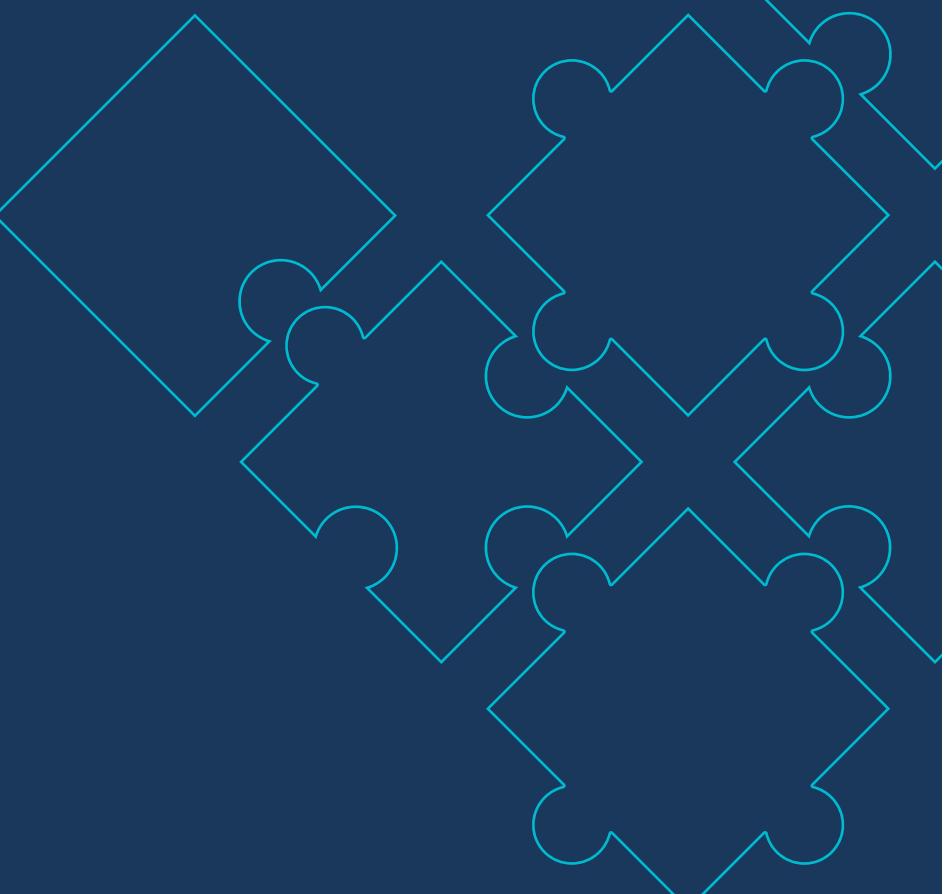
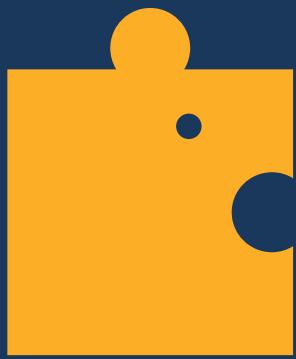




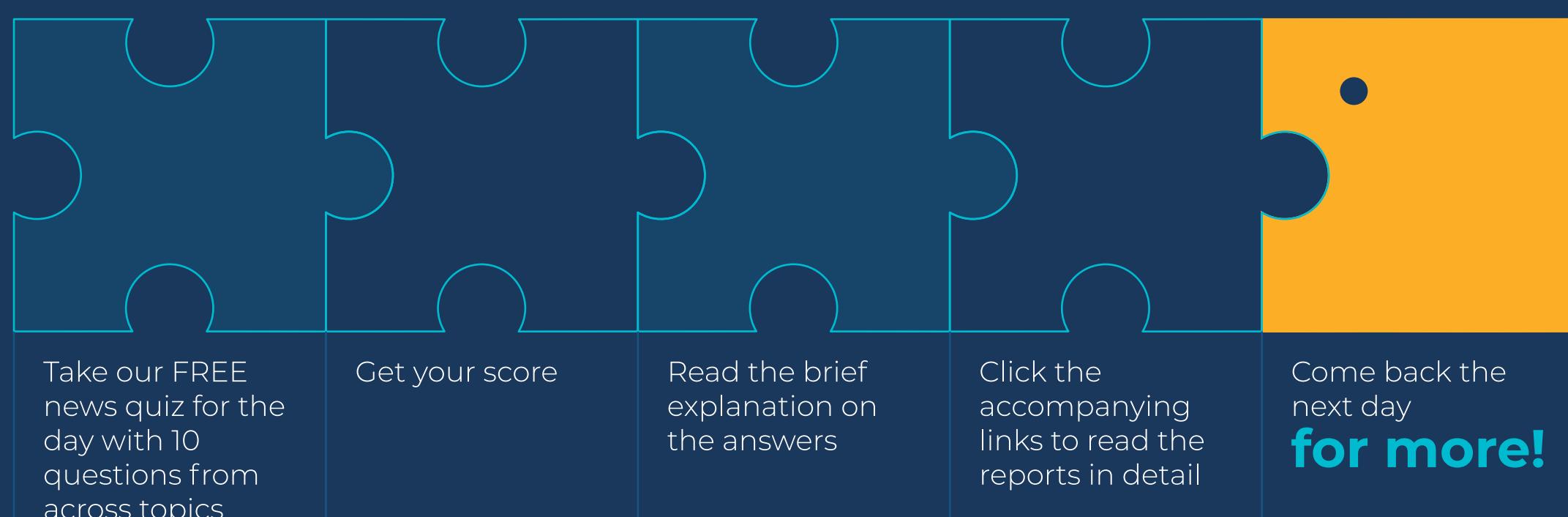
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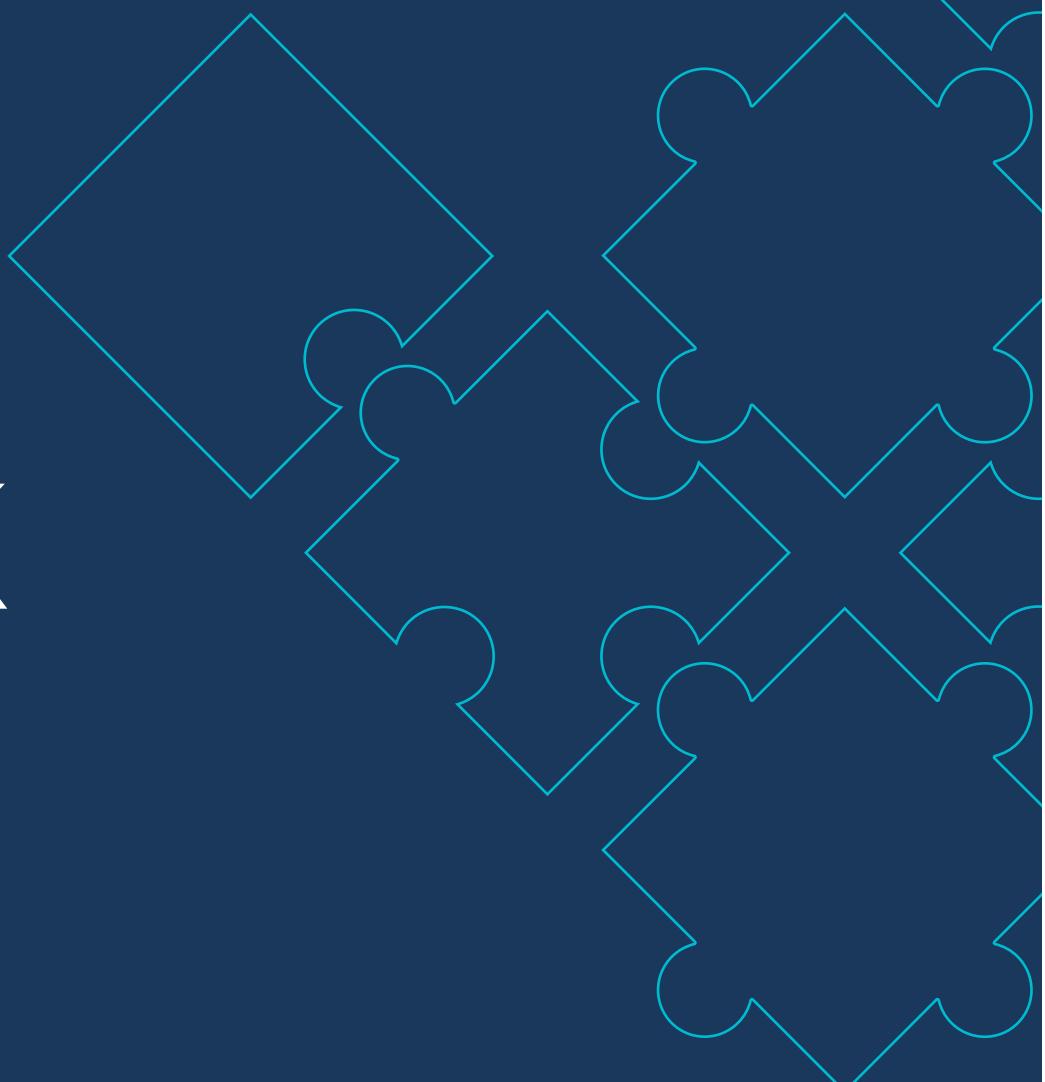


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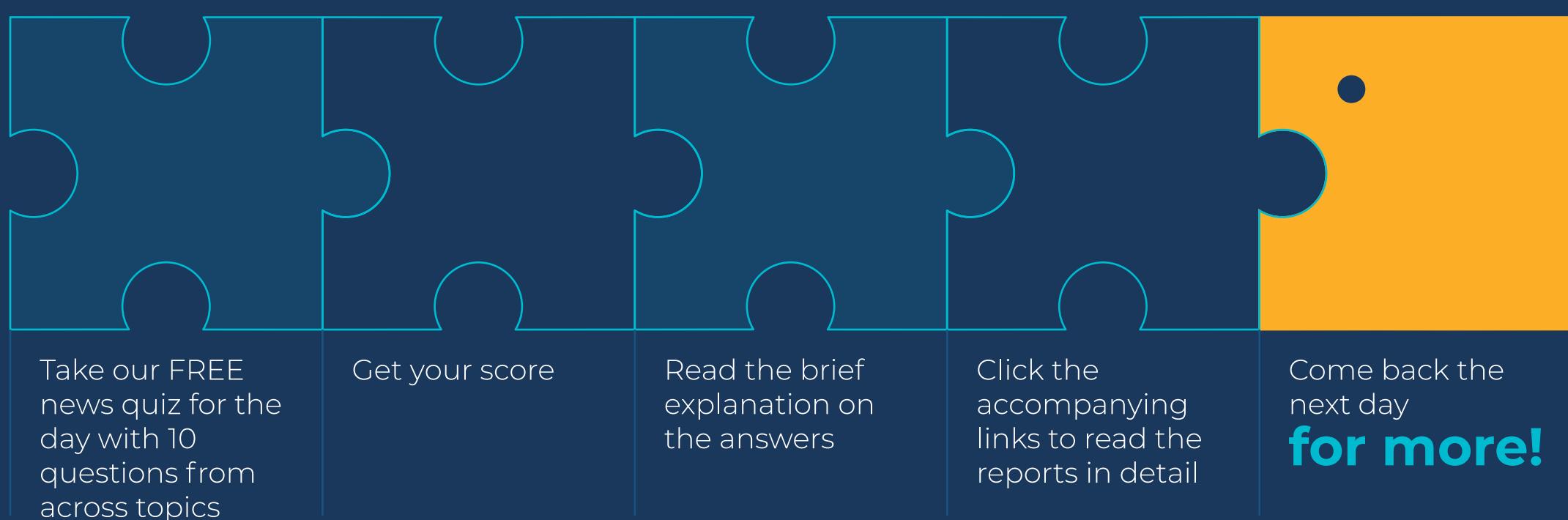
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CBI quizzes Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee's wife in coal theft case

Page 9



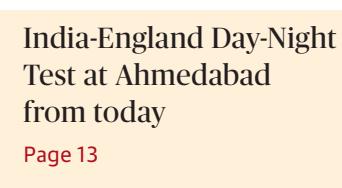
Defence Acquisitions Council clears proposals worth ₹13,700 crore

Page 10



Facebook to restore Australia news, pay media companies

Page 11



India-England Day-Night Test at Ahmedabad from today

Page 13

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NEARBY



'AAP emerging as an alternative in Gujarat'

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party said it has significantly improved its vote share in the municipal polls of Gujarat and people of different States are "accepting Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's model of development-based politics as a key alternative".

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Ajit Singh meets injured farmers in Muzaffarnagar

GAZIABAD

Rashtriya Lok Dal president Ajit Singh reached Soram village in Muzaffarnagar on Tuesday to meet the farmers who were injured in a clash with the aides of Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Rajasthan BJP discusses strategy for bypolls

JAIPUR

A core group of the BJP, formed to address factionalism in the party's Rajasthan unit, met here on Tuesday to deliberate on the strategies for the upcoming Assembly bypolls for four seats.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

Delhi court grants bail to Disha

Judge says 'toolkit' shared by activist is 'innocuous'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Terming the 'toolkit' shared by climate change activist Disha Ravi as "innocuous", a Delhi court on Tuesday granted her bail. Ms. Ravi was arrested for sharing the 'toolkit' relating to the ongoing farmers' protest against three contentious farm laws.

Additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana said, "The perusal of the said 'toolkit' reveals that any call for any kind of violence is conspicuously absent."

Dealing with the interpretation of the word 'sedition', a charge slapped by the Del-



Granted relief: Disha Ravi leaves the National Cyber Forensic Lab in New Delhi after an inquiry, on Tuesday. ■ REUTERS

hi Police on the 22-year-old activist, the judge said, "Law proscribes only such activities as would be intended, or have a tendency, to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resort to

violence".

"There is not even an iota of evidence brought to my notice connecting the perpetrators of the violence on January 26, 2021, with the said PJF [Poetic Justice Founda-

Nikita, Disha and Shantanu questioned

The Delhi Police questioned lawyer Nikita Jacob, engineer Shantanu Muluk and activist Disha Ravi for the second consecutive day at the cyber cell office in Dwarka on Tuesday. Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk arrived for the investigation at 11 a.m. ▶ PAGE 9

tion] or the applicant/accused [Ravi]," the court said, terming the evidence against Ms. Ravi "scanty and sketchy".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Punjab: curbs on gatherings from March 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

In a major setback to the government of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, the Supreme Court of Nepal on Tuesday reinstated the House of Representatives, the Lower House of Nepal's Parliament.

A special Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, which declared the verdict in response to 13 writ petitions, ordered that the 275-member House should

convene within 13 days.

Former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai said the verdict would help build better Delhi-Kathmandu ties.

The development comes two months after President B.D. Bhandari dissolved the Lower House on the recommendation of Mr. Oli's Cabinet.

The President also announced that polls should be held during April-May.

The move to dissolve the House of Representatives came after Mr. Oli had been

challenged by his colleagues in the Standing Committee of the ruling Nepal Communist Party with a possible no-confidence motion being planned against him.

The judgment by the Bench, led by Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher JBR, observed that the issue was political in nature but the court had to deal with it in the interest of upholding the Constitution of Nepal.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

Deliberate subversion of justice in riots cases'

Brinda Karat demands independent probe into the violence in north-east Delhi

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

The horrors of the north-east Delhi riots are still fresh in the memories of Mohd. Wakeel, a resident of Shiv Vihar, and Mallika, a resident of Bhagwati Nagar, a year since the violence destroyed their lives.

Ms. Mallika fights back tears as she recounts February 25, 2020, when she last saw her husband, Musharraf, whom she hid in a box bed in their home before applying sindoor (vermilion) and fleeing with her three-year-old son. Mr. Wakeel's scars do not even allow him to tear up as he lost both his eyes when a mob threw acid on his face.

A common thread that binds the victims, who shared their stories at the Press Club of India on Tuesday on the first anniversary of the riots, is the loss of trust in the police who, they alleged, did not answer their distress calls during the riots and afterwards, when they sought justice.

'Government protection'

She said BJP leader Kapil Mishra, who is accused of making inflammatory speeches ahead of the riots, had the temerity to say that "he could repeat what he did a year ago, if need be" because the



CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat with north-east Delhi riot victims a year after the violence, in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ PTI

Speaking at the event, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Brinda Karat alleged that there has been a "deliberate subversion of justice as truth has been hijacked to serve political interests and to save BJP leaders who were seen in the area during the riots".

Ms. Karat also questioned the role of the Delhi police and alleged that the number of personnel deployed was grossly inadequate to tackle the violence.

"On February 23, 2020, there were 1,393 police and central forces deployed [in the area] and 700 distress calls were received, most of which went unanswered. On February 24, 2020, 13 deaths were reported and the [Union] Home Ministry added only six more personnel, as the official figure for deployment on that

day according to the Delhi police's own submission to the court is 1,399."

She said it was only on the evening of February 24, 2020 that Section 144 of the CrPC was imposed. The number of police personnel was increased to 4,291 and 4,663 in the next two days when 29 and eight deaths, respectively, were reported.

Ms. Karat said despite the victims alleging that the police did not come to their rescue, the Delhi police have given themselves a clean chit by saying no cognisable offence has been found in the manner in which they conducted themselves.

"We demand an independent probe into the communal violence in north-east Delhi. The role of the police needs to be questioned and questions need to be asked about how the Capital was allowed to burn for five days under the eyes of the Home Minister himself," she said.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 2

A stork of luck



Waiting in the wings: An adjutant stork feeding its baby on top of a Shimul (cotton) tree as two others in another nest look on, in Guwahati on Tuesday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

Ministry disowns 'cow science' examination

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog had no mandate to conduct test, says Animal Husbandry Department

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog (RKA) having cancelled its "indigenous cow science" examination after widespread criticism about its promotion of fake claims and pseudoscience, the Animal Husbandry Department said the two-year-old body had "no mandate" to conduct such an examination. Any future awareness programme would be conducted "on a scientific basis", a senior official overseeing the RKA told *The Hindu*.

Under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Kathuria, the body's Chairman, the RKA had announced a national



Tall claims: Reference materials for the exam claimed that the dung of indigenous cows protected against radioactivity.

"Kamdhenu Gau Vigyan Prachar Prasar Exam" to be held on February 25. Reference materials for the exam made a number of unscientific claims, including that the dung of indigenous cows

protected against radioactivity, their milk had traces of gold, and that cow slaughter caused earthquakes. The RKA had the backing of the University Grants Commission (UGC), which publicised

the examination, causing widespread outrage.

"This gau vigyan [cow science] programme was announced by the then Chairman, Mr. Kathuria. And his term was up to February 20 only. Before leaving the office, he postponed it," said O.P. Chaudhary, Joint Secretary in the Animal Husbandry Department, which oversees the RKA. Mr. Kathuria did not respond to calls or requests for comment on the postponement.

'No role'

"Until date, the Ministry was not involved. Only Mr. Kathuria was involved and he was conducting the exam. The

Ministry does not know about the exam paper and did not play any role in the reference material for it... We will now examine everything on a scientific basis, and then take a decision," Dr. Chaudhary told *The Hindu*.

He said when the RKA was set up in February 2019, it was given a mandate as an advisory body on issues related to the protection, conservation and development of the indigenous cow and its progeny. After examining the situation, the Ministry would appoint a new Chairperson for the RKA and send fresh information to those who had already registered for the exam, he said.

Mizoram group seeks asylum for coup-hit Myanmar villagers

No formal request for providing refuge, says State govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Mizoram's apex students' body has asked the State government to provide asylum to some villagers in Myanmar affected by the military coup there.

The State's Mizo National Front (MNF) government, headed by Chief Minister Zoramthanga, said asylum would be considered if there was a formal request cleared by the Centre.

People belonging to Myanmar's Chin community were seeking to migrate to Mizoram to escape a military crackdown, primarily because of the Chin National Army (CNA), an extremist group seeking self-determination in Chin State across the border.

Representatives of the CNA had about a fortnight ago approached the authorities of a border village in Mizoram's Champhai district, seeking shelter for the Chin people. The district's Deputy Commissioner Maria C.T. Zuali brought the matter to the notice of the State government.

"If they need political asylum, they should apply as per protocol," Ms. Zuali said.

Lalchamiana said his government had not yet received a request for asylum from any individual or group.

Representatives of the CNA had about a fortnight ago approached the authorities of a border village in Mizoram's Champhai district, seeking shelter for the Chin people. The district's Deputy Commissioner Maria C.T. Zuali brought the matter to the notice of the State government.

"If they need political asylum, they should apply as per protocol," Ms. Zuali said.

Reply to plea on quashing independent reports: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought response from the government on a plea to quash various independent reports on the north-east Delhi riots, including the report of the fact-finding committee formed by the Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC).

The petition by advocate Dharmesh Sharma, a victim of the north-east Delhi riots, has sought to declare reports by any statutory authorities or private organisations or any extra-judicial private tribunal without any authority of law as void.

The plea said such reports ought not be relied upon by any judicial forum, including the courts where matters in respect of north-east Delhi riot cases are pending.

Apart from the DMC's fact-finding committee report, the petition filed through advocate Ashish Dixit, has challenged the report by Human Rights Watch 'Shoot the Traitors - Discrimination against Muslims under India's New Citizenship Policy'; report by Citizens and Lawyers Initiative titled 'Delhi Riots of February 2020- Causes, Fallout and Aftermath'; and a report by Amnesty International India.

500 riot victims file for reassessment of relief

Head of claims commission says work affected by pandemic

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Around 500 victims of the north-east Delhi riots have applied for reassessment of compensation provided to them by the Delhi government with the North East Delhi Riots Claims Commission (NEDRC).

Justice Sunil Gaur (retired), who is heading the commission, said they have received around 2,500 compensation claims out of which around 500 have applied for reassessment as they feel that the compensation they received is not as per the losses they suffered.

Big misconception

He said that many people are under the misconception that the commission was formed to recover losses from rioters.

"I want to make it clear that the commission's work is to assess losses that people suffered during the riots and prepare a report with the help of experts and submit it to the High Court, which will take the final call on it," said Mr. Gaur.

"We have received around 2,000 fresh claims from the victims as due to some reason they failed to get compensation for the losses they suffered during the riots," he added.



A gutted house in north-east Delhi after the riots.
• FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

C The Delhi Home Department appointed five loss assessors recently to probe applications

We have also received applications for compensation from the Fire Department, Delhi Police and the Delhi Transport Corporation regarding damage to public property, the retired Justice said, adding that no other government department has claimed compensation.

The Delhi government has provided compensation of over ₹26 crore to more than 2,200 claimants over the last year.

In February 2020, 53 people were killed when riots broke out in north-east Delhi. The police have registered 755 cases related to the communal violence.

finished by April, he added. The loss assessors are insurance claim experts.

"We have accepted all applications without insisting that the victim provide documentation of damage. The assessors will probe every application before recommending compensation. The court will decide over recovery of losses, whether it will be paid by the government or recovered from the rioters," said Mr. Gaur.

The Delhi government

provided compensation of over ₹26 crore to more than 2,200 claimants over the last year.

"I thought, there would definitely be hundreds of kids with the same problem. I was determined to open a school for them. Finally, we established Sunrise Public School. Currently, we have around 180 such kids enrolled in it," he said. Arsh al-

they said.

