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6.3 magnitude quake  
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Mallikarjun Kharge to  
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Data buoys: inflation  
cools to 4.06% in  
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India looks to bounce  
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## NEARBY



Second dose of COVID  
vaccine from today  
NEW DELHI  
The second dose of COVID-19  
vaccine will roll out from  
Saturday, eligible healthcare  
workers in Delhi have been  
informed, said officials. No  
extra arrangements have  
been made at vaccination  
sites for the second dose.  
New beneficiaries will also  
be able to take the first dose at  
all sites across the city.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3



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ED searches on for  
80 hours: NewsClick

NEW DELHI

Digital news platform

NewsClick on Friday said the  
Enforcement Directorate  
searches at the house of its  
editor-in-chief Prabir  
Purkayasha had been going  
on for the past 80 hours.

"Earlier, the NewsClick office  
was raided for over 36 hours  
and some equipment vital to  
our functioning as a news  
organisation was seized,"

read a NewsClick statement  
uploaded on its website.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

## Not conceded any territory, says govt.

Main phase of disengagement on the north and south banks of Pangong is expected to begin today

VIIJA SINGH  
DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

The disengagement on the south bank of Pangong Tso (lake) will see Indian troops moving to their post in Chushul and Chinese troops to the Moldo garrison.

In the next phase, additional Indian troops will move further down, around 40 km, to Tara-Rhongo post, and Chinese troops to Dorjo, a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

The main phase of disengagement on both banks of the lake is expected to begin on Saturday. "We will verify each step by all means, physical as well as electronic. The next priority is Depsang and Gogra-Hot Springs, where the face-off continues," the official said.

The official spoke on background on a day the Defence

### Withdrawal strategy | A look at the disengagement plan along the LAC

- On the south bank of Pangong Tso, Indian troops will move back to Chushul and Chinese troops to Moldo
- After a few days, Indian troops will move further down, around 40 km, to Tara-Rhongo post, and Chinese troops to Dorjo
- In the agreement signed by the military commanders of both countries, it has been mentioned that the moratorium on patrolling is temporary

**Sign of thaw:** A view of Pangong lake in Ladakh.  
■ GETTY IMAGES

Ministry said in a statement that the Line of Actual Control was at Finger 8 and not at Finger 4 at Pangong Tso. At the same time, the Ministry said India had not conceded any territory as a result of this agreement.

In August 2020, Indian troops had taken advantage-

ous positions on the hills on the south bank following which China matched presence, leading to an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation.

This incident followed China blocking Indian patrols at multiple locations in eastern Ladakh – north Pangong, Gogra-Hot Springs,

Galwan, Depsang and CNN sector in Demchok – followed by amassing of troops and armaments. The official said the moratorium on patrolling had been recorded in the agreement signed by the military commanders.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

China causing mutual distrust, says Army chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The "rising footprint" of China in India's neighbourhood and its attempts to "unilaterally alter the status quo" along India's disputed borders have created an environment of "confrontation and mutual distrust", Army chief General Manoj Naravane said on Friday, asserting that regional and internal connectivity was central to unleashing the potential of the northeastern States and "balancing" the influence of China.

In an hour-long reply to the debate on the Budget in the Rajya Sabha, Ms. Sitharaman said the Budget is about looking for a quick, short-term solution for those who desperately need it. It is also a Budget that has laid out a medium and long-term sustainable growth policy to keep India on the growth trajectory of being one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

The Finance Minister said despite schemes and initiatives, ranging from roads to agriculture, housing and scholarships to electricity, benefiting people, a false narrative was being created by the Opposition that the government was working for cronies?

"In spite of steps being taken for helping the poor and the needy of this country, a false narrative is created to accuse that the government works only for cronies," Ms. Sitharaman said, while acknowledging that more needed to be done for the poor.

The Finance Minister al-

leged that it was the Congress-led UPA government that promoted cronies.

She then went on to list various achievements of the government.

Pointing out that under the PM Awas Yojana, 1.67 crore houses had been constructed, while under the Saubhagya scheme, more than 2.67 crore households had been electrified, Ms. Sitharaman said, "Are these houses for cronies?"

