव-दीपावली, मयुरा में कृष्णोत्सव व बरसाना में रंगोत्सव का भव्य आयोजन
- काशी विश्वनाथ कॉरिडोर का विकास
- बौद्ध सर्किट के अंतर्गत श्रावस्ती, कपिलवस्तु और कुशीनगर का विकास
- रामायण सर्किट के अंतर्गत चित्रकूट और शृंगवरपुर का विकास
- जैन तथा सूफी सर्किट के तहत आगरा एवं फतेहपुर सीकरी में पर्यटन सुविधाओं का विकास
- कैलाश मानसरोवर भवन का निर्माण, तीर्थयात्रियों की अनुदान राशि रु. 50 हजार से बढ़ाकर रु. 1 लाख प्रति यात्री की गयी
- 39.42 करोड़ पौधरोपण
- गंगा के दोनों किनारों पर 9 करोड़ पौधरोपण

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Timings  
DELHI

FRIDAY, MAR. 19	
RISE 06:26	SET 18:32
RISE 09:51	SET 23:50
SATURDAY, MAR. 20	
RISE 06:25	SET 18:33
RISE 10:30	SET 00:00

SUNDAY, MAR. 21

RISE 06:24

SET 18:33

RISE 11:14

SET 00:45

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 35 16

Safdarjung 35 16

Palam 35 19

Delhi Palam Today

34°C A pleasant morning and day would be warm with partly cloudy sky places. Haziness to prevail with light winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

34°C Hazy pleasant morning and warm day with partly cloudy sky likely.

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## 2 staffers held for spitting on rotis

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested after a video surfaced on social media purportedly showing one of them kneading the dough at a local hotel in west Delhi and the other spitting on the 'roti' (flat bread) just before putting them in the oven, officials said on Thursday.

"It was found that the video was from a local hotel named Chand in Khyala. The men have been identified as Sabi Anwar and Ibrahim. The latter was spitting on the dough. 'We have registered a case at Khyala police station. We have also filed a case against the hotel owner for running the eatery without permission,' a senior officer said.

Four held for running online flesh trade

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Four persons, including two women, have been arrested for allegedly running a prostitution racket online and pushing a 12-year-old girl into it, the police said on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Urvija Goel said that the accused have been identified as Sanjay Rajput (35), Anshu Sharma (21), Sapna Goyal (24) and Kanika Roy (28).

The police said that on January 22, a case of kidnapping of a minor was registered at Rajouri Garden police station.

During investigation, the police found that she had been kidnapped by a gang of traffickers and sold for prostitution.

It was revealed that she was pushed into the business by a gang of national escort suppliers.

## DDA approves revised TOD policy

It will now be sent to the Centre for final notification

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) gave its final nod to the modifications made to the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) policy, in a meeting chaired by L-G Anil Baijal on Thursday. Mr. Baijal is also the chairman of the urban body.

The revised policy, which will now be sent to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for final notification, is proposed to improve public transit ridership, reduce vehicular congestion and reduce greenhouse emissions and pollution in the long run, according to officials.

"Apart from the metro and railway stations, the revised TOD policy will also enable node-based transit oriented development around upcoming modes of public transport like

BRITS, Metro Lite, Metro Neo and so on. The revised TOD policy will allow mass public transit agencies to utilise their operational area like tracks, stations, depots and so on, for development, facilitating the use of more effective and sustainable operation and maintenance models for the transit agencies," the DDA said.

The authority also gave its primary approval for Dynamic Parking Norms and inclusion of Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) in

the Master Plan for Delhi-2021.

"The occupancy of the ARHCs will be granted on the basis of licence deed with a maximum tenure of three years, ensuring accessibility to all the candidates eligible for ARHCs. The proposed ARHCs will enable availability of affordable and easily accessible rental housing to the urban poor of Delhi in the vicinity of their workplace," the land-owning agency said.

The revised parking norms will be based on the number and size of dwelling units instead of built-up area in case of residential projects.

The authority also approved the constitution of the "River Yamuna Management Committee" for proper monitoring of the river in compliance with orders of the National Green Tribunal.

# Arvind resigns from Ashoka University

His exit follows P.B. Mehta's resignation; says varsity can no longer provide space for academic freedom

PRISCILLA JEBARAJA  
NEW DELHI

Former Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Arvind Subramanian resigned from Ashoka University on Thursday, days after noted columnist and political commentator Pratap Bhanu Mehta's exit.

In his resignation letter, Dr. Subramanian said he had been "devastated" by "the circumstances involving the 'resignation' of Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta" two days earlier.

### 'Troubling feeling'

"That someone of such integrity and eminence, who embodied the vision underlying Ashoka, felt compelled to leave is troubling," he wrote. "That even Ashoka – with its private status and backing by private capital – can no longer provide a space for academic expression and freedom is ominously disturbing. Above all, that the university's commitment to fight for and sustain the Ashoka vision is now open to question makes it difficult for me to continue being part of Ashoka," he added.

Professor Mehta's letter provides insight into the rea-

sons behind his departure.

"After a meeting with the university's founders, it has become abundantly clear to me that my association with the university may be considered a political liability. My public writing in support of a politics that tries to honour constitutional values of freedom and equal respect for all citizens, is perceived to carry risks for the university. In the interests of the university, I resign," he wrote to University Vice-Chancellor Malabika Sarkar.

He added that "a liberal university will need a liberal political and social context to flourish" and expressed hope that the university would play a role in securing that environment. "In light of the prevailing atmosphere, the founders and the administration will require renewed commitment to the values of Ashoka, and new courage to secure Ashoka's freedom," he wrote.

In a virtual town hall meeting attended by over a thousand students, faculty and alumni on Thursday evening, Dr. Sarkar said she was not part of the conversations between the university's foun-



Arvind Subramanian

ders and Prof. Mehta before his resignation.

### 'Still a safe space'

"The trustees have said they did not ask him to resign," she said, adding that she believed the university remained a "safe space". She added that she had asked Prof. Mehta to rescind his resignation on Thursday morning, but he would not do so.

Ashish Dhawan, chairperson of Ashoka's Board of Trustees, did not respond to *The Hindu*'s request for comment.

Earlier, in a solidarity statement, the faculty said they were troubled by the "plausible" scenario that Prof. Mehta's resignation was a direct consequence of his

After a meeting with the university's founders it has become abundantly clear to me that my association with the university may be considered a political liability

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA, COLUMNIST AND POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

Wrote in his resignation letter

role as a public intellectual and critic of the government.

### 'Chilling precedent'

Even more troubling is the possibility that our university may have acceded to pressure to remove Professor Mehta or to request and accept his resignation," said the faculty statement, adding that it would "set a chilling precedent for future removals of faculty, curtailing our sense of who we are as researchers and teachers."

The University's Student Government and Alumni Council also gathered signatures for a solidarity statement, demanding transparency from the administration and founders. Historian Ramachandra

Guha, who is a former member of Ashoka's Academic Council had tweeted, "In its journey thus far, Ashoka University had shown much promise. They may have frittered all that away by the spinelessness of their Trustees, who have chosen to crawl when asked to bend."

In a report, Ashoka's student newspaper, *The Edict*, quoted a source claiming that Ashoka's founders endorsed the resignation, "motivated by an understanding that if Prof. Mehta resigned, the university's efforts to acquire a new plot of land to expand the campus would get much smoother. Additionally, formal recognition for the fourth-year PG diploma, Ashoka Scholars' Programme, was also hinted at being part of the deal."

### 'V-C refutes charges'

However, Dr. Sarkar refuted these allegations, saying that the university had already acquired the land several years ago, and that permissions for the four-year programme were also under way. The students demanded an independent inquiry into Prof. Mehta's ouster.

## HC reserves verdict on Tanha's bail plea

He has been in custody since May 2020

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a plea by Jamia Millia Islamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha, arrested under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, seeking bail in connection with a case related to the north-east Delhi riots.

A Bench of Justice Siddharth Mirdul and Justice A.J. Bhamhani asked the counsel for Delhi Police and Mr. Tanha to give their written submissions by March 22.

### 'Order challenged'

Mr. Tanha was arrested in May last year for allegedly being part of a "premeditated conspiracy" in the riots. He has challenged a trial court's October 26, 2020 order dismissing his bail application.

His bail petition was opposed by the Delhi police on the ground that the riots were premeditated and a conspiracy was hatched of which Mr. Tanha was a part. The prosecutor had opposed the plea saying there



were statements of protected witnesses in the case which clearly showed the alleged role of Mr. Tanha in the riots.

Mr. Tanha's counsel argued that he has been in custody since May 2020 and even the chargesheet has been filed. Before the trial court,

Mr. Tanha's counsel had claimed that he was not present in Delhi during the riots and did not visit any of the protest sites where rioting and violence occurred.

The counsel had contended that there was no physical evidence connecting Mr. Tanha to the riots and no allegations with respect to any funds being received by him for terrorist activities.

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e-mail ID - sepwd\_rgda@yahoo.com; Phone/Fax No - 06856 - 223049

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RAYAGADA (R&B) CIRCLE, RAYAGADA e-Procurement Notice

No.372 Date: 16.03.2021 INVITATION FOR BIDS

1. The Superintending Engineer, Rayagada (R&B) Circle, Rayagada on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in double cover mode to be received in online mode only for the construction of works as detailed in the table below:
2. Nature of Work : Road and Building Works
3. No. of Work : 3 (Three) nos. of work
4. Estimated Cost (Approximately) : Rs.439.47 lakhs, Rs.269.56 lakhs and Rs.273.11 lakhs
5. Bid Cost : Rs.10,000/- (each)
6. Class of Contractor : "B" Class / "A" Class / "Special" Class as per Financial Eligibility.
7. Availability of Bid Documents in the website : 11.00 Hrs of Dt.24.03.2021 to 16.00 Hrs of Dt.08.04.2021.
8. Date of Opening of Bid : 11.00 Hrs of Dt. 09.04.2021
9. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tendersissa.gov.in>. Any Addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Rayagada (R&B) Circle, Rayagada.

OIPR-34128/11/005/2021

B-835:

Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department \*\*\*\*\* e-Procurement Notice

The Superintending Engineer, 7<sup>th</sup> Circle, HPPWD, Dalhousie on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for following works under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD WORK) in the District Chamba for six number of package(s) with estimated cost totaling to Rs. 1349.64 Lacs including maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors with HPPWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag (Contractors of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag are eligible to participate for the works having amount put to tender above Rs. 100.00 Lacs). Not registered contractors may submit the bids; however successful bidder has to register himself in appropriate class before signing the contract with appropriate authority in HPPWD.

Division	RIDF	Name of the work	Estimated Cost (Rs Lacs)		Total Cost (Rs Lacs)	Period of completion (Months)	Bid security (Rs lacs)
			Construction	Maintenance			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Dalhousie	XXVI	Construction of Link road from Langi to Droni Km 0/0 to 3/225 (SH:- Formation cutting, C.D. Work etc.) Under NABARD RIDF-XXVI.	247.95	.....	247.95	12 Months	4.96
Dalhousie	XXVI	Construction of link road to village Dhudhalia to Naloh in GP Chalara Km 0/0 to 5/0 (SH:- Formation cutting, CD works etc. (under NABARD RIDF-XXVI))	172.35	.....	172.35	12 Months	3.45
Chamba	XXVI	Metalling /Tarring of Ghoom to Janjla road Km. 0/0 to 4/800					

## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH

C.S. MANMATHARAMAN (86)  
LIC Agent  
Attained lotus feet of Shri Ganesha on 18 March 2021.

Living memory

Wife: R A Santha

Daughters: Gayathri &amp; Supriya

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## TENDERS

## TENDER NOTICE

(Establishment of Common Facility Centre for Embroidery with furniture &amp; Stitching Cluster Sonipat, Haryana under SFURTI Scheme)

Sealed tenders are invited from licensed registered civil engineers/contractors (having minimum Three years experience in construction) for establishment of Common Facilities Centre at village Murthal District Sonipat state Haryana, being facilitated by Urban Rural Integrated Development Association (URIDA), WZ-33A, Dayasal Road, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi. Tender should be submitted in separate envelope for Technical Bid and Financial Bid along with earnest money of Rs. 2,00,000/- (Rupees Two Lacs only) and can be deposited at the below mentioned address upto 02.00 P.M. of 09/04/2021. The Demand Draft of earnest money should be in the name of Urban Rural Integrated Development Association, payable at Delhi. Tenders received will be opened before the Procurement Committee of the proposed Common Facilities on 10/04/2021 at 3.00 P.M.

Tender form can be obtained from URIDA, WZ-33A, Dayasal Road, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059 on any working day between 20/03/2021 to 09/04/2021 from 10.00 AM to 5.00 PM by payment of Rs. 500/-.

The details of works and Terms and Conditions are available in the Tender Form. President/Secretary URIDA, reserves the right to cancel any or all the Tenders with out assigning any reason.

Capt. Deepak Raj, (Secretary) URIDA, WZ-33A, Dayasal Road, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059, Tele No.: 011-25333206, 25337449

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## No. of daily vaccinations to be increased threefold, says Kejriwal

Chief Minister appeals to Centre to relax some guidelines in terms of eligible age groups; centres to be doubled to 1,000

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said the government plans to increase the number of vaccinations in the city from 30,000-40,000 per day to 1.25 lakh per day in the next few days.

For this, the vaccination centres will be doubled to 1,000 and the timings will be increased from the current 9 a.m.-5 p.m. to 9 a.m.-9 p.m., he added.

Rising concern over the increasing number of cases in the recent past here, Mr. Kejriwal said there was no



Vaccination in progress at one of the centres in north Delhi's Sant Ravidas Nagar on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

need to panic as the government was strengthening its tracking, tracing, and isolating system.

He added that due to the dwindling number of cases, there was laxity in people's attitude towards COVID-19

protocols and strict surveillance and enforcement drives will be implemented to ensure people wear masks and maintaining social distancing.

Mr. Kejriwal appealed to the Centre to provide relaxation in the COVID-19 vaccination guidelines and allow all above 18 years of age to get the jab.

“If the Centre allows vaccination for all and if Delhi gets sufficient supply of the vaccine, the government has a plan in place to administer them to the entire population of the Capital in the next

three months, Mr. Kejriwal said.

He assured people that this surge is not similar to the one which happened last year in June, September, and November.

“The situation is being monitored closely. Our health experts are being consulted regularly. We are also holding regular consultations with the health experts of the Central government. We are following all the measures advised by the experts,” he added.

Giving his own example of having taken the vaccine, Mr.

Kejriwal told those eligible not to be hesitant as it is the only effective method against the virus.

He, however, pointed out that the current guidelines are very rigid.

“On one hand, India has taken a lead in making a vaccine for the virus but unfortunately, on the other hand, we are observing a rise in cases across the country. I would appeal to the Central government to bring some relaxation in the vaccination guidelines in terms of eligible age groups,” Mr. Kejriwal said.

## ‘Too early to say if it can be called another wave’

Experts blame people not following social distancing norms for rise in virus cases

## STAFF REPORTER

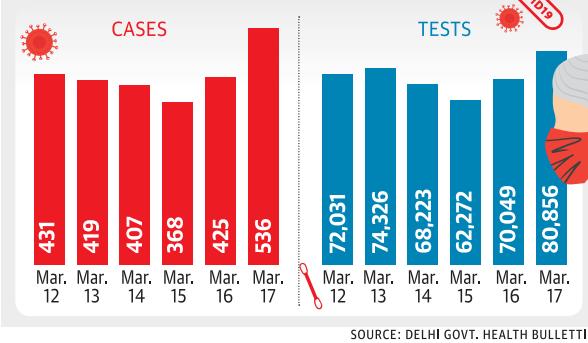
NEW DELHI

Regarding the current rise in virus cases, experts said it is too early to say if it can be called another wave of COVID-19 in the city. They cited two main reasons behind the rise – people not following social distancing and not wearing masks.

Delhi government officials said they have not found too many clusters of cases. “The cases are scattered. There are cases where multiple people from the same house test positive but not large clusters outside it,” said an official.

“The current surge in cases is not just seen in Delhi, but across the country. There are mutations to the virus and people who were not infected before are getting infected. There are no large-scale reports of reinfection,

## VIRUS GRAPH



make the behaviour a part of their lives. If they do not stick to social distancing and wearing of masks, Delhi can very well have a Maharashtra-like situation,” he added.

K. Srinath Reddy, epidemiologist, and president of Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Delhi, also said people going back to their pre-COVID-19 behaviour is the main reason for the spike in cases.

“By January, cases were down and people got a feeling that we have attained some ‘protection’ from the virus and we were free from the major threat. This has led to not following social distancing and wearing of masks,” Dr. Reddy said, adding that indoor crowds have increased and it is more dangerous than the outdoor ones, which keep moving.

## At 607, city reports highest virus cases in over 2 months

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed 607 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, the highest in over two months, taking the total number of cases to 6,45,632, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

One death was reported, taking the total number of deaths to 10,949. A total of 80,253 tests were done in a day. Of the total cases, 6,31,759 people have recovered and there are 2,924 active cases.

## 40,564 vaccinated

Meanwhile, a total of 40,564 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Thursday and there was one minor Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said Delhi has the lowest positivity rate as compared to other major States. He also said Delhi's testing capacity is five times that of the national average.

“The positivity rate is between 0.6-0.8% and since the past 2 months, it is under 1%. For the past 5 months, it has been under 5%. Today, Delhi has a positivity rate of only 0.6%,” he said.

## GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA PUBLIC WORK DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR TENDERS

Website: <http://mahatenders.gov.in>, Email: [jawhar.ee@mahapwd.com](mailto:jawhar.ee@mahapwd.com)

## E-TENDER NOTICE No.28 for 2020-21

Online Tenders (e-tender) in “B1” form for the following works is invited by the Executive Engineer, P.W. Division, Jawhar, (Phone No. 02520-222226) on Government of Maharashtra Electronic Tender Management System from the Registered Contractors in appropriate class of Public Works Department of Maharashtra State.

This tender notice contains 8 (Eight) work and their details can also be viewed on [www.mahapwd.com](http://www.mahapwd.com) and also downloaded from Government of Maharashtra e-tendering Portal <http://mahatenders.gov.in> and sub portal.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. lakhs)	Earnest money (Rs)	Class of Contractor	E-Tender form Fee (non refundable)	Time limit in (Calendar Months)	Head of Account	Remark
1	Renovation of Rural Hospital at Vikramgad, Tal. Vikramgad, Dist. Palghar .	41,82,601	42,000/-	Class V & Above	500/-+18% GST Rs. 90/- Total -590/-	180 Days (Including monsoon)	4059 DPDC	
2	Construction of SH-78 to Nashera Sakhwadi Road Km. 0/00 to 1/500 Tal. Mokhada, Dist. Palghar.	20,55,267/-	21,000/-	Class V (A) & Above	500/- + 18% GST Rs. 90/- Total -590/-	180 Days (Including monsoon)	50545117 Road & Bridge	
3	Construction of VR-79 to Dolhara Borichapada Road Km. 2/00 to 3/00 Tal. Mokhada, Dist. Palghar	21,18,816/-	22,000/-	Class V (A) & Above	500/- + 18% GST Rs. 90/- Total -590/-	180 Days (Including monsoon)	50545117 Road & Bridge	
4	Construction of SH-78 to Saturli Washala Chappalpada Madkachimet Charanwadi Road Km. 0/00 to 1/500 Tal. Mokhada, Dist. Palghar	21,18,3						

Geeta Phogat's cousin found dead in Haryana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Ritika, 17, cousin of Olympic wrestler Geeta Phogat was found dead at Haryana's Charkhi Dadri.

The teenage wrestler was disappointed over having lost Rajasthan State-level wrestling championship by a narrow margin on March 14, said the police.

She was found hanging at her uncle and legendary wrestler Mahavir Singh Phogat's house on March 15, said Sub-Inspector Dilbagh Singh, Station House Officer, Jhunjhunwala Kalan. The incident came to the fore when she did not turn up for dinner and the family members went to check on her.

A post-mortem was conducted and the body handed over to the family. Hailing from Rajasthan, the teenager had been staying with the Phogats since 2016 and training at the wrestling academy run by Mr. Phogat. "She was determined to win the championship, but a narrow defeat left her hugely disappointed," said Mr. Singh. Her cousin Babita Phogat, a Commonwealth Gold Medallist wrestler, in a tweet, said it was a moment of grief for the entire family.

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

Meat shops to remain shut on Tuesdays

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

The meat shops in the city would remain shut on Tuesdays. The decision to this effect was taken at the meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram on Thursday. The licence fee for the meat shops has also been doubled.

In a general meeting, the MCG House decided to hike the licence fee for the meat shops from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000. Among other decisions, it hiked the fine for illegal meat shops from ₹500 to ₹5,000.

# Day 113 of farmers' stir: backdrop shifts, but intensity remains intact

Fewer *langars*, tractors and fluctuating numbers not a sign of weakening resolve

HEMAMI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

The farmers' protest at the Delhi borders entered its 113rd day on Thursday, and the landscape has changed noticeably too. Green-coloured residential structures have replaced the cluster of stacked up tractors and trolleys at the start of the protest.

The makeshift structures have area codes written in bold – especially those built by farmers from Punjab – for others to know the villages they are from. For instance, PB 43 for Samrala, PB 45 for Talwandi Sabo, PB 46 for Tarn Taran and so and so forth.

Sitting inside his makeshift yet *pucca* house, which has a television installed along with newly-bought curtains and fans, at the Singhu border protest site, 70-year-old Kuldeep Singh said that similar structures will be built when summer peaks. The colour, he said, reflects the sunlight and keeps the interior cool.

Another change is more space for walking because of comparatively fewer tractors, besides access to inside



Green-coloured residential structures built by protesting farmers at the Singhu border in the city on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

routes for commuters. The barricades installed inside Singhu village and at its border have been removed. The tractor-trolley show, which used to happen on a regular basis as a show of their strength, has stopped as well.