The incident happened on February 15 at 7.45 a.m. when the victim, Raj Kumar from Burari, was coming home after dropping his daughter at school. On the way, two bike-borne persons approached him, and the pillar rider attacked him with a surgical blade and sped off.

The injured was admitted to a hospital and a case of attempt to murder was lodged. During the probe the accused were nabbed, said Deputy Commissioner of Police

School rebuilds lives of kids affected in riots

Sunrise Public School in Loni was started by a PhD scholar from IIT-Delhi

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

A school for north-east riot victims has been running near the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border since November last year.

When the communal riots broke out in the Capital, scores of people were displaced from their homes and the children could not go back to school. Also, due to the COVID-induced lockdown, many families could not afford their education any longer.

How it began

When Aasif Mujtaba, a PhD scholar from IIT-Delhi, met Class IV student Arsh, he found out that his family's juice shop had been burnt down during the riots.

Aasif, who also founded and runs an NGO called Miles2Smile Foundation, visited his family and got to know that they plan to send the boy to a stitching unit.

This is when he decided to start this school where children from Nursery to Class VIII are being taught. It is just a few minutes from Shiv Vihar where violence had broken out last February.

"I thought, there would definitely be hundreds of kids with the same problem. I was determined to open a school for them. Finally, we established Sunrise Public School. Currently, we have around 180 such kids enrolled in it," he said. Arsh al-



(Top) The principal of Sunrise Public School, Kishwar Shahzad, (left) with a teacher; a student reading a book at the school on Tuesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

can't forget the trauma I underwent. I can't imagine what these [riot-affected] people have gone through. Many of them have lost one of their parents or relatives in the riots," she said.

One of the first experiences of Ms. Shahzad was meeting parents, who had come with photographs of their burnt houses. "I recall visiting Shiv Vihar. I had stepped on a burnt pile of books inside a house; it was heartbreaking," she said.

Many parents said there was a private school in the area where their children used to study. After the riots, the school did not give any concession to the children whose parents could not afford the fees and also ill-treated them. Next, the children stopped going to the school.

Subjects taught

At the Sunrise Public School, they are teaching English, Urdu, mathematics, Hindi and science but in the new session starting in April, they are planning to add social studies, physical education, Islamiat, computer science, arts and GK as well.

"We are following an improved education system. It's subject-wise rather than class-wise. Students have to move to different classes for different subjects rather than teachers coming to their classes," Ms. Shahzad said.

Man, 3 others nabbed for attacking former neighbour

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 38-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly attacking his former neighbour, the police said. Three of his accomplices have also been nabbed, they said.

The accused have been identified as the main conspirator, Naseem Ahmad and his accomplices – Naveid Khan (24), Imran (22), and Amit Mehra (38).

Ahmad, Khan, and Imran are from U.P.'s Amroha while Mehra is a resident of Burari,

they said.

The incident happened on February 15 at 7.45 a.m. when the victim, Raj Kumar from Burari, was coming home after dropping his daughter at school. On the way, two bike-borne persons approached him, and the pillar rider attacked him with a surgical blade and sped off.

The injured was admitted to a hospital and a case of attempt to murder was lodged. During the probe the accused were nabbed, said Deputy Commissioner of Police

(North) Anto Alphonse said.

During interrogation, Ahmad said he and the victim used to reside in the same building. Around six months ago, the victim had used foul language against Ahmad's wife over some water leakage issue following which he hatched the conspiracy.

He also roped in Imran and Naveed for the crime. He also arranged a motorcycle. Khan was riding the bike when Imran attacked the victim.

The police said Ahmad

and Mehra used to run a cheating racket. They used fake papers to get vehicles financed and later sold them on online platforms. They were also carrying the stamp of some financial companies, which they were using for issuing fake non-objective certificates (NOC), they said.

One bike, scooter, two mobile phones surgical blade, passbooks, voter ID cards, and other items recovered from their possession, the police added.

Two more arrested in Red Fort violence case

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two more persons, including the president of the Kashmir United Front and a key conspirator in the case," said Delhi Police Additional PRO Anil Mittal.

Meanwhile, a Delhi court on Tuesday sent actor-activist Deep Sidhu to judicial custody for 14 days in connection with the case.

Protesting farmers had clashed with the police on January 26 during a tractor parade, and some entered the Red Fort.

the Kashmir United Front and is a key conspirator in the case," said Delhi Police Additional PRO Anil Mittal.

Meanwhile, a Delhi court on Tuesday sent actor-activist Deep Sidhu to judicial custody for 14 days in connection with the case.

Protesting farmers had clashed with the police on January 26 during a tractor parade, and some entered the Red Fort.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer, Bhawana Division, HPPWD Bhawana on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost (Rs.)	Starting Date for down-loading Bid	Earliest Money	Deadline for submission of Bid
1.	Construction of Health Sub- Centre Building with delivery room at Malag. (SW- Construction of 1 st floor building i/c water supply & sanitary installation).	7,43,812/-	22/03/2021	14,900/-	06/04/2021
2.	Construction of Health Sub- Centre Building with delivery room at Chander. (SW- Construction of 1 st floor building i/c water supply & sanitary installation).	7,43,812/-	22/03/2021	14,900/-	06/04/2021

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website: www.hptenders.gov.in

Executive Engineer' HPPWD Division Bhawana Pin-176083, Tel:01894-247777 e-mail: epwd-bhaw-hp@gov.in on behalf of Governor of H.P.

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Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invite for the supply of following materials from all bidders:-

NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Date Due & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/20-21/RS/KM/895	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV GRADE POWER CABLE OF SIZE 1CX60 SQ.MM	3.5 Cr	7,00,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/RS/KM/896	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV GRADE POWER CABLE OF SIZE CX25 & 4CX25 SQ.MM	5.6 Cr	5,60,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/RS/KM/897	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF 1.1KV GRADE POWER CABLE OF SIZE CX150 SQ.MM	2.6 Cr	5,20,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/RS/KM/902	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF LT AERIALLY BUNCHED CABLES OF SIZES 3CX150 & 3CX95 SQ.MM	16.77 Cr	16,77,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/RS/KM/898	Supply of 11KV 1C X 1000 sq.mm Cable	1.5 Cr	3,00,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/RS/GP/899	Rate contract for supply of single phase pole mounted distribution box (Pole DB)	3 Cr	6,00,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/RS/KG/903	Survey, Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Phase-2 of 66/11 KV AIS Grid substation at Mittra	13 Cr	13,00,000/-	16.03.2021 15:30 HRS	16.03.2021 16:00 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹1100/-
For any query call on 011-49107235 or e-mail on Brp.Eauction@relianceada.com
For details in respect of Equipment/OM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submit tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com

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E-Mail-: daoc.gurayush@gmail.com, Phone no. 0124-2253649, 4071687)

District AYUSH Society, Gurugram invites applications from the eligible candidates for filling up of the following post in the District Gurugram, Haryana under National AYUSH Mission purely on contract basis initially up to 31.03.2021 which may further continue for next one year subject to the condition of approval from Government with the details mentioned below:-

Sr. No. **Name of the Post** **No. of Post** **Remuneration** **Date and Time of Written Test**
1 Data Entry Operator 1 16,00/- per month 09.03.2021

• The interested candidates are advised to visit website www.gurugram.gov.in for details of the posts (educational qualification, age and other terms & conditions etc.) and download the application form.

• Last date for submission of duly filled application form is 01-03-2021 up to 05:00 PM in the office of District Ayurvedic Office, Gurugram by hand or by post.

• For interview schedule applicants will be intimated on Mobile No/E-mail ID provided by the applicant. Thereafter applicants are advised to provide valid E-mail ID and valid Mobile No. Interview schedule will be uploaded on above mentioned website also. Please check website www.gurugram.gov.in regularly for any kind of change of schedule.

• Candidates coming for interview are advised to bring original documents for verification.

District Ayurvedic Officer-cum-Member Secretary, District AYUSH Society, District-Gurugram

PRDN 1182/11/4/2021/1917/199/7

The tender document & all necessary information are available on website <http://jktdenders.gov.in>.

Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document The Standard Bidding Document can be downloaded over <http://jktdenders.gov.in>.

A. Sale of e-Bid Document (Start) 15-02-2021 10:00 Hrs onwards

B. Sale of e-Bid Document (End) 22-02-2021 16:00 Hrs

C.

Timings
DELHI

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 24	RISE 06:52 SET 18:18
THURSDAY, FEB. 25	RISE 06:51 SET 18:19
FRIDAY, FEB. 26	RISE 06:50 SET 18:19
SATURDAY, FEB. 27	RISE 17:21 SET 06:17

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 32 11
Safdarjung 32 11
Palam 30 13

Delhi Palam Today
32°C A cool morning with mist/haze and slight warm afternoon with light to moderate winds and bright sunny sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
32°C Day temperature would remain above normal. Dryness likely to increase towards day. Sunny sky would prevail.

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IN BRIEF



Delhi Police launches Jan Sampark Vahan

NEW DELHI
Delhi Commissioner of Police S.N. Srivastava has launched the Jan Sampark Vahan for a "dynamic connect with the people of Delhi across localities and communities". The initiative aims to strengthen police-public relations by involving them in celebrating Police Week and make people aware of the various services provided by Delhi Police. The van was launched on Delhi Police Raising Day on February 16.

DMA accuses IMA of defaming Vardhan

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Medical Association on Tuesday condemned the Indian Medical Association for seeking an explanation from Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan about his presence at the launch of Patanjali's Coronil. "The DMA strongly condemns the IMA press release, the contents of which are baseless, illegal and defamatory against Dr. Harsh Vardhan," stated the DMA.

Ensure strong booth management: BJP

NEW DELHI
BJP State organisation general secretary Siddharthan exhorted party workers to make booth management strong. At a party workers' meeting in Naveen Shahdara, he said it is the booth management which decides the fate of a candidate. "The ground-level party workers are its backbone and on their basis, one wins. We should work hard for the ward bypolls. A victory would ensure majority for us in 2022 corporation polls," he said.

35 people found with U.K. strain in Capital

Genome sequencing to find other mutations yet to begin

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Thirty-five people who returned from the U.K., and their contacts, were detected with the U.K. strain of COVID-19 in the city, a Delhi government official has told *The Hindu*. Also, 988 random samples from the city have been sent for genome sequencing to find if any of them have the U.K. strain.

But the Delhi government has not started checking for other mutant strains of the virus, which was found in Maharashtra and other parts of the country, officials said.

"A total of 216 people, who returned from the U.K., and their contacts had tested positive for the virus and 247 samples from these people were sent to find if any of them had the U.K. strain. Thirty-five of them were found to have the U.K. strain. Most of them have been discharged from hospitals after they recovered," the official said.

These samples were taken from November 25 to December 23, before flights from the U.K. were stopped temporarily. "About 15 days ago, the government also sent 988 random samples, which had been collected during the same period and had tested positive, for ge-



Healthcare workers collecting swab samples for RT-PCR test in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

nome sequencing to check if the U.K. strain was circulating in the city. The results of about 25 samples have come and they are negative. The rest of the results are awaited," the official added.

Identifying mutation

Most of these samples have been sent to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). "Genome sequencing helps identify the mutations to a virus and the meanings of it. It tells you how the virus is moving in the population and geography, whether the vaccine will work against the mutation or not, and many other things. More density and targeted genome sequencing should be done to get more information about the virus and prepare better against

it," said N.K. Ganguly, former Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

On Sunday, the Centre told States to regularly monitor for mutant strains through testing followed by genome sequencing as well as monitoring of the emerging cluster of cases. Following this, the Delhi government has reiterated all private and government labs, which are doing COVID-19 tests, to preserve samples of positive tests so that genome sequencing can be done if needed.

Though Lt. Governor Anil Baijal said on Monday that directions have been given to adopt "genome sequencing strategy", it has not yet started, according to officials.

NRI family alleges 'illegal confinement'

U.K. returnees sent to institutional quarantine despite testing negative move HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday issued notice to the governments on a petition by a family of four, including two minor children, who have been sent to seven-day institutional quarantine after returning from the U.K. even after testing negative for COVID-19.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh issued notice to the Ministries of Civil Aviation and External Affairs and also to the

Delhi government on the plea moved by the family, which is quarantined at Hotel Vivanta in Dwarka here.

The family has alleged that the action amounted to "illegal confinement" as they had tested negative for COVID-19. Their plea stated that all the members were tested for COVID-19 when they arrived here from the U.K. on February 20 and despite testing negative, they were "illegally and unlawfully" sent to institutional

quarantine.

they were issued a 'fit-to-fly' certificate.

After arriving at Delhi, they were again tested and were found negative, despite which they were sent to institutional quarantine at their cost in a 5-star hotel instead of home quarantine as sought by them. The plea has sought that the petitioners be released from their alleged "illegal confinement" and the cost of their "forced" stay be borne by the Centre and Delhi government.

MHA directs closure of two special COVID-19 centres as cases decline

The two facilities will be closed in a phased manner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has directed phased closure of two special COVID-19 care centres in the city in view of "continuous decline" in novel coronavirus cases, officials said on Tuesday.

While the Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel COVID hospital located in the Delhi Cantonment area is managed by the DRDO, the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre operational in south Delhi's Chhattarpur area is managed by the ITBP.

The two facilities will be closed in phases. Those admitted will be discharged

gradually and no new admissions will be done, a senior home ministry official said.

Review meeting

The decision to close the facilities, which began operations in June-July last year, was taken after a review meeting by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla.

The MHA said the two centres are being closed "due to continuous decline in COVID cases in the National Capital Territory of Delhi vis-a-vis adequate availability of medical facilities".

It was also formulated in

the meeting that the medical manpower of various Central Armed Police Force working in the ITBP-run centre should now be deployed elsewhere.

No critical patients

The Chhattarpur centre, with over 10,000 beds, has no patients in critical care at present while about 60 patients are admitted in the ward, as per official data.

This centre, established in the campus of the Radha Soami Beas, has treated over 12,000 patients till now, including some who returned from abroad.

20,466 take jab; Delhi sees 145 new cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A total of 20,466 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Tuesday and there were three minor Adverse Events Following Immunisation, said a government spokesperson.

Of the total beneficiaries, 2,703 healthcare workers received the first dose and 1,974 their second dose. Also, 15,789 front-line workers received their first dose.

Delhi witnessed 145 COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total cases to 6,38,173, according to a government bulletin. Two deaths were reported and the toll touches 10,903.

'Give ₹1 lakh each to two custodial torture victims'

NHRC gives recommendation to MHA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recommended the Ministry of Home Affairs pay ₹1 lakh each to two victims of custodial torture at Delhi's Adarsh Nagar police station in a 2019 case.

In a statement on Tuesday, the NHRC said it had also asked for the report on departmental action taken against the six police officers involved, who are facing trial.

"...the commission held that since the police officers failed to act as responsible public servants, therefore, departmental proceedings against them should also be initiated, and they should be punished accordingly. The State is vicariously liable for the action of public servant/police officers and hence the victims are entitled for compensation," it said.

Under the Protection of Human Rights Act, the NHRC

Kejriwal says AAP has emerged as a key alternative in Gujarat

Assembly elections will be between AAP and BJP, says CM

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party claimed that they have significantly improved their vote share in the municipal elections of Gujarat and citizens of different States were "accepting" Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's model of development-based politics as the key alternative.

The party also said that Congress was no longer relevant in Gujarat and it will be a battle between the BJP and AAP.

People of Gujarat have voted for politics of work, they were fed up by the policies of the BJP and the Congress. AAP has emerged as the key alternative for the people of Gujarat. The upcoming Assembly elections will now be only between AAP and the BJP," said Mr. Kejriwal.

Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia said that people in all the cities of Gujarat are expressing trust in the AAP and they were at number two in Surat, which is a BJP stronghold.

"People are seeking change and looking at the Aam Aadmi Party as the key alternative. We will raise public issues on the streets as well as in the House. The people of Surat have done a great job. People of Gujarat



Arvind Kejriwal ■

are upset with the BJP, they do not trust Congress. People are angry with the BJP, and AAP has emerged as their only hope," he added.

Massive significance

The party also said that in Gujarat, under the leadership of Gopal Italia, AAP workers worked hard and spread the message of the party from door to door and this made the difference.

"I believe that this result of AAP has a massive political significance. We all know that Gujarat has been a role model of BJP's development. The BJP is in power in entire Gujarat, including Surat. But the people who want change are choosing the Aam Aadmi Party as the key alternative," said AAP Chief Spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj.

The webinar saw the participation of over 100 EV enthusiasts who came in to listen to two discussions – one with experts from the industry on EV adoption in Delhi and the other on how youth can drive the EV movement in Delhi.

Man out on parole arrested for thefts

He was convicted in a 2010 rape case

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A rape convict who was released on parole to decongest jails during the COVID-19 pandemic has been arrested for his alleged involvement in several cases of ATM theft in the city, the police said on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old accused has been identified as Shamshad alias Khutkan from Faridabad in Haryana. Shamshad was released from jail on parole on April 20 as part of an exercise to decongest jails in view of the pandemic. During his parole, he was committing ATM thefts.

He was a life convict in the infamous Daula Kuan rape case of 2010, a senior officer said. On Monday, the police received information that Shamshad would come near Gokulpuri metro station at Wazirabad Road, following which a trap was

laid, an officer said.

"Shamshad was seen coming towards metro station at 3.35 p.m. On seeing the police, he whipped out his pistol and opened fire. He was later overpowered," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah.

Shamshad is a member of the Mewat-based inter-State gang of robbers.

12 ATMs

He was wanted in 12 cases of breaking of ATMs in Delhi and looting cash trays in a short span of two months, the DCP said. The gang members siphoned in ₹1.35 lakh in cash from 12 ATMs.

The accused used to spray black paint at CCTV cameras after entering the ATM booths. They used to open the ATMs with the help of a gas cutter and remove the cash trays, he said.

Hanuman temple: Mayor holds 'all-party meeting'

Civic body looking to grant legal status

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said an "all-party meeting" of senior leaders of the BJP-led north corporation was held on Tuesday to seek consensus before putting up a proposal in its House for granting "legal status to the prefabricated Hanuman temple that has come up at Chandni Chowk".

The meeting of the House of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation is slated to be held later this week.

The meeting was attended by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, civic body standing committee chairman and his deputy, Leader of the House Yogesh Verma, Leader of the Opposition and AAP member Vikas Goel and Leader of the Congress in the House Mukesh Goel.

"An appeal has been made to all-party leaders to allow the proposal to be passed smoothly with consensus," the Mayor said, adding: "Members of all three parties put up their suggestions during the meeting."

Published by N. Ravik at Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860, Anna Salai, Chennai-600022 and Printed by S. Ramanujam at HT Media Ltd. Plot No. 8, Udyog Vihar, Greater Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. 201306, on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD, Chennai-600022. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act).

Regd. LD(ND)-11/6110/2006-07-08 • RNI No. UPENG/2012/4940 • ISSN 0971-751X • Vol. 11 • No. 46

CM YK

Schools told to sensitise students on cyberbullying

Rising cases of online exploitation'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has issued a circular to all the heads of schools to educate students and their parents about the safe use of Internet and sensitise them about cyberbullying and online threats as they continue to attend classes online due to the pandemic.

The Directorate of Education (DoE) said a study has been conducted by India Child Protection Fund (ICPF) regarding online exploitation of children and increase in activities related to child sexual abuse material, which indicates a sharp rise in demand for online child pornography during the lockdown. Therefore, it said that it is imperative to make children and their parents aware about the safe use of Internet.

In a letter to school heads, DoE said school education has shifted from the carefree days of learning together in safe school environments to online mode.

"The Internet spaces are



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Cong. to move no-confidence motion against BJP-JJP govt.

Haryana budget session is slated to begin on March 5

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Haryana Congress legislators on Tuesday decided to move a no-confidence motion against the BJP-JJP government soon after the Governor's address during the upcoming budget session of the State Assembly.

Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the decision was taken during a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party here.

The budget session is slated to commence on March 5.

Private member Bill

The Congress would also bring a private member Bill to amend the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee Act to add the provision of guarantee of MSP for crops, he added. "We dis-



Bhupinder Hooda. ■ FILE PHOTO

cussed the issues to be raised in the budget session, which will include issues faced by the farmers, the unemployed and all other sections of society," he said.

Mr. Hooda said every section of society was under distress and had issues that needed immediate attention. The government had failed on all fronts, he added.

"No work is being done in

the State. Scams are the only thing that is happening. Calling attention motions will be brought by the Congress to discuss the liquor and registry scam. The Congress will also bring proposals regarding the cancellation of recruitments. We will also seek answers from the government on the issues of rising unemployment and the frequent leak of papers in recruitment exams," he said.

"The Congress will also register its opposition to the changes made in the domicile rules and sports policy, as the changes in domicile rules will open up jobs in Haryana to people from other States. Moreover, the youth from the Scheduled Castes and backward communities will find it difficult to get jobs," he added.

"No work is being done in

BJP discusses strategy for bypolls

Former CM Vasundhara Raje attends the party's core group meeting in Jaipur

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

A core group of the Bharatiya Janata Party, formed to address infighting and factionalism in the party's Rajasthan unit, met here on Tuesday to highlight the Congress government's "failure" on all fronts and deliberate on the strategies for the upcoming Assembly by-elections for four seats. The 16-member group includes former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje as its member.

The meeting, which was held a day before the budget was scheduled to be presented in the Assembly, took the decisions for holding the sessions of the party's working committees, celebrating the BJP's foundation day on April 6 and undertaking a campaign against the Congress government at the tiller level from March 6 to 14.



Rajasthan BJP chief Satish Poonia, Vasundhara Raje and other leaders at a meeting on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The core group met under the shadow of a letter written by about 20 party MLAs, considered close to Ms. Raje, to party's State president Satish Poonia complaining of being ignored in the Assembly. Significantly, the Opposition BJP has no Chief Whip in the House.

Ms. Raje, who had skipped the core group's first meeting on January 24, attended Tuesday's meeting and gave suggestions for strengthening the party at the grassroots level by mobilising public opinion.

BJP national general secretary and State in-charge Arun Singh, who attended the meeting as a special invitee, told reporters that party workers would expose the ruling Congress by highlighting its failure to fulfil the promises of complete farm loan waiver and disbursement of

unemployment allowance.

Mr. Singh said the benefits of the Centre's agriculture sector laws, which would facilitate doubling of farmers' income, would be explained to cultivators in the rural areas. "The Congress is anti-farmers. In a State like Rajasthan, the Congress government has failed to enforce crop insurance and extend the benefits of PM Kisan Samman Nihi Yojana," he said.

Nadda's visit

BJP president J.P. Nadda would visit Jaipur on March 2 to attend a meeting of the party's newly formed State executive, he said. The dates for the Assembly bypolls in Rajsamand, Sujangarh, Valabhanagar and Sahara, necessitated by the death of one BJP and three Congress MLAs, are yet to be announced.

Odisha ex-MLA arrested for robbing tourist

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A former MLA in Odisha was arrested and sent to jail for stopping a tourist and robbing him of ₹30,000 in Kandhamal district on Tuesday.

The former MLA, identified as Debendra Kanhar, and his acquaintance Srinivas Kanhar, a havildar in the India Reserve Battalion, were accused of attacking a tourist on the Urumagarh road and snatching money from him on February 9.

The tourist, Kamakhi Behera of Dhenkanal district, had lodged a police complaint on February 11. The accused were produced before the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate, Phulbani, who remanded them in 14 days' judicial custody.

Bihar Opposition stages walkout

Speaker had refused a discussion on farmers' issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

The Opposition Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) legislators in Bihar walked out of the Assembly on Tuesday after Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha rejected their notice for an adjournment motion on the farmers' issues.

The members had requested the Speaker to admit the motion as it was related to the farmers' demand for MSP and an extension of the date for paddy procurement in the State. They walked out when the Speaker refused to allow the discussion.

The Opposition has been protesting against the new farm laws since the month-long budget session was convened on February 19.

Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav alleged that farmers in Bihar had become

vulnerable after the State government abolished the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act in 2006. He also demanded that the government extend paddy procurement date till March 31.

Crime cases

Later, participating in a debate on the motion of thanks on the Governor's address, Mr. Yadav slammed the State government, alleging that incidents of crime had doubled in Bihar under the NDA regime. He also took a jibe at Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, saying he had called BJP 'Badka Jhota Party' (party of big liars) in 2015, but now had become a "stepney" of the same party.

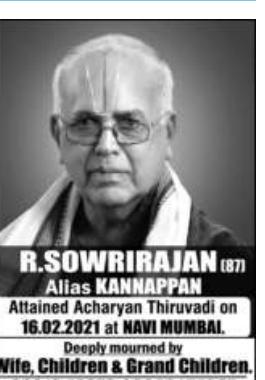
Later, Mr. Kumar rebutted the Opposition leader's allegation and urged him to "have patience to hear out

his response, which will eventually benefit you in later days". Mr. Kumar began by saying that when he [Mr. Kumar] was a Minister in the Central government, he [Mr. Yadav] was a kid in his lap. "Ever since the APMC was scrapped in 2006 by my government, paddy procurement has gone up through Primary Agriculture Co-operative Societies and Vyapar Mandals [business communities] and farmers do not face any problem in the State today... Farmers had been demanding two weeks more for procurement of paddy, but our government decided to extend it for 21 days," he said.

Mr. Kumar also presented government data on crime, health, electricity, road and other issues raised by Mr. Yadav.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

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Roc No.4467/2013 (MH5) JN4 Date : 22.02.2021

The Commissioner, Coimbatore Corporation, Coimbatore hereby invites Bids through both on-line and off-line from eligible bidders for the following work

SL. No. Name of work Bid Processing Fee Rs Bid Security Rs

1. Request for Proposal (RFP) for Setting-up of 100 TPD Capacity Processing and Recycling Facility for Construction and Demolition Waste in Coimbatore City through PWD Mode 10,000/- 9,00,000/-

The Coimbatore Corporation has already issued a tender notification for the above mentioned work fixing the tender date on 25.02.2021. Due to administrative reasons, the tender date has been postponed to 03.03.2021.

The bidding documents will be available upto 16.03.2021 and downloaded / uploaded from the website [https://tenders.gov.in](http://tenders.gov.in) or before at 15.00 Hours on 16.03.2021 through online. Tender Submission will be closed at 15.00 hours and opened at 16.00 hours on 17.03.2021 through offline.

Roc. No. 4467/2013 (MH5) JN4 e-mail cscj.njm@gmail.com Ofe: 0422-2396026 / 0422-2391122 DIPR/1345 / TENDER/2021 Commissioner, Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation, Coimbatore Corporation Building, Big Bazaar Street, Town Hall, Coimbatore-641001, Commissioner, Coimbatore Corporation

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GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT / WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Superintending Engineer, PWD, WRD, Upper Cauvery Basin Circle, Salem-7

Tender Notice No. 07/2021/DBI-DOF/275 (Puttu-Phili) Dated: 23.02.2021

On behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, the under signed has invited sealed tender for the following work Upto 3.00 p.m. on 08.04.2021 from the Registered Contractors of Public Works Department.

SL. No. Name of Work Apron, Value of work E.M.D. Period of Contract Class of Contractors eligible Cost of Tender Schedule (including GST)

(including GST)

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Sarabanga Basin Division, Salem

1 Rehabilitation of Parangipettaiyam tank supply channel from L.S. 0.88 Km to L.S. 2.70 Km of Parangipettaiyam village of Pethanackayam Taluk in Salem District.

Rs.670.00 Lakhs Rs.45,000/- 18 Months (including Monsoon period) Class I 75.00 Lakhs and above in State Level 15000 + 1800

1.Tender Schedules will be available in this office during working days & hours of the tender schedule period 2.E.M.D. and Cost of Tender Schedule to be remitted to the credit of : Executive Engineer, PWD, WRD, Sarabanga Basin Division, Salem 3. Tender Schedules sale period : 03.03.2021 to 07.03.2021 5.45 PM.4.Tender opening date : 3.00 p.m. on 08.04.2021.5. Contractors pre qualification and eligibility, Tender Schedule and other conditions can be obtained from the website <http://tenders.tn.gov.in> or from the office.6. Tender documents and bid documents to be made by the Department upto the last date and time of tendering should also be downloaded and printed out.

Special Chief Engineer, PWD, WRD, Upper Cauvery Basin Circle, Salem-7.

DIPR/1348 / TENDER / 2021

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North Eastern Railway

E-Tender Notice

By: CME/Works for Chief Workshop Manager, N.E. Railway, Mechanical Workshop, Gorkakpur

On behalf of President of India invites open tenders through on line (E-Tendering) for the following work.

S.No. : 1, E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 17-GKP-MWS-2020-21 "De-

Wheeling/Stripping of 7440 Nos. ICF & 3280 Nos. of FIAT Bogies along with Hiring of 02 Nos. of Fork Lift with driver and fuel". Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,68,18,16,16, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 0,00, Late date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 25.03.2021, Cost of the Tender Forms: Rs. 0.00, Period of Contract: 24 Months. The details of above tender are also available on Indian Railway website www.irreps.gov.in.

Chief Workshop Manager, CPRI/Mech-104 N.E. Railway, Gorkakpur

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Appeal for Identification



General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body Name: Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 35 years, Height: 5'8", Complexion: Wheatish, Sex: Male, Built: Strong, Face : No, Wearing: Black & orange T-shirt, Black Jeans pant & grey underwear found dead at KM Pin No. 1/18 G to 1/18 G F Railway Line in between Akashdham Yamuna Bridge, Delhi. In this regard, a DD No. 19A, Dated 20.02.2021 has been

lodged at PS Anand Vihar Railway Station, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved at G.T.B. Hospital Mortuary, Delhi for identification for 72 hrs.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Wednesday: No weather warning

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	31.0	14.3	Kozhikode	—	34.0	24.5
Ahmedabad	—	35.4	14.8	Kurnool	—	34.7	20.7
Aizawl	—	25.7	10.7	Lucknow	—	30.4	14.2
Allahabad	—	29.8	12.7	Madurai	—	34.8	22.7
Bengaluru	—	31.1	18.2	Mangaluru	—	35.7	22.8
Bhopal	—	32.3	13.4	Mumbai	—	35.0	21.4
Bhubaneswar	—	37.3	17.1	Mysuru	7	32.0	18.7
Chandigarh	—	29.3	14.3	New Delhi	—	31.5	10.7
Chennai	—	32.1	23.1	Patna	—	20.0	14.8
Coimbatore	—	33.8	21.4	Port Blair	—	30.5	22.4
Dehradun	—	27.8	13.4	Puducherry	—	30.7	21.6
Gangtok	—	18.0	9.6	Pune	—	33.8	16.4
Goa	0.1	33.6	23.3	Raipur	—	33.3	15.4
Guwahati	—	32.7	14.4	Ranchi	—	30.4	12.8
Hubballi	—	31.0	19.0	Shillong	—	21.1	9.5
Hyderabad	—	33.0	18.4	Shimla	—	20.1	10.6
Imphal	—	28.8	8.7	Srinagar	1.2	15.9	5.2
Jaipur	—	33.0	14.8	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.6	24.7
Kochi	—	32.8	24.6	Tiruchi	—	34.3	22.6
Kohima	—	20.8	7.5	Vijayawada	—	33.8	21.6
Kolkata	—	32.8	17.6	Visakhapatnam	—	31.0	20.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

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Chennai	.9	.20	.46	.82	.88	■■■■■
Delhi	8	125	.34	.340	.310	■■■■■
Hyderabad	10	.80	.15	.203	.244	■■■■■
Kolkata	.53	.26	.53	.327	.244	■■■■■
Lucknow	10	107	.89	.306	.190	■■■■■
Mumbai	63	111	.30	.185	.203	■■■■■
Pune	—	.86	.49	.140	.107	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	15	.76	.33	.154	.190	■■■■■

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

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

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

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

HC dismayed at Centre's stand on State's proposal

Maharashtra govt. sought appointment of police officials as trafficking officers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court recently expressed dismay at the Central government's stand of seeking repeated justification from the Maharashtra government on its proposal to notify police officers as trafficking officers as per the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA).

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a criminal public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the NGO, Rescue Foundation, in 2017 through advocate Chetan Mali.

The PIL sought appointment of special police officers under ITPA and establishment of anti-human trafficking units.

Last week, Additional Sol-

icitor General Anil Singh, appearing for the Centre, told the court that the State had been called on to justify its proposal by a letter, dated December 02, 2020, and a subsequent reminder with respect to the appointment of special officers.

The court said, "We are surprised that such a letter seeking justification could at all have been issued, particularly when the object of the Act is noble, that appointment of trafficking police officers is required to be made to give effect to the provisions of the Act, and that there was a judicial order of this Court requiring the State to forward a proposal to the Union of India in this behalf. Dismayed at the stand of the Union of India."

On two occasions – January 27, 2021 and April 11, 2018 – the Union government had told the State to make proposal/statement for appointments. On January 27, 2021, Deepak Thakare, public prosecutor appearing for the State, had

informed court that a proposal has been forwarded to the Union of India on October 26, 2020, to notify all Assistant Commissioners of Police and all Deputy Superintendents of Police as well as Assistant Superintendents of Police as "Trafficking Police Officers" as provided in Section 13 (special police officer and advisory body) of ITPA.

Mr. Thakare had said the Union of India is yet to convey its decision on such a proposal to the State. However, the advocate appearing for the Centre said he needs time to apprise the court on the matter.

On April 11, 2018, the Centre told the court that the State has to make a statement for appointment of the officers after a letter, dated April 4, 2018, sent to the Additional Public Prosecutor by the Deputy Secretary mentioned that certain officers have been conferred with powers under Section 13 of the ITPA by a government notification of 2006.

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From February 17 to 18, twelve consignments from Chakala MIDC Post Office were seized, and from February 19 to 23, twenty-six consignments from Foreign Post Office, Ballard Estate, and five consignments from Air Parcel Sorting Office, Vile Parle, were seized. They included 1,470 iPhones, 322 Apple watches, 64 drones, and so many items from Du-

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The Mumbai Customs on Tuesday seized smuggled goods worth ₹15 crore. A highly placed source confirmed that the seizure was made following an operation that began on February 17.

The official said, "Usually such items are found in cargo, but it is uncommon to find a parcel of this worth

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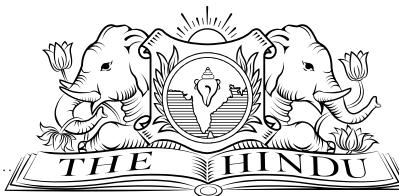
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A new peak

With a spike in cases after months of decline, India must speed up vaccination coverage

After a peak of nearly 98,000 fresh daily COVID-19 cases on September 16, 2020, the number of new cases reported per day in India has seen a slow but steady decline to reach below 12,000 in mid-February. But the trajectory of the curve began to reverse in the past week following a spike in cases in a few States – Maharashtra, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. In Kerala, the daily fresh cases have in fact been slowly declining for over a week. The recent case decline in the State stands out against the trend since early January 2021. Kerala was contributing between 45% and 50% of India's total daily cases for many weeks. But despite the drop to about 33% in the past week, there has been an increase in the daily fresh cases nationally – from a seven-day average of 11,100 cases in the second week of February to 12,900 cases in the last week. In the last three weeks, from less than 3,000 daily cases, the numbers in Maharashtra have been increasing, particularly so in the past week to touch nearly 7,000 on February 21. As in the beginning of the pandemic, since mid-February, Maharashtra is once again contributing the most daily cases nationally. While the absolute increase in cases in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh might not be high, in percentage terms, the increase is significant and clearly marks a spike.

The steady drop in cases has been recorded since mid-September last year despite the much-feared festival season, winter, large gatherings, almost absent restrictions in the free movement of people across States and national borders, and not-so-good adherence to mask wearing. Though the third countrywide sero survey conducted by the ICMR between December 17, 2020 and January 8, 2021 found that only 21.5% (around 225 million people) of India have been exposed to the virus – and hence, a large population is still vulnerable to infection – no spike was seen till a few days ago. No scientific explanation has been found to demystify this phenomenon; lack of targeted testing and/or integrity in reporting could be the only plausible reasons. But the recent spike, either due to the infection of people who are virus-naïve, or reinfection, raises the possibility of the spread of any of the three variants first found in other countries or the emergence of a new variant here in India. This highlights the importance of undertaking large-scale sequencing of the SARS-CoV-2 genome from infected people to trace and track the emergence and spread of any variants. While a few institutions in India have been sequencing the genome, the scale is nowhere near what is required. It is also time to speed up vaccination coverage to protect a large population of vulnerable people and increase mask wearing. There is no room for complacency.

After the coup

The Myanmar military must move fast to end the political crisis that is of its own making

Three weeks after they took control of Myanmar by toppling its democratically elected government, the country's Generals are struggling to retain their grip on power in the face of growing pro-democracy mass protests. The military, which had shared power with Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) for five years, orchestrated the coup on February 1, hours before the country's newly elected Parliament, in which the NLD had a huge majority, was set to convene. The military, which controlled Myanmar through direct rule for almost 50 years since independence from Britain in 1948, has now deployed the familiar repressive tactics to quell opposition to the latest coup: It has detained Ms. Suu Kyi, President Win Myint and several of the NLD's other top leaders, suspended the Internet, blocked social networks and warned the public of repercussions if they joined protests. But protests have only grown by the day. On Saturday, two unarmed protesters were killed by security forces in Mandalay. Even police violence and the deployment of security personnel, including snipers, across the main cities did not stop millions from joining a general strike on Monday. They demand the Generals free the detained elected leaders and restore democracy.

Myanmar's military has been one of the most consistent enemies of democracy. In the past, challenges to its powers were met with brutal crackdowns. Still, the junta has continued to face popular resistance. The crackdown on the protests of August 8, 1988 did not prevent the 'saffron revolution' of 2007 – protests led by Buddhist monks. Than Shwe, the then leader of the country, suppressed them but had to offer a new Constitution in 2008 as a compromise. This Constitution was the basis of the partial transition to democracy in 2015 when the NLD came to power. But even that experiment would not last more than five years, thanks to the power-hungry generals of Tatmadaw. But they were wrong to expect the Myanmarese people, who experienced at least limited liberties and democracy for five years after decades of the repressive dictatorship, to allow them to consolidate power easily. The protesters have called for civil disobedience, stoppage of work, sit-ins and mass demonstrations. The strike has already paralysed the banking system at a time when the economy, hit hard by COVID-19, is struggling to stand on its feet. The military is also facing international sanctions and condemnation. There is no easy way out for Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the commander-in-chief and the coup's main architect, from the crisis he has put himself in. The Generals should realise that years of repression have not killed Myanmar's aspirations for democracy. They should not repeat 1988 or 2007. They should stand down, respect the election results, release the leaders and hand power back to the elected government.

Human rights are everyone's business

India must realise that a democracy cannot be reduced to only demanding praise from the rest of the world



SEEMA CHISHTI

The ongoing protests by farmers against the three hastily promulgated agriculture laws have drawn international attention, with the denial of democratic rights to them by the government's construction of military-grade barriers and shutting down of the Internet at protest sites getting strong statements of support from numerous international celebrities. The official response of the Ministry of External Affairs was disproportionate to the provocation, but it was not merely the reaction of a thin-skinned government. The argument put forth by the government pushed a more fundamental premise: it warned the concerned global voices that these matters – democracy and human rights, left unstated – were India's 'internal affair'.

The recent arrest of the 22-year-old environmental activist, Disha Ravi, for amplifying the farmer protests internationally, unmasked the government's designs to criminalise those who speak for human rights. This attitude was also visible in the Home Ministry's directions to social media companies to block accounts of those expressing a point of view contrary to that of the government. A democracy which does not ensure and secure universal rights for all is a democracy only in name.

Being respected, not having their dignity violated and having a sense of security is what everyone, anywhere should get, whether it is Syrians on an Italian shore, the Rohingya in Myanmar, Hindus in Pakistan or stateless refugees on a border in Mexico. No government has immunity because it violates human rights in its jurisdiction. Prime Minister Narendra Modi could not have been more misplaced as he was, when he spoke of 'Foreign Destructive Ideology' in Parliament to refer to global

concerns for rights of protesting farmers. The belief that what India or what any other nation does to its people is an 'internal matter', is as misdirected a defence as the one a wife-beating husband deploys with his neighbours – that it is not their business.

Nation and the idea of rights
India played a signature role in drawing the world together to oppose the apartheid government of South Africa, and it took till 1962 to override the sovereignty shield used by the government to continue oppressing the Black population. India stayed firm from the 1950s till a resolution was adopted and a United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid was set up by the United Nations. India's work, in consistently creating awareness and resistance against the demonisation of Nelson Mandela via the Rivonia trial in 1963, checked the Apartheid regime from awarding him the death sentence.

The principle document signed in the last century, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid down the terms for the post-war world, it enshrined the rights and the freedoms of all people, living everywhere. It was not something that was forced down India's throat by its colonial rulers. India was a member of the first Human Rights Commission, which was to draft the 'international bill of rights'. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted from January 1947 till December 10, 1948, when it was eventually adopted by the General Assembly.

Along with the Charter of the United Nations that was signed earlier in San Francisco in 1945, Indian freedom fighters did their best to influence it and make its brief wider and more effective. Mahatma Gandhi issued a press statement in April 1945 which was directed at participants of the San Francisco conference and he extensively quoted from the All India Congress Committee resolution of August 8, 1942: "While the AICC must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the



future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved." A line is particularly evocative – "...Thus the demand for Indian independence is in no way selfish. Its nationalism spells internationalism."

At the time of the conference, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit who went on to become the first woman President of the UN General Assembly, was on a year-long lecture tour of the U.S., and she had a deep impact on African-Americans battling entrenched racism at the time. Pandit powerfully advocated Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru's ideas and emphasised their universality and the indivisible nature of rights that all human beings must enjoy.

She sent a note to the conference, urging them to be bolder than they were to be eventually. Scholars agree that Pandit's alliances with Eleanor Roosevelt, Black activists and others forged at the time, subsequently helped push for a more comprehensive adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The work of Indians like Hansa Mehta, Minoo Masani and Lakshmi Menon conveyed the message as being the same as that of the freedom movement – of freedom from oppression for all human beings (<https://bit.ly/3qLAGiA>).

Rights are indivisible

The makers of the Indian Constitution did not invoke paranoia about respecting Indian tradition, customs or hiding perverse practices. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan famously said while commanding the Objectives Resolution, or the basic road map of the Constitution, to the Assembly, that the endeavour was "a fundamental alter-

ation in the structure of Indian society,... to abolish every vestige of despotism, every heirloom of inorganic tradition."

The triad of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' engraved in the Preamble, drew significantly from the slogan which had proved influential following the French Revolution. It flowed from the realisation, in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's words, that given the vice-like grip of the 'graded inequality' of the caste system, all three elements, together, were absolutely essential if Indians were to realise their full potential. To quote B.R. Ambedkar who on the eve of the adoption of the Preamble explained how Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were connected and locked into each other firmly: "Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them."

New Delhi's recent moves

To cite Atmanirbhar as a counter to international concerns about freedoms, equality and the right to dissent amounts to hiding behind the flimsy excuse of sovereignty to escape the bitter truth of the slithering slope of democratic rights India appears to be going down. The case the Indian government is making is all the more specious as its own immediate concern expressed, officially by its External Affairs Minister when visiting Sri Lanka, on the Sri Lankan government needing to do more to safeguard Tamil lives belies this principle. The starkest case where India made human rights of citizens of other countries its business was in 2019 when the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, offered a home for certain persecuted citizens of three foreign countries.

When it comes to universal human rights and international attention, the premier example is of the liberation of Bangladesh which India led and shepherded by in-

voking these principles. That India chose to and continues to host the Dalai Lama, who attracts visible support from high-profile global celebrities, is a testament to New Delhi's commitment to human rights. That the public concern from international celebrities is tantamount to foreign 'intervention' carries no weight, as this is not about the Central Intelligence Agency or Vladimir Putin's Russia meddling in Indian electoral processes. In fact, the Bharatiya Janata Party has been cavalier about amending the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, or FCRA, rules permitting itself, a political party, to whitewash foreign funds with retrospective effect, in 2016.

The issue is a reality problem

The Prime Minister and his government have actively courted foreign approval. Two dozen foreign envoys were taken on a guided tour of Kashmir last week because getting a favourable opinion from foreigners matters to the government. At the height of tensions and the shutdown there, before Indian Members of Parliament were allowed, a delegation of far-right European Parliament members was bussed around deserted streets. The Prime Minister has personally appeared with celebrities in foreign lands during his numerous trips, seeking their approval. The craving for approval is natural for any publicity-seeking politician, but a democracy cannot be reduced to only demanding praise from the rest of the world and raising the bogey of 'internal matters' when international voices express solidarity with dissenters and raise serious concerns.

Global concerns about democratic rights in India cannot be dealt with by arresting messengers, bullying 'amplifiers' or shutting down social media accounts. India does not have an image problem; it has a reality problem. Changing the reality and adhering to best democratic practices inside is the only durable solution if the Modi government wants its image 'fixed'.

Seema Chishti is a journalist based in New Delhi

Writing more of India into Tibetology

The subject is no longer only about countering the other beyond the mountain – China



SWATI CHAWLA &
MADHURA BALASUBRAMANIAM

Le't situate the study of Tibet outside the narrow silo of Sino-Indian relations and within the Himalaya. It might teach us much that we don't know about India.

As students of Tibet and the Himalaya, we welcome the Indian Army's recent proposal for its officers to study Tibetology. A media report on January 28 said that officers would study "Tibetan history, culture, and language on both sides of the Line of Actual Control" in order to "counter Chinese influence and propaganda".

The Indian Army is right to emphasise the importance of building expertise on Tibet to understand the history and contemporary challenges in India's relationship with China. Indeed, India-China relations cannot be approached through a strictly bilateral prism that excludes Tibet and the Himalaya.

Equally, Tibetology cannot be confined within the bounds of state interests and territorial conflicts on either side of the Tibetan plateau. It encompasses the multi- and interdisciplinary study of the broader Tibetan cultural region, and is most productively situated with and within the Himalaya.

According to the *Proceedings of*

the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (2003), the region includes not just U-Tsang (present-day Tibet Autonomous Region), Amdo, and Kham, but large areas in the Himalaya, including parts of Nepal and Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh, and Tawang. We believe that approaching the region through these trans-Himalayan connections, as opposed to nation-state silos, can teach us not just about Sino-Indian relations but also about large parts of India.

Colonial provenance

As with other parts of the colonised world, the production and codification of knowledge about Tibet served European imperial interests. Britain recognised the importance of Sikkim and Bhutan in securing its interests in Tibet, and its Political Officer in Sikkim cultivated close relations with aristocratic families in the region. Simultaneously, from Warren Hastings in the 1770s to Francis Younghusband in 1903-04, an army of cartographers, mountaineers, missionaries, linguists, and botanists worked to produce definitive knowledge about Tibet for British India.