Over the last few weeks, the number of *langars* has also reduced. However, the bigger ones are still functional. "Most people have started making their food close to where they live. Now, it's more like people have settled down," said

Harvinder Singh from Ludhiana.

## Sustaining intensity

Protesting farmers said their numbers may fluctuate, but the protest will continue until a solution is reached in their favour. "We are all busy with farming now, because it is that time of the year when our field needs us the most. In three weeks, it will be the time to cut the crop. To be able to continue that, people come in shifts from the villages. One thing is clear, no matter what, the protest will

continue even if numbers dwindle," said Hardeep Singh (38) from Kapurthala.

Kashmir Singh (70), from Tarn Taran, said they had come prepared for six months. "It's only been about four months now. We are prepared to stay till next Lok Sabha elections," he said.

Jaswant Singh from Kapurthala said that he had never visited Delhi. "I had no idea that life had this in store for me that I will come to Delhi and stay for this long," he said.

The party sought his removal from the post.

# Baby beaten by minor help still critical

Domestic help felt annoyed at 13-month-old's constant crying

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

The condition of the 13-month-old girl beaten up by a minor domestic help continued to be critical on Thursday.

## Internal injuries

"Baby continues to be on ventilator support. Though her vital parameters are stable as of now, the outcome will depend on the healing of various internal organs over the next few days," said a statement released by Prabhakar Maheswari, Head, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Artemis Hospitals.

The help, aged around 13 years, had felt annoyed due

to the constant crying of the toddler and kicked and punched her out of aggression causing her life-threatening injuries.

The child's parents were out shopping when the incident took place on March 15. "When I returned after an hour, I found my daughter crying inconsolably. The doctor at Artemis Hospital told me that she had fractured four ribs and had injuries

her to W-Partiksha Hospital where the doctor checked her and referred her to Artemis Hospital. The doctor at Artemis Hospital told me that she had fractured four ribs and had injuries

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The minor has been booked for an attempt to murder and causing grievous hurt.

The family claimed the minor was hired through another domestic help working with them for over two years.

The girl's family resides in a flat in a group housing society. Her mother is a software engineer.

# AAP blames Javadekar for 22 cities figuring among world's 30 most polluted

Party demands Minister's resignation

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday alleged that the Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar is responsible for 22 Indian cities being in the top 30 polluted cities in the world.

On one hand, the Delhi government is taking persistent steps to control pollution, and on the other, the Centre isn't doing anything about the eight most polluted cities

SARABJIT BHARDWAJ  
AAP chief spokesperson

removed with immediate effect," he said.

## Kill democracy

AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the BJP-led Centre wants to "kill" democracy by introducing the "unconstitutional" Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021 in Parliament. "On one hand, the Delhi government is taking persistent steps to control pollution, and on the other, the Centre isn't doing anything about the eight most polluted cities

"If everything is going to rest with the L-G, what meaning will elections hold? What happens to the mandate of people? What happens to democracy?" he asked.

The police seized a semi-automatic pistol with three live cartridges, five empty cartridges and the motorcycle used by the accused to commit snatching.

# Man held for shooting at policemen

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man, who was wanted in a case in which two policemen were shot at, was arrested after a brief exchange of fire in east Delhi's Ghazipur, the police said on Thursday.

Accused Adil alias Shaheed, a resident of Delhi's Akbarpur Majra, is allegedly a "notorious snatcher".

During the encounter, Adil sustained bullet injury on his leg and was taken to a hospital.

DCP (Special Cell) Pramod Kumar Kushwah said that on February 25, vehicles were being checked at a police picket in JJ Colony in Balswa Dairy. Adil and his two accomplices opened fire when the police tried to stop them and constable Sandeep sustained serious injuries.

The two accomplices, including a juvenile, were nabbed on March 1.

"When the police spotted Adil on Wednesday, he was asked to surrender. However, he whipped out a pistol and fired at the police team. The policemen fired in retaliation," Mr. Kushwah said.

The police seized a semi-automatic pistol with three live cartridges, five empty cartridges and the motorcycle used by the accused to commit snatching.

# Protest on pedals



Former Union Minister Vijay Goel takes out a cycle rally on Thursday demanding Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's resignation over the pollution levels in the city. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

# Delhi's own school education board registered: official

'Notification detailing modalities soon'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Delhi's own school education board DBSE has been registered and an official notification detailing its modalities is expected soon, according to officials at the Directorate of Education (DoE).

The Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE), which was approved by the Cabinet on March 6, was registered on Tuesday.

"The board was officially registered on Tuesday and is expected to bring a most-awaited reform in the school assessment system."

"To start with, 20 to 25 Delhi government schools will be affiliated to DBSE from the 2021-22 academic session. Consultations are on with principals, teachers and parents concerned to decide upon which schools will be affiliated with the board in the first phase," a senior DoE official said.

According to the official, the modalities are being worked out and a notification detailing everything is expected soon.

The board will have a governing body chaired by the Education Minister. It will also have an executive body for day-to-day functions and will be headed by a CEO. Both bodies will have experts from industries, the education sector, principals

# Facilitate repatriation of man's mortal remains

Court tells MEA to coordinate with Deputy Chief of Missions, Saudi Embassy

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) officials to coordinate with the Deputy Chief of Missions of Saudi Embassy here to facilitate the exhumation and repatriation of the mortal remains of a man, belonging to Hindu community, who was wrongly buried in Saudi Arabia as per Muslim rites.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said that the MEA official should seek cooperation from the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia located in New Delhi "in order to emphasise on the sensitivity of the issue".

At present, there are about 1,000 government and 1,700 private schools in Delhi, nearly all of which are affiliated with the CBSE.

In July last year, the Delhi government had constituted two committees to prepare the scheme and framework for the formation of the State education board and for curriculum reforms.

Announcing the Cabinet approval, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said the present education system focuses only on learning by rote that needs to be changed. He added that high-end technique will be used to teach students of the new education board. He had said that all schools in the national capital will not be brought under the new education board in one go.



Mission to obtain some timeline within which the process of exhumation and repatriation of the body would be completed.

Anju Sharma, in her petition, stated that she is the wife of deceased Sanjeev Kumar, an Indian citizen who passed away on January 24, 2021 at his workplace in Saudi Arabia.

Kumar, an Indian migrant

who worked in Saudi Arabia for 23 years, died due to diabetes, hypertension and cardiac arrest and the mortal remains were kept in Beesh General Hospital, Jizan, Saudi Arabia.

On getting the information, Ms. Sharma and other family members of the deceased requested to repatriate the mortal remains.

"Shockingly, on February 18, the petitioner [Ms. Sharma] was informed that the body of her husband has been buried in Saudi Arabia while the family members of the deceased were waiting for the mortal remains in India," the petition filed through advocate Subhash Chandran K.R. said.

"The officials in Indian Consulate explained that it

was due to a mistake committed by the official translator of Indian Consulate Jeddah, who wrongly mentioned his religion as 'Muslim' in the death certificate," the plea said.

The MEA stated that in the present case, the burial took place on February 17, 2021, without informing the Indian Consulate, which could be due to the protocol being followed during COVID-19.

The MEA said immediately upon being informed of the burial, the Indian Consulate took steps by writing communications to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jeddah as well as to the Governor of Jizan Region, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

# HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT "CORRIGENDUM"

The Tender invited vide this office NIT No. 7131-7180 dated 11.11.2020 and was opened on 04-12-2020 but some administrative reasons it was postponed to open on 28.12.2020 and again due to model code of conduct the invited tender was postponed to open on 28.01.2021, but again due to some administrative reasons invited tender was postponed to open on 18.03.2021 due to administrative reasons. But now some administrative and technical reasons the invited tender is hereby cancelled. The detail of the invited tender is as under:

Sr. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)	Cost of Tender	Time	Eligible firms/ class
1.	C/o link road from Shamsherpur to Nawada via Heerpur Matratlon Rampurh road Km. 0/0 to 7/270 under NABARD RIDF-XXVI. (SH-F/C, Missing cross drainage works, Metalling, Tarring, side drain, Parapets and road sign boards including five years maintenance).	Rs. 3,03,61,000/-	Rs. 6,06,000/-	5000/-	Eighteen months	A Class
2.	Improvement of road including metalling and tarring and cross drainage works on Jamnialla to Bodhwala bridge via Rihala Basti in Gram Pancharat Pardon, Tehsil Paonta Sahib, District Sirsa (HP). (C/O 5/7 mtrs wide road including retaining walls, earth filling, C/O cross drainage works, P/L granular sub-base, WBM Grade-I and II, Premix Carpet Surfacing, Cement concrete pavement road, C/O essential parapets and drains in Km. 0/0 to 2/576) under NABARD RIDF-XXVI.	Rs. 2,13,61,000/-	Rs. 4,26,000/-	5000/-	Eighteen months	A Class

Executive Engineer,  
Paonta B&R Division,  
HP PWD., Paonta Sahib.

HP / 6630/20-21

Corrigendum, Addendum, Extension if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time.

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# Ruckus in Haryana Assembly over damages recovery Bill

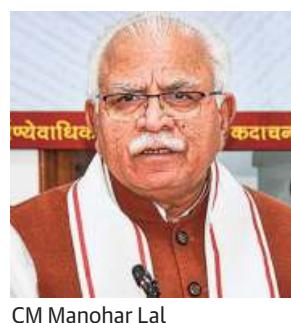
Its sole aim is to target farmers protesting against farm laws, says Opposition

**VIKAS VASUDEVA**  
CHANDIGARH

Heated arguments were witnessed in the Haryana Assembly on Thursday between treasury benches and opposition Congress, as 'Haryana Recovery of Damages to Property During Disturbance to Public Order Bill, 2021' was passed.

The Congress MLAs stormed the well of the House, shouting slogan against the Bill and demanding its withdrawal. It claimed that Bill was aimed at strangling democracy.

**'Bill on public demand'**  
Home Minister Anil Vij, who earlier introduced the Bill, said it has been brought on public demand. "The Congress should clarify are they with people who are in-



CM Manohar Lal

the liability, to assess the damages caused and to award compensation.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal said that the 2.5 crore people of the State have every right over its land and it is the responsibility of the State government to protect it. "For this purpose, the Haryana Recovery of Damages to Property during Disturbance to Public Order Bill, 2021 was passed," said Mr. Lal, talking to reporters.

He said the Bill has nothing to do with the agitation of farmers surrounding the new farm laws.

**'Necessary to instil fear'**  
"It is necessary to instil fear in the minds of those who damage property and this is our constitutional legal system. In a democracy eve-

ryone has the right to speak and protest peacefully, but no one has the right to damage property. This Bill will determine the responsibility of those who damage property as well as ensure compensation to the victims," Mr. Lal added.

Leader of Opposition and senior Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who forcefully opposed the bill inside the House, said the Bill would strangle democracy and demanded the government to take it back.

Mr. Hooda, later told reporters that the Bill provides for recovery from peaceful protesters, which, he said was an attempt to violate the fundamental rights as every citizen has the right to peaceful protest in a democracy.

# Outrage over Rajasthan textbook content

FIR registered by police on a complaint lodged by Cong. minority cell leader

**MOHAMMED IQBAL**  
JAIPUR

The Jaipur Police on Thursday registered a criminal case after the social activists and Muslim groups in Rajasthan expressed outrage over some contents of a school textbook and a guidebook on political science, which seek to link religion with terrorism. The textbook is published by the Rajasthan State Textbook Board.

In a chapter on "Terrorism, criminalisation of politics and corruption", the Class XII textbook asks a question, "What do you understand by Islamic terrorism?" A multiple choice question, "Which one of the following is not the main objective of Islamic terrorism?" gives the options of establishing a Muslim nation, implementing Islamic laws and principles, establishing peace, and resisting Western non-Muslim powers with violence.

The contents in the book, published for the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education, were reportedly introduced during the previous Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime. Bhanwar Singh Rathore, Associate Professor at Department of Political Science, Government College, Jodhpur, has been listed in the textbook as the convenor, author and translator.

The answer key given in the students' guidebook, published by Jaipur-based Shri Prakashan, states that Islamic terrorism is a "form of Islam" and goes on to elaborate on the subject. It says Islamic terrorism became "very powerful during the last 20 to 30 years" and had brought havoc to the world by "suicide attacks, unlimited barbarity, blackmail, demand for ransom and heinous killings".

"Islamic terrorists dedicate themselves to their community and commit the heinous crimes in the name of their religion and Allah," the answer states, adding that terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir was "purely religious" and could be put in the category of separatism.

## Case registered

A First Information Report was registered at Lal Koti Police Station in Jaipur under Sections 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of Indian Penal Code on a complaint lodged by Mohsin Rasheed, general secretary of the PraDash Congress Committee's minority cell.

Mr. Rasheed said the books directly associate the religion with terrorism by repeatedly using "Islamic terrorism" and promoted hatred for Islam and Mus-

lims. "Besides provoking and humiliating Muslim students, teachers and the community, it is also an attempt to destroy the unity and integrity of the country," he said in his complaint, while demanding action against those responsible for writing and approving the textbook.

Rajasthan Muslim Forum member Naim Rabbani held the Congress government responsible for not removing the "objectionable contents" in the last two years. He said while the BJP had inserted the reading material matching with its ideology during its rule, it was strange that the Congress had not dropped it during its exercise on revision of textbooks.

The Muslim Parishad Santhan, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) and Popular Front of India have also demanded that the textbook and guidebook be withdrawn and the syllabus of political science revised.

## Night curfew extended in Punjab

CM Amarinder cautions of tough measures as cases spike

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday announced a two-hour extension in the night curfew in the State's nine districts worst affected by COVID-19.

He cautioned of several more tough measures and restrictions over the next few days.

Night curfew will now be in place from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., instead of 11 p.m. to 5 a.m., in the districts of Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Patiala, Mohali, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala and Ropar. All these districts are reporting more than 100 cases daily. The announcement came as Punjab's daily cases shot up to 2,039 cases with 35 deaths on March 17.

Addressing a press conference to mark the completion of four years of his government, the Chief Minister said the COVID-19 situation in the State was

critical and he was going to be tough.

Several stringent measures, including restrictions on gatherings, will be announced after discussions with the State government's expert team over the next couple of days, he said.

Whether these will include restrictions on political gatherings was also something that will be decided as per the medical expert team's advice, the Chief Minister added.

### People may not like it'

"I won't be easy on the people. People may not like it, but it's my duty," he said, adding that he hoped the daily case load won't cross 3,000, as projected by some experts.

With 283 COVID-19 patients in high-dependency units (on Oxygen) and another 27 on ventilators, the situation is dangerous, said Captain Amarinder, urging State on the issue.

ing people to go to the doctor and get themselves tested even if they feel slightly unwell.

While his government was taking all possible measures to check the spread of the virus, the Chief Minister hoped the Centre would accept his suggestion (submitted at the Prime Minister's meeting yesterday) on opening up the vaccination to younger people in the worst hit areas and also to all those in public dealings.

To a question on Himachal Pradesh CM's statement seeking curbs on people coming in from Punjab for pilgrimage and religious purposes, Capt. Amarinder said he was not in favour of restricting religious movement. But the COVID-19 problem needs to be controlled, and an appropriate decision will be taken when he gets a formal letter from the Chief Minister of the neighbouring State on the issue.

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**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Friday:** Thunderstorm with lightning, hail/gusty winds likely at isolated places over east Rajasthan, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Telangana, south interior Karnataka and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-33.9	18.2	18.2	Kozhikode	...-34.8	25.8	25.8
Ahmedabad	...-38.1	22.0	22.0	Kurnool	...-37.1	24.2	24.2
Aizawl	...-28.8	10.8	10.8	Lucknow	...-35.1	18.7	18.7
Allahabad	...-37.6	18.1	18.1	Madurai	...-36.2	22.4	22.4
Bengaluru	...-33.6	19.8	19.8	Mangaluru	...-36.1	24.4	24.4
Bhopal	0.4	35.5	19.2	Mumbai	...-36.0	24.4	24.4
Bhubaneswar	...-38.2	25.2	25.2	Mysoor	...-34.0	19.0	19.0
Chandigarh	...-34.8	17.0	17.0	New Delhi	...-35.3	16.4	16.4
Chennai	...-33.0	24.7	24.7	Patna	...-35.2	18.8	18.8
Coimbatore	...-36.3	21.0	21.0	Poorni Blair	...-31.9	24.2	24.2
Dehradun	...-33.3	14.6	14.6	Puducherry	...-32.4	22.2	22.2
Gangtok	7.2	19.1	11.4	Pune	...-36.9	20.0	20.0
Goa	...-33.6	25.6	25.6	Raipur	...-36.8	22.6	22.6
Guwahati	...-34.1	18.5	18.5	Ranchi	...-33.8	17.8	17.8
Hubballi	...-34.0	21.0	21.0	Shillong	...-23.1	12.1	12.1
Hyderabad	...-36.3	22.2	22.2	Shimla	...-21.8	11.0	11.0
Imphal	...-31.4	10.6	10.6	Srinagar	...-17.9	4.7	4.7
Jaipur	...-35.8	23.0	23.0	Thiruvananthapuram	...-33.9	24.2	24.2
Kochi	...-32.4	26.4	26.4	Tiruchi	...-35.7	22.6	22.6
Kohima	...-22.0	10.8	10.8	Vijayawada	...-36.4	23.2	23.2
Kolkata	...-36.3	23.4	23.4	Visakhapatnam	...-32.6	25.2	25.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	37	68	65	95	127	ORANGE
Bengaluru	...7	72	41	114	113	ORANGE
Chennai	...8	17	56	74	68	ORANGE
Delhi	17	37	46	374	349	RED
Hyderabad	...52	28	101	103	103	ORANGE
Kolkata	31	20	30	246	182	ORANGE
Lucknow	15	95	36	399	380	ORANGE
Mumbai	21	50	267	225	225	RED
Pune	...6	63	57	151	113	ORANGE
Visakhapatnam	10	56	26	78	101	ORANGE

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO<sub>2</sub>: 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<sub>x</sub>: 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

# Maharashtra hits new peak with 25,833 COVID-19 cases

Active case tally goes past 1.66 lakh; Mumbai reports surge of 2,877 cases

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
PUNE

Maharashtra touched a new high by reporting 25,833 fresh COVID-19 cases on Thursday as its active case tally rose to 1,66,353.

A total of 12,764 patients were discharged in the last 24 hours and the State's recovery rate has dipped to 90.79%. However, the surge has to be viewed in context of a robust 1.21 lakh samples being tested. With 58 deaths (of which 38 were recorded in the last 48 hours and the rest from an earlier period), the total death toll rose to 53,138. While the total case tally has reached 23,96,340 the tally of recoveries stands at 21,75,565.

**1.21 lakh samples tested**

"Of 1,78,35,495 laboratory samples tested thus far, 23,96,340 (with the case positivity rising to 13.35%) have returned positive, with over 1,21,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate, adding that the State's case fatality rate had incrementally dipped to 2.22%.

Pune district reported over

5,000 new cases to take its total case tally to 4,55,016. As per State Health Department figures, three deaths were reported as the toll rose to 8,161. As per district authorities, the active case tally has crossed the 26,000 mark, while the death toll has crossed 9,460.

Mumbai city reported a surge of 2,877 cases, taking its total case tally to 3,52,851, of which 17,153 are active. Eight fatalities took the city's death toll to 11,559.

**Plan to impose night curfew**

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar spoke of a strict imposition of night curfew in Mumbai while stating that the civic body administration was considering shifting crowded markets to new sites. She appealed to all citizens to work together to prevent the imposition of a lockdown.

Cases continued to mount in Aurangabad in Marathwada which reported more than 1,600 new cases to take its total tally to 64,012, of which 10,340 were active. No deaths, however, were reported as the total death toll stayed constant at 1,311.

Nashik in north Maharashtra reported a massive surge of more than 2,400 new cases, taking its total tally to 1,44,516, of which 11,037 are active, while two deaths were posted its total death toll to 2,108.

**All-time high spike in Nagpur**

Nagpur district in Vidarbha reported an all-time high surge of nearly 4,000 cases as its total case tally reached 1,85,852, of which 24,209 are active. With eight more fatalities, its total death toll has reached 3,621.

In western Maharashtra, Satara reported 297 new cases and one fatality as the total case tally rose to 61,309, of which 1,673 are active, while the total death toll has reached 1,861. Sangli reported 84 cases, but zero deaths as the district's total case tally reached 52,149, of which only 799 are active. Kolhapur district reported 67 cases and no deaths as well as its tally reached 50,331, of which just 494 are active.

A total of 8,13,211 people across the State are in home quarantine and 7,079 are in institutional quarantine facilities.