On the one hand, works of fiction such as James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933) painted a mythical image of Tibet as Shangri-la – a utopian society untouched by modernity; the repository of a putative true Buddhism. On the other, imperial realpolitik wrestled with demarcating the territorial boundaries of British India and its protectorates, most notably through



the McMahon Line (1914). These approaches shaped initial academic engagements with Tibet – trends which persist to this day.

Free India, Tibetan studies

Independent India recognised the economic and cultural ties that traversed the Himalayas and the role of Buddhism as the connecting tissue. This informed the institution-building efforts of the government in the 1950s. Dedicated to Tibetan and Buddhist studies, the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies and the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies were established in Leh and Sarnath, Varanasi, respectively, as was the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in the erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim, which was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958. The Institutes in Sarnath and Gangtok are on the Indian Army's list of places where officers can study Tibetology.

These efforts notwithstanding, studies on Tibet by Indian academics have largely mirrored India's geopolitical anxieties, which were exacerbated after the Sino-Indian war in 1962. Some exceptions

such as Girija Saklani and T.C. Palakshappa aside, the majority of Indian scholarship on Tibet has continued to focus on the role of Tibet in the bilateral relationship between India and China, or on Buddhism.

By understanding Tibet as a buffer zone in India-China relations, the former often leads to an ahistorical narrative of India and Tibet as "natural allies", eschewing the history of complex political engagements between successive administrations in Lhasa and India over issues ranging from frontiers to customary rights of grazing and trade. It does not account for the centrality of Tibet in India's relationship with Bhutan and Sikkim (before 1975).

Similarly, with respect to Buddhism, the *guru-chela* narrative of India as the birthplace of Buddhism and Tibet as the recipient of this knowledge dominates, as does the idea of Buddhism as a derivative of Hinduism. This often excludes a view of Tibetan Buddhism as a living and evolving entity that thrives in large parts of the Himalayan region. It also ends up equating Tibet with a reified Tibetan Buddhism devoid of sectarian complexity, and erasing Tibet's non-Buddhist religions.

A Himalayan home

Most tragically, in defining Tibetology so narrowly, we miss an opportunity to understand contemporary India. The postcolonial Indian state was not forged in the centres of Delhi and Calcutta alone. Nor were its mountains and plains integrated into a single na-

tion-state uniformly. The Himalaya is not just an insurmountable "natural barrier" – a sentry as we sing in *sare jahaan se achha* – that separates India from its neighbours. It is home to interconnected yet diverse ecologies, societies, and polities that criss-cross many contemporary borders.

What is more, there is no location more advantageous for studying Tibet and the Himalaya. Indian institutions – both national and state archives, as well as private collections in libraries – house the richest materials for this work. India hosts the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibetan refugee settlements and a plethora of Tibetan institutes. Linguistic and field expertise abound, as do opportunities for learning the language for the uninitiated.

Foregrounding the interconnections among Tibet and the Himalayan regions and their relationship with the Indian centre offers valuable perspectives into processes of state-making and the politics of nation-building. As recent environmental, social, and geopolitical crises show, these continue to remain live concerns.

Thus, in broadening the mandate for Tibetology, we write more of India into the story. It is no longer only about countering the other beyond the mountain.

Swati Chawla is a historian of the Himalaya and an assistant professor at O.P. Jindal Global University. Madhura Balasubramanian is an independent researcher studying Tibetan rehabilitation in India

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.

Government lost

The rapid political developments in Puducherry confirm, yet again, the failure of the Congress party to manage its affairs, and refusal to learn lessons from earlier and debilitating political experiences, in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, where it could not retain power (Page 1, "Narayanasamy govt. falls in Puducherry", February

23). The Congress is becoming easy prey to the BJP's aggression. The distressing episode exposes the utter failure of the anti-defection law in failing to stop defections and causing the downfall of elected governments.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

Contract labour

The Government of Tamil Nadu intends to support

new industries through large investments. Entrepreneurs are supportive of this new venture and have asserted that this initiative will generate new employment opportunities. Currently, most industrial undertakings are sourcing manpower (contract workmen) through intermediaries. Such an approach, albeit lucrative to the companies, is unjust as

far as workers are concerned with respect to their remuneration, service conditions, statutory benefits, and job security. Since the State is providing land, electricity, and financial assistance as part of infrastructure incentives to promoters, there is a ripe opportunity to enforce corporate social responsibility. It is imperative for the State to impose caps on contract

labour (no more than 10% of the total workforce). When taxpayer funds are used as a stimulus, it is important for the State government to enter into *quid pro quo* arrangements that ensure collective and long-term societal benefits.

T.S. GOPALAN,
Chennai

Wildlife's woes

It is extremely sad to note that a leopardess, a two-

The excise duty-fiscal policy contradiction

The increased tax burden due to excise duties cannot help growth



DIPANKAR DASGUPTA

There used to be a time – and this was well before India began to globalise – when each Union Budget announced sales tax increases on tobacco products, especially cigarettes. The demand for cigarettes being somewhat inelastic, the rise in tax was expected to be a shot in the arm for the revenue-starved government of our poor country.

Increase in excise duty
India is less poor now, having risen to the rank of an emerging market economy. Yet, COVID-19 has ushered in a cataclysm. As opposed to Budget estimate of 3.5% for fiscal deficit, the revised estimates show a 2.7 times larger deficit of 9.5% for FY 2020-21. Moreover, a comparison of the government's revised Budget estimates with the original Budget estimates reveals a fall in receipts from every source of taxation except excise. The revised Budget shows a rise of ₹4,000 crore on account of excise duties alone. Presumably, the increase comes from the much-debated excise duty increases on petroleum and diesel. As far as the Budget documents go, the excise duty rise will hardly compensate for the huge falls in other tax revenues. It is not surprising, therefore, that despite the excise rise, the fiscal deficit continues to be higher than the Budget estimate. In fact, the larger excise duty collection is not large enough to have significantly reduced the inflated fiscal deficit figure.

Given the nature of the products on which the excise duty has gone up, prices of commodities will rise in general, directly or indirectly. This is because all these commodities fall either in the category of final goods, which individuals purchase for personal consumption, or in the category of intermediate goods, which are used to produce a variety of essential services such as public transport, agricultural water supply, hotels and restaurants.

With annual output shrinking by an estimated 7.7%, it is straightfor-



PICHUMANI K.

ward to conclude that unemployment has risen significantly. The accompanying price rise will be the unemployed persons' worst nightmare. The result will be severe inequality.

New philosophy

As far as shrinkage in output is concerned, it is the unavoidable lockdown that needs to be blamed rather than the government's mismanagement of the economy. The associated inequalities though cannot be delinked from policy and, as political opponents will argue, COVID-19-linked income inequities ought to have been addressed through higher taxation of the rich. Even though such criticism does not lack wisdom, it appears that the philosophy underlying the government's economic policy framework has changed, a change that has not received adequate attention. In what follows, we shall address the issue from a pure economist's point of view.

In this context, it is well worth our while to pursue Volume 1 of the Economic Survey 2020-21. Chapter 2 of the document considers the basics of fiscal policy with reference to Olivier Blanchard's 2019 presidential address to the American Economic Association. Professor Blanchard's view may appear to run counter to our own Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, according to which the fiscal deficit must be capped under 3.5% or so. The idea underlying the prescription was that a fiscal deficit automatically transformed to government debt. Such debts along with their servicing

liabilities have a tendency to magnify over the years, thereby imprisoning governments in debt traps, where present borrowings keep increasing to repay past borrowings and service charges. This leaves little room for growth enhancing expenditure and reduces a government's creditworthiness in the eyes of lenders.

Professor Blanchard, and following him the Economic Survey, propose a different viewpoint altogether. Debt-financed fiscal spending, according to them, could well be a driver of growth. It can improve the standard of living of the entire population, without necessarily removing inequality. The inequality, however, could well be benignant, for even though the rich will grow richer, the poor will escape out of poverty.

A government's fiscal expenditure, Professor Blanchard points out, has stronger multiplier effects during recessions than during booms. In an economic boom, state expenditure may crowd out private expenditure on account of a rise in the interest rate. During recessions, private expenditure is low in any case, on account of a rise in precautionary savings and the grim state of long-term expectations. The government, however, is not affected by such psychological constraints. Its fiscal expenditure produces positive growth and this in turn can generate a feel good factor for the private sector over time, raise animal spirits, and improve the state of the economy.

Blanchard's argument

What, however, constitutes the government's spendable resource? The

obvious answer is debt, or the fiscal deficit itself. What will prevent the government from sinking into a debt trap? Professor Blanchard shows that the debt-to-GDP ratio can be prevented from exploding if the rate of growth of GDP happens to be higher than the sovereign rate of interest. This is the case in developed economies. In such economies, debt-financed government expenditure will create a positive primary surplus (defined as the total government receipts minus expenditure net of interest payments) out of which interest payments can be made to keep the debt-GDP ratio under control. There will, of course, be a maximum value that this ratio can attain, a value that is higher the larger is the excess of the growth rate over the interest rate.

According to the Economic Survey, India's average interest rate and growth rate over the last 25 years (leaving out FY 2020-21) have been 8.8% and 12.8% respectively. Hence, Professor Blanchard's condition is satisfied, so that debt financing of recession ought not to raise FRBM issues involving fear of future taxation to address past debts. To some at least, the argument may sound like an excuse for not resorting to higher taxation of the rich to remove economic inequality.

The philosophy of the Economic Survey, on the other hand, appears to be that expenditure causes growth, rather than distributional equality. With improved growth, standards of living will rise across the population, bringing affluence of a sort to the economically deprived even as it makes the rich grow richer.

This, of course, is not to support excise duty increases, for it goes against the very principle of the Blanchard argument, which emphasises maintainable debt and expenditure as the vehicle of development as opposed to increased tax burdens. Therefore, there appears to be a contradiction between the government's announced fiscal policy stance and the fiscal regime it is actually running. But then, Professor Blanchard's argument requires the growth rate to exceed the rate of interest, which was not the case in FY 2020-21.

Dipankar Dasgupta is former Professor of Economics, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi and Kolkata

Being petroleum-independent

It is time for India to adopt stringent fuel efficiency standards and a zero-emissions vehicle programme



ANUP BANDIVADEKAR

Speaking on the increase in petrol and diesel prices, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently said the middle class would not have been burdened if the previous governments had focused on reducing India's energy import dependence. He also emphasised the need for clean sources of energy. Expanding and diversifying energy supply is good, but if India is to reduce its energy import dependence, it must look towards first managing the demand for petroleum products. It is worthwhile to reflect on measures taken by the previous governments as well as the government under Mr. Modi in this context.

Steps in the right direction

The UPA-2 administration under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh formulated fuel efficiency standards for passenger vehicles that are now in effect. It also constituted the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP). While well-intended, both these actions fell short in terms of ambition. India's 2022 fuel efficiency standards for passenger cars are nearly 20% less stringent than the European Union's standards. The NEMMP primarily focused on hybrid electric vehicles, and most of the incentives under the NEMMP went towards subsidising mild hybrids instead of electric vehicles. No wonder global manufacturers are rushing to deploy electric passenger cars in Europe while largely ignoring the Indian market.

The government under Mr. Modi has undertaken several initiatives to increase energy security. Heavy-duty vehicles, which consume nearly 60% of the diesel used in the country, are now subject to fuel efficiency standards. The share of bioethanol in petrol has risen to nearly 8% by volume under the 2018 National Policy on Biofuels. The government has encouraged multiple fuel pathways in the transport sector including natural gas. Importantly, it has recognised the urgency for us to transition to electric vehicles. The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) scheme now focuses largely on electric vehicles. The government has also provided several additional fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to encourage a transition to electric vehicles.

While these are steps in the right direction, there are many things that the government can and should do to reduce depen-

dence on petroleum. First, the government should formulate a zero-emissions vehicle (ZEV) programme that would require vehicle manufacturers to produce a certain number of electric vehicles. Such programmes are in effect in China, certain States in the U.S., British Columbia in Canada, and South Korea. At present, the electric mobility initiative in India is driven largely by new entrants in the two- and three-wheeler space. Market leaders have adopted a wait-and-watch attitude. A ZEV programme would require all manufacturers to start producing electric vehicles across all market segments.

The government should also strengthen fuel efficiency requirements for new passenger cars and commercial vehicles. Two-wheelers, which consume nearly two-third of the petrol used in India, are not subject to any fuel efficiency standards. A recent analysis by the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) suggests that a standard requiring 50% reduction in fuel consumption by new two-wheelers by 2030 will not only lead to internal combustion engine (ICE) efficiency improvements, but also ensure that nearly 60% of all new two-wheelers sold in India are electric driven. Similar opportunities exist on the passenger vehicle and heavy-duty commercial vehicle fronts. Adopting stringent fuel efficiency standards and a ZEV programme by 2024 can result in India's petroleum demand peaking by 2030, in spite of tremendous projected growth in economic and vehicular activity. Consumers will save money at the pump due to more fuel-efficient ICE vehicles. Those who switch to electric vehicles will save even more as these consume less energy and electricity is cheaper compared to petrol and diesel.

Complementary policies

The FAME scheme focuses on two- and three-wheelers, taxis, and buses. It should be extended not only to all passenger cars and commercial vehicles but also to agricultural tractors. Extending fiscal incentives to all kinds of vehicles and stepping up investments in charging infrastructure are essential complementary policies. By next year, the GST rates for all passenger vehicles could be made proportional to their fuel efficiency level, instead of the present system that relies on vehicle length and engine size.

As the economy recovers from the pandemic, the demand for petroleum products will rise, as will prices. But the government can save money for the consumer while enhancing long-term energy security by wielding the regulatory tools at its disposal.

Anup Bandivadekar is the passenger vehicle programme director at ICCT

A proper transfer policy needed

Frequent transfers of public servants affect their morale and weaken administration

ZUBAIR NAZEER

Good governance and better administration of development is often offered as a plausible solution to conflict management. At the heart of this solution are public administrators. Civil servants, no matter how dedicated, innovative and efficient they may be, need a stability of tenure to govern well.

The J&K example

Consider the case of Jammu and Kashmir. If the purpose of administering the region is to ensure peace and development, then it is unlikely to succeed till there is a proper transfer policy. As it stands presently, officers are transferred too often. This denies them the opportunity to settle down into an official role. At times, a particular administrative location is used as a testing lab where officers keep arriving and leaving, with a deleterious impact on officer morale, leading to a reduction in efficiency and effectiveness. The latter effect impacts development and governance and acts as a collective punishment to the population of that place. It has been a major reason for distrust, disconnect and alienation.

This disenchantment is palpable in Shopian district, which has often been the epicentre of protests and militant-related activities. Since its district status in 2007, it has seen 13 Deputy Commissioners (DCs) at its helm. In the last few years, the transfer policy in Shopian has become a theatre of the absurd. The last three DCs have had a stay of 378 days, 537 days, and 25 days, respectively. The last DC assumed charge on January 19, 2021 and was transferred to Leh on February 13, 2021. The story is similar in many other districts and government departments across J&K.

Often, the frequent transfer of officials is blamed on the interference of local politicians. However, the argument cannot be valid this time since there are no elected MLAs after the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly in late 2018. Since then, in the absence of elected representatives, the participation of local people in governance and development is through civil servants. It is this participation that has been the worst af-

fected due to the frequent transfers.

The issue of frequent transfers is not limited to J&K, of course, but is found across India. The analysis of the SUPREMO (Single User Platform Related to Employees Online) database of the Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, shows that the average posting spell of civil servants in India is only about 15 months. This is despite an increase in the median tenure since 2014 at the national level. Ashok Khemka and Pradeep Kasni are two Haryana-based IAS officers whose cases symbolise this issue. Mr. Khemka has been transferred more than 50 times in his career and Mr. Kasni 65 times. The Union Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Jitendra Singh, publicly accepted his helplessness in 2016 about the frequent transfer of officers in States.

A major shortcoming

The undermining of transfer guidelines has been a major shortcoming of personnel administration in India. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission has highlighted it. The Fifth Pay Commission had recommended that no premature transfer should be allowed and that there should be fixation of a minimum tenure for each post. The Hota Committee, which argued against frequent transfers, noted that "absence of a fixed tenure of officials is one of the most important reasons for tardy implementation of government policies, for lack of accountability of officers, for waste of public money because of inadequate supervision of programmes under implementation and for large-scale corruption."

An oft-repeated argument used for transfers is that they are "in the interest of administration." However, they essentially weaken administration. Transfers often reflect administrative favouritism and create divisions among civil servants. If they are done on a political basis, this impacts the neutrality of the civil services. The core values of the civil services – neutrality, impartiality and anonymity – cannot be maintained without an efficient transfer policy.

Zubair Nazeer is an Assistant Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi



DATA POINT

Languages in danger

Close to 197 of India's indigenous languages were vulnerable, endangered or extinct as of 2017, according to the latest edition of the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. Nearly 60% of them originated in the Northeast and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI). More than half of India's endangered languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers and have therefore not been recorded in the Indian Census. The UN has declared the 10-year-period between 2022 and 2032 as the decade of indigenous languages. The organisation observes International Mother Language Day on February 21. By Suman Sen

LANGUAGE LIST | According to UNESCO, as many as 197 languages in India were endangered*, vulnerable or extinct as of 2017 – the highest in the world. Five of them were extinct; 42 were critically endangered; 7 were severely endangered; 62 were definitely endangered; and 81 were vulnerable

India	China	Indonesia	Mexico
197	144	143	143
U.S.	Russia	New Guinea	Canada

Brazil 190 Australia 108 98 87

CENSUS COUNT

India's language Census records only those with more than 10,000 speakers. Of the 99 non-scheduled languages the 2011 Census recorded, the number of speakers reduced for 22 (depicted in the chart) compared to a decade ago. Thirteen of them are spoken in the Northeast (●).

% change in speaker strength from 2001
No. of speakers in 2011

Balti Lohauli Monpa Ladakhi Sema Konyak Rabha Coorgi

Ladakh & Balti spoken in the J&K region, Monpa and Sema in the Northeast, and Lohauli in Himachal had less than 15,000 speakers in 2011

AT RISK | The map points to the locations where the vulnerable (●), definitely endangered (○), severely endangered (●), critically endangered (●), and extinct (●) languages were most spoken. Thirteen of the 42 critically endangered ones were spoken in the Northeast

Tangam (100)
Handuri (138)
Nihali (2,000)
Toda (1,006)
Onge (50)
Great Andamanese (No. of speakers: 5)

Vulnerable: Most children speak the language but only in specific domains (example: home)

Definitely endangered: Children no longer learn the language as the mother tongue

Critically endangered: Only the elders speak the language but partially and infrequently

Extinct: No speakers left

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 24, 1971

Teachers' promotions invalid

The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court to-day [New Delhi, February 23] set aside the promotions of more than 200 school teachers in Jammu and Kashmir State, holding that they were made in pursuance of the State Government's communal policy. The promotions were challenged by Mr. Makhan Lal Waza and nine other teachers of the Jammu and Kashmir Education Department through a writ petition. They alleged that the Government's policy of promoting teachers to higher posts and higher grades was not based on merit and seniority but purely on grounds of religion, caste and place of birth. The petitioners stated that they were qualified and senior but other teachers had been unduly promoted over them in pursuance of the communal policy. In allowing the petition, the Court held the promotions to be illegal and unconstitutional, being violative of Article 16 of the Constitution. It directed the State Government to revise and reconsider them. (Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment). The matter was heard by the Chief Justice, Mr. S.M. Sikri, Mr. Justice G.K. Mitter, Mr. Justice K.S. Hegde, Mr. Justice A.N. Grover, and Mr. Justice Jagannath Reddy. Mr. Justice Grover, who delivered the judgment, said the State Government had acted in complete defiance of the law on the point laid down by the Supreme Court in the Trilokinath case.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEB. 24, 1921

The Reparations

London, February 21: Telegrams from Paris state that the first estimates of the sums which Germany owes to the Allies for reparations have been forwarded to the German Government by the Reparations Commission. According to newspapers, the estimates include the following claims: Britain excluding Dominions £2,500 millions sterling for damages to property and persons, and 7,500 million francs in paper for allowance to soldiers and their families. France, 218,542 million francs in paper, Italy 33,000 million lire for damage to property, 38,000 million francs in paper for damage to persons and pensions and 128 millions sterling for shopping losses; Belgium, 34,000 million Belgian francs for damage to property and 2,500 million French francs for damages to persons and pensions; Japan, 800 million yen.

FROM PAGE ONE

Delhi court grants bail to activist Disha Ravi

"Citizens are conscience keepers of government in any democratic nation. They cannot be put behind the bars simply because they choose to disagree with the state policies. The offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the governments," Judge Rana remarked.

The court highlighted that the Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju had, during the course of the hearings, conceded that there is no direct evidence establishing the link between Ms. Ravi and the violence that took place on January 26 in Delhi.

The court also pointed out that the ASG had admitted that PJF is not a banned organisation and even no criminal action is pending against its founders, Mo Dhaliwal and Anita Lal.

On the Delhi police's allegation that Ms. Ravi gave a global audience to the secessionist elements by manipulating support of international youth icon Ms. Greta Thunberg, the court said, "The right to dissent is firmly enshrined under Article 19 of The Constitution of India. In my considered opinion the freedom of speech and expression includes the right to seek a global audience."

AS-G Raju had alleged that the 'toolkit' has embedded hyper links with an intent to malign India abroad. But the court said there was "absolutely nothing objectionable" in the hyperlink 'askindiawhy.com' embedded with the 'toolkit'.

On another hyperlink 'Genocide.org' embedded

in the 'toolkit', the court concurred with the ASG that the imputations are really objectionable in the website.

"However, even if the said imputations are found to be objectionable in nature, I cannot but disagree with AS-G that the said material is seditious in nature," Judge Rana said.

The Delhi police had alleged that Ms. Ravi along with her associates under the pretext of protesting against the farm laws have resolved to vandalise Indian Embassies and specifically attack symbols of India i.e. Yoga and Chai.

"Except for a bare assertion, no evidence has been brought to my notice to support the contention that any violence took place at any of the Indian Embassies pursuant to the sinister designs of the applicant/accused and her co-conspirators," the court said.

"Conspiracy cannot be proved merely on the basis of inferences. The inferences have to be backed by evidence," the court noted. It added, "In my considered opinion creation of a WhatsApp group or being editor of an innocuous Toolkit is not an offence."

"In the absence of any evidence to the effect that the applicant/accused (Ms. Ravi) agreed or shared a common purpose to cause violence on January 26 with the founders of PJF, it cannot be presumed by resorting to surmises or conjectures that she also supported the secessionist tendencies or the violence caused on January 26," the court added.

'Vaccine rollout for older people soon'

"Moreover, they have been found earlier in some States in India. The E484Q strain was earlier detected in four sequences in Maharashtra as early as March and July 2020. The N440K mutation has been reported on 13 different occasions between May and September 2020 in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Assam. The current upsurge in Maharashtra cannot be attributed to the currently discussed point mutations," Dr Bhargava said.

He added that the situation is being constantly monitored and that data will be shared as further scientific evidence emerges.

The statement comes amidst surge in COVID cases, with Maharashtra and Kerala reporting 75% of the active COVID cases.

"Other states including

Blow to Oli as Nepal SC reinstates lower House

The verdict also indicated that political decisions should be taken within the boundaries and limits laid down by the Constitution.

Mr. Bhattarai who is currently undergoing treatment in a hospital in South Delhi, while welcoming the verdict, said, "This is not only the restoration of Parliament but virtually restoration of constitutionalism and democracy in Nepal which was greatly endangered under the leadership of PM K P Sharma Oli. This will also pave the way of re-polarisation of the democratic forces in Nepal, so that we can maintain national unity, have better Nepal-India relation and contribute to the rapid economic development of the country."

Former prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, who has been agitating against the dissolution of the House, termed Tuesday's order as "historic".

"The historic verdict

Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu-Kashmir are also a cause for worry and our teams has been dispatched to study and understand the cause for the surge," said Mr. Bhushan at the conference.

Cautions that the virus is still very much around and that it continues to surprise Dr. Paul said, "People should not abandon COVID appropriate behaviour as we are still vulnerable. The surge in the COVID cases are a warning signal to us."

Meanwhile, the cumulative number of vaccine doses administered to healthcare and frontline workers has crossed 1.19 crore on Tuesday as per data released by the Ministry. It added that a total of 1,19,07,392 vaccine doses have been given through 2,53,434 sessions.

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"The historic verdict

Six killed as explosives go off in Chickballapur

Karnataka govt. orders CID probe into incident

**KARNATAKA BUREAU
BENGALURU**



In grief: The mother of a blast victim near the quarry at Hirenagavalli village in Chickballapur district on Tuesday. Right, officials at the site of the explosion. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

Villagers had protested in a bid to stop quarrying

**K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ
HIRENAGAVALLI**

"We have tried our best to stop stone quarrying on this hill. We held protests and later tried installing a Hanuman statue on the hill. But nothing worked. The politicians and the bureaucracy are hand in glove with the miners," says Venugopal Reddy, a resident of Hirenagavalli village, where a blast at a quarry killed six on Tuesday.

The tales of woe are not restricted to Hirenagavalli. Surrounding villagers too have complained of quarrying causing cracked buildings, respiratory disorders and crop loss.

"It has been years since I got a good harvest from my farm that abuts one of the quarries. Since boulders are anyway powdered to make M-sand, there are reckless explosions and the risking of life," he said.

got it," said farmer A.K. Gangappa.

The monolithic Hirenagavalli Hill (also locally called Mayalafakir Konda) is believed to be the site of a popular Telugu folk story of Balanagamma. It was the site of an annual village fair till 2011, when the Karnataka government permitted stone quarrying. Today, more than 18 quarry pits and 44 stone crushers are mining the hill.

Says activist R. Anjaneya Reddy: "While stone quarrying has been happening for decades now and has also adversely impacted life in the district, what has worsened it is the M-sand units. Since boulders are anyway powdered to make M-sand, there are reckless explosions and the risking of life," he said.

Kerala ignored Centre's warning on U.S. firm

Union Minister says deal smacked of corruption

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**



Ministers Pralhad Joshi and V. Muraleedharan at the opening of the NDA election committee office in Thiruvananthapuram ■ PTI

Ministers Pralhad Joshi and V. Muraleedharan at the opening of the NDA election committee office in Thiruvananthapuram ■ PTI

On October 3, 2019, State Transport secretary K.R. Jyothilal had written to the Ministry of External Affairs seeking the help of the Indian Consulate in New York to verify the firm's legitimacy.

India's Consular General wrote back on October 21, 2019, that the firm lacked a proper address. The company existed only on paper and in the virtual domain. It had no business or physical presence and had remained dormant. He

Cautioning that the virus is still very much around and that it continues to surprise Dr. Paul said, "People should not abandon COVID appropriate behaviour as we are still vulnerable. The surge in the COVID cases are a warning signal to us."

Meanwhile, the cumulative number of vaccine doses administered to healthcare and frontline workers has crossed 1.19 crore on Tuesday as per data released by the Ministry. It added that a total of 1,19,07,392 vaccine doses have been given through 2,53,434 sessions.

Drug-sex racket busted in Kerala

**ABDUL LATHEEF NAHA
MALAPPURAM**



The Childline in Malappuram district of Kerala has exposed a high-profile drug-and-sex racket luring schoolgirls through Instagram. The rackets have been found to drug the girls befriended through Instagram, and then trapping and abusing them sexually.

A 14-year-old girl from a well-to-do family in the district was rescued by Childline authorities last week. The ninth standard girl had become a drug addict and was raped for months by several men. The girl has revealed that she was given ganja first, then hashish oil and cocaine.

One arrested

The girl is in the custody of the district Child Welfare Committee (CWC), and needs de-addiction therapy. Some of those who abused the girl had reportedly threatened to kill her if she revealed their names.

Although the girl identified seven people involved in the racket, the police have arrested only one. Seven cases have been registered at the Kalpanachery police station. Activists expressed concern over the police laxity. The police produced the child before the CWC on Tuesday only after having been asked to do so by CWC chairman Shajesh Bhaskar.

Some of the TDP leaders reportedly teased YSRCP activists after TDP-backed candidate Allupalli Rambabu won the election, which allegedly led to the violence at the village in Etcherla mandal. Many vehicles, houses, utensils were damaged. Special forces were deployed to bring the situation under control.

Narrow escape for bus passengers in A.P.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ONGOLE**



Perching precariously: Passengers coming out of the bus in the Nallamala forests on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

26 injured as TDP, YSRCP activists clash in Srikakulam

**STAFF REPORTER
SRIKAKULAM**

Twenty-six persons were injured and many vehicles were damaged when leaders and activists of the YSRCP and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) clashed at Budagatlalapalem village in Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam district on Tuesday.

The situation in that village and other panchayats was under control, he said, adding search was on for nearly 20 trouble-makers.

SC puts off Lavalin case hearing again

CBI seeks adjournment in graft case

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday, yet again, adjourned the hearing of the SNC Lavalin corruption case appeals against the discharge of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on the basis of a request made by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

This is the third time the appeals have been adjourned in 2021.

The corruption case concerns the loss of ₹86.25 crore in the Kerala State Electricity Board's (KSEB) contract with Lavalin for the renovation and modernisation of Pallivasal, Sengulam and Panniar hydroelectric projects in Idukki district of Kerala. Mr. Vijayan was the State's Power Minister then.

On December 4, a Bench led by Justice U.U. Lalit had conceded to a plea made by

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for CBI, for an adjournment. On that day, Justice Lalit noted that the appeals have been shuttled from one date to another. The first of the appeals had been filed in October 2017.

In a hearing on October 8, Justice Lalit had cautioned the CBI that the appeals may fail unless the arguments against Mr. Vijayan's discharge in the corruption case were cast iron. Justice Lalit had reminded Mr. Mehta that two courts – trial court and the Kerala High Court – had already discharged Mr. Vijayan of any wrongdoing.

On Tuesday, Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju appeared for the CBI. As soon as the case was called, Mr. Raju sought an adjournment. Justice Lalit posted the case for April 6.



Name of patient: Rudra Ravindra Sathe, 5 years. Hospital: Name: Care Institute of Medical Sciences. Diagnosis: Name: Trauma and Burns. Treatment: Autologous blood transfusion from 3 months age. The overall curative option for this condition is Bone Marrow Transplantation (B.M.T). The overall cost of the transplant would be about Rs. 9,00,000/- We request Kindly send donation by Cheque/D.D/M.O. Favouring Save Poor Lives and on the back of the same mention the name of the patient and Accts Details. S/B Account No.: 20000913497, State Bank of India, Rajaji Annamalaiapuram Branch, and FSC CODE: SBN0001855, Google pay No.: 988407377.

Contact: SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, (ADMIN DIVISION) Flat No. A1, Ceebra Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76, Kamraj Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai-600 028, Ph: 044-42044165, Mobile: 9884607377, E-mail:savelpolives@gmail.com Our website: www.savelpolives.com

DONATION SENT TO CMC HOSPITAL IN JANUARY MONTH FOR RS. 1,84,854/-

CMYK

M NDE

Naudeep Kaur alleges torture in custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Labour rights activist Naudeep Kaur, who was arrested by the Haryana police on January 12 and is currently in Karnal Jail, said in her bail plea before the Punjab and Haryana High Court on Tuesday that she had been severely beaten up by officials at a police station.

The 24-year-old activist was arrested on charges of attempt to murder and rioting, among other charges under the IPC.

The court had on February 22 adjourned Ms. Kaur's bail hearing and listed it for February 24. In the plea the activist stated that after being arrested, she was beaten and tortured, and suffered multiple injuries. The plea also said she was taken to the police station in the absence of any woman police official.

R-Day violence accused takes part in meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BATHINDA

Lakha Sidhana, who is wanted in connection with the violence in Delhi on Republic Day, on Tuesday attended a public meeting in Punjab's Bathinda in support of the ongoing farmers' agitation against the Centre's agri laws.

A video clip showed him seated on the dais.

There was speculation whether the gangster-turned-activist would take part in the public meeting as he is wanted by the Delhi Police for his alleged role in the violence that broke out during a tractor parade on January 26.

Gangster Ravi Pujari sent to police custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The special Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime court remanded underworld gangster Ravi Pujari in police custody till March 9 in a case of firing outside a hotel in suburban Mumbai in 2016. Pujari was extradited to India from Senegal in February 2020 and produced before the court on Monday.

Rahul Gandhi's speech in Kerala draws BJP ire

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday reacted sharply to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's speech in Thiruvananthapuram, lauding voters in Kerala for being more interested in issue-based politics in comparison to the north, with party president J.P. Nadda accusing him of "spewing venom".

Left-Cong. alliance yet to finalise seat-sharing

We may give ISF 20-25 seats: Left leader

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Six days before the first rally of the Left-Congress alliance on the brigade ground in Kolkata, the parties are yet to finalise the seat-sharing arrangement.

Sources say chief patron of Furura Sharif Abbas Siddiqui demanded 80 seats for his newly formed party – Indian Secular Front. As both the Left and the Congress flatly rejected the demand, he scaled it down to 40.

"We have decided to give the ISF 20-25 seats. A few of these will go from our ac-

Disha quizzed for second day

She and the other accused were confronted with one another, say police

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police questioned lawyer Nikita Jacob, engineer Shantanu Muluk and activist Disha Ravi on second consecutive day at the cyber cell office in Dwarka on Tuesday.

Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk arrived at the office at 11 a.m. to join investigation. On Monday, Ms. Jacob left the office at 8 p.m. and Mr. Muluk at 11 p.m.

A senior police officer said each of the co-accused was confronted with the other two as they were made to answer a set of questions that primarily focused on the creation of the alleged toolkit. The police said they were questioned for around four hours to get more details about the conspiracy that was planned to defame India on the Republic Day. Later, Ms. Ravi was taken to the Patiala House courts for



Interrogation continues: Lawyer Nikita Jacob and, right, activist Shantanu Muluk, at the cyber cell office in Dwarka, New Delhi, on Tuesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA & REUTERS

bail hearing and the other two remained at the office for investigation.

"We are trying to connect the sequence of the events to establish the role of each person in the case. The actual creator of the toolkit, their source of funding and the people backing them were some of the key questions asked," said the officer.

The officer said Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk left the office around 8 p.m. If required, they will be asked to join the investigation again.

During investigation, they have got some more information. They are verifying the facts to get more details about the people involved in it.

"Disha had destroyed a

crucial piece of evidence in the form of WhatsApp chats from her phone. A team of technical experts is working on it to recover the chat and the details of members in the WhatsApp group. A technical team is working to identify the people who are trying to tamper with or delete digital footprints to escape being caught," the officer said.

Terrorism is a crime against humanity'

Pandemic handling shows India's commitment to human rights, says Jaishankar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Terrorism is a "crime against humanity", said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday. Addressing the High Level Segment of the 46th Session of Human Rights Council (HRC), he said India's commitment to human rights is seen in the way the government has handled the pandemic.

Terrorism continues to be one of the gravest threats to humankind. It is a crime against humanity and violates the most fundamental human right, namely the 'Right to Life'. Terrorism can never be justified, nor its perpetrators ever equated with its victims

S. JAISHANKAR,
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER



with its victims," said Mr. Jaishankar highlighting India's experience "as an inclusive and pluralistic society and vibrant democracy".

Major challenge

Mr. Jaishankar said human rights agenda in the world is facing a major challenge

from terrorism and expressed India's desire to work with other members of the HRC.

He highlighted the special importance of the rights that are enshrined in the Constitution as the Fundamental Rights.

"These continue to evolve

through legislation by Parliament, progressive interpretation of laws by the judiciary and active participation of civil society and citizens."

The Minister's comments came days after India reacted angrily to observations by the Special Rapporteurs on Minority Issues and Freedom of Religion or Belief on apparent erosion of rights in Kashmir and the rest of India.

The Ministry had termed the observations as "deplorable".

Mr. Jaishankar reached out to the HRC: "Our approach to the UN Human Rights Council is guided by our spirit of engagement,

dialogue and consultation. We believe that equal emphasis should be placed on both promotion and protection of human rights. Both are best pursued through dialogue, consultation and cooperation among States as well as technical assistance and capacity building."

Mr. Jaishankar said the government provided "direct food support to 800 million Indians and financial support to 400 million" to counter the impact of the pandemic.

"In the same spirit, India has pledged to use its vaccine manufacturing capacity to make vaccines accessible and affordable to all.

BJP sweeps Gujarat local body elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

The BJP swept the urban local body polls of Gujarat, winning all the six municipal corporations in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar for which the results were announced on Tuesday. Though the result was expected, the party's victory margin was more than 80%.

poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's popular poem *Krishna Ki Chetawani*.

At a kisan panchayat in Pali Khera on the outskirts of Mathura, she said when the ruler became arrogant, his policies would not be in the interest of the people.



Lending support: Ajit Singh seen with an injured farmer in Muzaffarnagar on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ajit Singh meets injured farmers in Muzaffarnagar

Rashtriya Lok Dal president demands FIR against culprits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GAZIABAD

Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Ajit Singh reached Sooram village in Muzaffarnagar on Tuesday to meet farmers who were injured in a clash with the aides of Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan on Monday. "I am not saying farmers are with me, I have come here to say that I am with you," he said.

Addressing hundreds of farmers in the village, Mr. Singh demanded that an FIR be registered against those who had roughed up the farmers and entered their houses. "This is the least you could do. It is the law," he told the officials present at the meeting.

Earlier, BKU president Naresh Tikitai said those who were injured were farmers and not RLD workers.



Question hour: CBI officials leaving the residence of Abhishek Banerjee after questioning his wife. ■ PTI

CBI questions MP's wife in coal theft case

Mamata visits her before team's arrival

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A team of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday questioned Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee's wife, Rujira Banerjee, in connection with a case involving coal theft. The CBI officials were present at her residence on Sunday to answer questions relating to the case.

"Though I am unaware of the reason for me being called for questioning or the subject matter of the investigation, you may visit my residence as per your convenience between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. tomorrow, i.e. 23 February 2021," Ms. Banerjee had said in her reply to the CBI on Monday.

Minutes before the team of CBI officers arrived at Mr. Banerjee's residence on 188 Harish Chatterjee Street, he was visited by his aunt and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The Chief Minister spent about 10 minutes before leaving for the State Secretariat.

The CBI has earlier questioned Mr. Banerjee in connection with a case registered on November 27, 2020

involving coal theft. On Sunday, the CBI served a notice on Ms. Rujira under Section 160 of Code of Criminal Procedure. The agency asked her to be present at her residence on Sunday to answer questions relating to the case.

"Though I am unaware of the reason for me being called for questioning or the subject matter of the investigation, you may visit my residence as per your convenience between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. tomorrow, i.e. 23 February 2021," Ms. Banerjee had said in her reply to the CBI on Monday.

Over the past few months, the CBI has conducted several raids in Kolkata and other parts of State in connection with the coal theft case.

STATE INDUSTRIES PROMOTION CORPORATION OF TAMIL NADU LIMITED
19-A, RUKMINI LAKSHMI PATH ROAD, EGMORE, CHENNAI-600 008.
Short Term Tender Notice

For and on behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, sealed tenders are invited under "Two Cover System" for the following work from Class-I State level Civil / Electrical contractors registered in State/Central or Government of Tamil Nadu undertakings having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be received upto 3.00 PM on 29.03.2021 and the same will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM.

S.I. No.	Name of Work	Approx. value of work	EMD
1.	Construction of RCC Precast Compound Wall, Laying of Paver Block Roads and RCC side drains, Supply and Erection of Steel Trusses for Sheds (3 Nos.), Providing Highmass arrangements for the Solid Waste Disposal Centre at SIPCOT IT Park, Siruseri.	Rs.320.72 Lakhs (Including 12% GST)	Rs.1,70,360/-
2.	Construction of 3m vent RCC Box Culvert at the entrance of SIPCOT Information Technology Park, Siruseri.		

EMD in the form of DD in favour of SIPCOT Ltd., payable at Chennai.
(In the name of Tenderer / firm only)

The tender Schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in

DIPR/1359/TENDER/2021 SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SIPCOT, Chennai-8

TENDER CUM AUCTION

M/s Natema Sugar Ltd., (4900 TCD Plant) Nindra Mandal Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh is due of Rs.37.87 crores to sugarcane farmers. As per the orders of District Collector, Chittoor the undersigned attached the factory and kept the machinery (as per form-1') for auction on 03.03.2021. Tenders should be submitted with EMD of Rs. 30.00 Lakhs through D.D. in favour of The Asst. Cane Commissioner, Chittoor before 11.00 AM on 03.03.2021. Auction will be conducted at 11.30 AM. For further details contact Asst. Cane Commissioner, Chittoor. The officer has every right to postpone or cancel the auction.

Asst. Cane Commissioner, Chittoor

Government of Puducherry
PUDUCHERRY TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR

Applications/nominations are invited for the post of Vice-Chancellor. The details and application form are available in the website: <http://dhte.py.gov.in>. Last date : 15th April 2021.

Director of Higher & Technical Education
No: 444/DIP/AD(Press)/2020-21

Government of Kerala
FOREST & WILD LIFE DEPARTMENT

Window No:iprd 21/e 116 - Tender No.R-16/03/2020(March & April 2021)-Divisional Forest Officer,Timber Sales Division,Kozhikode,vannarcoil,Mathottam,Arikalar P.O-673028,Phone-0495-2414702-E-auction sales of timber at Chaliam Parappa, Kannoth,Kunnad,Bavali,dumping depots on 23/03/08/04&27/04/21,10/03/29/03/19/04/21 respectively,PAC : 7 Crore,Window No:iprd 21/e 117 - Tender No.A-2/21/03/2020 - Divisional Forest Officer,Timber Sales Division,Perumbavoor,Mudikkal P.O-683547,Phone-0484-2522219-E-auction of timber on 03,11,20,28/05/2021 from Chakakudy,vettor,Mudikkal,Chettikulam & Varapuzha depots of Timber sales division,Perumbavoor - PAC : 4 Crore.

Full details on Tender Advertisements appeared above are exhibited before the Office from which the tender originates. Details on all Tenders above please visit www.kerala.gov.in and mofdt.kerala.gov.in for searching the advertisement of your choice. R.O. No. 41/G1/2021/PRD.

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PHED, REGION UDAIPUR
Telephone No. 0294-248138, e-mail aec.uda.phed@rajasthan.gov.in
NO/ACE/UDR/BKN/20-21/11454-464
Dated 3 Feb 2021
Notice Inviting Tender No. 48/2020-21
Online tenders are hereby invited on behalf of the Hon'ble Governor of Rajasthan for the following work on Single Responsibility Turnkey Basis (Design, Build, Operate & Maintain) from eligible enlisted "AA" class contractors of PHED, Rajasthan and meeting eligibility criteria. Contractors enlisted with other departments of Government/ Central Government undertakings/ organizations in class equivalent to "AA" class of Rajasthan and meeting prescribed eligibility criteria may also apply after depositing prescribed Earnest Money. Details of this tender notification and pre-qualification criteria can also be seen in NIT exhibited on website www.dpr.rajasthan.gov.in, <http://rajwater.gov.in>, <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in> and <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. Tenders to be submitted online electronic format on website <http://http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>.
NIT No. Brief Description of works
48 Re organization of Regional water supply scheme Bagherianakanaka with coverage of 44 left out problematic villages and its habitations of block Khamnor, Delwara and Railmaga District Rajsamand with operation and maintenance for 10 years after defect liability period of one year on Single Point responsibility Turnkey basis.
Estimated Cost Rs. 126.03 Crore,
Tender Fee Rs. 25,000.00, RISL Fee Rs. 1000.00,
Earnest money Bid Security Declaration for Amount @1% Rs. 1,26,03,000.00
Period of completion- 30 months
Availability of tender document on website 12.02.2021 to 15.03.2021
UBN NO: PHE 2021WL01001
DIPR/C/1703
Addl. Chief Engineer,
PHED, Region Udaipur

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, CALICUT
NIT Campus Post, Calicut, Kerala 673601,
Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India

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We are looking for result oriented & dynamic manpower to work on following projects being implemented by the centre funded by Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Govt of India on contract basis.

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For details & nature of assignment / remuneration, interested candidates may visit our Website <https://nielit.gov.in/calicut> and apply on-line or before 03 March 2021. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview at NIELIT, NIT Campus, Calicut, KERALA - 673601 © Ph : 0495-2287266 / 7560890

Govt. will ensure healthcare for all: PM

COVID-19 has taught us to be prepared to fight similar challenges in the future, says Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Stating that the budget allocation for the health sector this financial year has been unprecedented, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said this indicated his government's commitment to providing healthcare to every citizen. He added that the COVID-19 pandemic had taught the country a lesson on how to be prepared to fight similar challenges in the future.

Speaking at a webinar on effective implementation of budget provisions in the health sector, Mr. Modi said, "The world has watched us closely and India has shown its strength during the pandemic. The country's healthcare sector's reputation and trust are at a new level all over the world."

The world has watched us closely and India has shown its strength during the pandemic

NARENDRA MODI,
PRIME MINISTER



"From medical equipment to medicines, ventilators to vaccines, scientific research to surveillance infrastructure, and doctors to epidemiologists, we have to focus on everything. All this is aimed at being better prepared for any health disaster in the future," he added.

The Prime Minister said this was the inspiration behind the PM AtmaNirbhav Swasth Bharat scheme.

ployment opportunities," Mr. Modi said.

He added that the world now clearly appreciated the strength and resilience shown by India's health sector during the pandemic.

"The trust in the country's health sector has increased manifold all over the world. The world's attention will definitely shift towards India's medical education system and there will be a huge influx of foreign students to study medicine in the country," he said.

The Prime Minister said the current government treated health issues in a holistic manner rather than in a fragmented manner. Therefore, the focus was on wellness and not just treatment.

"The government is working with a four-pronged stra-

tegy for a healthy India. The first is prevention of illness and promotion of wellness, including measures such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, yoga, timely care and treatment of pregnant women and children. The second is to provide cheap and effective treatment to the poorest of the poor. The third is to increase the quality of health infrastructure and healthcare professionals, while the fourth is to work on a mission mode to overcome obstacles," he said.

In his speech, the Prime Minister lauded the efforts of the AYUSH sector during the pandemic and said its infrastructure had also been of great help in the country with regard to increasing immunity and scientific research.

Indradhanush 3.0 to fill gap in immunisation due to COVID

More than 29,000 children, 5,000 women covered on first day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The States and Union Territories (UTs) have rolled out the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 scheme to cover children and pregnant women who missed routine immunisation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Health Ministry said in a release issued on Tuesday. More than 29,000 children and 5,000 pregnant women were covered on the first day, it added.