## Sharjeel Usmani records statement with Pune police

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
PUNE

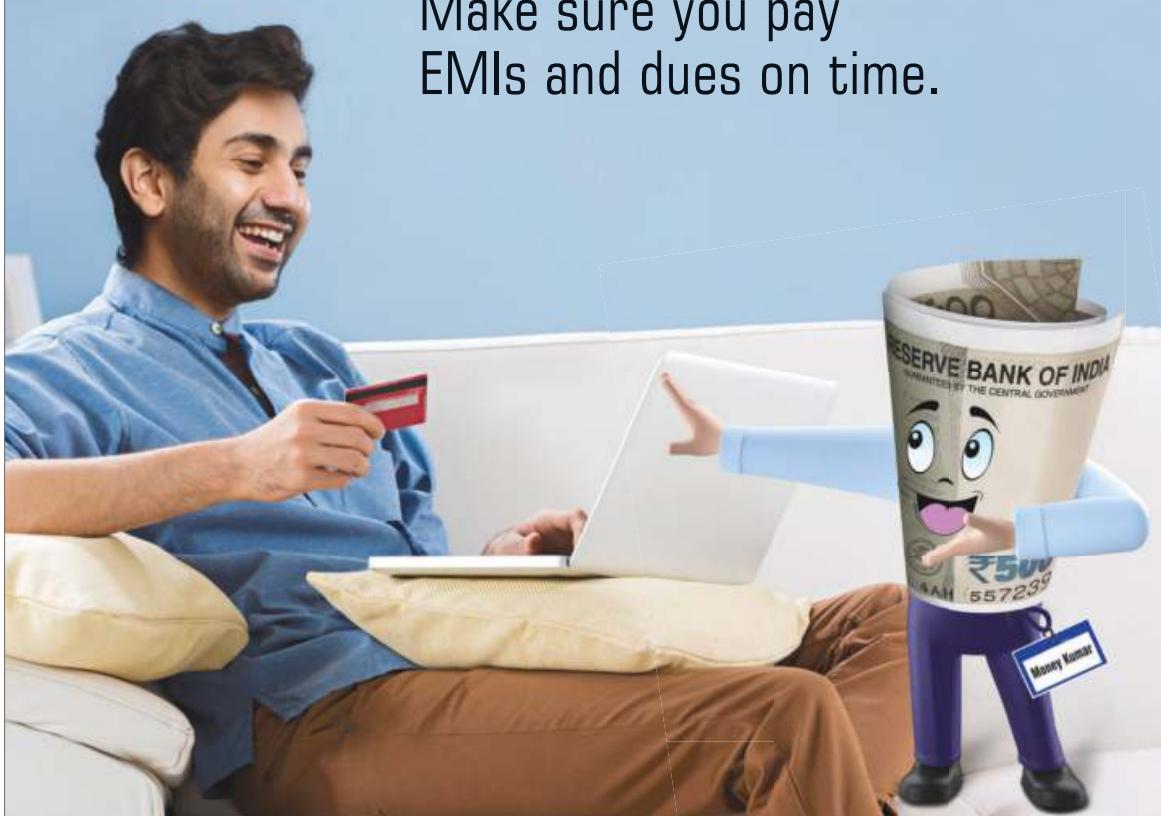
Aligarh Muslim University alumnus Sharjeel Usmani recorded his statement with the Pune police on Thursday in connection with his speech made at the Elgaar Parishad conclave held in the city in January this year, a senior official said. Mr. Usmani had earlier recorded his statement with the city police in this connection on March 10.

"Usmani on Thursday visited Swargate police station, where the case against him has been registered for his alleged speech. The police recorded his statement," the official said. Deputy Commissioner of Police Sagar Patil said, "Usmani recorded his statement again following the high court's directive."

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**TENDER DOCUMENT**  
(Technical Bid-Volume-I)

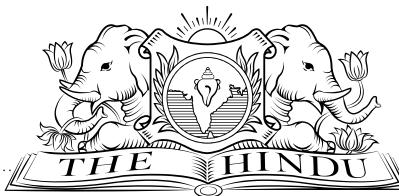
**TOP SHEET**  
E-NITS. No. 50/PHA of 2020-21  
E-TENDER FOR

**S.No** | **Name of Work**

1. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC including Electrical/Mechanical Works of Water Supply Scheme Cherso (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
2. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC including Electrical/Mechanical Works of Water Supply Scheme Sal Nazbal (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
3. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC including Face Lifting of Structures & Electrical/Mechanical Works of Water Supply Scheme Zadipora (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
4. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC including Face Lifting of Structures & Electrical/Mechanical Works of Water Supply Scheme Mohanjiji (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
5. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC including Face Lifting of Structures & Electrical/Mechanical Works of Water Supply Scheme Udaipora/Karlibagh (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
6. Providing Water Supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC of Water Supply Scheme Karumallabathoor (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
7. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC of Water Supply Scheme Shojan Gujrabasti (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
8. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC of Water Supply Scheme Zardihard (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
9. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC of Water Supply Scheme Gulistan (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.
10. Providing water supply facilities for the coverage of FHTC of Water Supply Scheme Satoora (under JJM) including maintenance for a period of three years which includes 12 months DLP.

The bidding documents consisting of eligibility criteria, specification, bill of quantities (B.O.Q) set of terms & conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the e-procurement Portal <http://jtktenders.gov.in> as per schedule of dates given below:-

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>			<b>Time</b>
		<b>DD</b>	<b>MM</b>	<b>YY</b>	
1	Publishing date of NIT	17	03	2021	09:00 AM
2	Download start date	17	03	2021	09:00 AM
3	Bid submission start date	17	03	2021	09:0



## Aadhaar as a hurdle

Inefficiencies in the Aadhaar project should not come in the way of welfare delivery

The Supreme Court, on Wednesday, did the right thing by terming as serious the allegation by a petitioner that three crore ration cards were cancelled for not being linked with the Aadhaar database and that these were connected to reported starvation deaths in some States. The unique identification scheme has been in existence for more than a decade and recent data has estimated that nearly 90% of India's projected population has been assigned the Aadhaar number. Following the Court's judgment in 2018, upholding the Aadhaar programme as a reasonable restriction on individual privacy to fulfil welfare requirements and dignity – a 4-1 majority Bench had also rejected a review petition in January 2021 – questions about the scheme's validity for public purposes have been put to rest. But that has not meant that concerns about the failures in the use of the identity verification project have been allayed. These include inefficiencies in biometric authentication and updating, linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts, and the use of the Aadhaar payment bridge. With benefits under the PDS, the NREGA and LPG subsidy, among other essentials, requiring individuals to have the Aadhaar number, inefficiencies and failures have led to inconvenience and suffering for the poor. There are reports that show failures in authentication having led to delays in the disbursal of benefits and, in many cases, in their denial due to cancellation of legitimate beneficiary names. The government had promised that exemption mechanisms that would allow for overriding such failures will help beneficiaries still avail subsidies and benefits despite system failures. That has been the response by the government to the recent petition as well, but reports from States such as Jharkhand from 2017, for example, suggest that there have been starvation deaths because of the denial of benefits and subsidies.

Biometric authentication failures are but expected of a large scale and technology-intensive project such as the UID. Despite being designed to store finger and iris scans of most users, doubts about the success rates of authentication and the generation of "false negatives" have always persisted, more so for labourers and tribal people. Those engaged in manual and hard labour, for example, are susceptible to fingerprint changes over time. In practice, beneficiaries have tended to use Aadhaar cards as identity markers but there have been instances of people losing cards and being denied benefits. Given the scale of the problem, the central and State governments would do well to allow alternative identification so that genuine beneficiaries are not denied due subsidies. The question of fraud can still be addressed by the use of other verification cards and by decentralised disbursal of services at the panchayat level.

## For a reset

There is no hope of a sudden improvement in U.S.-China ties, but the Alaska meet is a start. As top diplomats from the U.S. and China begin their meeting in Alaska, there is no question that their conversation will be a difficult one. The meeting, between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Yang Jiechi, CCP Politburo member and Director, Central Foreign Affairs Commission, accompanied by U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi, comes on the back of tensions that spiralled during the Trump administration around trade tariffs, 5G telecommunication, tech espionage, Chinese maritime actions and U.S. sanctions on China, and further exacerbated over the pandemic, which Mr. Trump called the "China virus". Biden administration officials have said that they will bring up China's crackdown in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, Chinese aggression against U.S. allies and partners, in particular pressure on Australia over trade bans, aggression against Japan in the Senkaku islands and even the PLA's incursions over the LAC, which China considers bilateral issues. Mr. Blinken prefaced the Alaska meet with visits to Seoul and Tokyo where he promised an American "pushback" to China, and he goes into the talks with the backing of the recent summit-level Quad conversations, with a commitment to ensuring a free Indo-Pacific. For its part, China is seeking a reversal of Trump-era policies, and structured dialogue to take forward ties from the point they have reached, arguably their lowest since the Nixon era. In particular, China wants an end to the U.S.'s trade sanctions, restrictions on American firms manufacturing in China and visa bans, and a reopening of its consulate in Houston.

Clearly, the scene is set for an extended airing of grievances, and expectations are low of any breakthrough, but the fact that the meeting is happening at all sends the signal that both sides are prepared to engage each other. Mr. Blinken's formulation that the U.S. will be "competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be and adversarial when it must be" with China, chalks up climate change, the COVID-19 challenge and global economic recovery as areas of possible discussion. Research quoted by the World Economic Forum predicted that the U.S.-China tariff war itself could cost the world \$600 billion. Afghanistan is another area where the U.S. and China have held three meetings last year as part of the "Troika" with Russia, and a common peace strategy could be another helpful conversation. The two sides are expected to discuss a possible summit meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping. While New Delhi has a litany of its own grievances with Beijing, it too would benefit if a "Cold War" between the U.S. and China is averted, much like the rest of the world that has found itself akin to the proverbial grass when two elephants fight.

# Biden and the West Asian tinderbox

The U.S. is a sunset power in the region and the President faces challenges in reshaping American engagement here



STANLY JOHNY

**I**t took just 36 days for United States President Joe Biden to order his first air strike abroad since taking office. On February 25, the U.S. bombed facilities used by Iran-backed militias in Syria, in retaliation for a rocket attack at an American base in Erbil, the capital of the Iraqi Kurdistan, earlier in the month, allegedly by pro-Iran Shia militants in Iraq. The next day, the administration released an intelligence report on the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate on October 2, 2018, which concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the operation. Separately, the Biden administration has taken steps to revive the Iran nuclear deal, and asked the Islamic Republic to comply with the terms of the multilateral agreement that was reached in 2015 but abandoned by former U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018.

### The strategic reality

These three decisions may not be directly interlinked, but they draw a broad outline of Mr. Biden's West Asia policy. Almost all American Presidents since the Second World War have left deep policy imprints on the region. Barack Obama and Mr. Trump sought to refocus away from West Asia to East Asia where China is rising, but they did it differently. Mr. Obama identified Iran's nuclear programme as his primary foreign policy challenge in the region – as it could end Israel's nu-

clear monopoly and trigger an arms race – and sought to address it diplomatically. This was also out of a reluctant conviction that going to war with Iran would be too risky.

Mr. Trump took a more hostile approach towards Iran. He abandoned the nuclear deal, reimposed sanctions on Tehran, offered unconditional support to Saudi Arabia and Israel in taking on Iranian proxies, and even assassinated a top Iranian General. But Mr. Trump was also careful not to open a direct war with Iran. He ordered the hit on Qassim Soleimani in Iraq, not inside Iran. When Iran retaliated by firing missiles at American bases in Iraq or when it shot down an American drone over the Gulf, Mr. Trump chose not to order counter attacks.

Mr. Biden faces the same strategic reality, with a greater urgency. The competition with China has revived memories of the Cold War, and the administration has moved fast to build an alliance system in the Indo-Pacific. Mr. Biden cannot get stuck in West Asia for too long, but he cannot just leave a region, which has some of America's closest allies, and hosts thousands of its troops, either. His initial decisions suggest that he, like Mr. Obama, has identified the Iranian nuclear programme as the key challenge. Because, if that is not tackled, it could trigger a chain of incidents, drawing both the U.S. and its allies into another prolonged conflict in the region which would slow down his pivot to the Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Obama was narrowly focused on the Iran nuclear programme. (He did not use force against Iran or its proxies that could have endangered the nuclear talks.) Mr. Biden, on the oth-



er hand, has set a more ambitious plan in motion. By offering talks to Iran while at the same time bombing Iranian proxies and ending support for Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen and releasing an intelligence exposé on its de facto leader, he is seeking to strike a balance between the region's two key powers – one an ally and the other a rival.

### The Iran deal as ticking clock

But Mr. Biden faces at least three key challenges in his bid to reshape the U.S.'s engagement with the region. One, his decision to bomb pro-Iran militants in Syria in retaliation for an attack by Iran-backed militants in Iraq could be read in Iran as a weak show of strength rather than a tough warning. Mr. Trump ordered the Soleimani hit in Iraq. Mr. Biden picked Syria, further away from Iran. When Soleimani was killed, the Trump administration claimed that the attack reestablished America's deterrence. But in fact, Shia militants continued to target American positions inside Iraq with rocket attacks. Even after Mr. Biden's Syria strikes, attacks targeting U.S. presence continued in Iraq. After Mr. Biden stopped America's support for the Yemen war, the Houthis, backed by Iran, also stepped up attacks against Saudi Arabia.

While attacks and counter attacks continue, Mr. Biden is losing

precious time to revive the nuclear deal. Iran is going to presidential elections in June. Mr. Biden's best practical way to contain Iran's nuclear programme is by reviving the deal. And his best bet to revive the deal is to do it before President Hassan Rouhani, whose government signed the original agreement in 2015, leaves office. The clock is ticking.

### Saudi Arabia and Israel

Two, if the U.S.'s dependence on Saudi Arabia has reduced in recent years, Riyadh's dependence on Washington has also come down in a changing West Asia. The U.S. did nothing when Saudi oil facilities came under attack in September 2019. The Saudis know that America's ability in shaping geopolitical outcome in West Asia is in decline. Today, there are more power centres in the region – from Turkey to Russia. MBS, as the Saudi Crown Prince is widely called, has established a good working relationship with Russia's Vladimir Putin. Foreseeing some blowback from the Biden administration, he moved quickly to mend ties with Qatar, even ignoring the scepticism from the United Arab Emirates.

On March 7, in an apparent defiance of America's call for an end to the war on Yemen, Saudi Arabia carried out massive air strikes in the country amid Houthi attacks. Unless there is a palace coup, MBS is set to become the monarch when his father, King Salman, leaves the throne. Washington will have to deal with him, and when it does, he will have more options on his side than his father, uncles and grandfather had.

Three, the elephant in the room is Israel. How is Mr. Biden going to fit Israel into his larger scheme of things for West Asia? If Mr. Biden

talks human rights to Saudi Arabia and ignores the rights abuses by Israel, which is being investigated by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories, his policy would look hollow. If he "holds Iran accountable" for the actions of Shia militias by ordering air strikes and does nothing to stop Israel's ever-expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank, he would be accused of double standards. And if he takes a tougher line towards Israel and pushes them to revive the stalled peace process with the Palestinians at a time when his administration seeks to engage Iran for the nuclear deal, it would further infuriate the Israelis, who in the past had carried out intelligence operations and targeted killings inside Iran. An angry Israel can, to the least, torpedo Mr. Biden's Iran policy.

### China is the focus now

Mr. Biden does not have an easy way out of the West Asian tinderbox. Mr. Obama had narrower goals. Success for Mr. Biden would depend largely on how he manages to balance between the three key powers in the region. He may be hoping that a hybrid strategy of tough posturing, use of limited force, and diplomatic outreach would yield results.

It would have worked 20 years ago when the U.S. push for democracy had forced even Egypt's Hosni Mubarak to hold multiparty elections. The U.S. today is a sunset power in West Asia, and its strategic focus is on China. Both America's allies and rivals know that. And in geopolitics, consequences need not necessarily follow the plan of action.

stanly.johny@thehindu.co.in

# Dismantle the power edifices, empower those unseen

Tamil Nadu awaits a political, economic and social environment that affirms marginalised identities with confidence



T.M. KRISHNA

**A**t a recent public interaction, A. Kamal Haasan, the leader of the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM)-led political front – which positions itself as an alternative to the long-standing Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led political formations – stated that his party's application form for aspiring candidates had no column for caste. This was in response to a question whether Tamil Nadu will ever transcend caste-based politics.

### Merit and identity

An often-paraded argument by the caste privileged is that merit is an untainted guiding light while identity is a biased lens. Merit is an absolute, a metric detached from social variances and undulations. It is not a product of society. On the contrary, it is a measure that circumvents societal discrimination. One solution advanced is the removal of the 'caste column' from all application forms.

Kamal Haasan speaks in the same vein. By the simple act of removing one column, presto, his

party becomes casteless; and will, consequently, lead to caste-free politics. A meritocracy will be born!

### The field is far from level

People enjoying caste privilege will no doubt demand that caste should not be a dominant determinant in electoral politics. If you belong to brahminical or politically dominant castes, it is convenient and self-serving to demand this false level-playing field. But the field is far from level. It is so uneven that those who have been pushed down the slopes into the crevasses and forced to remain there will not be represented unless they are specifically identified and representatives of their communities gain the power to speak for themselves.

When you are a Dalit, it matters that you are being represented by someone who shares your lived experience. The community lives on the margins, not just economically but in every socio-political sphere. This results in marginal political power and, in such an environment, the agency to speak for Dalits remaining with Dalits is essential. This is not very different from an African-American tending to identify with their own or women rallying around women candidates. Elimination of caste requires the dismantling of edifices of power and the empowering of those who remain unseen. These



two seemingly opposite actions need to work in tandem in order to attain equity. A reserved constituency is an important political tool for Dalits. B.R. Ambedkar spoke of the 'Annihilation of Caste' but that did not mean keeping it out of political action. Rather, quite the opposite. An annihilation of caste can be achieved only when we create a political, economic and social environment that affirms marginalised identities with vigour and confidence. Parties such as the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi with their thrust on Dalit political presence, are, therefore, indispensable to bringing about political parity, making that caste column central to empowerment.

### Caste always lingers

The caste-empowered close their eyes to the reality of how caste operates. Biases are hereditary societal implants. When a provision for self-identification by caste is done away with, the candidate presumes he has elevated himself to a trans-caste pedestal. This is a delusion. The party, on its part, believes that prior social work for the

marginalised or politically progressive answers given in an interview reveal the individual's 'above-caste distinction' attitude. But this is not how the story unravels. Caste always lingers and operates in ways that go unnoticed.

Even the most well-intentioned Forward Caste or Other Backward Caste politicians need to keep themselves in check. This will only be achieved if every political party consciously and deliberately looks for candidates from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and fields them as such, up-front. Importantly, this must not be confined to the obligatory reserved seats. I would have been far more impressed had Kamal Haasan said that his party made a conscious effort to identify Dalit and tribal candidates and allocated a certain percentage of seats for them. Caste is such an enclosed identity that parties that present a progressive face take the route of negating its active presence rather than taking it head-on.

The counter argument would be that the Gounder and Thevar caste groups consolidated themselves only because of caste-based politics. What this perspective ignores is the fact that these were already socio-culturally dominant communities and they further consolidated this inherent position. Communities such as Vanniyars also formed caste-based formations, further squeezing Dalits

into a corner. Therefore, to speak of caste-identity-less candidate selection is problematic. We need to break powerful caste-centric groupisms but that will not happen unless we first recognise that such communities come together only because of their caste might within the social order. Whereas, Dalit communities find it much harder to assemble and are always viewed with suspicion by all. The brahmins', complaint about casteism in Tamil Nadu politics does not stem from their social, cultural or economic marginalisation. Their frustration comes from their removal from the high seats and being relegated to the gallery.

The demolition of caste from Tamil Nadu politics needs to begin on the ground. Only then will it reflect in elections. At the same time, despite many serious failings, we have to applaud Tamil Nadu for the social progress that it has made over the decades. This is the direct result of robust, socially aware politics. But the caste column from a form can only be removed when Dalits and Tribals feel that it has become redundant and their caste identity irrelevant; not when those who will always benefit from caste proclaim castelessness in order to feel good about their hearts being in the right place.

T.M. Krishna is a musician and author

## 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.

### Surge, wave warning

The Prime Minister's warning of another possible nationwide COVID-19 outbreak is cause for concern. The economy is limping and we cannot afford to have a second wave. Political parties should make themselves more responsible towards the welfare of the people.

The vaccination drive should be spruced up while those who have had the jab should not see it as a licence to roam freely.

M.B. MADHUSUDANAN,  
Chennai

It is a pity that around three crore ration cards which confer a statutory right of food upon the poor have been cancelled across the country because they could not be biometrically linked to Aadhaar. The National Food Security Act, 2013 is a remarkable piece of

legislation enacted in independent India that entitles a reasonable quota of ration at nominal prices to especially citizens. The Central government has been trying to ensure transparency in the field of public distribution with various progressive reforms and also save the public exchequer a huge sum. However, the ultimate responsibility of identifying beneficiaries and the issuance of ration cards lies with the State governments only. So States should have informed the beneficiaries well in advance of their requirement to avoid this unfortunate development (Page 1, "Serious issue if 3 cr. rations cards were cancelled, says SC", March 18). The State governments have abdicated their responsibility in this regard.

SATISH REDDY KANAGANTI,  
Tippurthy, Nalgonda, Telangana

■ Whether the government admits or not, the linkage of Aadhaar with ration cards remains a big issue at the ground level. As Aadhaar seeding is being insisted upon, it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that all ration card holders are issued an Aadhaar number. Since people living in remote and tribal areas may not be aware of and conversant with the procedures, arrangements should be made at all panchayat offices to issue the Aadhaar number after adequate notice.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,  
Hyderabad

■ The report shocks, more so for a nation which produces food grain in excess of its consumption and also in a position to export it. It exposes the missing links in food distribution. The combined failure of various agencies responsible is what

has led to this welfare crisis.

BALASUBRAMANIAM PAVANI,  
Secunderabad

■ The government must moderate its zeal for blanket digitisation of life, and it cannot forget disadvantaged citizens. Living in remote areas with little connectivity is a reality and government policies must be inclusive and respect the lives of all its citizens.

MATTHEW ADUKANIL,  
Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu

■ The report shocks, more so for a nation which produces food grain in excess of its consumption and also in a position to export it. It exposes the missing links in food distribution. The combined failure of various agencies responsible is what

but has also introduced an element of social injustice among taxpayers. While non-ration card holders do not get freebies, they will have to bear the burden of costs the State will incur on freebies. If political parties want to distribute white goods such as washing machines they must do so at their own cost rather than fritter away the State's resources. It is time we have a law prohibiting the distribution of unmerited freebies by the state.

KANGAYAM R. NARASIMHAN,  
Chennai

■ Control the freebies Freebie politics in Tamil Nadu is being carried to an extremity by political parties, especially the AIADMK. It is even more disturbing that the Election Commission of India does not seem inclined to stop such reckless misuse of the State's resources. Freebie economics has not only taken precedence over genuine economic progress

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semester examination. They have been accessing their profile page on the official website but have reached a dead end. The final date for submission of the online application has ended. The helpline numbers mentioned on the website do not work. The college authorities have directed us to visit the Salt Lake Campus of MAKAUT on the ground that the issue is related to the university and colleges usually do not deal with such issues. The security personnel at Salt Lake have been evasive in their response to our grievances and have even tried to trivialise our issue. Many of us revisited the Salt Lake Campus on March 12, but the authorities have been non-committal. One response has been, "The loss of one year is not a big deal."

ARKAPRAVA PAL,<br

# ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2021

## SWOT ANALYSIS

# Congress under siege in its bastion

The party alliance faces a formidable challenge in Puducherry from a resurgent AINRC spearheaded by Rangasamy

M. DINESH VARMA  
PUDUCHERRY

In over a decade since the Congress vacated the throne of power at the Centre, the Union Territory of Puducherry has clung to its reputation as a Congress bastion. In the three Assembly elections since 2006, the only time it defaulted to a worst-case scenario alternative was to choose an offshoot of the Congress, the regional All India N.R. Congress (AINRC).

However, that reputation as one of the last remaining Congress bastions in the country comes under severe test as the Union Territory braces for the April 6 Assembly elections to the 30-member House.

This year, the Congress-DMK-Left-VCK parties under the Secular Democratic Progressive Alliance (SDPA) have a mountain to climb to overcome a resurgent AINRC spearheaded by its founder and former Chief Minister N. Rangasamy, who leads the NDA, a confident BJP that controls the nomination of three nominated legislators to the Assembly and is contesting nine seats, and the AIADMK with its sway over a



**Campaign trail:** Former Chief Minister of Puducherry N. Rangasamy rides pillion with former Health Minister Malladi Krishna Rao during the AINRC's election campaign in Puducherry on Thursday. ■ PTI

couple of strongholds in Puducherry and Karaikal.

### Series of exits

The Congress, which has been embattled by a series of exits of influential leaders that eventually culminated in the fall of its government in a trust vote on February 22, barely days before elections were notified, bears no resemblance to the party that rode to power in alliance with the DMK in 2016.

Party workers fumed when the principal ally, the

DMK, walked away from the negotiating table with an unprecedented 13 seats in its kitty against 15 for the Congress and one each for the VCK and the CPI. The fire was lit on the tinderbox when the DMK fielded candidates in key constituencies where the Congress believed it stood a fighting chance and a PCC meeting to screen candidates erupted in protests.

**CM candidate**  
The NDA alliance of the AINRC-BJP-AIADMK too has

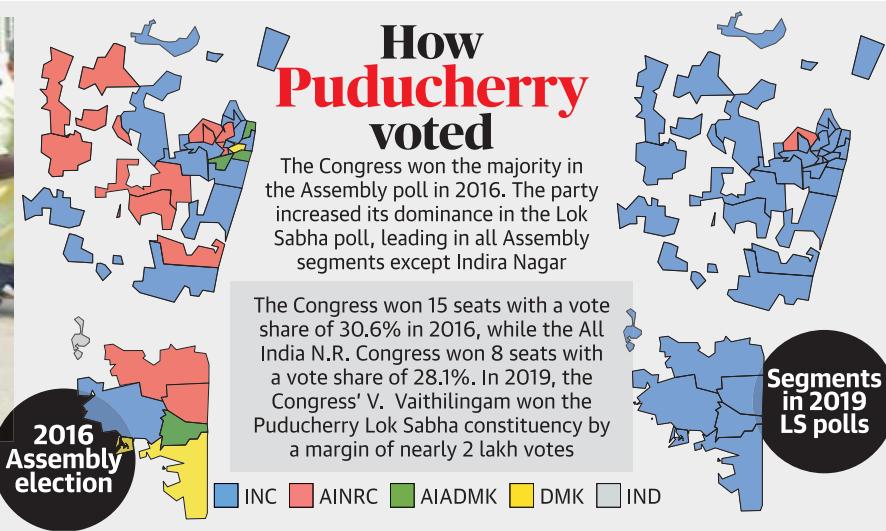
not been without its own set of troubles, primarily the discord between the BJP and the AINRC over the chief ministerial candidate. While the BJP stuck to its non-committal policy on the chief ministerial candidate, the AINRC executive went ahead and announced that Mr. Rangasamy would be the Chief Minister if the NDA won. The AIADMK is also smarting under the ignominy of being relegated to the third spot in the formation.

While the AINRC is contesting 16 seats, the BJP is

fielding candidates in nine seats, leaving the AIADMK with just five seats in spite of its long political history, having been in power twice – in 1974 and 1977 – though the ministries failed to last even half the term after allies withdrew support. While former Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy has taken the personal decision to not contest but only campaign for the party, former Chief Minister and AINRC supremo Mr. Rangasamy is contesting from Thatanchavady and Yanam.

"In spite of recent setbacks, we hope to win as people across communities and classes who are suffering due to pro-corporate and anti-poor Central policies will silently express themselves on polling day," said A.V. Subramanian, Puducherry PCC chief, contesting in Karaikal North.

"The Congress in Puducherry, like elsewhere in the country, is facing public anger over its dismal performance," said Nirmal Kumar Surana, BJP in-charge.



## Tall drink of water



**Beating the heat:** A folk artist is trying to keep cool during a procession near the Corporation Zonal Office in Nungambakkam, Chennai, where actor-politician Khushbu Sundar filed her nomination as the BJP candidate from the Thousand Lights Assembly constituency. ■ RAGU R.

## INTERVIEW| KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA

# 'In West Bengal, there is a syndicate raj, goonda raj, mafia raj'

An architect of the party's rise in Bengal says the State has seen setbacks in all sectors under Left and Trinamool rule

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

**Kailash Vijayvargiya**, national general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has been the party's observer for West Bengal for the past six years. He is considered one of the architects of the BJP's meteoric rise in West Bengal. Mr. Vijayvargiya speaks about the BJP's prospects and challenges in the Assembly polls. Edited excerpts:

Where does the BJP stand in West Bengal in the run-up to the Assembly polls?

■ The BJP is all set to form the next government in West Bengal. The people of West Bengal are going to choose between two governments – one at the Centre and the other in the State. The people are also aware that there are two different leadership models at the Centre and in the State. On the one side, there is the leadership of Narendra Modi, under whom in the past six years not a single Minister has been accused of corruption. The schemes of the Centre are reaching beneficiaries and there is transparency. There are no midterms in the implementation of these schemes – complete transparency is maintained. On the



other hand, we see the way [implementation of] the State government's schemes is riddled with corruption. Everywhere there are syndicates operating. People in West Bengal have to give commission for getting the benefits of every scheme.

When did you realise that the BJP could emerge as an important force in West Bengal?

■ In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP got 17% of the votes. This gave us the impression that the people of the State were ready to support the BJP provided we could present the party as an alternative to the people of the State. Since then, we ran a number of campaigns asking people to associate with us through missed calls. The

lists were screened and we started adding more and more beneficiaries. In the 2018 panchayat election in West Bengal, people were not allowed to contest and exercise their franchise. And in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the anger of the people was reflected when the BJP won 18 of the 42 seats.

The Trinamool Congress claims that it has ushered in overall development in the State.

■ What kind of development? Can Mamata ji give one example of what she has achieved in Bengal? The State government has not been

able to showcase its achievement in the past two terms.

Before Independence, Bengal was one of the most prosperous States in the country. Today, it is among the backward States. From the Left regime to the Trinamool Congress regime, Bengal has only seen setbacks in all sectors. In the 1970s, Bengal accounted for 24.8% of the industrial output in the country; today it stands at a meagre 2.3%.

Along with different spheres of cultural activity, West Bengal has made a contribution in the field of spirituality with figures like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Ramakrishna Paramahansa. But today, their followers are not feeling safe.

There has been a politicisation of bureaucracy and the police administration. They are hand in glove with criminals and the mafia. What has happened in the past 10 years is a syndicate raj, goonda raj and mafia raj.

We have to keep in mind that West Bengal is a border State and crucial to internal security. A huge danger is also

posed by illegal infiltrations. There is enough evidence to prove that cattle smuggling continues.

It is being said that the BJP has used defections as a political tool and now that many Trinamool Congress leaders are with the BJP, the party has become the Trinamool's B-team.

■ When a river merges with the sea, the river loses its identity and becomes a part of the sea. The BJP is the biggest party in the world and those joining the BJP are becoming a part of the party. Those joining have to contribute to the party. Mukul da was the second most important person in the Trinamool Congress when he joined the BJP. In the initial days, he was sitting in the second row, not in the first row. The same has been the case with other leaders who joined us.

What alternative is the BJP offering? What do you mean when you say that the BJP will make the State 'Sonar Bangla (golden Bengal)'?

■ West Bengal has immense potential in every sector. There is immense scope of industrial growth. After Mamata ji drove away the Tatas from Singur, no industrialist has dared to invest in the State.

We are promising industrial growth and upgradation of infrastructure and quality education. West Bengal has access to the sea and the ports here can be utilised to their optimum capacity. There are also coal mines here. We have everything in the State, from skilled manpower to locational advantage. What is lacking is political will.

Another issue that we are going to ensure is to enforce the sanctity of borders and stop all illegal activity. In 2011, people voted the Trinamool Congress to power because they wanted to remove the CPI (M). Today, the people of the State want development and therefore there is such support for the BJP. The people of West Bengal know that development can only be ushered in under the leadership of Narendra Modi.



**In Bengal, the Congress has embraced the Left. In Kerala, it is wrestling with the Left**

NARENDRA MODI  
Prime Minister

P9

## POLL POURRI



### Appealing for votes in Arabic

M.P. PRAVEEN  
KOCHI

Arabic graffiti on some walls seeking votes for CPI candidate Eldho Abraham contesting from the Muvattupuzha Assembly constituency in the eastern suburbs of Ernakulam district is garnering attention. P.Y. Noorudheen, former councillor from Muvattupuzha municipality and a friend of Mr. Abraham, says he created it for personal amusement and is surprised by the attention it has gained. Mr. Noorudheen said he had done the graffiti to dust off his Arabic and art skills, which he mastered as a signboard artist in Saudi Arabia.

### 17 teachers 'unfit' for poll duty

RAHUL KARMARKAR  
GUWAHATI

The authorities in Assam's Nalbari district have recommended VRS for 17 teachers who were found to be "unfit" for election duty. These teachers, drafted as polling personnel for the coming Assembly election, had requested for exemption from election duty on medical grounds. The medical board for the election subsequently found them to be unfit for election duty. In a letter to the State's Secondary Education Secretary, the Nalbari Deputy Commissioner said the teachers were found unfit but were not on medical leave. The Education Department is examining the letter.

### Spewing hatred on social media

MITHOSH JOSEPH  
KOZHIKODE

Spewing out hatred and fueling political vendetta, aggressive social media campaigns are underway against a number of candidates in the Kerala Assembly election. A number of new profiles have been created on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for the smear campaign. The faceless identities in cyberspace are also getting the support of some political workers and social media campaigners in the State. One of the worst-hit is the mother of Walayar victims who has declared her candidacy against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in Dharmadam. The entry of Revolutionary Marxist Party of India (RMP) candidate K.K. Rema to the election fray has also drawn the attention of many faceless fake profile holders.

### 'Congress cheats for votes'

RAHUL KARMARKAR  
GUWAHATI

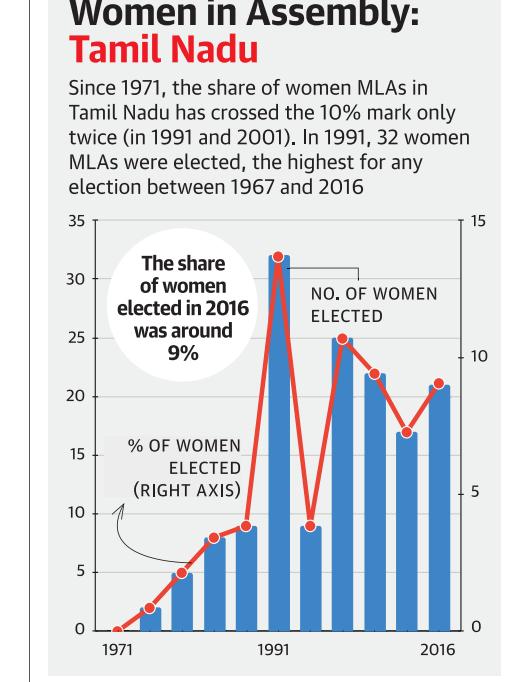
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said in Assam's Karimganj that "cheating for votes" came naturally to the Congress. He also hit out at the party for choosing an ally (AIUDF) that "threatens the integrity of Assam". "Congress is disconnected from ground realities. The Congress party today has neither a neta (leader), nor niti (policy), nor vichaardhara (ideology)," the Prime Minister said while addressing a BJP rally in southern Assam's Karimganj. He referred to a video where State Congress president Ripun Bora and Kalibazar MP Gaurav Gogoi (in photo) are purportedly heard listing promises that are "not supposed to be fulfilled", to stress that the party will go to "any lengths" for votes.

### Appeal to 'Marxist friends'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday asked "Marxist friends" not to vote for either the CPI(M) or the Congress. She accused both parties of being hand in glove with the BJP. Sujan Chakraborty, CPI(M) leader, said this was an admission by Ms. Banerjee that she is a "friend of the Maoists" and had used them for "targeted killings of CPI(M) supporters".

## DATA BYTE



CM YK

## FROM PAGE ONE

## SC to hear plea against sale of electoral bonds

It said the scheme had "opened doors to unlimited political donations, even from foreign companies, thereby legitimising electoral corruption at a huge scale, while at the same time ensuring complete non-transparency in political funding". The application reminded the court that both the central bank and the poll panel had objected to the electoral bond scheme.

The government notified the scheme on January 2, 2018. It defended the scheme in court, saying it allowed anonymity to political donors to protect them from "political victimisation".

## 'India has assured Sri Lanka of support'

Colombo has also been reaching out to the member countries during the past weeks, pitching its version of Sri Lanka's post-war realities that the UN resolutions seek to address.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, among other leaders, seeking support at the 47-member Council, where Colombo anticipates a hostile resolution. Mr. Rajapaksa spoke to Mr. Modi over telephone last week, reportedly following up on the letter sent earlier. China has officially declared its support to Sri Lanka.

All eyes are on India's vote, not only because of its "influence" in the Council, but also because of its own tensions with Colombo, following the Rajapaksa government's recent decisions on strategic projects involving India and China. Given India's pressing geopolitical concerns in the island nation, and stated support for Tamil aspirations, it remains to be seen how New Delhi will approach the vote scheduled on March 22.

The only official intervention made by India so far on Sri Lanka at the ongoing

## Roads to be freed of toll booths in a year: Gadkari

"I want to assure the House that within one year, all physical toll booths in the country will be removed. It means that toll collection will happen via GPS. The money will be collected based on GPS imaging [of vehicles]", Mr. Gadkari told the Lok Sabha during Question Hour, responding to a question by Bahujan Samaj Party MP Danish Ali.

He said 93% of the vehicles were paying toll using FASTag – a system that facilitates electronic payment of fee at toll plazas seamlessly – but the remaining 7% had still not adopted it despite paying double the toll.

He also made a statement in the Lok Sabha on the government's new scrapping policy which, he claimed, would reduce pollution, improve fuel efficiency, and increase government's revenue collection from the sale of new vehicles.

The new policy provides for fitness tests after the completion of 20 years in the case of privately owned vehicles and 15 years in the case of commercial vehicles. Any vehicle that fails the fitness test or does not manage renewal of its registration certificate may be declared as an End of Life Vehicle.

All government vehicles and those owned by PSUs will be de-registered after 15 years. The government will implement the policy in a phased manner, Mr. Gadkari said.

The policy will kick in for government vehicles from April 1, 2022. Mandatory fitness testing for heavy com-



The Centre has announced several incentives for scrapping old vehicles.

mercial vehicles will start from April 1, 2023, and for all other categories of vehicles, including personal vehicles, it will start in phases from June 1, 2024.

To encourage owners to take their old vehicles to scrapping centres, the government has announced several incentives, including advisories to the States to give up to 25% rebate in road tax for personal vehicles and up to 15% rebate for commercial vehicles.

The government will also offer waiver of registration fees on the purchase of new vehicles. The Minister said the Centre would issue an advisory to automakers to offer 5% rebate for those who buy a new vehicle after producing a scrapping certificate.

The Ministry has proposed that commercial vehicles be de-registered after 15 years in case of failure to get the fitness certificate, and a private vehicle will be de-registered after 20 years if its fails fitness certification.

There are 51 lakh light motor vehicles older than 20 years and 34 lakh light motor vehicles older than 15 years, the Minister said.

The policy will kick in for government vehicles from April 1, 2022. Mandatory fitness testing for heavy com-

## Move on Sabarimala only after consensus: CM

He indirectly endorses Minister's view

STAFF REPORTER

MALAPPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said that any further moves on the Sabarimala issue will be made following consultations with different stakeholders after the final judgment from the Supreme Court.

The government affidavit had said the shroud of secrecy was a product of "well thought-out policy considerations". It said the earlier system of cash donations had raised a "concern among the donors that, with their identity revealed, there would be competitive pressure from different political parties receiving donation".

Addressing the media at Manjeri during his electioneering in the district on Thursday, the Chief Minister indirectly endorsed the expression of regret by Minister for Devaswom Kadakkampally Surendran at the incidents caused by allowing women's entry into Sabarimala.

He said the Sabarimala



In full swing: Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan speaking at Ponnani, Malappuram, on Thursday.

verdict taking all sections into confidence," he said.

He criticised the media for highlighting the statements of R. Balashankar, former editor of the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser*, about a tie-up between the CPI(M) and the BJP. "The Left Democratic Front does not need any help from any communal forces," he said.

The Chief Minister lashed

out at the Opposition for raising unnecessary and silly issues to divert the attention of the media and the people. "Are you not listening to the BJP veteran O. Rajagopal's statement about the Congress-League-BJP alliance in Kerala," he asked. "Are you not ashamed to go after Mr. Balashankar?"

He alleged that there was a strong bond between the United Democratic Front and the BJP in the State. Accord-

ing to him, the UDF failed the State by helping the BJP deny Central aid for Kerala. The Chief Minister wondered why the UDF was supporting the Centre in attacking the State government.

"Even Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who criticises the Centre for using its agencies to target the opponents,

is trying to find fault with the Central agencies for not being aggressive with Kerala and its government," he said.

## Raghunath to take on CM after Sudhakaran opts out

STAFF REPORTER

KANNUR

Kannur District Congress Committee (DCC) secretary C. Raghunath on Thursday filed his nomination to contest against Chief Minister and Left Democratic Front candidate Pinarayi Vijayan in the Dharmadam constituency in the Kerala Assembly elections. He submitted his nomination papers even though the Congress was yet to officially announce its candidate in the constituency.

He told mediapersons that the KPCC and the high command had requested him to contest from Dharmadam in Kannur. However, local Congress leaders contend that if Mr. Sudhakaran contested in the constituency it would not benefit the party campaign.

He said the political agenda of the United Democratic Front was to win the five constituencies in the district. For this he had to work in all five segments.

Mr. Sudhakaran said the DCC had informed the high command and the KPCC to name Mr. Raghunath as the candidate in Dharmadam.

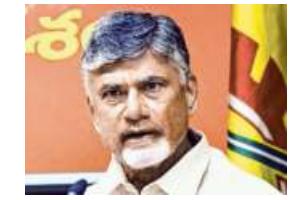
sudhakaran took the decision after an hour-long meeting at his office with district leaders.

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## IN BRIEF



Naidu files plea in HC to quash FIR in land case

VIJAYAWADA  
Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday filed a petition in High Court for quashing the FIR registered by the Crime Investigation Department against him for alleged involvement in the assigned lands scandal in Mangalagiri. The matter is likely to be heard on March 19. He has been summoned for questioning on March 23.

## Kerala HC dismisses plea against CIC appointment

KOCHI  
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Thursday dismissed a writ petition challenging the recommendation to appoint former Chief Secretary Vishwas Mehta as State Chief Information Commissioner (CIC). The petitioner had held that the recommendation was against the guidelines of the Supreme Court.

## Loudspeaker rule won't apply to azan: Walkf

BENGALURU  
Karnataka's Waqf Board has clarified that its March 9 circular banning use of loudspeakers in mosques and dargahs from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. is not applicable to morning 'azaan' or call for prayer. The circular, which said the ambient noise level near many mosques affected the health and psychological well-being of the people, had drawn criticism.

## Kerala court quashes order absolving accused

THIRISSUR  
The Thirissur Vigilance court on Thursday revoked a government order that dropped the names of three former government officials, including ex-Chief Secretary John Mathai, from the list of accused in the Malabar Cements Limited bribery case. The case relates to corruption in the purchase of raw materials, causing huge losses to the company.

## State govt. takes steps to tackle rising COVID-19 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU



Safe side: People waiting in the observation room after taking the COVID-19 vaccine in Bengaluru. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

centres being set up in Bengaluru.

## Ambulances allocated

A total of 200 ambulances, one in each ward, would be set aside exclusively for COVID patients.

The State's COVID war room would start operating round the clock as it was during the first outbreak and

the government would monitor the situation using real-time data through the Brumhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike.

Mr. Sudhakar said vaccine wastage, which had been pegged at over 6% in Karnataka, would be monitored on a daily basis and officials would be accountable for every vial.

The government had earlier suspended the then Chengalpattu Superintendent of Police, who was accused by the complainant of intercepting her car while she was going to meet the

## T.N. govt. suspends former Special DGP

He is facing sexual harassment charge

S. VIJAY KUMAR

CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday night suspended a former Special Director-General of Police pending inquiry, police sources said. The senior IPS officer is facing charges of sexual harassment made by a woman IPS officer.