"Various States and UTs have started implementation of the Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0, a campaign aimed to reach those children and pregnant women who have been missed out or been left out of the Routine Immunisation Programme. This is aimed to accelerate the full immunisation of children and pregnant women through a mission mode intervention. The first phase has been rolled out from February 22 for 15 days," it said.

The campaign is scheduled to have two rounds of immunisation lasting 15 days (excluding routine immunisation and holidays). It is being conducted in 250 pre-identified districts/urban areas across 29 States/UTs.



Step forward: The campaign is being conducted in 250 pre-identified districts/urban areas in 29 States/UTs. • AFP

rence to COVID-appropriate behaviour (CAB) during immunisation activities has been strongly emphasised.

The States have been asked to follow a "staggered approach" to avoid crowding at the session sites and even plan break-up sessions if a staggered approach is not effective.

The sessions have also been planned in such a way that not more than 10 beneficiaries are present at the session site at one given point in time.

The Ministry said adhe-

DAC clears bids worth ₹13,700 crore

Procurement proposals for 118 Arjun MK-1A tanks for ₹8,400 cr. also cleared

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

The Army officer who was seen raining blows on a Chinese soldier in a video of the last year's June 15 Galwan incident, released by the Chinese state media, was felicitated by Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Tuesday. Captain Soiba Maningba Rangnaiem of the 16 Bihar regiment was identified from the video released by China's state media on February 19.

Order on Stan Swamy's bail plea on March 2

MUMBAI

The special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court will pass its order on Father Stan Swamy's petition for bail in the Bhima Koregaon violence case on March 2. Fr. Swamy, 83, a jesuit priest and activist who had been working with tribals for decades, is currently in the Taloja Central Jail.

CBI, West Bengal govt. spar over contempt case

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday posted a contempt case filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against former Kolkata police chief Rajeev Kumar and others in connection with the Saradha chit fund scam case, for hearing after two weeks. The West Bengal government told a Bench that the case had "come alive" before the Assembly election. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the CBI, retorted that "contempt always remains alive".

Narcotics case: another Bengal BJP leader held

KOLKATA

The Bengal police on Tuesday arrested BJP leader Rakesh Singh in a case involving the seizure of narcotics. On February 19, the Kolkata police arrested the secretary of the party's youth wing, Pamela Goswami, for the possession of about 90 g of cocaine in the New Alipore area. Ms. Goswami had said that she was being framed by Mr. Singh.

Varavara Rao granted bail in Surajgarh case

Poet will be released from hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court granted bail to poet Varavara Rao on Tuesday in the 2016 Surajgarh iron case at Gadchiroli. He will be released from a private hospital.

He had moved a single Bench of Justice Swapna Joshi after the Principal Bench of the Bombay High Court granted him bail for six months on medical grounds on Monday.

He was arrested on January 30, 2019 by the Gadchiroli police in the Surajgarh iron case after being arrested on August 28, 2018 by the

Pune police in the Bhima Koregaon case. The chargesheet filed by the Gadchiroli police alleged that evidence collected by the Pune police connected him to a case in 2016. On December 25, 2016, some Naxals allegedly torched 75 trucks carrying iron ore from the Surajgarh mines in Etapalli tehsil, Gadchiroli.

Advocate Firdos Mirza, representing Mr. Rao before the Nagpur Bench, said, "Even after being released on bail by the Bombay High Court, Mr. Rao was not released because of this case. Now, he has been granted bail."

He directed the police force to ensure strict enforcement of wearing of masks, along with notification of CO-



Battle-ready: The improved Arjun MK-1A tank was handed over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Army last week.

tance of necessities (AoNs) were accorded approval, which include for proposals for the three Services.

Other proposals from the DRDO cleared by the DAC include Nag missile carrier Namica, Arudhra medium power radars, Armour-Piercing Fin-Stabilized Discarding Sabot (APFSDS) 125mm practice ammunition.

With the AoN accorded for the tanks, the Army will now place the indent with the Heavy Vehicle Factory

(HVF), Avadi, a defence official said. Within 30 months from the date of indent, the HVF will deliver five tanks called the "pre-production model".

The Army will put them through General Service Quality Requirement (GSQR) evaluation and accord the Bulk Production Clearance (BPC) if found satisfactory, the official said.

To systematically work towards reducing the time taken for capital acquisition,

the DAC also approved that all capital acquisition contracts (delegated and non-delegated) other than design and development cases shall be concluded in two years. The Ministry, in consultation with the Services and all stakeholders, will come up with a detailed plan of action for achieving it, the Ministry said.

Blast protection vehicles

The Kalyani M4 is a multi-role platform, designed for quick mobility in rough terrain and in areas affected by mine and Improved Explosive Devices (IED) threats. An official said the deal is for 27 vehicles.

"It offers best in-class levels of ballistic and blast protection – up to 50kg TNT side blast or IED, roadside bombs due to its innovative design, built on a flat-floor monocoque hull," the company said. It successfully completed a series of extreme vehicle trials, it said.

Monks flay push for new projects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A group of Buddhist monks in Tawang district has opposed the Arunachal Pradesh government's renewed push for hydropower projects.

In a statement issued on February 22, the monks-led Save Mon Region Federation (SMRF) said the proposed projects would not only affect the nesting grounds of the endangered black-necked crane but also threaten several Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the region.

"The projects will damage the geographically volatile and highly seismic Tawang region," the SMRF said. Chief Minister Pema Khandu had in a couple of statements this month hinted at reviving the projects in the Tawang basin.

The identities of 39 bodies have been established so far. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

far been found at different places. The Jomishim police have registered 205 missing persons reports.

The police have sent the DNA samples of 110 family members of the missing persons and 86 bodies/body parts to the forensic science laboratory in Dehradun for matching.

POK women seek travel papers

Government should deport us if it does not accept us, they say



In protest: Women from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir during a demonstration in Srinagar on Tuesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Most of the women, many of whom are divorcees now, are not allowed to return to PoK.

"We have not committed any crime by marrying a Kashmiri [in PoK during their stay]. These Kashmiris are citizens of India. We are just demanding equal rights," Saira, one of the protesters, said.

"Adnan Sami [from Pakistan] was granted citizenship.

Sania Mirza [from India] is married to a Pakistani cricketer and is a Pakistani national. But she continues to represent India. Unfortunately, we are being treated like terrorists," she said. Many of their relatives had died since they came to Kashmir, but they were not allowed to participate in their funerals," a woman said.

Toiba, another protester, said they had been left without a identity. "We have no ration cards and no schools to admit our children."

According to the official figures, around 150 brides from PoK moved to Kashmir, along with ex-militant husbands, after the rollout of the 2010 rehabilitation policy. Official figures suggest that around 212 people returned through Nepal and other routes between 2010 and 2012, against 219 cases approved after security clearance.

A J&K High Court judgment, issued in 1971 in the Mohsin Shah case, had observed that no deportation exercise could take place for such couples because "one person had merely travelled from one part of India to another".

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Curbs on gatherings in Punjab from March 1

Attendance capped at 100 and 200 persons for indoor and outdoor events

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Amid growing concern over the rising COVID-19 cases in the State, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday ordered restriction on indoor gatherings to 100 persons and 200 for outdoor events from March 1.

Chairing a high-level virtual meeting to review the situation, the Chief Minister also authorised the Deputy Commissioners to impose night curfew in hotspots in their districts if needed, with micro containment strategy to be adopted.

He directed the police force to ensure strict enforcement of wearing of masks, along with notification of CO-



People without face masks at Heritage Street near the Golden Temple in Amritsar on Tuesday. ■ PTI

VID-19 monitors by all restaurants and marriage halls with the Excise and Taxation department as the nodal agency. The Chief Minister said a decision on reducing occupancy in cinema halls will be

taken after March 1. Private offices and restaurants shall be encouraged to display latest tests done for all employees, he added.

While directing increased testing, Capt. Amarinder or-

dered mandatory testing of 15 contacts per positive case, with monitoring to be done by COVID Patient Tracking Officers and review to be undertaken by the Health department.

Expressing concern over the 3.23 case fatality rate, the Chief Minister took note of the mortality audit findings that many of the deaths are taking place within 2-4 days of hospitalisation.

Health Secretary Hussain Lal informed that Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Patiala, SAS Nagar and SBS Nagar districts had shown a spike in positivity in recent days, triggering concerns over a possible fresh wave in the State.

On February 20, Mr. Shullai claimed Mr. Mawrie got the State president's post through manipulations. "The State BJP is sinking each passing day under his leadership. His removal will help BJP grow in Meghalaya," the MLA said. He also defended Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma's observation that half the BJP leaders in the State want Mr. Mawrie's ouster. "The Chief Minister has every right to say this since our central leadership has directed us (two MLAs) to support the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government," Mr. Shullai said.

Cracks in Meghalaya BJP out in the open

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The cracks in the Meghalaya unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party are out in the open. The State unit of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the youth wing of BJP, has threatened to launch a State-wide protest if the "internal issues" are not resolved by changing the leadership.

This followed a cold war between the two BJP legislators - Alexander L. Hek and Sanbor Shullai - and State BJP president Ernest Mawrie over the latter's alleged tendency to take whimsical decisions or rail against coalition partners.

Varavara Rao granted bail in Surajgarh case

Poet will be released from hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI</

More than meets the eye Changes to the new Forty Two go way past its exteriors ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



What lies beneath

The Forty Two sports changes beyond what the eye can see, including a strengthened chassis and an adjustment to the preload in the front suspension

RISHAAD MODY

The new version of the Jawa Forty Two will be sold alongside the current bikes in the brand's showrooms. While most of the obvious changes are style-based, there are some mechanical improvements hidden under the skin as well.

The most apparent design change is the switch to alloy wheels. These black wheels support tubeless tyres and they are available as accessories for Jawa Classic and the existing Forty Two customers. Gelling with the alloy

wheels is a blacked-out theme on the engine and exhaust pipes, just like on the Jawa Perak. There are new pin stripes on the wheels and a fat racing stripe over the fuel tank as well; both details incorporate the name Classic Legends.

Those neat bar-end mirrors are standard equipment, while the headlamp grille, small flyscreen and rear metal rack can be bought as accessories. The mirrors do make contact with your hand, but they work well and do not get in the way too



much while filtering through traffic. The bike has a new set of switches, including a small button to scroll through the two new trip meters. However, the tiny digital screen is quite basic and features such as a clock, gear position indicator or trip computer, are absent.

Overall, the Forty Two carries these changes quite well and the design still looks handsome, with the only eyesore being the gap between the rear fender and the tyre. The new Forty Two will be available in red, white and black,

apart from the six colour options of the classic chrome-and-silver look of the original Forty Two.

There are also changes beyond what the eye can see. Jawa says that it has strengthened the chassis in strategic points and adjusted the preload in the front suspension. Neither of those are on the spec sheet, but what catches our attention is that the new Forty Two has lost around a kilogram of weight – it is now 171kgs. This has been achieved by removing the earlier catalytic converter from under the bike and replacing it with two smaller catcons situated where the exhaust header pipes emerge from the engine.

Changes within the engine have resulted in a small increase in power – it is up by 0.8hp. This is through refinements made to Jawa's Cross Port technology that debuted in the company's BS6-compliant

bikes last year. The Cross Port system allows the gases emerging from both exhaust ports in the cylinder head to interact with each other before they exit via the dual exhaust pipes. The latest modifications have further revised the profiles of these ports to make them more efficient.

These increments are small, but noticeable. The difference is felt in the slightly stronger mid-range, which is a welcome change over the old bike's flat power delivery. Another upside is that the exhaust sound seems to pack a slightly deeper pulse and sounds crisper. The fun factor around corners has increased too, because the side stand has been redesigned to avoid scraping.

Jawa has also redesigned the seat pan while using a higher density foam, which has resulted in better comfort and support. The seat height remains unchanged and the Jawa still has lower body ergonomics that could dismay tall riders.

This new Forty Two will only be available in the dual-channel ABS variant and is priced higher than the standard model at ₹1.84 lakh. The new bike presents marked improvements, but the big challenge for Jawa remains its ability to meet demand and prove its reliability. This is something we hope to see from the company over the course of 2021.



Fair and square

The C5 Aircross has a fantastic ride quality, impressive refinement, and an easy-to-drive nature

SERGIUS BARRETTO

It is commonplace to describe cars as sporty, sleek, muscular, sophisticated and so on, but with Citroen's C5 Aircross, it is hard to come up with familiar terminology. The SUV does a good job of balancing the 'odd yet attractive' look with its multi-layered front replete with split headlamps, unconventional grille, additional air intake slot below the grille, faux inlets and wide-set fog lamps.

The most noticeable features are the lower door mouldings that have-block styling elements and the neat swirl-like alloy wheels, while the rear has a pair of fake air and exhaust outlets; the tail-lights with 3D LED modules really draw attention. Accentuating the looks on this car are silver accents on the side moulding, front bumper and roof-rails.

The block-like details carry to the inside too, reflecting in the seat upholstery, door pads and the cube-like air-con vents. Even the steering wheel is

sort of a 'squircle' with the bottom and top edges flattened.

The digital instrumentation is a bit too radical though, and whilst customisable, it lacks the option of conventional looking dials. In 'Dial' mode, there is a numeric speed read-out and an additional slide-rule speed display along with a bar graph-like tachometer which isn't easy to read.

The front seats are broad and incredibly comfortable while the rear seats are cosy enough. There is plenty of head and shoulder room at the rear too, though leg room is only sufficient.

The C5 gets three independent



CITROEN C5 AIRCROSS SPECIFICATIONS	
LENGTH	4500mm
WIDTH	1969mm
HEIGHT	1710mm
WHEELBASE	2730mm
TYRE SIZE	235/55 R18
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	52.5 litres
BOOT CAPACITY	580-1630 litres
ENGINE	1997cc, 4 cyls, turbo-diesel
POWER	177hp at 3750rpm
TORQUE	400Nm at 2000rpm
GEARBOX	8-speed automatic

AUTO SNIPS



Skoda Kushaq to be revealed on March 18

Skoda's all-new mid-size SUV – the Kushaq – will be revealed on March 18, 2021. The company also released design sketches of the SUV, which does not provide any new info on the interiors. There is little in terms of differences between the Vision IN concept, which previewed Skoda's mid-size SUV, and the production-spec Kushaq. Both feature a prominent and wide Skoda grille flanked by a dual-headlight set-up. There will be two engine options – a 110hp, 1.0-litre, three-cylinder turbo-petrol, and a larger and more powerful 150hp, 1.5-litre, four-cylinder turbo-petrol mill.



Honda CB350RS launched

Honda has launched the new CB350RS in India at a price of ₹1.96 lakh (ex-showroom, pan-India). While based on the H'ness CB350, the CB350RS looks markedly different, which is evident in the shape of the front mudguard, redesigned LED headlamp, side panel, stubby tail section and upswept exhaust. The single piece, flat seat is all-new as well. Another aspect that sets this model apart is the smaller rear wheel and wider tyre. Features like the switchgear and instrument cluster have been carried over from the standard CB350. The CB350RS is powered by the same 349cc, single-cylinder engine as CB350. Weighing in at 179kgs, the CB350RS is 2kgs less than H'ness, while ground clearance has gone up by 2mm to 168mm. Seat height, on the other hand, remains the same at 800mm.



BMW launches new X3 xDrive30i SportX

BMW has launched a new entry-level petrol variant of the X3 SUV, the xDrive30i SportX at a price of ₹56.50 lakh (ex-showroom, India). The xDrive30i SportX packs in an 8.8-inch infotainment system with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay support, three-zone climate control, LED headlight, automatic headlights and wipers, a panoramic sunroof, 18-inch alloy wheels and more. BMW is also offering its X3 customers benefits worth up to ₹1.50 lakh valid till midnight on February 28, 2021.

Q & A WITH HORMAZD



Up in the hills

I am unable to decide between the MG Hector and Jeep Compass. I want an automatic with good driving pleasure and passenger comfort, especially in the hills. I will be driving an average of around 3,000-4,000 kilometres a year.

Anup Pradhan, Gangtok

• The Hector is more comfortable than the Compass, due to its larger cabin and softer ride, but the Compass is a much nicer car to drive. The Jeep's ride and handling is far better than the Hector's; it feels more solid and rolls a lot less on twisty roads in the hills. For you, the Jeep Compass would be the better choice.

Wheel deal

I bought a 2020 Tata Harrier XMA and as it does not offer alloys, I got ARAI-certified ones from Neo. Do I have to worry about the car warranty? I have been told that, according to BS6 norms, my warranty will be voided.

Kuldeep Singh Udawat, Indore

• The chances of a car manufacturer or authorised service centre rejecting a warranty claim is usually in the case of ill-fitted aftermarket electronic accessories such as fancy lights, pressure horns and stereos, which are installed by improperly splicing the original wiring and cables inside the vehicle.

However, any modification made to the vehicle till the time it is under warranty could invite questionable company response to honouring claims. Having said that, if you have stuck to the optimal rim size for the Harrier and have not upsized the tyre from its stock size, there is nothing much to worry about. The dealer in this case is providing you with misinformation about the warranty getting void because of new guidelines in the BS6 regime and might want to sell you the alloy wheels in the original accessory pack from their offering.

Still, we urge you to go through the owner's manual of the vehicle for more details about the warranty policy.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of Autocar India. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in

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POWER	177hp at 3750rpm
TORQUE	400Nm at 2000rpm
GEARBOX	8-speed automatic

The steering is light and it is easy to manoeuvre the C5 through city traffic. That said, the engine is not meek – the 177hp 2.0-litre diesel is strong and delivers power in a very linear manner. Part-throttle response is good and putting your foot down at almost any speed rewards you with a nice strong surge ahead.

Amplifying the engine's strength is the 8-speed gearbox that keeps you in the meat of the powerband. It holds onto gears for longer though it will automatically upshift around 4,000rpm even if you are in full manual gear.

The car looks chic, and it nails its stated mission of comfort with fantastic ride quality, impressive refinement, and an easy-to-drive nature.

So, while it maybe typically French, its chosen focus points are Indian requirements, and that is what Citroen will be counting on, to open a strong innings in India.

Hollywood actor Wesley Snipes, who plays General Izzi in *Coming 2 America*, says he owes his work ethic to Michael Jackson



So good at being bad

MINI ANTHIKAD CHHIBBER

Wesley Snipes, who plays General Izzi in *Coming 2 America*, the sequel to the ginormous 1988 hit, *Coming to America*, starts the video chat with a 'namaste'.

"I haven't been to India yet," he says after experimentally rolling 'Bangalore' on his tongue. "Let me put it this way, I haven't touched Indian soil, but I am very aware of the culture. I practise *kalaripayattu*, the ancient martial art from Kerala. I have studied the Vedas, martial arts and the healing system. We have incorporated this into our daily lives. Getting to India is one of my goals."

In *Coming to America*, Prince Akeem (Eddie Murphy) of Zamunda was supposed to marry Imani from the neighbouring country of Nextdoria (well, yes that is the name).



Akeem wanted to marry for love and went off to Queens to look for his queen. Izzi is Imani's older brother and things haven't been very good between the two coun-

tries after Akeem left Imani barking like a dog and hopping on one foot.

"Izzi is the most glorious, magical and wonderful leader in the whole region of Zamunda and Nextdoria," Wesley says with his trademark velvet chuckle. "Eddie's character left my sister at the altar and that caused disruption. It put a curse on Zamunda. It looks like we are suffering but we are not. Zamunda has the money but we have it in our hearts and Izzi is back to claim what is rightfully his."

Talking about working with Murphy, the 58-year-old actor and martial artist says, "This is the second time we are working together after *Dolemite Is My Name* (2019). That was a joy. I had wanted to work with him for many years, and we grabbed the first opportunity. I thought maybe if I do a really good job, they will come back and ask me to do something else," he laughs again.

Craig Brewer, who directed *Dolemite Is My Name*, has also directed *Coming 2 America*. Wesley jokes about his casting. "I heard many of the other actors were getting calls for *Coming 2 America* but I was left out. Finally, Craig asked me to join and he tells me,

New turf (Left) Teyana Taylor and Wesley Snipes star in *Coming 2 America* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

"we want you to play the bad guy. I didn't want to do a *Beasts of No Nation* or an Idi Amin. I didn't want to do a caricature of a despotic African leader – it has already been done. I thought let me choose the personalities of people that I know, the ones who come to Europe, England or America to study and return, full of airs. So that is Izzi. He studied in Scotland and America and came home. He brought his fashion sense with him from all his travels like every tyrannical African leader does." Wesley says dissolving into peals of infectious laughter.

Jack of all trades

Wesley has worked in every genre from comedy (*White Men Can't Jump*) and action (*Passenger 57*) to horror (*Blade* film trilogy), Sci Fi (*Demolition Man*) and drama (*One Night Stand*). "This genre – improvisational and ensemble acting is my sweet spot. Also, if I get a role as a dancer, I'd do it like that, (snaps his fingers). Martial Arts action is my third choice."

Wesley's dancing skills reminds us of him in the Michael Jackson music video 'Bad' (1987) where he plays the antagonist. The iconic music video directed by Martin Scorsese, was one of Wesley's first screen appearances. Wesley starts to laugh again. "What a glorious opportunity, it was amazing at that time. I knew Scorsese was a big Robert De Niro fan. They had a particular style of acting. I decided to adopt some of that during the audition. Sure enough Scorsese recognised the style and hired me. He hasn't hired me since, so I don't know what I have to do!"

Jackson, Wesley says was phenomenal. "He changed the way I approached my craft and my life. He was a consummate artist and an extraordinary piece of energy. His rehearsals were like other people's performances. It set a goal for me. I thought it would be an interesting challenge to have a vision, an idea of what I wanted to perform in a scene and see if I can match that exactly. I wanted to see if I can deliver it when I only have one take, one chance to do it. That is always the goal, how I approach my characters, and my work. And I learned that from Michael Jackson."

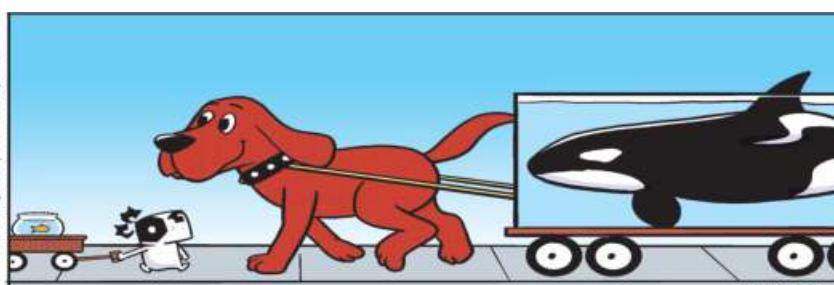
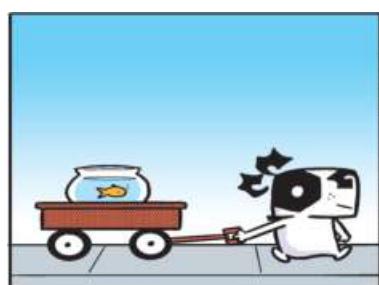
While everyone talks of Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther being the first black superhero, Wesley's *Blade* trilogy (1998 - 2004) based on Marvel Comics' vampire hunter was way earlier. Now there is news of a reboot from MCU with Mahershala Ali playing the lead role. "I am happy for Mahershala. I hope he does a wonderful job. I think it is a heck of a role to take on. We are so appreciative of what we contributed, not only to that movie but to the industry as a whole – as young neophytes and now, maturing our skill sets in arts and technology. I am not going to do another Blade but we got something else that would be just as good. I think it is going to be better," and another laugh erupts.