## Court rap

The government was left with no other option after the court observed that a person facing such charges must be suspended before an inquiry was opened.

Besides an internal inquiry committee, headed by a senior woman IAS officer, the Crime Branch-CID has registered a case against the former Special DGP, the former Chengalpattu Superintendent of Police and others.

The government had earlier suspended the then Chengalpattu Superintendent of Police, who was accused by the complainant of intercepting her car while she was going to meet the

Competent Authority, accused of having made sexual advances towards a woman Superintendent of Police, had not yet been suspended.

The government had earlier suspended the then Chengalpattu Superintendent of Police, who was accused by the complainant of intercepting her car while she was going to meet the

Establishments (KPIDFE) Act, 2004. With this, some of the claimants would have received the total amount deposited by them with the IMA and some partial amount up to ₹50,000 of their total deposits, government counsel Vijayakumar A. Patil told the Bench.

These aspects were disclosed in the status report, submitted before a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice M.G. Shukre Kamal during the hearing on PIL petitions through which the court is monitoring the progress of the investigation of criminal cases and process of providing relief to investors under the provisions of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Estab-

lishments (KPIDFE) Act, 2004. With this, some of the claimants would have received the total amount deposited by them with the IMA and some partial amount up to ₹50,000 of their total deposits, government counsel Vijayakumar A. Patil told the Bench.

The High Court termed "erroneous" the approach of the State government that it has to wait till the Central Bureau of Investigation submits the final report on the probe into the IMA scam case to decide whether to attach the properties of R. Roshan Baig, former MLA, arraigned as one of the accused.

## Wellness Series webinar to be held tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER

CHENNAI

As part of *The Hindu* Wellness Series presented by Fujifilm, a webinar on self-awareness and early detection of breast cancer will be held on March 20 at 11.30 a.m.

Chandreshkhar Sibal, Senior Vice President, Head of Medical Division, Fujifilm India Pvt. Ltd; Dr. Shilpa Lad, Consultant Breast Imaging and Interventions, NM Medical Center, Mumbai; Dr. Mandar Nadkarni, Breast Oncosurgeon, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH) Mumbai; and Dr. Bhawna Dev, Senior Consultant, Sri Ramachandra Medical College & Re-

## SC stays ban on teachers contesting elections

Bench issues notice to Kerala govt.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a Kerala High Court decision barring aided school teachers and non-teaching staff from contesting Assembly elections or engaging in political activities.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde issued notice to the Kerala government while staying the High Court verdict in February.

The High Court had declared Section 2 (IV) of the Legislative Assembly (Removal of Disqualifications) Act of 1951, which allowed aided school teachers to become legislators, as uncon-

stitutional. Petitioners in the High Court had challenged the 1951 law, saying their participation in politics would affect the quality of education. They had argued in the HC that since Kerala Government Servants Conduct Rules prohibits government school teachers from taking part in political activities, the rule should extend to school teachers also.

The government had however contended in the High Court that as per a government order issued in 1967, the teachers of aided schools had political rights. There were no rules or Act prohibiting them from participating in political activities or contesting polls.

## Competent Authority submits report to HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

In a relief to a small section of investors in I Monetary Advisory (IMA) Group of Companies, the Competent Authority (CA) on Thursday told the Karnataka High Court that it has returned either full or partial amount of their deposited sum to 3,243 investors by way of bank transfer.

The amount to be returned, with the permission of a special court, was capped at a maximum of ₹50,000 as the total amount

available with the CA is only ₹5.3 crore, and has distributed ₹4.92 crore to the 3,243 claimants starting from the lowest amount claimed, the CA informed the court.

Equally worrying is the level of corruption, which is the focus of the second paper, *Corruption in Private Teacher Education Institutions*. There are many sub-standard, dysfunctional TEIs functioning as 'commercial shops', said the press release.

According to the researchers, TEIs deliberately neglected basic curricular requirements. "Classes are neither conducted seriously nor taken seriously by students," said the authors of

## First volume on teachers &amp; teacher education released by Azim Premji University

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

With as many as nine million teachers in around 1.5 million schools in India, the quality of education imparted to aspiring teachers is equally important. For education in our schools to improve, teaching has to improve.

This is the crux of the first volume on teachers and teacher education, comprising four papers on the subject, that was released by Azim Premji University on Thursday. It is the first volume in a series on 'Issues in Education', said the university in a press release.

Together, the four papers

explore the landscape of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the country, corruption in private TEIs, the support system needed for teachers and the problem of those who are on contract.

**Corruption flagged**  
The landscape of Teacher Education Institutions in India – found that of the 17,503 TEIs in India, more than 90% are privately owned, stand-alone institutions, offering single programmes localised in certain geographies. Four States, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, ac-

'Govt. does not believe in vote bank politics'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi government believes in empowerment without appeasement and works for development without discriminating on the basis of religion, Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said.

During Question Hour in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Naqvi said all sections of the society, including minorities, are reaping benefits of welfare schemes launched by the Modi government.

He said the Union government is working for the well-being of weaker sections and economically backward people and added that the Prime Minister abolished the practice of triple talaq to empower Muslim women.

"Our government does not believe in vote bank politics, neither it will in the future," Mr. Naqvi said in response to a query by Kerala Congress (M) member Thomas Chazhikadan.

## Rajya Sabha passes Bill to raise FDI limit in insurance sector

Opposition alleges that govt. is handing over control, ownership to foreigners

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Insurance Amendment Bill, 2021 that increases the maximum foreign investment allowed in an insurance company from 49% to 74%, amid criticism from the Opposition parties on the clause enabling "control and ownership" by foreign investors.

The Opposition parties unsuccessfully tried to stall the house demanding that the Bill not be moved in a haste and instead be sent to a standing committee. They marched into the well of the House after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the Bill. The House was adjourned four times.

The debate started at 3.30 p.m., when the Opposition relented reluctantly to have a debate instead of continuing with the protests.

Senior Congress leader



**Proving a point:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. ■ PTI

Anand Sharma questioned the very justification and intent for such a bill. He asked when the government has majority in both Houses why was it in a hurry to pass the Bill ducking due parliamentary scrutiny that the Opposition was demanding. He said the insurance companies hold the people's money in trust and that this Bill broke it. He also accused the government of violating the assurance given in 2015 that

"Indian ownership and control" would remain.

Mr. Sharma said, "We are not opposed to the policy of disinvestment, but it is disinvestment or leapfrogging towards privatisation and embarking on grand clearance sale of national assets built assiduously over the years."

He also flagged that the big insurance firms are not in shortage of capital and that the Bill differed from the government motto – "Atma-

nirbhar Bharat".

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva pointed out that none of the insurance firms had managed to get FDI even up to the present limit of 49% and questioned the justification to increase the limit.

Replying to the debate, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman assured the House that the policy holder's money will not leave Indian shores and have to be compulsorily invested here. She argued that more FDI would mean greater competition and thus better negotiated premiums for the end user.

Countering the key criticism by the Opposition parties on handing over "control and ownership" to foreign firms, Ms. Sitharaman said it came with safeguards. The key management personnel would have to be Indians and therefore would be governed by the Indian laws.

The court said the victim should be immediately noti-

## Don't stereotype women in court rulings, SC tells judges

Bench sets aside Madhya Pradesh High Court's 'rakhi' order

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday forbade judges from making gender-stereotypical comments like "good women are sexually chaste", women who drink and smoke "ask" for sexual advances or presume that a sexually active woman consented to rape while hearing cases of sexual offence.

A Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and S. Ravindra Bhat stopped judges from trying to mandate marriage or compromise between a molester and his victim. The Bench, in a judgment, proscribed judges from granting bail to suspected sexual offenders on the condition that they perform "community service" or apologise to their victims.

Countering the key criticism by the Opposition parties on handing over "control and ownership" to foreign firms, Ms. Sitharaman said it came with safeguards. The key management personnel would have to be Indians and therefore would be governed by the Indian laws.

The court said the victim should be immediately noti-



A judge's address is not limited to the parties in a case, says Justice Bhat.

fied if the accused is given bail in a sexual offence case. She should be given a copy of the bail order within 48 hours.

The 24-page verdict, authored by Justice Bhat, set aside a Madhya Pradesh High Court order granting bail to a suspected molester provided he visits his victim at her home and "allows" her to tie a rakhi on him.

"Using rakhi tying as a

condition for bail, transforms a molester into a brother, by a judicial mandate," Justice Bhat wrote.

In a scathing verdict, Justice Bhat said judgments and orders continue to reflect "entrenched paternalistic and misogynistic attitudes" even after 70 years as a Republic. "A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view," Justice Bhat quoted Henrik Ibsen in exasperation.

Judges should not fall into the trap of stereotyping. A judge's address is not limited to the parties in a case but extends to the broader legal community of other lawyers, judges, legal academics, law students and indeed the public at large, Justice Bhat warned.

## 2 BJP candidates decline nomination

Former Chief Economic Adviser Ashok Lahiri replaced in Alipurduar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

In a major embarrassment to the Bharatiya Janata Party, two candidates announced by the party on Thursday for the Assembly polls from Kolkata have refused to contest on the party's ticket.

Shikha Mitra Chowdhury, wife of the former West Bengal Congress president Somendranath Mitra, was named by the party for the Chowringhee seat.

She, however, said she was not consulted before the party made the announcement. "I am not contesting



Ashok Lahiri

on BJP ticket anyway. I come from a Congress culture and I cannot join the BJP," she said.

Another BJP candidate chosen for the Kashipur-Belgachia constituency, Tarun Saha, said he had not joined the BJP and had not sent any request for candidature. Mr. Saha is the husband of the local Trinamool Congress MLA Malda Saha.

In another development, the BJP changed its candidate for the Alipurduar seat, eminent economist and former Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India Ashok Lahiri, with the party's general secretary in Alipurduar district, Suman Kanjilal.

There were reports of BJP offices being attacked in certain parts of the State and party supporters coming out airing their grievances publicly against the newly announced candidates. Protests were reported in Durgapur, Malda and North 24 Parganas.

During the day BJP announced 156 candidates for West Bengal. They included prominent party leaders like Mukul Roy, Rahul Sinha and Shamik Bhattacharya.

Interestingly, the list does not include West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh.

## National security threat perception is real'

Perceptible increase in drone movement from across the border, says Punjab CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday termed the national security threat perception real, saying there was a perceptible increase in drone movement from across the border since the farmers' protests started gathering traction in October 2020.

He said he had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah amid the agitation to discuss this grave issue and to ask him why Central forces could not be provided with adequate equipment to locate and



Amarinder Singh

shoot down the drones.

"The Khalistani cells in Punjab were dormant but they are being fed with weapons via the drones to activate them to create trouble," he said.

"Any breach of the Punjab border is a breach of national security," said Capt. Amarinder. "While a large number of weapons have been seized near the borders, what is the cause of worry is those that have not been caught," he said.

Detailing about the arrests and seizures since his government took over in March 2017, the Chief Minister said "everyone wants him to be part of our team". He said he would also be happy to have Partap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Dhullo as part of the team.

2,000-odd weapons (including rifles, revolvers, pistols, etc.), hand grenades, RDX and other explosives, walkie-talkies and satellite phones. As many as 11,000 rounds of ammunition have also been seized. These are not small numbers for a small State like Punjab," he said.

Asked about former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu's rehabilitation, the Chief Minister said "everyone wants him to be part of our team". He said he would also be happy to have Partap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Dhullo as part of the team.

## BJP, Oppn. spar over events in J&K

Parties want statehood restored in J&K; say crossfire incidents increased in 16 years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The discussion on the supplementary demands for grants for Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry in the Lok Sabha became the site of an intense debate between the ruling BJP and the Opposition on the events in J&K since August 5, 2019, the reading down of Article 370.

National Conference MP Hasnain Masood termed the ending of the special status of J&K and reducing its status to a Union Territory as a fire that had been lit by the present government. He termed the District Development Council (DDC) polls in J&K as

a referendum on the move and pointed out that the BJP had got only 3% vote in the polls.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman responded to the charge stating that the DDCs were not a referendum but a demonstration by the people of the Union Territory of their faith in the democratic institutions and the administration's ability to maintain law and order.

"The DDC polls saw voters come out in large numbers, 51% polling percentage was recorded in these polls, not just in urban areas but in rural areas too. That is a sign of the faith that people have in

democratic institutions and law and order," she said.

Jamyang Tsering Namgyal of the BJP hailed Prime Minister as a "yug purush" for realising the dream of ideology Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who had opposed special status to J&K.

Anumula Revanth Reddy (Congress) said the incidents of "crossfire" have risen in the past 16 years in the Union Territory and accused the government of slapping criminal cases on local journalists for writing critical pieces.

He also criticised the role of former Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi, saying she often fought the elected government there.

The Budget for Puducherry was also part of the debate.

Bhartruhari Mahtab of the BJD said he looked forward to the day when J&K and Ladakh are accorded statehood

M/S ANIL LIMITED (IN LIQUIDATION)	
Liquidator's Address: 9-B, Vardan Complex, Nr. Virmal House, Lakhdi Circle, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad-380 014.	
Contact: +91-79-26565577, Email ID: rdc_rca@yahoo.com	
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE	
Notice for sale of the assets through E-Auction is hereby given to the public in general under section 35(1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 w.r.t regulation 33 of Liquidation Process regulations	
Date and Time of Auction	Saturday, 03.04.2021 between 01:00 PM to 03:00 PM
Last Date for Submission of EMD	Thursday, 01.04.2021 before 06:00 PM Payable through RTGS / DD to "Anil Limited (In Liquidation)" having Account No. 20352011000305 and IFSC Code BKID0002035
Inspection Date & Time of Auction	From 21.03.2021 to 30.03.2021 (From 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM) Contact Person: Rajendra D. Choudhary, M: 9426623398
Particulars	Reserve Price - EMD (Rs. In Crores.)
Parcel of land bearing Survey No. 137/P, 138, 139, 140 and 141 of T.P.S. No. 12, admeasuring 1,44,856 Sq. Mts belonging to Anil Limited located at Anil Limited, Anil Road, Bapunagar, Ahmedabad.	495 5
Non Agricultural Land, situated at old Revenue survey no. 13 (adm. 35714 Sq. M.), 14 (adm. 7284 Sq. M.), 15/1 Paki (adm. 19830 Sq. M.), 15/1 Paki (adm. 19931 Sq. M.), 15/1 Paki (adm. 17301 Sq. M.) of Mouje Navdra of Taluka Kalwanpur, Devbhumi Dwarka having total Land area admeasuring 1,00,060 Sq. M. (Suitable for Wind farm)	1.38 0.15
The detailed terms & conditions, E-Auction application, Tender Document and other details of online Auction are available at <a href="http://www.eauctions.co.in">http://www.eauctions.co.in</a> and <a href="http://www.sunresolution.in">www.sunresolution.in</a> . For any query, contact Mr. Dixit Prajapati (M: 7874138237) through Email: admin@eauctions.co.in or to the email, contact Mr. Rajendra Choudhary, rdc_rca@yahoo.com	
Place: Ahmedabad	Sd/- CA Ramchandra Dallarmal Choudhary Liquidator - Anil Ltd. (In Liquidation)
Date: 19/03/2021	IP Reg. No: IBBI/PA-001/2017-18/10326

LOOK OUT NOTICE	
Sureshkumar, S, S/o Sivaramapillai, Ushasree, Mattam North, Thattarambalam, Kannamangalam Village, Mavelikkara Taluk, Alappuzha, Kerala.	
The person whose photograph is publicised above is a wanted accused in Cr.441/19, 442/19, 443/19, 444/19, 445/19, 446/19, 447/19, 448/19, 449/19, 451/19, 452/19, 454/19, 465/19, 507/19, 37/20, U/s 406, 420 IPC, registered and investigated at Crime Branch, Central Unit-II, Ernakulam. Since the inception of crime cases which were registered all over Kerala, the accused was absconding. He is also involved in cases of similar nature in various States. Any information regarding the said Sureshkumar shall be informed to the undersigned on public interest.	
Superintendent of Police, Crime Branch Central Unit-II, Ernakulam, Kerala. Ph: 0484-2785250, 9497996911, DySP: 9497990187 589/F/2021/I&PRD	
<b>The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.</b> (A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking) (In ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 & 8.3 8000 Certified Company) SANKARAMANGALAM, CHAVARA-691583, KERALA, INDIA: Phone: +91-476-2651215 to 2651217, Fax: +91-0476-268010, 2686721 E-mail : contact@kmmll.com, URL www.kmmll.com	

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Name of the work	E-Tender ID
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## IN BRIEF



## Train runs in reverse direction for over 20 km

The Railways has suspended a loco pilot and a guard after the Puranigiri Jan Shatabdi express train travelled in the reverse direction for over 20 km after hitting an animal. No injuries were reported. The incident took place on Wednesday evening on the Khatima-Tanakpur section in Uttar Pradesh. An official said the incident happened due to an animal being run over, resulting in issues with the control of the train.

## Bombay HC refuses to stay release of movie

MUMBAI  
In a relief to actor John Abraham, the Bombay High Court on Thursday refused to stay the release of the film *Mumbai Saga*. Mr. Abraham stars in the film, which is alleged to be based on the lives of jailed gangsters Ravi Bohra and Amar Naik. The court was hearing a plea filed by their family members. The plea said the release of the film would "lead to violation of right to privacy, fair trial and liberty of the two".

## BJP MP cremated with State honours in H.P.

SHIMLA  
BJP MP from Himachal Pradesh, Ram Swaroop Sharma, who was found dead at his official residence in New Delhi, was cremated with full State honours at Machhayal village in Mandi district on Thursday. Many, including Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, attended the funeral. Mr. Thakur also visited Sharma's village Jalpahar to express his condolences. (Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.) PTI

## COVID-19 cases cross 37,000

Highest single-day spike this year, Maharashtra leads with 25,833 infections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

As of 10.30 p.m. on Thursday, India reported its highest single-day COVID-19 spike this year, with 37,634 cases. As many as 144 deaths were also recorded on the day.

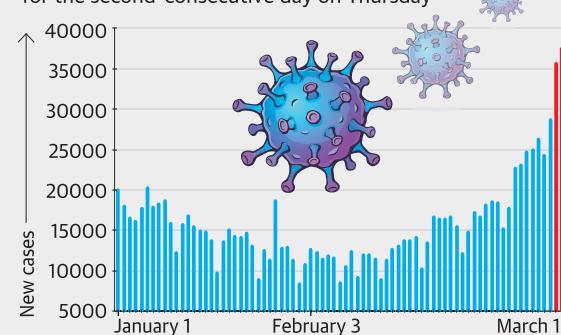
The figure does not include cases and deaths from Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Nagaland, Ladakh and Sikkim. The data is sourced from covid19india.org, an independent aggregator of daily COVID-19 figures.

The country has so far reported a total of 1,15,11,936 cases and 1,59,394 deaths. It has 2,66,928 active cases.

Maharashtra reported its highest single-day case count with 25,833 infections (accounting for 69% of the new cases), followed by Punjab with 2,369 cases and Kerala with 1,899.

## Alarming rise

India's daily case load crossed the 30,000 mark for the second consecutive day on Thursday



India reported 19,750 recoveries on Thursday while the cumulative recoveries stood at 1,10,80,920.

Maharashtra saw the highest number of casualties at 58. Punjab followed with 32 and Kerala 15.

As per data released by the Health Ministry, the top 10 districts in India in terms

of active cases include Pune (35,539), Nagpur (24,209), Mumbai (17,153), Thane (15,548), Nashik (11,037), Aurangabad (10,340), Bengaluru-Urban (7,344) and Jalgaon (4,448). The Ministry also said that 400 cases with the U.K., South Africa and Brazil variants of the COVID-19 virus were recorded

in the country as on date.

India's tests per day per million population were more than 140 and the daily positivity rate was 3.37% as of Thursday, said the release.

It added that a rising trajectory of daily new cases was visible in eight States – Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka and Haryana – while Kerala is reporting a consistently declining trend over the last one month.

## Vaccination figure

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 3.89 crore on Thursday, the Ministry said.

A total of 17,83,303 vaccine doses were given till 7 p.m. on the 62nd day of nation-wide vaccination, as per the provisional report till 7 p.m.



The case was earlier being heard by the Delhi HC.

plea by vaccine makers to transfer a vaccination-related case from the Bombay High Court too.

Earlier in March, the two companies were asked by the Delhi High Court to reveal their capacity to manufacture vaccines on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

## Commercial war

Senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi said the companies could not be made to run from one High Court to another, responding to questions about daily production and revealing details of their vaccines. Senior advocate Harish Salve, for the Serum

Institute, said there was a "vaccine commercial war" brewing. Disclosure would harm interests. He said courts should not ideally enter into this domain.

The Delhi High Court had on March 5 asked the companies to "disclose the daily off-take of the vaccines from their respective institutes and how much excess quantity of the vaccine is lying unutilised". It had wanted the companies to indicate "whether they can scale-up their capacities, if the need arises".

It had also questioned the government's rationale behind keeping a "strict control over the class of persons who can be presently vaccinated". Under the present arrangement, persons above the age of 60 years and those falling in the age group of 45-60 years with serious comorbidities alone can receive the vaccinations. The rationale for such a classification should also be disclosed," the court had said.

## SC transfers COVID-19 vaccination case to itself

SII and Bharat Biotech say it is an 'all-India' issue

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed *suo motu* proceedings before the Delhi High Court on the administration of COVID-19 vaccines and transferred the case to itself.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said a similar case concerning the vaccination drive was already pending in the Supreme Court, and the case from the Delhi High Court could be heard along with it.

Vaccine makers Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech argued that vaccination was an "all-India" issue and needed to be heard by the Supreme Court for a final decision.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta agreed with the vaccine makers to have the cases pending in High Courts, including the Bombay High Court, to be transferred to the Supreme Court. The Bench issued notice on a

## Workers call for implementation of policy on migrants, demand relief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A group of hawkers, sex workers, domestic workers, rescued bonded labourers and other unorganised workers gathered at Jantar Mantar here on Thursday – almost a year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, setting off a crisis for migrant workers – to demand that

the government fulfil its promises.