Coming 2 America will stream on Amazon Prime Video from March 5

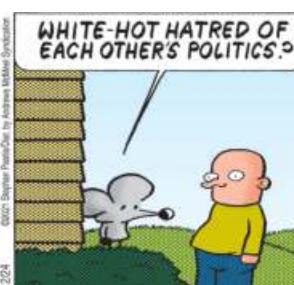


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POOCH CAFE



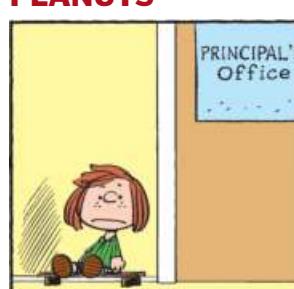
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



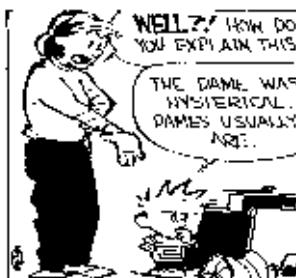
PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Flutter in my backyard

Butterflies of Tamil Nadu, a booklet recently launched by The Nature and Butterfly Society, introduces readers to 90 commonly found butterflies in the State



Winged beauties Blue Mormon (above) and Commander • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SUSAN JOE PHILIP

Did you know that the lemon tree in your backyard can be a host for Lime butterflies? Or that the common Baron butterflies lay their eggs on mango trees? "Each butterfly depends on a specific set of plants for laying their eggs. The caterpillars feed on the leaves of these host plants to be a pupa, which later grows into an adult butterfly," says Pavendhan A, president of The Nature and Butterfly Society. The organisation has currently come up with *Butterflies of Tamil Nadu*, a 24-page booklet that introduces people to the world of butterflies.

It discusses the role, life cycle and migration of butterflies along with a step-by-step process of setting up a butterfly garden. "There are 325 varieties of butterflies in Tamil Nadu. The booklet contains information and photographs of 90 commonly found species. To make it



GET STARTED ON BUTTERFLY WATCHING

It does not require a huge investment and you can start in your garden or backyard

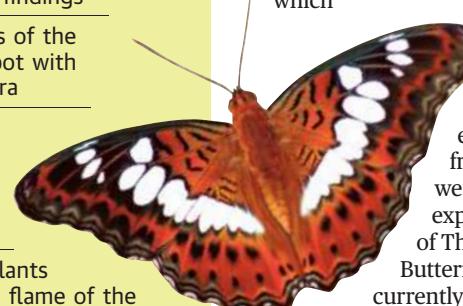
Have a field guide and a notebook to jot down your findings

Click photographs of the butterflies you spot with your phone camera

To identify the species use the field guide or websites like butterflyvision.in

Planting nectar plants such as marigold, flame of the woods, Peruvian zinnia, coat buttons, Chinese hibiscus etc will bring in more butterflies

With time, one can invest in binoculars and a professional camera



especially for those from the economically weaker sections," he explains. The members of The Nature and

Butterfly Society is

currently working on bringing

out the Tamil version of the book.

"We have started working on it. I hope that it will be out in the next three months," he concludes.

The book is priced at ₹30 and the organisation provides discount for bulk orders. Contact 9677466921 or tamilnadubutterflies@gmail.com to order.

+ people can donate money for books to be distributed to children. This will be useful especially for those from the economically weaker sections," he explains. The members of The Nature and

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Facebook to end Australia news blackout

After govt. agrees to tweak law, firm says it will pay media companies for content; Google to follow suit

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



New pact: The deal will see Google and Facebook plunge tens of millions of dollars into the struggling local news sector • AP

Facebook said on Tuesday it would lift a contentious ban on Australian news and pay local media companies for content, after a last-gasp deal on pending landmark legislation.

Australia's Treasurer Josh Frydenberg announced a face-saving compromise that will see Google and Facebook plunge tens of millions of dollars into the struggling local news sector.

In return the U.S. digital firms will, for now, avoid being subjected to mandatory payments that could cost them vastly more and create what they see as an alarming global precedent.

Just hours after the compromise was unveiled, Facebook announced its first proposed deal with an Australian media company, Seven West, and was said to be pursuing commercial deals with other local news

Amid foreign concerns, no let up in protests against Myanmar junta

G7 countries condemn crackdown on peaceful protesters

ASSOCIATED PRESS
YANGON

Protesters against the military's seizure of power in Myanmar were back on the streets of cities and towns on Tuesday, a day after a general strike shuttered shops and brought huge numbers out to demonstrate.

In Mandalay, the country's second-biggest city, a funeral was held for 37-year-old Thet Naing Win, one of the two protesters shot dead by security forces on Saturday.

Numbers were down from Monday's massive crowds, but groups of demonstrators in Yangon, the country's biggest city, assembled again at various venues on Tuesday for peaceful protests.

Protesters trained their

ire on a new target on Tuesday, gathering outside the Indonesian Embassy in response to a news report that Jakarta was proposing to its regional neighbours that they offer qualified support for the junta's plan for a new election next year. The demonstrators demand that the results of last year's election, won in a landslide by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, be honoured.

Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Teuku Faizasyah denied the report, saying it "is not Indonesia's position at all to support a new election in Myanmar."

There is continuing international concern over Myanmar, with Foreign Ministers from the Group of Seven na-

tions on Tuesday issuing their second statement since the coup.

"Anyone responding to peaceful protests with violence must be held to account," they said. The group also condemned restrictions on freedom of expression, including arrests and the blocking of internet access, and called for the release of Suu Kyi and her colleagues.

The U.S. and several Western governments have called for the junta to refrain from violence, release detainees and restore Suu Kyi's government.

On Monday, the U.S. said it was imposing sanctions against more junta members because of the killing of peaceful protesters by security forces.

pense services. Prime Minister Scott Morrison angrily accused Facebook of making a decision to "unfriend" Australia.

Google has already brokered deals worth millions of dollars with local media companies, including the two largest: Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and Nine Entertainment.

'Reasonable solution' Commentators described the eleventh-hour amendments – which came as Parliament looks set to pass the law this week – as "a reasonable compromise".

"Everybody can walk away saying, well we got what we wanted," University of New South Wales Business Professor Rob Nicholls said.

Both companies now have an additional two months to reach further agreements that would stave off binding arbitration.

The tech firms had fiercely

opposed the law from the get-go, fearing that it would threaten their business models.

In particular, the companies objected to the rules that made negotiations with media companies mandatory and gave an independent Australian arbiter the right to impose a monetary settlement.

That process will now be avoided if companies are deemed to have made a "significant contribution" to the Australian news industry through unspecified "commercial agreements".

"We now face the strange possibility that the news media mandatory code could be passed by Parliament and it applies to precisely no one," said Marcus Strom, head of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, a union.

"It will just sit in the Treasurer's (drawer) as a threat to misbehaving digital compa-

nies."

Imran pitches economic corridor to Sri Lanka

It will help boost connectivity, Pakistan PM says in Colombo

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Pitching the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a connectivity booster, Prime Minister Imran Khan, in Colombo on a two-day visit beginning on Tuesday, said Pakistan would find "ways and means to enhance trade and connectivity" with Sri Lanka.

Pakistan is part of the One Belt and Road initiative of China, and CPEC is one of its flagship programmes.

And it means connectivity," he said hours after his arrival. The CPEC, Mr. Khan said, would help enhance Sri Lanka's connectivity "right up to Central Asia", while trade routes would bring Pakistan and Sri Lanka "closer together".

Mr. Khan is the first head of government to visit Sri Lanka since the pandemic struck the world. He held a one-on-one bilateral meeting with counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa on Tuesday evening, and is scheduled to meet President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday.

Mr. Khan will also lead the delegation-level talks, covering "all areas of cooperation" between the two countries, including trade and investment, health and education, agriculture, science and technology, defence and security, and culture and tourism, the Pakistani mission here said.

'Deep affinity' "Several MoUs" in these areas were signed on Tuesday, according to a tweet from Prime Minister Rajapaksa.

Mr. Rajapaksa, who received the visiting leader at the Bandaranaike International Airport – he was accorded a red-carpet welcome with a 19-gun salute – said Mr. Khan's visit, despite the pandemic, symbolised the "deep affinity" that he and his government had for Sri Lanka. "I admire your courage and the great le-



Way forward: Pakistan PM Imran Khan, centre, with his Sri Lankan counterpart, Mahinda Rajapaksa, in Colombo • AP

C Pakistan is part of the One Belt and Road initiative of China, and CPEC is one of its flagship programmes. And it means connectivity

IMRAN KHAN

Pakistan Prime Minister

age linking the two countries, inviting Sri Lanka's Buddhists to "one of the greatest Buddhist heritage" sites in the world.

Protest held

Members of Sri Lanka's minority Muslim community held a demonstration on Tuesday, urging the government to reverse its mandatory cremations policy for COVID-19 victims. Carrying a mock coffin, they denounced the government's policy enforcing cremations, in a protest near the Presidential Secretariat, aimed at drawing Mr. Khan's attention.

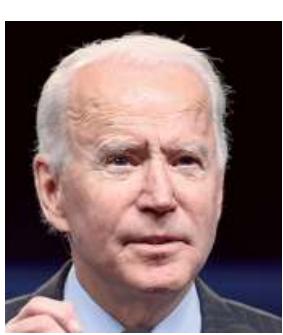
Weeks before his arrival, Mr. Khan had welcomed – on Twitter – an announcement made by PM Rajapaksa in Parliament that burials would be permitted. However, Colombo backtracked a day later, sparking renewed concern among Sri Lanka's Muslims. Mr. Khan did not refer to the issue in his speech on Tuesday.

The Sri Lankan government, which had earlier said Mr. Khan would address Parliament, cancelled the programme closer to his arrival, citing "scheduling issues" and safety concerns linked to the pandemic.

Biden, Trudeau to lay out road map to rebuild ties

Bid to calm the waters after Trump era

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Joe Biden

President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will lay out a "road map" for rebuilding U.S.-Canada relations on Tuesday during their first bilateral meeting, a senior official said, although the scrapped Keystone pipeline could present a hurdle.

Following the turbulence of Donald Trump's presidency, Mr. Biden would have hoped to use his well-honed skills of personal connection while meeting face-to-face with the leader of the key ally. However, the meeting will occur virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"I think the biggest deliverable from the trip, or from the meeting, is going to be essentially... a road map to reinvigorate U.S.-Canada collaboration," a senior U.S. administration official said

Afghanistan warring sides return to table

Priority for govt. is to reduce violence

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD

With violence spiking, Afghanistan's warring sides have returned to the negotiation table, ending more than a month of delays amid hopes that the two sides can agree on a reduction of violence – and eventually, an outright ceasefire.

Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem tweeted on Monday that talks had resumed in Qatar, where the insurgent movement maintains a political office. There were no details other than the atmosphere was "cordial", a commitment that negotiations should continue and an announcement that the first item of business will be setting the agenda.

When talks ended abruptly in January, just days after beginning, both sides submitted their wish lists for agendas. The task

now is for the two sides to sift through the respective wish lists, agree on items to negotiate and the order in which they will be tackled.

The priority for the Afghan government, Washington and NATO is a serious reduction in violence leading to a ceasefire. The Taliban has said it is negotiable, but until now has resisted any immediate ceasefire.

Washington is reviewing the February 2020 peace deal the previous Trump administration signed with the Taliban that calls for the final withdrawal of international forces by May 1. The Taliban has resisted suggestions of even a brief extension, but a consensus is mounting in Washington for a delay in the withdrawal deadline.

There is even a suggestion of a smaller intelligence-based force staying behind.

**All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur
ADMISSION NOTICE**
SPOT COUNSELLING FOR DM/MCH COURSES – JANUARY 2021 SESSION
Spot Counseling for filling up vacant DM/MCh seats of AIIMS Raipur for January 2021 session will be held on Saturday, 27.02.2021 at 12.00 Noon at AIIMS Raipur.
The list of vacant seats is available on the website of AIIMS Raipur www.aiimstraipur.edu.in. Final updated list of vacant seats will be uploaded on the website by 05.00 PM on 26.02.2021.
Those eligible candidates, who are desirous of seeking admission in the spot counseling as per the result Final Result Notification No. 149/2020 dated 05-12-2020 (https://www.aiimsexams.org/pdf/Final_DM_Jan21_Result.pdf) issued by AIIMS New Delhi should register on or before 26.02.2021 (3 PM) by clicking on the given link https://forms.gle/YcaaoBeeMMT1v6g. Registered candidates are required to remain physically present at AIIMS Raipur along with all original certificates/documents mandatorily. For essential eligibility conditions, other details and terms and conditions please visit the website.

DIRECTOR

**Department of Agriculture,
Government of Andhra Pradesh
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**
Department of Agriculture, AP, invites bids for selection of Agencies for supply of All in One Desktops, Duplex Printers and UPS to RBKs & Hubs. For other details please visit www.apgrisnet.gov.in or www.tender.approcurement.gov.in Sd/- Sri. H. Arun Kumar, Commissioner of Agriculture, DIPR 597PPCL, Dt: 23-02-2021

NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
CIN No. U40109TG2005G03419.
e-Auction Specification No.: CGM/P & M/S CR-90 TO SCR-121/2020-21
e-Auction Starts : (i) From 18.02.2021 at 11.00 hrs to 18.03.2021 at 13.00 hrs.
INSPECTION: 24.02.2021 to 10.03.2021, EMD Submission Last Date and Time is: 16.03.2021 17:00 hrs.
For further details visit auction.telangana.gov.in and www.tnepdcl.in
Note: Changes if any, shall be uploaded as addendum only through website: <https://auction.tnepdcl.in/> Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&MM)

467/F2/2021/I&PRD

MISSING

Shoukathali 23 yrs, S/O Siddiq, House, Bankrishnapur, Hugli District, West Bengal is a missing man (mentally agony) in Thrissur Town East Police Station (Kerala). Crime, 1072/19 U/S 57 KP ACT. On 28.09.2019 at 17.20 hrs he went from his rented home at Brothers lane Thrissur and not returning back to home till yet. This case is being investigated by Inspector of Police, Thrissur Town East Police Station. If any information is obtained, please contact to the following phone numbers.

Identification:-

1. A wound mark in right eye brow.

Height - 158 cm, normal Body, normal color, oval face at the time of missing he wore green colour shirt and black colour pant.

Contact Numbers

1. ACP Thrissur City (Kerala), Office: 0487 2424194, Mob: 9497990087

2. ISHO of Police, Town East P.S, Thrissur, Office: 0487 2424192, Mob: 9497987130

Sd/- Asst. Police Commissioner, DCRB Thrissur City, Kerala,

467/F2/2021/I&PRD

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer-6, Solid Waste Management Division, N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560002

No.: EE-6/SWM/TEND/04/2020-21 Date: 23.02.2021

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Tender Notification) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)
The Executive Engineer-6, Solid Waste Management Division, invites tenders on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP, Bengaluru from eligible Contractors for the work detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Amount Put Tender (Rs. Lakhs)
1	Improvement to existing Lorry (Transfer) Points through provision of semi-permanent structure / Visual Barricade.	1,308.96
2	GVP Elimination and Transformation of Area and ICT monitoring of the transformed area (Including at semi underground bin areas) for Visual Cleanliness for 2 years in BBMP Limits.	513.34

EMD (Rs. Lakhs): EMD Declaration Form

Calendar of events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-Procurement Portal of the Government of Karnataka. (2) Last date for receipt of queries is 17.03.2021 upto 4:30 p.m. in the Office of the Executive Engineer-6, Solid Waste Management, BBMP. (3) Pre-Bid Meeting will be held on 18.03.2021 at 4:00 p.m. in the Office of the Chief Engineer, Solid Waste Management, 3rd Floor, Annex Building-2, BBMP Head Office, Bengaluru-02. (4) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 4:00 p.m. on 24.03.2021 and the opening of tenders will be as per the e-procurement portal guidelines. (5) Technical bids will be opened on the website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the Office of the Executive Engineer-6, Solid Waste Management Division, Annex Building, No. 3, Room No. 408, 4th Floor, N.R. Square, BBMP on or after 26.03.2021 at 4:00 p.m. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/- Executive Engineer-6, Solid Waste Management Division, BBMP

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Principal Chief Materials Manager

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SOUTHERN RAILWAY

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT, CHENNAI - 600 008

E-TENDER NOTICE FOR THE SUPPLY OF STORES No. 04/2021 dated 22-02-2021

Southern Railway has implemented an e-system. All advertised tenders will be dealt through e-procurement system only. No manual offer/postal offer will be entertained.

These tenders can be accessed under the link www.reps.gov.in->SR->COS

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	49,751	0.01
US Dollar	72.46	0.04
Gold	46,372	0.78
Brent oil	64.96	0.50

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	662.00	-11.80
Asian Paints	2372.20	-14.85
Axisc Bank	715.95	-3.50
Bajaj Auto	3912.25	-59.30
Bajaj Finserv	10008.65	8.05
Bajaj Finance	5382.70	6.85
Bharti Airtel	565.55	-4.75
BPCL	435.25	12.70
Britannia Ind	3335.95	-5.25
Cipla	790.95	-1.50
Coal India	136.90	0.65
Divis Lab	3484.25	-48.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4495.15	25.90
Eicher Motors	2514.70	32.35
GAIL (India)	147.35	4.55
Grasim Ind	1231.50	1.00
HCL Tech.	909.95	-10.20
HDFC	2628.60	-23.35
HDFC Bank	1529.15	-18.85
HDFC Life	705.70	15.10
Hero MotoCorp	3405.45	-8.70
Hindalco	333.05	16.95
Hind Unilever	2179.25	11.65
ICICI Bank	616.30	6.45
IndusInd Bank	1048.30	25.40
Infosys	1266.35	1.15
Indian Oil Corp	97.65	2.00
ITC	208.50	1.45
JSW Steel	412.60	6.50
Kotak Bank	1872.95	-76.65
L&T	1486.30	34.10
M&M	840.95	3.85
Maruti Suzuki	6970.50	-115.95
Nestle India Ltd.	16169.95	73.65
NTPC	103.40	1.35
ONGC	112.20	5.90
PowerGrid Corp	226.10	1.15
Reliance Ind	2023.45	15.35
SBF Life	869.70	20.65
State Bank	395.60	6.10
Shree Cement	27260.35	169.50
Sun Pharma	604.05	8.75
Tata Motors	324.00	19.50
Tata Steel	729.30	44.75
TCS	2980.20	21.75
Tech Mahindra	945.75	-4.95
Titan	1424.05	18.80
UltraTech Cement	6268.45	93.35
UPL	566.40	26.65
Wipro	415.50	-3.20

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.26	72.58
Euro	87.83	88.22
British Pound	101.84	102.29
Japanese Yen (100)	68.67	68.98
Chinese Yuan	11.18	11.23
Swiss Franc	80.29	80.66
Singapore Dollar	54.72	54.97
Canadian Dollar	57.29	57.54
Malaysian Ringgit	17.86	17.94

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



TVS Motor appoints Prentice as VP - Design

CHENNAI
TVS Motor Company has appointed acclaimed motorcycle designer Timothy Prentice as VP - Design, to further enhance its global design excellence. He will oversee design solutions for future mobility and boost the company's agility in adapting to future trends, the firm said in a release.

Protection-cum-savings plan introduced by LIC

MUMBAI
LIC of India has introduced Bima Jyoti, a non-linked, non-participating individual savings plan. "It provides a guaranteed lump sum payment at maturity and financial support to the family in case of unfortunate death of the policyholder during policy term," LIC said.

RIL to hive off oil-to-chemicals into new unit with \$25-bn loan

Reorganisation will 'improve efficiencies, attract investor capital', says the firm



Eyeing inflows: RIL had valued the O2C business at \$75 bn and was in talks with Saudi Aramco for a 20% sale. ■ P.V. SIVAKUMAR

the retail fuel business. Post spin-off, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) will house only the upstream oil and gas exploration and production business, including the KG-D6 block, and the financial services, group treasury and the legacy textile businesses, and act as a holding compa-

ny of the group. The retail business is held in Reliance Retail Ventures and the telecom and digital ventures are nested in Jio Platforms.

The wholly-owned O2C unit's assets will be funded by the interest-bearing loan, which will be an "efficient mechanism to upstream

cash, including any potential capital receipts," in the unit, the firm said. The 10-year loan to the newly created arm is meant for purchase of the assets of the O2C businesses and comes at a floating rate of interest.

In August 2019, RIL had agreed to upstream ₹1.08 lakh crore of Jio's debt to make its telecom venture debt-free, ahead of inducing investors such as Facebook, Google and KKR. As of December 2020, RIL's gross debt was ₹2.57 lakh crore.

RIL began work on hiving off the O2C unit last year. It values the O2C business at \$75 billion and has been in talks with Saudi Aramco for sale of 20% stake. Necessary approvals for the spin-off are expected by the second quarter of the next fiscal.

GDP growth in Q3 likely to be 1.3%: report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

India's GDP may turn positive at 1.3% in the third quarter of 2020-21, having witnessed contraction in the previous two quarters due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the number of cases is falling and public spending has started rising, according to a report.

Projecting that the gross domestic product (GDP) may have returned to the black in the last quarter of the calendar year 2020, DBS Bank said in the report that the full-year growth in real terms may be at a negative 6.8%.

The import of goods – including electrical machinery and equipment, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances, plastics and related articles, articles of iron and steel, furniture, fertilizers, vehicle parts and accessories, toys and sports equipment, inorganic chemicals and ceramic products – recorded a decline.

"We should look for an early harvest here by looking at the USFDA and GMP [Good Manufacturing Practice]-approved drugs that can come in as a first step. India is a large producer of generics, but we also go beyond that," he said at a

meeting hosted by FICCI with Ambassadors of several Arab countries on economic opportunities between India and the Arab nations.

India-Arab trade accounts for 20% of India's overall trade, but is still concentrated in hydrocarbons, the secretary said, mooting agriculture, technology and tourism as potential areas for diversification.

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Pharma exports to Arab nations cumbersome'

India for trade beyond hydrocarbons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India has urged Arab countries to make it easier to export pharmaceutical products to the region and asked them to tap Indian farms to secure food supplies, as it seeks to diversify the \$160 billion trade basket with the Arab bloc beyond hydrocarbons.

"Indian pharma products enjoy great credibility around the world, [but] we do not have the same kind of recognition in most of the Arab world, because the process through which medicines are brought into your countries are very elaborate and cumbersome at times," said Ambassador Sanjay Bhattacharya, Secretary (Arab, OIA & CPV), Ministry of External Affairs.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations President S.K. Saraf said the trend reflected the rising competitiveness of domestic exporters.

The import of goods – including electrical machinery and equipment, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances, plastics and related articles, articles of iron and steel, furniture, fertilizers, vehicle parts and accessories, toys and sports equipment, inorganic chemicals and ceramic products – recorded a decline.

"We should look for an early harvest here by looking at the USFDA and GMP [Good Manufacturing Practice]-approved drugs that can come in as a first step. India is a large producer of generics, but we also go beyond that," he said at a

Adani inks JV pact to set up data centres

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AHMEDABAD

Adani Enterprises on Tuesday announced the setting up of a 50:50 joint venture with global data centre operator EdgeConneX to set up data centres across the country.