"Sex workers had no resources to survive the lockdown as they live on daily earnings," said Kusum, from the All-India Network of Sex Workers at the protest organised by the Working People's Charter. She demanded a one-time income support of ₹10,000 for all unorganised workers.

Chandan Kumar, national

coordinator of the Working Peoples' Charter, said though the NITI Aayog had come up with a draft policy for migrant workers, it was yet to be implemented.

Nirmal Agni, general secretary of Bandhua Mukti Morcha, said workers would come together to protest on the eve of the lockdown anniversary on March 23 if the government failed to implement the policy.

## Vaccine export curbs may hit U.K.

Delivery solely dependent on Centre's decision, says Adar Poonawalla

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

Adar Poonawalla

with the Serum Institute.

## Nothing to do with SII'

"It is solely dependent on India and it has nothing to do with the SII. It is to do with the Indian government allowing more doses to the

U.K.," Mr. Poonawalla said.

According to the paper, Mr. Poonawalla confirmed that five million doses of the Oxford vaccine had already been delivered to the U.K. early this month.

The *Telegraph* quoted a source stating that the second batch of five million doses that the SII is due to give the U.K. will only be delivered once it was approved by the Indian government, which is deliberating on how to combat the resurgence of the pandemic.

Of India's 2.35 lakh-odd active cases, Maharashtra contributes to more than 60%, with the State reporting an average daily spike of

more than 15,000 cases for the past one week to take the tally of active cases beyond 1.50 lakh.

Eight of the 10 most-affected districts, including Pune and Nagpur, are from Maharashtra.

Stating that the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra government's emphasis was on ramping up its vaccination drive, State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said he had written to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan that the State needed 2.20 crore doses from the Centre for the drive.

This translates to a requirement of 20 lakh doses per week.

## Raise CAA, S-400 deal with India'

U.S. Senator writes to Defense Secretary, says India deviating from 'shared values'

## SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

Saying the Indian government is moving away from democratic values, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Menendez, has written to U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin asking him to raise concerns about democracy and India's purchase of the S-400 Russian missile defense system, during his visit to New Delhi. Mr. Austin is expected to meet Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and senior national security officials between March 19 and 21 when he is in New Delhi.

"I would like to see the U.S.-India partnership grow, but we must acknowledge that the partnership is strongest when based on shared democratic values and the Indian government has been trending away from those values," Mr. Menendez said in the letter dated March 17.

"I also expect that you will raise the administration's opposition to India's reported

edly planned purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system," he wrote.

Among his concerns, Mr. Menendez cited crackdown on journalists and critics of the government, its handling of the farmers' protests and the use of sedition laws, and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

"The Indian government's ongoing crackdown on farmers peacefully protesting new farming laws and corresponding intimidation of journalists and government critics only underscores the deteriorating situation of democracy," Mr. Menendez said.

CAA TSAs sanctions

India's purchase of S-400 for just under \$5.5 billion could attract sanctions under a 2017 law, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

The Trump administration's

hand in December last year by requiring it to sanction Turkey for purchasing the S-400. In 2018, China was sanctioned for purchase of Russian equipment.

While India is not a treaty ally of the U.S. and is increasing its purchase of U.S. arms – mitigating circumstances as per U.S. law – the Menendez letter suggests that sanctions are still, at least in theory, an option as India is expected to take delivery of the S-400 later this year.

It read: "India's planned purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system is also a matter of concern. I recognize that India is not a U.S. treaty ally and has historical ties with the Soviet and Russian militaries. However, if India chooses to go forward with its purchase of the S-400, that act will clearly constitute a significant, and therefore sanctionable, transaction with the Russian defense sector under Section 231 of CAATSA."

Trump administration's

said.

Moreover, in recent years, rising anti-Muslim sentiment and related government actions like the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the suppression of political dialogue and arrest of political opponents following the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, and the use of sedition laws to persecute political opponents have resulted in the U.S. human rights group Freedom House stripping India of its 'Free' status in its yearly global survey," he said.

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# All hail the florets

As steak, as pizza crust... the cauliflower can change its avatar in many ways, stepping into unexpected shoes. What's your favourite take on this versatile veggie?

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

Let us put aside the health claims for a minute. Based on taste alone, cauliflower has been a constant favourite across cuisines, diets and fads for years, be it in a hearty

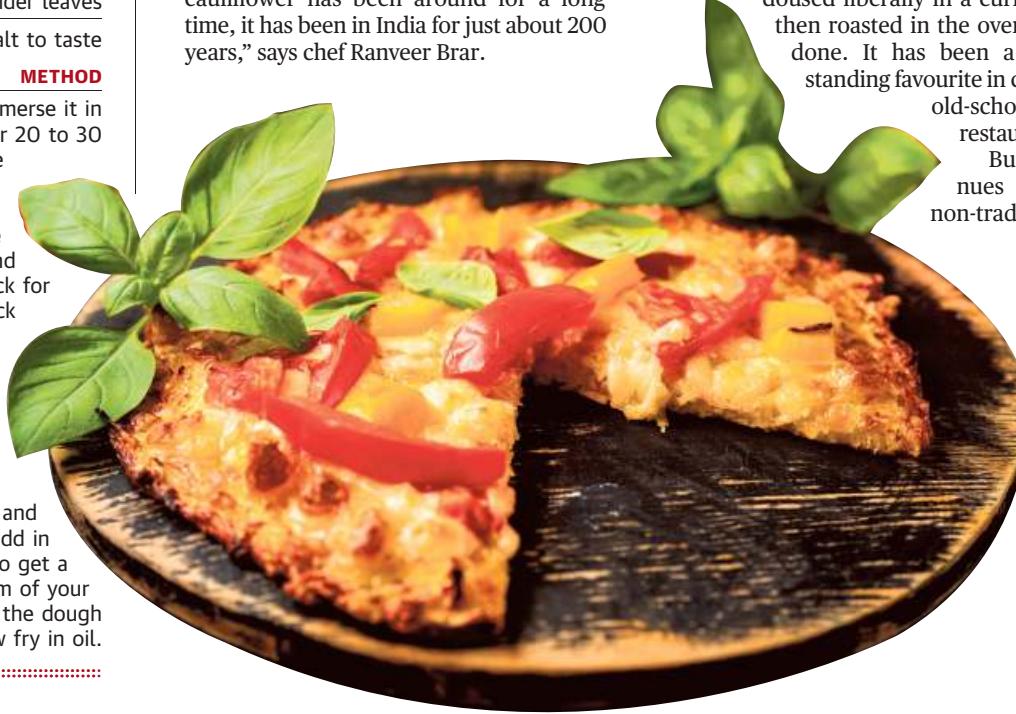
## Cauliflower pancake

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 small cauliflower
- 2 medium sized potatoes
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 1/2 cup chopped green chillies
- 1/2 cup chopped coriander leaves
- Salt to taste

### METHOD

Wash the cauliflower and immerse it in lukewarm salt water for 20 to 30 minutes. Par boil the potatoes and grate them. Remove cauliflower from water, give it a good shake to remove excess water, and steam it in a steamer. Check for softness: when a toothpick enters the florets easily, remove from steamer and let it cool. Then grate the cauliflower. Mix the grated potatoes and cauliflower, add the egg yolk, salt, onion and garlic powder, followed by chopped chillies and coriander leaves. Finally, add in the cheese, and mix well to get a soft dough. Oil the palm of your hands, make small discs of the dough and shallow fry in oil.



*musallam* or as a trusty grill-side companion. So, when a section of social media recently discovered cauliflower waffles, the "outrage" jokes took us by surprise – the vegetable has always had myriad forms, after all. Why not explore a few of them?

Let us start at home: Indian cuisine has accepted many foreign ingredients and dishes into its democratic embrace and used them to produce foods that are unique in flavour and technique. The cauliflower is one of a group of greens like carrot, beans and kohlrabi that were formerly referred to as 'English vegetables', as they had been introduced into India by the British. The Indian cauliflower is actually a cross between the Cornish and European species, more suitable for local commercial cultivation.

"Today, we cannot imagine our meals without this vegetable, but cauliflower actually came into our country not via the Silk Road but through the British. So though the cauliflower has been around for a long time, it has been in India for just about 200 years," says chef Ranveer Brar.

The chef shares a recipe that elevates the cauliflower from a simple side-dish to the star of the table. *Gobi musallam* uses marination and roasting techniques more common to grilled meats, with an eye-catching and palate pleasing result.

*Musallam* refers to the North Indian method of using whole ingredients (usually chicken or leg-of-lamb), that are seasoned with special spices and basted in a gravy as they are roasted. In the case of *gobi musallam*, an entire cauliflower is blanched or steamed, filled with green chutney, doused liberally in a curry and then roasted in the oven until done.

It has been a long-standing favourite in classic,

old-school restaurants. But venues of the non-traditional

variety, like cafes and bistros, have a different take on the vegetable. For instance, Chennai's Chamiers Cafe has for years tried out different experiments – like cauliflower rice – before settling on its steadily popular cauliflower steak. Says founder Kiran Rao: "The dish ticks a lot of boxes: it is popular with the vegetarian crowd, the vegan crowd, the keto crowd and other diners, too."

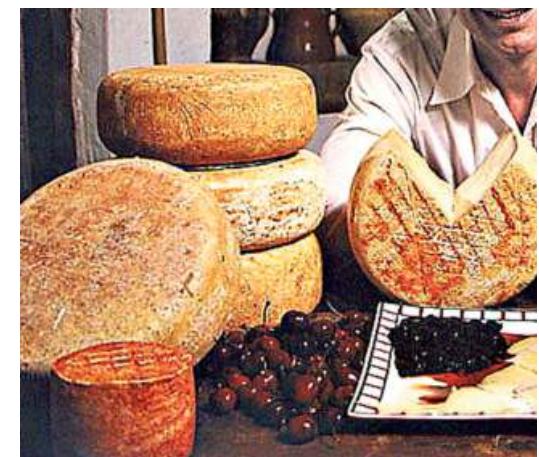
The dish is not all that niche – most cities with an experimental dining crowd have a cafe or two that serves it – but it is still unheard-of enough to be interesting. Adds Rao, "We serve it with a side of grilled vegetables, just as we would a regular steak."

And then there is the host of dishes where cauliflower is used as batter, or as a substitute for flour. Cauliflower waffles, pancakes and even pizza crusts have been around for years, enjoying fleeting moments in and out of the spotlight as the world of diets shifts to the next big trend. Cauliflower pizza crust, for instance, is a popular recipe on online keto forums.

Ankita Deka Bora, a professor of Social Work at Augsburg University who follows the keto diet, has used this recipe to convince the most cynical of her friends. It comes down to taste, she explains, "Pizza base with cauliflower has a nice, crunchy bite to it. If not told [in advance], a first-timer can be left guessing about the ingredient. Because it is cauliflower there is a notion that it might taste like steamed vegetables. In reality, it can be compared to roasted pita bread." So when in doubt, go *gobi*.

With inputs from Nahla Nainar and Prabalika M Borah

## HORS D'OEUVRES



### The value of cheese

Early next month, 10 of the world's most prestigious cheeses will be going under the hammer, at the 2021 Championship Cheese Auction. The auction – online for its 2021 edition – is part of the World Championship Cheese Contest, that has been hosted by the US-based Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association biennially since 1957.

An original Original Dutch gouda from Friesland in the Netherlands, Gruyère from Emmental in Switzerland and an esquirrou from France are set to be part of the auction, which is dominated by offerings from US-based cheesemakers. Each item up for auction has won awards at the global and US national levels. That makes this an opportunity for cheese lovers – even those not interested in shelling out hard-earned gold for a block from overseas – to taste and appreciate some real masters of the craft. *Though bidding in advance is not an option, registrations for bidders are open on the website worldchampioncheese.org. Online bidding opens on April 5, and the live auction kicks off on April 7, at 3 pm CT.*



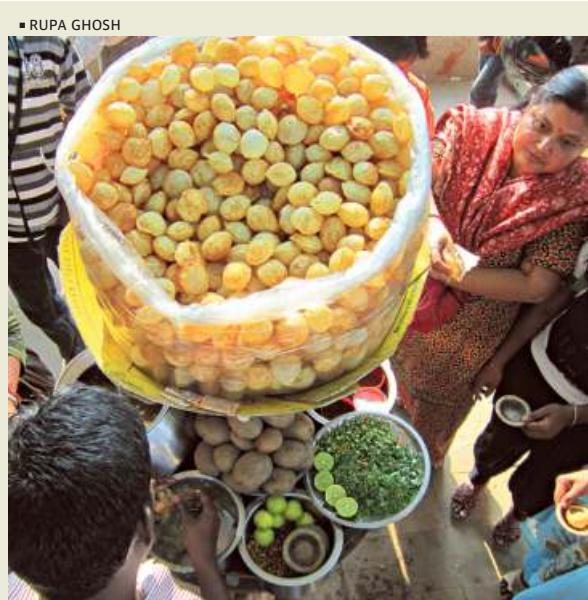
### Chowman's new outing

Chowman, the popular Kolkata-based chain of Indo-Chinese restaurants started by food lover and musician Debaditya Chaudhury, is widening its presence in Bengaluru with three cloud kitchens in the bustling hubs of Whitefield, Aarekere, and CV Raman Nagar, and dine-in restaurants across several locations in the city.

The menu offers diverse fare like wine and crab meat soup, Kolkata-style chilli chicken, black fungus and mushroom in chilli soy sauce, pan-fried chilli fish and butter garlic fish.

Food delivery is available through Swiggy, Zomato and the restaurant's in-house app. Outlets are open from 11am to 10.30pm, and dinner for two costs around ₹800 plus taxes.

To know more, call the toll-free number 18008901250.



### All for the crunch

There is no joy in having *pani puri* in the clean and careful confines of home, so I did not try. I bid my time for a year, before opportunity recently presented itself in Chennai, at the crossroads between street-style abandon and COVID-mandated caution.

I was on my way home from a grocery run – mask firmly on my face; bag tightly tucked under my arm; death glares locked and loaded and ready to shoot at anyone waving their obscenely uncovered noses like any other vendor worth his salt, looked like he didn't give two hoots about prospective customers battling rush-hour traffic to reach him. I finally managed to cross the street, drawn to the heaps of *puri* and tureens of *pani*. There were even a couple of listless, barely leafy trees, a flickering bug-ridden street lamp and some deafening car horns to set the scene perfectly. I didn't trip on any loose pavement tiles, like I usually would, but a girl cannot have everything.

When I finally reached, it was only to be met by a bored gaze and a lazy wave towards the shop flanking the stall. Inside stood a couple packing sweets and savouries, and handing out tokens for *pani puri*. The shop was spotless, the owners were following protocol, the man at the stall was wearing fresh plastic gloves. It was all rather disappointing, and I will take the exorbitant amount I paid (less than ₹50, don't worry) to my shameful little grave.

But all that was forgotten the second the vendor wiped some sweat off his brow with his sleeve, and punched a hole into a startlingly crunchy *puri*. Stuffing, sweet water, spicy water, bowl... from then on, it was a race between my appetite and his deftness. I cracked the brimming treat between my teeth, letting the sweet, sour and oh-so-heavenly water dribble and pool down into my bowl. I managed to chomp down two of them in record time, before giving up on the race and enjoying the rest slowly. He plucked the rest down into my already watery bowl a bit more slowly, and – joy of joys – even whipped up a last, dry *sukhi puri* without waiting to be asked. Finally, my hands were messy, my shirt stained, my mouth an utter rainbow of tang, sweet and umami. All was right with the world again... a water tanker behind me blared its horn to concur.

Meghna Majumdar

## YOU HAD TO BE THERE

### A ghee-laden icon

I walked into this much-loved restaurant of Coimbatore after months, and it instantly felt like home. After exchanging smiles with familiar waiters, I looked around and was happy to see the place bustling with diners, just the way it used to be during pre-COVID times. At a nearby table, a group of families was enjoying ghee roast, onion roast and the *uthappam* generously topped with chopped onions and tomatoes.

My eyes followed the waiter who ambled towards me holding a big tray. A plate appeared with ghee masala *dosa* on my table, bringing an instant smile to my face. As the



SIVA SARAVANAN S

Some foods just cannot be savoured at home. Out on the streets, back in our favourite haunts, we reunite with our favourite guilty pleasures after a year-long pause

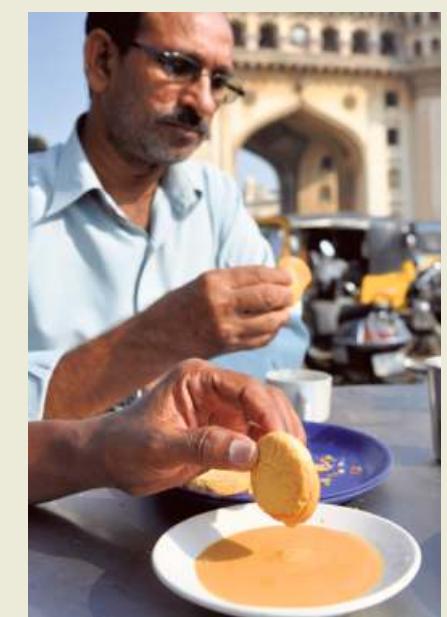
TEAM METROPLUS

aroma of hot ghee wafted up, I took one bite of the crisp *dosa* and soft mashed potato masala, and realised what I have been missing during lockdown – *dosa* treats at the iconic Sree Annapoorna.

While there are variants with mushrooms or cauliflower, nothing can match the joy of scooping up the buttery potato mash with chopped green chillies, onions, tomatoes, and coriander leaves, and relishing it with *sambhar* or chutney, sometimes even both. It's a match made in culinary heaven – the crisp *dosa* and soft mashed potatoes.

I began with the crispy thin outer portion, dipped it in coconut chutney, then dunked it in a bowl of the famous, slightly-sweet *sambhar*, and savoured the flavours. Then, I slowly worked my way towards the chunky centre, filled generously with masala. I tried it with red beetroot chutney and a tangy green chutney, licking my now greasy fingers. This was not the first time I was digging into the ghee masala *dosa*, but the experience of eating it at a restaurant table, observing other diners, and seeing life come back to normal was comforting. I asked for extra coconut chutney and *sambhar*, polished off the *dosa* in no time and floated my way home.

K Jeshi



### Sip and dip into the finest

Irani chai was never my thing. But during the lockdown when Hyderabad's Irani cafes were shut, I craved a sip of the sweet, creamy milk tea. The joy of dipping a flaky biscuit in it and finally letting it melt in my mouth is a revelation even for a non-Irani chai drinker.

When businesses reopened, I tried ordering the tea through a takeaway disposable flask, but it was a bit of a disappointment. Irani chai is best savoured when it comes in white china cups with spillage on the saucer, within few seconds of being brewed.

Finally, it all fell into place when I decided to go on a heritage walk with some of my friends. Visiting the Old City after more than a year was a pleasure and the Irani cafe there was a sight for sore eyes. 'Ek chai aur fine biscuit', I told the waiter, who served me within seconds.

The sweetness of the creamy tea has an distinctive mouthfeel. The mild chocolatey hint of a tea that has been well-steeped in hot milk is a winning combination. With each sip, I could only think of how much I had missed.

The aroma made me dizzy with happiness. Then I broke the fine biscuit to see if it was flaky enough with hydrogenated fat... and finally, chai met biscuit and my taste buds cried out in delight at realising a lockdown dream.

Prabalika M Borah

G RAMAKRISHNA

Samantha Stark,  
producer-director of  
*Framing Britney Spears*, talks  
about the controversial documentary  
that throws light on the  
American pop sensation

# A piece of her

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

"I panicked, was terrified," admits director-producer Samantha Stark, recalling her mindset right before the release of *Framing Britney Spears*. "I was thinking a lot about what Britney would think if she saw it. Making something without her participation was very strange for me; I have a lot of internal conflict about it." She is candid that the team was afraid of a fallout in case of misrepresented events, despite intensive research, but "we did not get that at all, which was surprising".

Spearheaded by Stark, *Framing Britney Spears* is part of docu-series *The New York Times Presents*, which comprises full-length films about coronavirus frontline workers, the Australian bush-fires, and the murder of Breonna Taylor, among other issues. *Framing Britney Spears* breaks the tabooed silence around the musician's mental health issues and conservatorship — Spears has not legally controlled her fortune since 2008.

Unfortunately, most of the general public, at the mention of 'Britney Spears' will not immediately think of her US\$70 million net worth as a pop music icon, but rather recall images of her shaving her own head and beating the car window of a paparazzi with an umbrella. *Framing Britney Spears* turns that around.

**The allure of Spears**  
When the one hour and fourteen-min-

## In search of better endings

On World Storytelling Day, 21 narrators will come together from across the country to share personal accounts of dealing with fear and anxiety for the benefit of the larger community

NIVEDITA GANGULY

On World Storytelling Day on March 20, a team of 21 storytellers will go on a storytelling marathon spread across the day, to narrate personal accounts that inspire and heal. Organised by Mumbai-based The Secret Passages, in collaboration with Chennai-based Katha Vriksh and Mumbai-based Storycellar, the theme centres around Better Endings, New Beginnings.

"The idea is to tell stories that are

nute film was released on February 5 to the US, fans around the world rallied to contribute to the #FreeBritney movement.

Stark admits during a video call, that she "had no clue" *Framing Britney Spears* would have such a big reaction. "The weekend it came out in the US, #WeAreSorryBritney started trending on Twitter by the time I woke up the next morning. That's the exact impact we wanted, for people to look at her story and realise their own complicity in how she was treated. It's a good step to symbolise we are ready to change."

The film addresses Spears' personality and on-stage and on-screen persona. Stark points out a startling dichotomy: "I learned how in control she was at the beginning of her career. I was told by many people that she was a creative force and was very business-minded. As the teams and I went through the archival footage, it struck me that I don't remember hearing Britney speak; I had no idea how 'with it'

she was; the answers she sometimes gave were very strong and she would fight back. When criticised for wearing 'too sexy of clothing', she said 'I'm going to wear what I want'.

When told she was a bad influence on children, she said 'I'm not here to babysit your kids'."

This was a huge learning point for Stark, as someone who admittedly only consumed the furthest outward media coverage of Spears. The film goes on to detail Spears' "control getting sucked away" to the point of zero financial independence. In a way, Spears' conservatorship wound up serving as a microcosm of the larger conversation around women's financial independence and mental health.

Stark avers, "Even though she makes millions of dollars — she was making a million dollars a week at one point — she cannot control her own finances at all. Her father [Jamie Spears] controls them." Stark slumps her shoulders a bit as she recalls the ar-

ris, which helped charge up a more empathetic discourse around American female celebrities and their private struggles. But fans on social media are protesting unauthorised documentaries like *Framing Britney Spears*, claiming *The New York Times* is profiting off Spears' pain.

In response to this, Stark thinks for a moment. Then, she explains, "Over the summer through court filings, Britney — through her court-appointed attorney Sam Ingram — expressed that she didn't want this hidden away in the closet like a family secret. This means, to me, that she was inviting scrutiny into her situation. I'm neither a celebrity reporter nor a political reporter — two types of reporters that do stories about people not necessarily participating in them. The film is not making assumptions about what was in her head; this was how I justified doing this project."

She recounts how accidentally unsealed court documents portrayed the extent to which Spears had no control over her finances.

A jarring truth unveiled during the documentary is that Spears was paying for her father's legal fees as well as her own. But if she wanted to go on vacation, she had to get that approved by her father.

"In 2016 and 2017, these documents showed every single thing on her spending, itemised down to coffee, what she buys at Target, gifts for her kids, flowers, and meals." Stark shakes her head, adding, "It is so twisted and outlandish; you make millions of dollars and you have to itemise your coffee to make sure it fits in your budget."

**The consent debate**

The film comes on the heels of Paris Hilton's 2020 documentary *This Is Pa-*

**Spears' conservatorship wound up serving as a microcosm of the larger conversation on women's financial independence and mental health**

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Pitch perfect Jaaved Jaaferi from the series ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

What's Mr Lion thinking?

Through *Animals Gone Wild*, actor Jaaved Jaaferi introduces viewers to various aspects of the animal kingdom

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

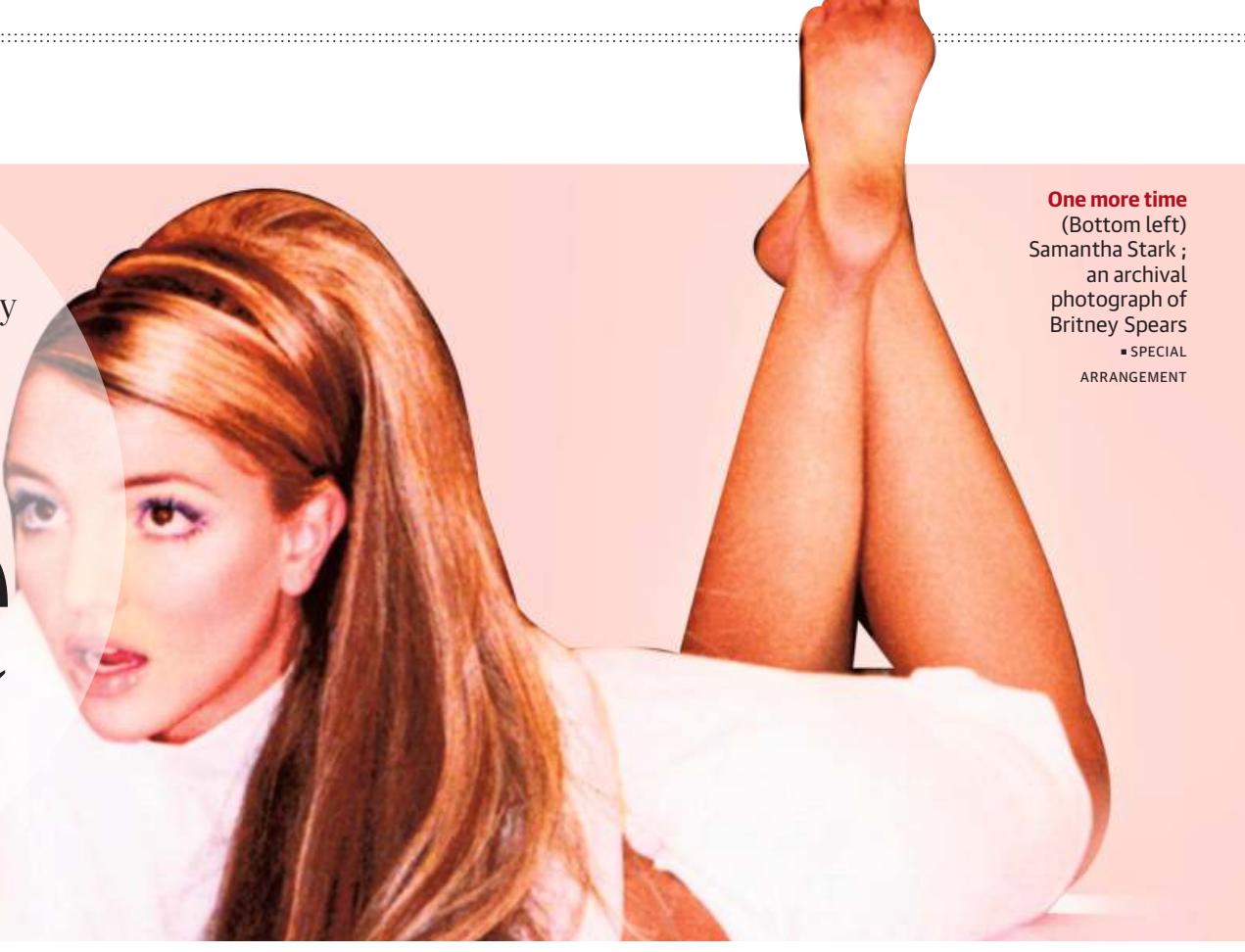
What's common between Sher Khan's deep baritone and Mickey Mouse's squeaky voice? Actor Jaaved Jaaferi, who has lent his voice to both in Hindi. Next, he will be seen in National Geographic's series *Animals Gone Wild*.

The show will have Jaaferi take up multiple roles: Tony Tiewallah, Camouflage Ray and Gullu Guide. The characters have been created by him. Accompanying him will be a gamut of animals, virtually making an appearance from their respective natural habitats. African elephants, llamas, dogs, crocodiles, chimpanzees, lions, and more. "We had to keep the credibility alive," says Jaaferi over a phone call.

Though Jaaferi was part of the creative process, a research team put together all the facts about animals, their mannerisms and why they do what they do. The actor has learnt some fascinating aspects of the animal kingdom through this show. "I have seen ducks suddenly coming close and attacking you, if you don't give in to their whims and fancy. I have seen a swan attack a gorilla, or a cat scare away a big dog. There is harmony as well, like for example when you see how whales protect their babies."

The team spent a few months during lockdown working on this, with footage shot on camera and sent in from across the world. Each episode features four to six animals.

*Animals Gone Wild* will premiere on National Geographic India on March 22 at 8 pm.



One more time  
(Bottom left)  
Samantha Stark ;  
an archival  
photograph of  
Britney Spears  
■ SPECIAL  
ARRANGEMENT

POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



Stories that heal The core team of The Secret Passages; (seated, second from left) Geetanjali ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

realisation for me and helped me to love myself, which I had been struggling with my whole life," says Jyoti Pande, one of the storytellers.

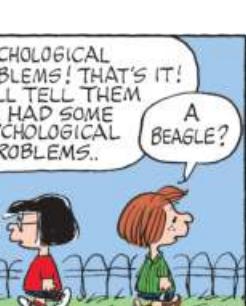
Geetanjali says that narratives around popular stories and fables are changing. "There used to be no grey areas in stories. But today, stories are more about characters who have shades of grey and less about a hero or villain. We open up the possibilities of how a story can end. I strongly believe that stories can be more purposeful," she concludes, adding that they can act as positive intervention.

The event will be held at three time slots: 10 am to 12.30 pm, 5 pm to 7.30 pm and 8 pm to 10.30 pm.; details at [thesecretpassages.com](http://thesecretpassages.com)

## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



# EU regulator backs AstraZeneca vaccine after safety investigation

Benefits of vaccine outweigh the risks, EMA finds; patient leaflet to carry warning

REUTERS  
AMSTERDAM

The EU's drug watchdog said on Thursday it is convinced the benefits of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine outweigh the risks following an investigation into reports of blood disorders that prompted more than a dozen nations to suspend its use.

The news came as the European Medicines Agency (EMA) director Emer Cooke said the watchdog could not definitively rule out a link between blood clot incidents and the vaccine in its investigation into 30 cases of a rare blood clotting condition.

But she said in a briefing the "clear" conclusion of the review was that the vaccine "benefits in protecting people from COVID-19 with the associated risk of death or



**Begin again:** A woman receiving a dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine at Lichfield cathedral, England, on Thursday. ■ AFP

hospitalisation outweigh the possible risks."

The agency will, however, update its guidance to include an explanation about the potential risks on both the patient leaflet and in the information for healthcare professionals, she said.

The agency has been under growing pressure to

clear up safety concerns after a small number of reports in recent weeks of bleeding, blood clots and low platelet counts in people who have received the shot.

The EMA's focus and primary concern has been on cases of blood clots in the head, a rare condition that's difficult to treat called cere-

## Countries resume shots

Many countries, including France, Italy, Latvia and Lithuania, and regions such as Germany's Rhineland-Palatinate, announced resumption of vaccine rollout from Friday. Spain will restart its use from next week.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he will get the vaccine on Friday.

## Beijing says 'no compromise' on sovereignty ahead of key meet

Blinken, Sullivan to meet Chinese Foreign Minister in Alaska

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

China's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday it would not make concessions to the U.S. on key issues, including Xinjiang and Hong Kong, ahead of high-level meetings between the two countries' diplomats in Alaska.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan are set for talks with senior Chinese official Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi later Thursday.

It is the highest-level face-to-face diplomatic meeting between the two countries

since U.S. President Joe Biden took office.

China wants a reset in relations, which were pitched into turmoil by Donald Trump's presidency, which brought a damaging trade war and spats over everything from defence to tech and rights in Hong Kong.

The U.S. diplomats landed in Alaska hours ahead of the talks, a Foreign Ministry spokesman in Beijing issued a warning to Washington. "China has no room for compromise on issues concerning its sovereignty, security and core interests," spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

Mr. Zhao urged the U.S. against talking tough and engaging in "megaphone diplomacy" toward China.

"The US should meet China halfway and conduct the dialogue in a sincere and constructive manner," Mr. Zhao said.

The U.S. diplomats aim to be on the front foot in the talks, U.S. officials have said. The U.S. plans to express "deep concerns" about the treatment of the Uighur minority in Xinjiang, a crackdown in Hong Kong, China's "economic coercion" and Beijing's "aggressive" stance towards Taiwan.

## Suu Kyi faces new allegations

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MANDALAY

A Myanmar construction magnate with links to military rulers said he personally paid more than half a million dollars in cash to deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a broadcast on state television aimed at discrediting the ousted civilian government.

The statement by Maung Waik could pave the way for more serious charges against Ms. Suu Kyi, who has been detained since the February 1 military takeover.

The military had earlier alleged that she was given \$6,000,000 plus gold bars by a political ally.

## Russia hosts Afghan peace meet

Kabul government and Taliban representatives meet with international observers

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSCOW

Russia hosted a peace conference for Afghanistan on Thursday, bringing together government representatives and their Taliban adversaries along with international observers in a bid to help jump-start the country's stalled peace process.

The one-day gathering is the first of three planned international conferences ahead of a May 1 deadline for the final withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from the country, a date fixed under a year-old agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban.

**Call for ceasefire**  
Moscow's attempt at mediation comes as talks in Doha between the Afghan government and the Taliban, still waging an insurgency, have stalled. Washington and Kabul have been pressing for a ceasefire while the Taliban



**Time for talks:** Ex-President Hamid Karzai, left, and Taliban leader Abdul Ghani Baradar, second from right, in Moscow. ■ AP

say they will negotiate it as part of peace talks with the Afghan government.

"We hope that today's talks will help achieve progress in the inter-Afghan talks," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at the start of the meeting.

The Moscow conference is attended by U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, Abdullah Abdullah, head of Afghanistan's National

Reconciliation Council, and Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Representatives of Pakistan, Iran, and China are also participating.

Moscow, which fought a 10-year war in Afghanistan that ended with Soviet troops' withdrawal in 1989, has made a diplomatic comeback as a mediator in Afghanistan, reaching out to feuding factions as it jockeys

with the U.S. for influence in the country.

Mr. Lavrov on Thursday urged the Afghan government and the Taliban to take a constructive stance and make compromises, adding that international participants should help create the necessary conditions for reaching a deal.

"The Afghan parties interested in the national reconciliation can reach peace only through negotiations and compromises," Mr. Lavrov said.

"It's important to sign an agreement that would serve the interests of all key ethnic and political forces of the country and determine the vector of its development."

He emphasised that it was important to quickly reach a peace deal "amid the deteriorating military-political situation" before the summer, when an upsurge in fighting is likely.

## Tanzania mourns after Magufuli's sudden death

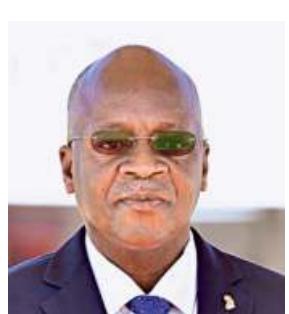
Samia Suluhu Hassan to succeed him

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DAR ES SALAAM

Tanzania was in mourning on Thursday over the sudden death of President John Magufuli, an authoritarian leader and COVID-19 sceptic who leaves behind a divided legacy and a question mark over his fatal illness.

Flags flew at half-mast as the country began a 14-day mourning period after Vice-President Samia Suluhu Hassan – who is set to become the country's first female leader – announced Magufuli's death before midnight on Wednesday.

Ms. Hassan said Magufuli had died on Wednesday of a "heart condition" from which he had long suffered,



John Magufuli

in a hospital in Dar es Salaam.

The government had previously denied Mr. Magufuli was ill as pressure mounted to explain his three-week absence from public view, which sparked rumours he was had COVID-19.

## Children faced abuse in German diocese: report

314 victims between 1975 and 2018'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BERLIN

An independent study commissioned by the Roman Catholic Church released on Thursday has uncovered hundreds of cases of sexual violence allegedly committed by clergy and laymen in Germany's top diocese.

The long-awaited 800-page report on the Cologne diocese found 202 alleged perpetrators of sexual assault and 314 victims between 1975 and 2018, Björn Gercke, a lawyer mandated by the Church, told reporters.

"More than half of the victims were children under the age of 14," Mr. Gercke said.

The findings show "that for decades, apparently no one dared to report such cases".

However, the investigation cleared Cologne's Archbishop Rainer Maria Woelki of breach of duty over the abuse. He had faced months of protests for refusing to allow the publication of an earlier study on abuse committed by priests in his diocese.

Most of the allegations cover the tenure of Archbishop Woelki's predecessor, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, who died in 2017.

He had justified his decision citing a right to privacy for those accused in the report.

## Austin visit may allay concerns about Indo-Pacific, Afghanistan

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will meet Rajnath Singh, other officials in Delhi

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON



Lloyd Austin

that the former President worked out" he said. "And so we're in consultation with our allies as well as the [Afghan] government and that decision is in process now."

ity with his interlocutors in Delhi but also concerns about an erosion of democratic norms in India.

### Bipartisan support

India continues to enjoy bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, but along with that comes an interest in and reactions to developments within the country.

"The letter from Senator Menendez suggests Congress will play an active role in shaping the U.S.-India relationship," says Sameer Lalwani, director of the Stimson Center's South Asia programme.

"I expect the Pentagon will continue to communicate the trade-offs and consequences for deep U.S.-India defence cooperation if India inducts the Russian-made S-400 system. At the same time, I expect India to proceed with this procurement because it does bolster its defences, particularly against China and the PLAAF [Chinese air force]," Mr. Lalwani said.

Prior to his departure from New Delhi in January, former U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Juster had said that CAATSA was not designed to harm friends and allies of the U.S. His comments were made not long after the Trump administration sanctioned Turkey (a NATO ally of the U.S.) in December, for its S-400 purchase. Congress had mandated the sanctions in a defence Bill passed in 2020, forcing the executive's

The law does provide for sanctions waivers: this is contingent on it being in the national interest of the U.S., or the country in question cooperating with the U.S. on security matters, or the country reducing its reliance on Russian weapons.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

nounced visit to Afghanistan, Jim Mattis, former Defense Secretary, dropped in on U.S. and allied troops in Afghanistan in September 2018 when the Trump administration was trying to push a peace deal in the country. The Pentagon, however, had nothing to announce on Afghanistan, when *The Hindu* asked if Mr. Austin would be visiting the country.

### Talks CAATSA

Then there is the question of U.S. sanctions on India for buying the S-400, a Russian missile defence system. India, which paid just under \$5.5 billion for the equipment, will begin taking delivery of the system this year, potentially kicking off sanctions under a 2017 U.S. law, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). Senator Bob Menendez, the Democrat who chairs the Senate Armed Forces Committee, wrote to Mr. Austin this week asking him to raise not just the S-400 sanctions possibil-

### PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that **Nikhil Sharma** S/o **Dayanand Sharma** R/o **Nahar Colony Sanota, PS- Gulawati, District, Bulandshah, Uttar Pradesh** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. **506/14 U/s 419/471/34 IPC, P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi** has been returned to a warrant of arrest therupon issued that the said accused **Nikhil Sharma** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Nikhil Sharma** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Nikhil Sharma** of FIR No. **506/14 U/s 419/471/34 IPC, P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated **04.05.2021**.

By Order

Sh. Kapil Kumar

Metropolitan Magistrate

Room No. 32, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

HIMACHAL PRADESH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.  
RITZ ANNEXE, SHIMLA - 171001  
Tel: (0177) 2652704-06 Email: hptdc@hptdc.in  
Website : www.hptdc.in

File No: Pur-1-2020 Date: 18.03.2021  
e- Procurement Short NOTICE  
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The General Manager, HPTDC Ritz Annex, Shimla on behalf of Managing Director, HPTDC invites item rate bid through electronic tendering system for the Supplying, Installation & Commissioning of Kitchen and Bar equipments for new Hotel at Kasauli Distt. Solan (H.P.)from Equipments Manufacturers who are specialized in such works and also registered under GST Act 2017. Other terms and conditions may kindly be downloaded from website <https://htptenders.gov.in> or [www.hptdc.in](http://www.hptdc.in)

General Manager

GOVERNOR'S SECRETARIAT  
JHARKHAND, RANCHI-834008  
Tel: 0651 - 2283465, 2283466, 2283467  
Fax -0651 - 2284870 E-mail : [jhgovt@jh.nic.in](mailto:jhgovt@jh.nic.in)  
[www.rajbhavanjharkhand.nic.in](http://www.rajbhavanjharkhand.nic.in)

### ADVERTISEMENT

Invitation of online application for the posts of Financial Adviser of Ranchi University, Ranchi; Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh; Sido Kanhu Murmu University, Dumka; Nilamber-Pitamber University, Medinagar, Palamu; Kolhan University, Chabaisa & Binod Bihari Mahato Koylanchay University, Dhambad.

The Screening Committee constituted by the Hon'ble Governor-cum-Chancellor of Universities of the state of Jharkhand invites online application latest by 23.04.2021 by 05:00 PM from interested eligible candidates who shall be appointed by the Chancellor either on deputation or by re-employment from amongst the officers of the Indian Audit and Accounts Services or from any other Accounts Service of Government of India, or from officers of Jharkhand State Finance Service, not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner. The maximum age limit for appointment of Financial Adviser shall be 62 years on the date of publication of advertisement for recommending a panel of names to the Hon'ble Governor-cum-Chancellor of Universities of the State of Jharkhand for the posts above.