"Our members have been reporting that they have never seen such chaos in the steel market," said Paul Nathanson, executive director at Coalition of American Metal Manufacturers and Users. The group, which represents more than 30,000 companies in the manufacturing sector and downstream supply chains, this month asked President Joe Biden to terminate Mr. Trump's metal tariffs.

Work for setting up of the data centres has already begun in Chennai, Navi Mumbai, Noida, Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad markets, the release added.

SPORT

Virat Kohli reopens discussion on a 'nuclear winter of the soul'

India skipper says it is important to have a "professional to speak to who could understand what (one is) going through"



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

Even today, when such things are spoken of more candidly, sportsmen find it difficult to discuss mental health issues. So when Virat Kohli, India's most lionised sportsman does so, we realise how pervasive it can be – and how much needs to be done.

Kohli spoke recently of his depression on the 2014 England tour when he struggled, making just 134 runs in ten innings over five Tests.

Not the first time

This is not the first time Kohli has spoken about his state of mind on that tour. He mentioned it ahead of the Test against Bangladesh about a year and a half ago. A couple of years before that he had told a website, "People have gone into depre-

sion and it's a very dangerous situation. I have gone through those times...not many people realise how badly criticism can hit an individual."

For Kohli, it was a one-series thing; on the next tour, to Australia, he made 692 runs including four centuries. Others may not have been so lucky.

England cricketers Marcus Trescothick and Graeme Fowler have written movingly about the depression that affected their careers, and thus pointed out the difference between situational depression, as described by Kohli, and clinical depression they themselves suffered from.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between the two; the clinical calls for medication and therapy; the danger of a relapse is ever present. Situational often changes with altered circumstances.

Pucovski's case

A couple of years ago the Australian prodigy Will Pucovski took a six-week break just as his career was blossoming. Batting on 64 overnight for Victoria against Western Australia, he told his coach before resuming, "I don't know what's happening, and I don't know why it's happening..." He

scored 243 in that innings. He was just 20 then, and later made his debut against India.

"Will's decision to speak up and continue to ask for assistance in managing his ongoing mental health is extremely positive," Cricket Australia's doctor Richard Saw said. Pucovski's support system and his own acceptance has had a positive effect on the treatment of a player seen as the future of Australian cricket.

It is the kind of support system that Kohli is calling for. Family and close friends are essential, but he has said it is important to have a "professional to speak to who could understand what (one is) going through." Such a person needs to be part of the squad.

This is particularly important in dealing with a problem that never existed before – that of managing tours in bio-secure bubbles.

Praveen Kumar, the medium pacer who played 84 internationals for India in three formats, admitted in an interview he had been so depressed at one time that he had contemplated suicide.

"I was dreaming of a Test career, but suddenly it was gone," he said, "nobody

understands depression in India..."

For so long have mental issues been seen as a sign of weakness that these have seemed out of place in a macho activity like competitive sport. Failure, however brief, is a part of sport but it can cause even the strong-minded to buckle occasionally. As Fowler wrote, "Cricket is a game based on failure. Bradman scored a hundred every three innings, therefore two-thirds of his career was a failure..."

Impact of failure
Former England captain and practising psychoanalyst Mike Brearley put it thus: "Failure is stark and public. Like a king deposed, the dismissed batsman has to leave the arena; the bowler is merely taken off..."

In the same piece (in Wisden), Brearley says, "Depression is a terrible thing. People struggle to describe it to those who aren't subject to it: darkness, pointlessness, worthlessness, a nuclear winter of the soul...depressed people can't concentrate, can't think, feel lethargic, guilty, and irritable. There is inadequate understanding of what it is about, why it has taken such a hold..."

Depression may not be fully understood, but that it exists and needs to be dealt with cannot be ignored. Kohli has brought it back into focus.

Awareness is the first step towards understanding the urgency of the issue and handling it with empathy and professional expertise.

Shotgun WC from today

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

India, England confront their demons and the unknown in defining Test

Pink-ball scars, an untested pitch, combination worries: both sides have plenty to deal with in a game that will shape the path to the WTC final

ENGLAND IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR
AHMEDABAD

A week-long break is a luxury in this year's international cricket calendar following the lull of 2020. As India and England return to action in the third Test on Wednesday, they will have to overcome the fear of the unknown on multiple counts at the plush Sardar Patel Stadium.

First and foremost, it will be the first international match after the stadium was refurbished to accommodate more spectators than any other cricket venue in the world.

No doubt, Motera hosted the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy knockouts last month, but the fact that the ultramodern venue is yet to stage a First Class match means that how the surface plays remains anybody's guess.

From the lush-green look it wore four days ago, the strip has been converted into one that's eerily similar to the pitch at Chepauk for the second Test. It will be interesting to see how the teams approach the game in terms of their combination.

Add to that the fact that the third game of the four-Test rubber will be played with the pink ball, and it changes the scenario even more. Both India and England had a forgettable outing in their last pink-ball outings. No doubt the conditions at Motera will be drastically different from Adelaide (where India was bowled out

It is much more challenging to play the new pink ball regardless of the pitch. Especially in the evening, when you are starting your innings under lights, that one-and-a-half hours is very challenging

KOHLI

for 36 last year) and Auckland (when England was bundled out for 58 in 2018), but it will be interesting to see whether either side carries any baggage of the collapses.

Despite the uncertainty prevailing with regard to these aspects, considering the match could end up being a huge factor in determining New Zealand's opponent for the World Test Championship, both teams will have to first get their combination right.

On that count, both the units have plenty to ponder. With Jasprit Bumrah set to wear India's whites at his home-ground for the first time and Ishant Sharma on the verge of joining the elite 100-Test club, Mohammed Siraj in all likelihood will make way.

India will have to decide on whether to draft in Umesh Yadav – with his stupendous record on home soil – to bolster its pace attack keeping in mind the pink ball is likely to aid pacers. If India opts to field three quicks, Umesh, having recovered from the calf strain he suffered in Aus-

tralia, will come in for Kuldeep Yadav, who was under-bowled in the second Test.

England, too, has to deal with multiple headaches out on the park. Despite its pre-conceived rotation policy, it will be interesting to see if the management fields the pace trio of James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Jofra Archer for the first time in the series.

In batting, with Zak Crawley having recovered from a freak injury suffered ahead of the series-opener and Jonny Bairstow being available for selection, the visiting side will hope the duo will take some load off captain Joe Root and all-rounder Ben Stokes.

The teams (from): India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (Vice-capt.), K.L. Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R. Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, and Umesh Yadav.

England: Joe Root (Capt.), Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Zak Crawley, Dan Lawrence, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes, Ollie Pope, Ben Foakes (wk) Dom Bess, Jack Leach, Stuart Broad, James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Olly Stone, Chris Woakes, and Mark Wood.

On-field umpires: Nitin Menon and Anil Chaudhary; **Third umpire:** Shamshuddin; **Fourth umpire:** N. Ananthapadmanabhan; **Match referee:** Jagaval Srinath.

Hours of play: 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m., 5.10 to 7.10 p.m., 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. (play can be extended till 10 p.m.).

The Day-Night face-off

As India and England gear up for the Pink-ball Test at Ahmedabad from Wednesday, a look at the teams' performances so far

INDIA IN D-N TESTS PLAYED 2 WON 1 LOST 1

2019	Kolkata	bt Bangladesh by an innings and 46 runs
2020	Adelaide	lost to Australia by eight wickets
		Most runs Virat Kohli (214, 3 innings)
		Most wickets Umesh Yadav (11, 4 innings)
		Highest total 347/9 decl. vs. Bangladesh
		Lowest total 36 vs. Australia

ENGLAND IN D-N TESTS PLAYED 3 WON 1 LOST 2

2017	Birmingham	bt WI by an innings and 209 runs
2017	Adelaide	lost to Australia by 120 runs
2018	Auckland	lost to NZ by an innings and 49 runs
		Most runs Alastair Cook (303, 5 innings)
		Most wickets James Anderson (14, 5 innings)
		Highest total 514/8 decl. vs. West Indies
		Lowest total 58 vs. New Zealand

Spectacular sight: A view of the Sardar Patel Stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

INDIA IN TESTS AT AHMEDABAD

PLAYED	12	WON	4	LOST	2	DRAWN	6
1983				lost to West Indies by 138 runs			
1987				drew with Pakistan			
1994				beat Sri Lanka by an innings and 17 runs			
1996				beat South Africa by 64 runs			
1999				drew with New Zealand			
2001				drew with England			
2003				drew with New Zealand			
2005				beat Sri Lanka by 259 runs			
2008				lost to South Africa by an innings and 90 runs			
2009				drew with Sri Lanka			
2010				drew with New Zealand			
2012				beat England by nine wickets			

Motera awaits grand reopening

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

While the England squad was slogging it out in the practice area on Tuesday afternoon, the action was even more hectic in the main stadium. With the world's largest cricket venue set to host its first international match, the Sardar Patel Stadium wore a festive look.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah was overseeing the last-minute preparations at the 1,10,000-capacity stadium that will have President Ram Nath Kovind in attendance on the first day of the pink-ball Test.

The state-of-the-art stadium has 11 pitches and will be illuminated by a ring of fire, a circular LED lights arrangement, instead of floodlight towers.

The highlight of the venue, however, is the provision of four dressing rooms with amenities including gyms. This is likely to come in handy when T20 double-headers become the norm in cricket.

First 20 balls are vital, Root tells his batsmen

Recommends watchfulness at the start

S. DIPAK RAGAV



Stokes... time to fire.

■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

The day-night Tests have seen batting collapses, with both teams experiencing it once – 58 for England vs. New Zealand (Auckland, 2018) and 36 for India vs. Australia (Adelaide, 2020).

When asked about it, the 30-year-old said, "It seems to be a trend, and it is something that as a batting group you need to make sure that you stop. One thing that stands out to me is the vital first 20 balls, making sure you get used to tracking the ball, get used to the conditions and be very aware of how things can change throughout the day."

Even on Tuesday, Sharath was gracious in acknowledging the new champion,

Sathiyan keeps his tryst with destiny

Picks up his maiden crown to deny Sharath record-extending 10th title

NATIONAL TT

RAKESH RAO
CHANDIGARH

G. Sathiyan's wait to lay his hands on the winner's trophy of the National table tennis championship has finally ended.

Playing his fourth final in seven years, Sathiyan ended the jinx by beating nine-time winner Sharath Kamal 11-6, 11-7, 10-12, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8 in under 50 minutes at Panchkula.

The two Chennai-based players, ranked in the world's top-50 bracket, produced some exciting times in patches though the title-battle failed to reach any great heights.

Two years ago, when Sharath broke Kamlesh Mehta's record of eight titles by beating Sathiyan in the final, the champion was candid in admitting that his younger rival was clearly "unlucky" to lose while he was extremely lucky during the closing points of the decider.

Even on Tuesday, Sharath was gracious in acknowledging the new champion,

"Sathiyan deserved to win this every bit. He played far better while I was lucky to win the third game. Though I did have my chances but could not take them. No excuses. I am very happy for Sathiyan."

On his part, Sathiyan was understandably more relieved than excited. "The monkey is off my back. Winning the National title means a lot to me, having come so close in the past. My coach S. Raman (a four-time National champion) always maintained that winning the National title was no big deal if

he came prepared for the challenges.

"All these years, we prepared for the Pro Tour and came to the Nationals and failed to make the right adjustments. This year, I must say, our preparations paid off."

Pulling it back

About letting go a 9-7 lead in the third game and allowing Sharath a chance to bounce back in the match, Sathiyan admitted, "Yes. At that stage, I did start thinking too far ahead and lost my focus for a while. But I am glad I got it



Proud paddlers: New champion G. Sathiyan, second from left, runner-up Sharath Kamal and losing semifinalists S.F.R. Snehit and Manav Thakkar with their reward. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bedi undergoes surgery



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

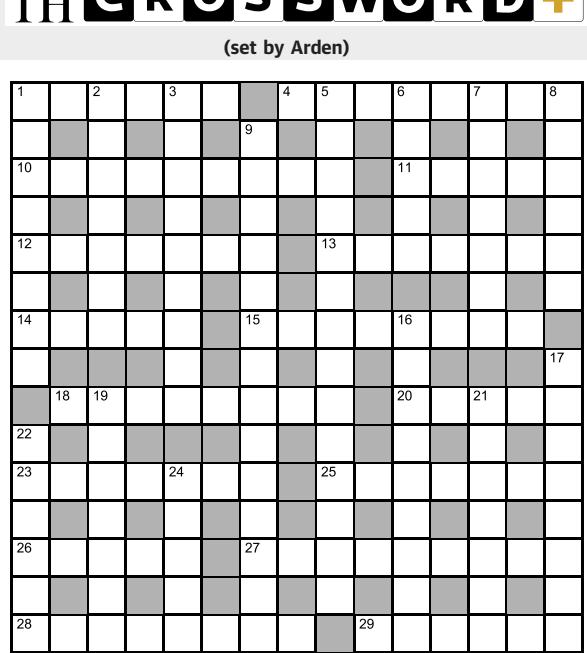
Legendary spinner Bishan Singh Bedi underwent a bypass surgery at a city hospital a few days back after he complained of heart problems. He is recovering well.

The 74-year-old Bedi is expected to be discharged soon, said a close confidant of the former India captain.

He added that Bedi "is currently doing fine."

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@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>
- 14 Song in right order, it delights cowboys (5)
15 British girl initially sounds unsure getting some cover (8)
18 Two rivers overflow and ravage (8)
20 Car's old but sound (5)
23 Free morning break, assembled but lacking interest (7)
25 Not happy with name of bird (7)
26 Best spreadsheet? (5)
27 One bang on a spot to raise some capital (9)
28 Mark crosses over in a repartee (8)
29 Putting pressure on the alliance, that's the custom (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Cook's got some coffee – a snow job? (8)
2 It's superficial, not in tie up (7)
3 Sycophants perhaps saw some poisonous growth (9)
5 Possible to predict rubbery ooze in flower (14)
6 Not happy with rigid state at the top (5)
7 Essential part – ways to come up with a magazine (7)
8 Travelling alone around India, by air in other words (6)
9 Todd Huggins' new avatar – a forced union (7,7)
16 Metal ore's processed to get chemical (9)
17 Donators can create lot of damage (8)
19 Tempted, caught wearing tie finally (7)
21 Work on spar, it's safe (7)
22 Great European covers up (6)
24 Could be musk – Musk supporting another musk at the top (5)
- ACROSS
- 1 Hostile force made up story (6)
4 Bill backed by minister, it's true (8)
10 Like to follow some Chinese – not about wearing it on one's head (9)
11 Ropes in volunteers – is allowed (5)
12 Poles in characteristic passage (7)
13 Placed on site before a country (7)

SUDOKU

1	4		8	9			
2	9						1
5			4	8			
3	9	6		8			
7		2				9	
8		7	1	6			
1	8					7	
3			6	1			
8	1		5	3			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 131

TV PICKS

India vs England: 3rd Test, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.
Champions League: Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Thursday)
ISL: Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF

Tharanga retires

COLONBO Veteran Sri Lanka opener Upul Tharanga on Tuesday announced his retirement from international cricket after a career spanning 15 years and during which he also had a brief stint as captain. PTI

Bopanna-McLachlan duo crashes out

SINGAPORE Second-seeded Rohan Bopanna and Japanese Ben McLachlan were beaten 6-4, 6-2 by Venezuela's Luis David Martinez and Spain's David Vega Hernandez in the pre-quarterfinals of the \$361,800 ATP tennis tournament here on Tuesday.

Ronaldo stars for Juve

TURIN Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Juventus strolled to a 3-0 home win over bottom side Crotone in Serie A on Monday, with the win taking the champion up to third in the standings. Sevilla beat Osasuna 2-0 to move third above Barcelona in LaLiga.

Deepak in last eight

NEW DELHI Asian silver-medallist Deepak Kumar (52kg) advanced to the quarterfinals with a facile 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Olzhas Bainiyazov as Indian boxers got off to a mixed start at the 72nd Strandja memorial tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria. Other winners on Monday included Navneet Kumar (91kg) and Jyoti (51kg) in the women's draw.

Westbrook, Beal help Wizards edge Lakers

LOS ANGELES Bradley Beal scored 33 points and Russell Westbrook added 32 on Monday as the visiting Washington Wizards rallied for a 127-124 overtime victory over the Los Angeles Lakers for their first five-game winning streak in three years.

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Shorey and Rana propel Delhi

Their centuries help the side register a big win over Pondicherry

HAZARE TROPHY

SPORTS BUREAU
JAIPUR

Hundreds from opener Dhruv Shorey and Nitish Rana helped Delhi score a thumping 179-win over Pondicherry in a Pool D match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day tournament here on Tuesday. Chasing a daunting 355, Pondicherry was bowled out for 175 in 39.3 overs.

No. 3 batsman Suresh Kumar top-scored with 42 off 53 balls for Pondicherry. Left-arm seamer Kulwant Khejroliya took four for 47 in eight overs.

Earlier, Delhi, put in to bat, was in some trouble when pacer Sagar Trivedi struck twice in the sixth over, dismissing Shikhar Dhawan and Himmat Singh, leaving the team at 25 for two. Shorey (132, 142b, 13x4, 3x6) and Rana (137, 106b, 21x4, 1x6) added 255 for the third wicket to help Delhi



The architects: Dhruv Shorey and Nitish Rana put the contest beyond Pondicherry's reach.

• FILE PHOTO

reach 354 for four in its allotted 50 overs.

Mumbai batsmen click

Mumbai's batsmen succeeded in going past Maharashtra's 279 for nine in a match between two familiar rivals. Skipper Shreyas Iyer (103 not

out, 99b, 9x4, 1x6) led from the front to take his side home with six wickets and 2.4 overs to spare.

There were also useful contributions from openers Yashasvi Jaiswal (40, 66b), Prithvi Shaw (34, 38b) and Shivam Dubey (47, 39b).

There were two centuries in the Maharashtra innings – Yash Nahar (119, 133b, 7x4, 6x6) and Azim Kazi (104, 118b, 12x4, 2x6) – but no other player reached 20.

For Mumbai, seamer Dhaval Kulkarni claimed five for 44.

Rawat's goal stuns CCFC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Substitute Suraj Rawat's injury-time stunner helped Mohammedan Sporting beat a 10-man Chennai City FC 2-1 in the Hero I-League here on Tuesday. Sporting's come-from-behind win helped it move to the fifth spot with 13 points. CCFC, which suffered its third defeat in a row, was ninth with nine points.

The results: Mohammedan Sporting 2 (Suraj 55, Suraj Rawat 90+1) bt Chennai City 1 (Ranjeet Pandre 19).

Sudeva Delhi 0 lost to Gokulam Kerala FC 1 (Philip Adjah 68); Aizawl FC 1 (Lalmesanga 26) lost to Real Kashmir FC 3 (Lukman Adefemi 34, Mason Robertson 56, 72).

DELHI ROUND-UP

Gautam and Karan score centuries

Gautam Dahiya's 104 and Karan Kumar's 101 helped SK Academy defeat Vishwakarma Academy by 198 runs in the SH Sports u-19 tournament.

The scores: SKA 311/8 in 40 overs (Gautam Dahiya 104, Karan Kumar 101, Sagar Sharma 3/06) bt Vishwakarma Academy 113 in 31 overs (Sagar Sharma 43, Aryan Shokeen 4/13, Harshit Parihar 3/17).

All-round show by Apoorv Naman Wasan top-scored with an unbeaten 60 and Apoorv Walia made 56 as M-10 Academy downed Gulia Academy by six wickets in the Niz Sports u-19 tournament.

The scores: Gulia Academy 200 in 33.5 overs (Sumit Balbara 57,

Abhishek Mahawar 46, Rahul Singh 33) lost to M-10 Academy 202/4 in 38 overs (Naman Wasan 60 n.o., Apoorv Walia 56).

Shaurya slams double century

An unbeaten double-century by Shaurya Seth and 101 not out by Kunal Sangwan saw Telefunken CC thump Push CC by 360 runs in the first u-14 Hitkary DC junior league.

The scores:

Telefunken 455/2 in 40 overs (Shaurya Seth 221 n.o., Kunal Sangwan 101 n.o., Parikshit Sehwari 84) bt Push 95/7 in 40 overs (Rudraksh Bhandari 3/16). WDCA 129/8 in 40 overs (Om Prakash 40, Rohan 34, Gaurish Dahiya 3/15) lost to BHCA 133 for no loss in 12.2 overs (Saksham Sharma 104 n.o.).

NEUFC keeps hopes alive

SPORTS BUREAU

NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) brightened its chances of making it to the playoffs by downing a 10-man SC East Bengal 2-1 in a 19th round fixture of the Indian Super League at Fatorda on Tuesday.

After a barren opening half, V.P. Suhair gave NorthEast the lead with his first ISL goal. East Bengal defender Sarthak Golui scored an own goal to double NEUFC's lead but later scored to pull one back for his side.

The result: SC East Bengal 1 (Sarthak Golui 87) lost to NEUFC 2 (V.P. Suhair 48, Sarthak Golui 55-og).
Wednesday's match: Odisha FC v MCFC, 7.30 p.m.

Panchkula to host C'wealth TT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Panchkula will host the Commonwealth table tennis championship later this year. The announcement came from TTFI president Dushyant Chautala at the closing ceremony of the National championship on Tuesday.

Buoyed by the successful organisation of the National championship, Chautala, who is also the president of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation (CTTF), confirmed the hosting of the championship after having hinted about TTFI's preparedness to host the event in Haryana.

Meanwhile, Chautala is set to get re-elected unopposed as the TTFI president for another four-year term when the AGM to be held at Panchkula on Wednesday. Arun Banerjee will be the new secretary.

TUESDAY'S HAZARE TROPHY SCORES



Rishi Dhawan (Himachal, 6/27 and 73 n.o.) • FILE PHOTO

Wednesday's matches

- Elite A (Surat): Hyderabad vs Baroda; Gujarat vs Tripura; Goa vs Chhattisgarh
- Elite B (Indore): Jharkhand vs Vidarbha; TN vs Madhya Pradesh; Andhra vs Punjab
- Elite C (Bangalore): Kerala vs Railways; Karnataka vs Odisha; Bihar vs Uttar Pradesh
- All matches at 9 a.m.

45, Shivam Bhambr 71 n.o.). Haryana 264 in 50 overs (Chaitanya Bishnoi 84) lost to Saurashtra 265/9 in 49.1 overs (Snell Patel 79, Arpit Vasavada 46).

Plate (Chennai): Arunachal Pradesh 222/7 in 50 overs (Rahul Dalal 123 n.o.) lost to Assam 226/5 in 36.4 overs (Denish Das 59, Sibankar Roy 60 n.o., Saahil Jain 48, Rakesh Kumar 4/58).

Manipur 148/9 in 50 overs (Arjit Gupta 45, Mahipal Lomror 67, Rishi Dhawan 6/27) lost to Himachal 201/6 in 33.3 overs (Rishi Dhawan 73 n.o.).

Nagaland 347/9 in 50 overs (Sedezhalie Rupero 65, R. Jonathan 62, Stuart Binny 80, Lalnunkima Varte 5/66) bt Mizoram 318/6 in 50 overs (Pratik Desai 141, Taruwar Kohli 108, K.B. Pawan 40 n.o.).

Meghalaya 319/7 in 50 overs (Yogesh Tiwari 58, Punit Bisht 116, R. Sanjay Yadav 73 n.o.) bt Sikkim 231/9 in 50 overs (Ashish Thapa 88, Manan Vohra 79, Robin Bist 59).

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