All the instructions and link regarding submission of online application are available on the website of Raj Bhawan, Ranchi ([www.rajbhavanjharkhand.nic.in](http://www.rajbhavanjharkhand.nic.in)) and Chancellor Portal ([www.jharkhanduniversities.nic.in](http://www.jharkhanduniversities.nic.in))

Sd/-

O.S.D. (Judicial) to Governor

-cum-

Convener, Screening Committee

PR 244063 Governor(20-21).D

Letter No - 221 /2021 Dated -17 /03/2021

### Very Short Tender Notice

RFP Name:-Request for Proposal for Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) under PMKVY 3.0-CSSM  
Jharkhand Skill Development Mission Society (JSDMS) invites the Request for Proposal (RFP) from interested and eligible organizations, who are already empanelled with NSDC for RPL implementation. Mandate of selected Project Implementation Agency (PIA) / Training Providers (TPs) shall be implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) under Centrally Sponsored State Managed (CSSM) component of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY) 3.0 in the state of Jharkhand. Eligibility criteria and other terms and conditions can be downloaded from tender section of JSDMS portal <http://jsdm.jharkhand.gov.in>

This section provides general information about the key details, about issuer, important dates and addresses related to RFP

SCHEDULE FOR INVITATION OF SHORT RFP NOTICE

Sl No.	RFP No.:	Training Provider(TP)/Project Implementation Agencies (PIA) for implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

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## MARKET WATCH

	18-03-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	49217	-1.17
US Dollar	72.53	0.02
Gold	44509	-0.02
Brent oil	65.39	-3.11

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	679.65	-8.60
Asian Paints	2404.55	-18.40
Axius Bank	718.75	-9.15
Bajaj Auto	3664.50	94.90
Bajaj Finserv	9430.15	-94.95
Bajaj Finance	5371.85	12.05
Bharti Airtel	527.20	4.30
BPCL	426.90	-5.15
Britannia Ind	3439.65	-28.25
Cipla	755.15	-17.00
Coal India	137.05	-2.80
Divis Lab	3272.90	-105.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4212.75	-143.10
Eicher Motors	2664.60	17.60
GAIL (India)	135.10	-3.30
Gasim Ind	1387.80	20.70
HCL Tech.	947.75	-39.70
HDFC	2514.60	-0.95
HDFC Bank	1491.00	-4.35
HDFC Life	680.85	-8.95
Hero MotoCorp	3107.20	-83.35
J&T	331.80	5.40
Hindalco	2215.20	-11.10
ICICI Bank	578.60	-10.90
IndusInd Bank	1002.80	-6.15
Infosys	1337.10	-49.90
Indian Oil Corp	97.25	-0.95
ITC	217.65	7.05
JSW Steel	423.15	-0.65
Kotak Bank	1830.40	-37.95
L&T	1428.10	-9.55
M&M	845.65	8.70
Maruti Suzuki	7113.75	49.10
Nestle India Ltd.	16201.25	-254.50
NTPC	103.80	-2.75
ONGC	110.20	0.85
PowerGrid Corp	221.05	0.60
Reliance Ind	2009.10	-46.25
SBI Life	890.45	1.50
State Bank	367.10	-1.05
Shree Cement	26595.50	-246.70
Sun Pharma	574.55	-10.20
Tata Motors	307.00	1.20
Tata Steel	704.85	0.45
TCS	3036.50	-76.45
Tech Mahindra	996.20	-23.85
Titan	1468.20	-4.35
UltraTech Cement	6510.05	-10.20
UPL	601.30	-7.90
Wipro	410.15	-9.50

## Delhi HC stays Future on Reliance deal

Court hands Amazon a win, asks why Biyani, other FRL promoters should not be sent to prison

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

In a major victory for U.S.-based e-commerce giant Amazon, the Delhi High Court on Thursday ruled that Future Retail Limited (FRL) and its promoters including Kishore Biyani "deliberately and wilfully" violated the order of an emergency arbitrator (EA) restraining FRL from going ahead with its assets sale deal with Reliance Retail.

Noting that the intention of FRL and its promoters "do not appear to be honest", the high court directed attachment of the assets of Future Coupons Private Limited (FCPL), FRL, Mr. Biyani and 10 other promoters.

Justice J.R. Midha also directed Mr. Biyani and the other promoters to be present before the court on the next date of hearing on April 28. It additionally issued show-cause notices to all the



**Question of ethics:** The court said that the intention of the Future Group did not appear to be honest. ■ REUTERS

promoters "to show cause why they be not detained in civil prison for a term not exceeding three months" for violation of the emergency arbitrator's order.

The high court also imposed a cost of ₹20 lakh on Future Group which will be deposited in the Prime Mi-

nister's Relief Fund for providing COVID-19 vaccines to senior citizens of Below Poverty Line (BPL) category.

It directed Future Group not to take any further action in violation of the interim order passed by the emergency arbitrator at the Singapore International Arbitration

Centre (SIAC) on October 25, 2020. The high court's order came on a plea of Amazon, which has 49% stake in FCPL, seeking enforcement of the EA award.

Amazon had contended that it had invested ₹1,431 crore in FCPL with the clear understanding that FRL would be the sole vehicle for its retail business and its retail assets would not be alienated without its consent and never to a Restricted Person, including the Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani (MDA) Group.

Amazon stated that FRL had taken various steps to transfer the retail assets to the restricted person, MDA Group, in violation of the EA order and that the firm was continuing with it.

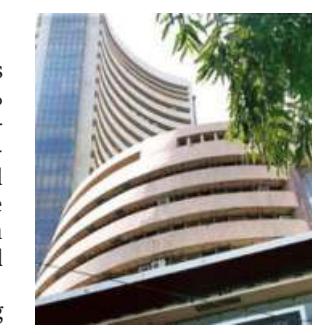
**Breached agreements'**  
"The respondents (Future Group) have breached the agreements. However, there

is no remorse. The intention of the respondents does not appear to be honest," the high court remarked.

FCPL, which holds 9.82% in FRL, has objected to the enforcement of the EA award on various ground including that the EA is not an Arbitrator or Arbitral Tribunal. The high court rejected this saying, "The interim order dated 25th October, 2020 is legal, valid and enforceable as an order of the Court".

FRL had also argued that Reliance was acquiring the retail and wholesale business as also the logistics and warehousing business from the Future Group as going concerns on a lump sum basis for a lumpsum aggregate consideration of ₹24,713 crore.

The high court, however, rejected FRL's argument that if this scheme fell through, it was inevitable that FRL would go into liquidation.



Mr. Nair said Indian markets saw more volatility than its global peers as domestic investors turned extra cautious on the increasing number of COVID-19 cases.

"The mounting concerns of possible fresh economic restrictions made enthusiasm of dovish commentary from the Federal Reserve short-lived for domestic markets," Press Trust of India quoted Bindu Modi, head strategy at Reliance Securities, as saying.

## Rising cases may lead RBI to delay liquidity normalisation'

Save new strict lockdowns, no threat to recovery: analysts



Maharashtra alone accounting for 65% of that.

Though analysts are unlikely to rush to review their growth forecasts, several believe policy normalisation, may now take a backseat.

"Monetary policy normalisation might be pushed back by a quarter as authorities monitor developments closely," Ms. Rao said.

The RBI in early January said it wanted to start restoring normal liquidity operations in a phased manner.

"Growth concerns due to rising pandemic cases... could push back market expectations on the timing of policy normalisation," Nomura economists Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi wrote in a note.

wave," said Radhika Rao, an economist with DBS Bank.

DBS has retained its assumptions for a stronger pick-up in March quarter growth versus the December 2020 quarter.

India reported 35,871 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, the highest in more than three months, with

## NCLT agrees to Haldia's plan for NOCL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Chennai has approved the resolution plan submitted by Haldia Petrochemicals for Nagarjuna Oil Corporation Ltd. (NOCL).

V. Mahesh, liquidator for NOCL, confirmed the development, but the final order copy is awaited.

NOCL's refinery project in Cuddalore, which was supposed to go on stream in 2012, faced several delays.

With time and cost overruns, the project cost surged to ₹3,500 crore.

A debt restructuring plan, initiated by a consortium of 17 banks did not materialise and insolvency proceedings were initiated against NOCL.

## Neelachal Ispat: losses scale high, minority holders to stay

'Without infusing capital, such holders will see unfair gains'

**C** The firm's losses hit a record ₹1,758 crore in FY20, from ₹401.45 crore the previous year

trial Promotion & Investment Corporation of Odisha, Odisha Mining Corporation, NMDC, MECON and BHEL, till March 29. Set up in 1982, NINL has been incurring losses since FY13.

Bidders had sought details on plans for the 5.35% stake held mainly by state-owned entities such as LIC, IDBI Bank and Central Bank of India – allotted as part of a debt restructuring exercise in FY05 – and another 0.94% held by two holders of partly paid-up shares.

The firm's liabilities would be cleared from the disinvestment proceeds and provide unfair gains to minority shareholders without their infusing any capital, bidders have pointed out.

## Skoda unveils made-in-India Kushaq SUV

LALATENDU MISHRA  
MUMBAI

Skoda Auto Volkswagen India on Thursday unveiled the Kushaq SUV, its first made-in-India product under the company's 2.0 project which was announced in 2018.

"The unveiling of the Kushaq marks the beginning of a new era for Skoda Auto and Volkswagen Group in India," said Gurpratap Boparai, MD, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India Pvt. Ltd., who helms the integrated organisation. In the next 12 months, the firm plans to unveil four new products under the Skoda and Volkswagen brands.

## Adani Green Energy raises \$1.35 bn in debt

Lenders to fund 1.69 GW portfolio

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) has raised \$1.35 billion in debt for its under-construction, renewable-asset portfolio from 12 international banks, the firm said.

"The revolving project finance facility would initially finance the 1.69 GW hybrid portfolio of solar and wind renewable projects to be set up under four SPVs (special purpose vehicles) in Rajasthan," it said.

As per the agreement, 12 international banks have committed to the facility which would be the first certified green hybrid project



loan in India, according to a company statement.

"The new pool of liquidity strengthens AGEL's strategy to fully fund its under-construction asset and augurs well for its vision of scaling capacity to 25 GW by 2025," AGEL said.

## Retail jewellers likely to sustain recovery'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Despite the steep fall in gold prices and the resultant fall in realisations, retail jewellers are likely to sustain the ongoing demand recovery into the next fiscal with a 30-35% spike in demand, according to a report.

There was strong de-

mand recovery in Q3 FY21 due to the festive season, pent-up wedding demand, and a 10% correction in gold prices during the festive period from its peak in last August, India Ratings said in a report, revising the sectoral outlook to stable from stable-to-negative.

"We intend to be among the top two brands in each category in the small appliances segment," said Ravindra Singh Negi, president-electrical consumer durables.

"In the mixer-grinder and mixer-juicer grinder category, we aim to be among the top three in

## Havells eyes doubling small appliances' sales

Segment worth ₹5,000-₹6,000 crore



Ravindra Singh Negi

the next two years," he said.

"We are also targeting to double our small domestic appliances business in the next two years," he added.

He added that the firm saw resurgence of demand with the festive season, that had since continued.

## Accenture staff to get one-time bonus payout

MINI TEJASWI  
BENGALURU

Tech major Accenture announced a one-time bonus, equivalent to one week of the basic salary, for all its 5 lakh employees across the world.

In India, about 2 lakh people will benefit from the bonus scheme. However, managing directors based in various geographies, will not be eligible for this payout, the company said.

"This bonus recognises the exceptional contributions and dedications of Accenture people to its clients during this challenging year," CEO Julie Sweet said.

## SPORT

## Dhanalakshmi betters Usha's 200m meet mark



**Catching the eye:** Dhanalakshmi continued to make heads turn with her superb run in the 200m. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mar (Har, 1:48.48), 2. Ankesh Chaudhary (HP, 1:48.65), 3. Anu Kumar (Utk, 1:49.25); **Discus throw:** 1. Kirpal Singh (Pun, 59.04m), 2. Vazeer (Har, 56.40m), 3. Abhinav (Har, 55.79m); **Pole vault:** 1. Parshant Kanhaiya (Har, 5.10m), 2. Lakshay (Har, 5.05m), 3. Anas EB (Ker, 4.90m).

**Women: 800m:** 1. Chanda (Del, 2:02.57), 2. Lili Das (WB, 2:02.98), 3. M.R. Poovamma (Kar, 2:03.35).

# Suryakumar, bowlers help India buck 'chasing' trend and stay alive

One-drop's up-tempo 57 headlines batting effort which also features crucial Shreyas cameo; home side holds its nerve in dewy conditions to defend 186 and make it 2-2

## ENGLAND IN INDIA

### ASHWIN ACHAL AHMEDABAD

If Ishan Kishan was unfortunate to be ruled out of the fourth T20I because of a groin strain, Lady Luck smiled on his replacement – Suryakumar Yadav. The Mumbai cricketer, dropped for the previous outing after not having faced a ball on debut in the second T20I, grabbed his chance.

Suryakumar's electric 31-ball 57 was key to India's tight eight-run victory, which helped the home side pull level at 2-2 in the five-match series.

The unshakable self-confidence that Suryakumar exudes came to the forefront when he rocked back to pull Jofra Archer for a six off the very first ball he faced. It was a dream start to his international batting career.

### Astonishing scoop

Two more maximums followed – including an astonishing scoop over fine-leg – before a questionable catch by Dawid Malan forced his dismissal.

Skipper Virat Kohli (1, 5b) fell cheaply, rushing down the track to leg-spinner Adil Rashid and missing completely.

Rishabh Pant (30, 23b, 4x4) and Shreyas Iyer (37, 18b, 5x4, 1x6) kept the score moving at a healthy rate, helping India make 185 for eight.

Archer finished with four for 33, his best figures in



**Smash hit:** Suryakumar's innings contained six fours and three sixes. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

T20Is. Fellow pacer Mark Wood was all fire and bite, even if he only managed to scalp one wicket.

### Stokes on song

In reply, England fought hard but paid the price for losing wickets at crucial junctures. Ben Stokes (46, 23b, 4x4, 3x6) kept the visitors in the hunt with some clean

hits. He fancied his chances against spinners Washington Sundar and Rahul Chahar, tonking anything full with great power into the stands.

It took some clever bowling from Shardul Thakur in the 17th over to turn the tide. He first took out Stokes with a slower ball, slapped straight to Suryakumar at long-off. The very next ball,

Eoin Morgan fell to another cutter. England needed 46 runs from 22 balls at this stage, leaving Sam Curran, Chris Jordan and Archer with a lot on their plate. With 23 needed off the final over, Shardul was given the ball.

A nervous Shardul conceded a four, a six and two wides, but got his act together in the final three deliveries to shut England out of the contest.

Opener Jason Roy looked dangerous during his 27-ball 40, until a flat-batted tennis shot off Hardik Pandya landed in Suryakumar's hands at deep mid-wicket. His opening partner Jos Buttler (9, 6b), the Man-of-the-Match in the third T20I, was deceived by a slower ball from Bhuv-

## SCOREBOARD

### INDIA

Rohit Sharma c&b Archer 12 (12b, 1x4, 1x6), K.L. Rahul c Archer b Stokes 14 (17b, 2x4), Suryakumar Yadav c Malan b Sam Curran 57 (31b, 6x4, 3x6), Virat Kohli st. Buttler b Rashid 1 (5b), Rishabh Pant b Archer 30 (23b, 4x4), Shreyas Iyer c Malan b Archer 37 (18b, 5x4, 1x6), Hardik Pandya c Stokes b Wood 11 (8b, 1x6), Shardul Thakur (not out) 10 (4b, 2x4), Washington Sundar c Rashid b Archer 4 (2b, 1x4), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-2, w-4): 6; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 177.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-15 (Buttler, 2.5), 2-60 (Malan, 7.5), 3-66 (Roy, 8.5), 4-131 (Bairstow, 14.5), 5-140 (Stokes, 16.1), 6-140 (Morgan, 16.2), 7-153 (Sam Curran, 17.6), 8-177 (Jordan, 19.5).

### INDIA BOWLING

Rashid 4-1-39, Archer 4-0-33-4, Wood 4-1-25-1, Jordan 4-0-41-0, Stokes 3-0-26-1, Sam Curran 1-0-16-1.

### ENGLAND

Jason Roy c Suryakumar b Hardik 40 (27b, 6x4, 1x6), Jos Buttler c Rahub l Bhuvneshwar 9 (6b, 1x6), Dawid Malan b Rahul Chahar 14 (17b, 1x6), Jonny Bairstow c Washington b Rahul Chahar 25 (19b, 2x4, 1x6),

Ben Stokes c Suryakumar b Shardul 12 (9b, 1x4), Jofra Archer (not out) 18 (8b, 2x4, 1x6), Adil Rashid (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-2, w-4): 6; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 177.

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Rashid 4-1-39, Archer 4-0-33-4, Wood 4-1-25-1, Jordan 4-0-41-0, Stokes 3-0-26-1, Sam Curran 1-0-16-1.

### ENGLAND

Ben Stokes c Suryakumar b Hardik 40 (27b, 6x4, 1x6), Jos Buttler c Rahub l Bhuvneshwar 9 (6b, 1x6), Dawid Malan b Rahul Chahar 14 (17b, 1x6), Jonny Bairstow c Washington b Rahul Chahar 25 (19b, 2x4, 1x6),

Shardul Thakur (not out) 10 (4b, 2x4), Washington Sundar c Rashid b Archer 4 (2b, 1x4), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-2, w-4): 6; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 177.

## TV PICKS

**All England Open badminton:** Star Sports 2HD & 3, 3.30 p.m.  
**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m. (Saturday)

## IN BRIEF



**DSF tie-up will support budding boxers:** Mary Kom  
**NEW DELHI:** Dream Sports Foundation (DSF), the philanthropic arm of Dream Sports, on Thursday announced a partnership with the Mary Kom Regional Boxing Foundation (MKRBF) to support six talented and budding female boxers from Imphal. Through this partnership, DSF will facilitate training and provide educational and financial assistance to these promising boxers for the next year. ANI

**Purav Raja in semifinals**

## INDIANS ABROAD

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
**BIELLA (ITALY):** Purav Raja, in partnership with Tristan-Samuel Weissborn of Austria, beat Quentin Halys and Lucas Pouille of France 6-4, 4-6, [10-7] in the doubles quarterfinals of the €44,820 Challenger tennis tournament here on Thursday.  
**The results:**  
**€44,820 Challenger, Biella, Italy: Doubles (quarterfinals):** Lloyd Glasspool (GBR) & Matt Reid (Aus) bt Luca Margaroli (Sui) & Sriram Balaji 6-4, 6-2; Tristan-Samuel Weissborn (Aut) & Purav Raja bt Quentin Halys & Lucas Pouille (Fra) 6-4, 4-6, [10-7]; **Pre-quarterfinals:** Tristan-Samuel Weissborn & Purav Raja bt Akira Santillan & Bernard Tomic (Aus) 6-2, 5-7, [10-3].

## Chelsea in quarters after seven years

Bayern Munich strolls past Lazio with Lewandowski on target again

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON

Chelsea eased into the quarterfinals of the Champions League for the first time in seven years with a 2-0 victory over Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, completing a 3-0 win on aggregate.

Chelsea took the lead with a goal created by a trio of summer signings who cost more than \$200 million.

Kai Havertz launched a counter-attack after Kieran Trippier's cross was intercepted before releasing Timo Werner to run down the left.

Werner sent the ball in for Hakim Ziyech, who placed the shot under goalkeeper Jan Oblak in the 34th minute.

The goal meant Atletico needed to score twice but its slim chances ended when Stefan Savic was sent off in



**Burying it:** Chelsea's Ziyech plants the ball past Atletico's Oblak for the opener. ■ REUTERS

the 81st minute.

## Latest setback

It was just the latest setback for Atletico, whose Spanish league lead has dwindled from 10 to four points in recent weeks.

With defending champion

Bayern Munich beating Lazio 2-1 to seal a 6-2 aggregate win in the night's other game, the quarterfinal lineup is now complete.

Robert Lewandowski gave Bayern the lead from the penalty spot in the 33rd minute for his 39th goal in all com-

petitions this season.

**The results:** Bayern Munich 2 (Lewandowski 33-pen, Choupo-Moting 73) bt Lazio 1 (Parolo 82). **Bayern wins 6-2 on aggregate.**

Chelsea 1 (Ziyech 34, Emerson 90+4) bt Atletico Madrid 0. **Chelsea wins 3-0 on aggregate.**

## Zareen stuns World champ

## BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI



Nikhat Zareen. ■ FILE PHOTO

(+91kg) who lost their preliminary round bouts.

## The results:

**Men: 63kg:** Shiva Thapa bt Smagulov Baghiyov (Kaz) 3-2.

**Women: 57kg:** Sonia Lather bt Surmeneli Tugcenaz (Tur) 5-0;

**60kg:** Parveen bt Ozayol Esra (Tur) 5-0.

## India looks to continue its domination

## SHOOTING WC

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

Host India will look to continue its global domination in shooting when the first final of the World Cup is held at the Dr. Karni Singh Range.

## In new avatar

After the pandemic, shooting, especially in rifle and pistol events, returns in a new avatar. The qualification for air rifle men and women will be held on Friday.

The finals for both the events, apart from the air pistol for men and women, will be staged on Saturday.

It will continue with the team competition for air rifle and air pistol on the third day, Sunday.

Earlier, every event used

to start and finish in one day, except for the shotgun events, and rapid fire pistol, which required two stages of competition over two days.

India had topped the medals table in all the four World Cups in rifle and pistol in 2019.

It also went on to top the table in the elite competition, the World Cup Final.

After the topsy turvy scores during the selection trials, at least in some cases, it will be interesting to see how the Olympics bound Indian shooters fare.

Focusing on the shooting would be the key, considering the numerous distractions, including the COVID-19 protocols, to sustain India's supremacy on the world stage.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

## Grand Slam.

Many camp out overnight to gain an advantage but tickets will be distributed differently this year.

There will also be no re-selling of tickets within the grounds. "Both the queue and ticket resale remain much-loved and important Wimbledon traditions, and we look forward to their return in 2022," said a statement from Wimbledon.

## Wimbledon to scrap queues



**Familiar scene:** The sight of spectators in tents during the Wimbledon queue will be missed this year. ■ REUTERS

## Lotlikar shocks Nirajan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BHILAI

Ronin Lotlikar knocked out top seed Nikhil Nirajan 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 in the boys' quarterfinals of the ITF grade-5 junior tennis tournament at the SAIL tennis complex here on Thursday.

Lotlikar will face third seed Yuvan Nandal in the semifinals.

## The results (quarterfinals):

**Boys:** Ronin Lotlikar bt Nikhil Nirajan 4-6, 6-2, 6-4; Yuvan Nandal bt Daksh Prasad 6-4, 6-4; Dhruv Hirpara bt Daksh Agarwal 6-1, 6-4; Sebastien Cauhape (Bel) bt Rushil Khosla 6-3, 3-6, 6-4.

**Girls:** Sanjana Sirimalla bt Aarni Reddy Yellu 3-6, 6-4, 6-4; Rutuja Chaphalkar (USA) bt Kristi Boro 6-2, 6-2; Ruma Gaikaiwari bt Amina Salibayeva (USA) 6-1, 6-1; Shruti Ahlawat bt Flo Helsen (Bel) 5-7, 6-0, 6-4.

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