She added that while the Congress was desperate to prove its ownership of the scheme, it was riddled with problems.

"You may have given birth to the scheme, but you left it in a mess. What we have done after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge – we removed all the ills of the scheme and effectively used it," she said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## 15 killed, 33 injured in accident at T.N. fireworks unit



Gone in a flash: Fire and rescue personnel inspecting the fireworks unit in Virudhunagar district. ■ PTI

10 in critical condition with severe burns; PM, CM express grief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
VIRUDHUNAGAR

In one of the worst fireworks accidents in recent times, 15 workers were killed and 33 injured after an explosion ripped through Sree Mariyamalai Fireworks factory near Vembakkottai, in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu, on Friday.

"Fifteen workers have died, while 10 others are in a critical condition," said Virudhunagar Collector R. Kannan, who visited the accident site and the hospitals.

While 10 of them sustained 100% burns, at least eight suffered 60% to 90% burns, said Joint Director (Health Services) R. Manoharan.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Inter-marriages can reduce caste tensions, says court

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Educated youngsters are showing the way forward to reduce caste and community tensions in India by tying the knot in inter-marriages, the Supreme Court said in a recent judgment.

"Educated younger boys and girls are choosing their life partners, which, in turn, is a departure from the earlier norms of society where caste and community play a major role. Possibly, this is the way forward where caste and community tensions will reduce by such inter-marriages," a Bench, led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, said.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

## Going the extra mile



Sticking to stand: Farmers arriving on a tractor trolley to attend a 'Khap Mahapanchayat' in support of their agitation against the Centre's new farm laws, in Bahadurgarh, Haryana, on Friday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN (REPORT ON PAGE 5)

Uttarakhand toll rises to 38,  
rescue effort continues

DEVESH K. PANDEY  
VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The death toll in the avalanche in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand rose to 38 on Friday. Eleven of the deceased have been identified. While 30 bodies have been found in Chamoli, three were recovered from Rudraprayag and one from Tehri Garhwal.

"DNA sampling is being done to identify the victims. We have also written to the police in various States seeking help," Deputy Inspector-General of Police (Law and Order) Nilesh Anand Bharne said. Eighteen severed body parts have also been found in Chamoli as the search operation continued.

REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 10

## A puppet master with a chip in the brain

Leather puppets in the traditional Tholpavakoothu are being animated by robots



New avatar: Leather puppets with robotic movements on display in Palakkad. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

owned by Rahul Balachandran.

The first robotic leather puppet was installed at the Palakkad District Heritage Museum, which was inaugurated by Minister for Museums Kadannappally Ramachandran, on Thursday. Although there is a wide variety of art and

cultural symbols showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Palakkad at the museum, the shadow leather puppets installed at Navarasa zone-5 have been a big draw with visitors with their robotic movements.

According to Lakshmana Pulavar, the most difficult part of Tholpavakoothu is

the limb movements of the puppets. These are now being controlled through robotics.

"We have puppets in several museums across the country. But this is the first robotic leather puppet," said Sajeesh Pulavar, who graduated from the NSS Engineering College in Palakkad. He has turned to Tholpavakoothu full-time to preserve and promote the temple art form. "It was a dream come true for me," said Mr. Sajeesh.

Tholpavakoothu is a traditional temple art in Kerala having its roots in Palakkad and neighbouring regions. It used to be performed in the Bhadrakali temples of Palakkad, telling tales from the Ramayana. It is also known as Nizhalkoothu and Olakoothu.

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# Amid wires, barricades a garden blooms

Mini garden at Ghazipur border stands as an embodiment of peaceful defiance and unflinching resolve

JATIN ANAND  
GHAZIABAD

Identical signs painted in red ink on a white background caution visitors from accessing two adjacent sides of the Ghazipur border. But each seeks to convey a different meaning as the farmers' protest nears the three-month mark.

One has been placed on police barricades beyond which layers of security arrangements and razor wire seek to box farmers in. The other has been placed by farmers on a makeshift, mini garden they created last week in response to, and in peaceful defiance of, these very arrangements.

Protected by green fencing on all sides, the small patch of land – which they dug up, added soil brought from various villages, and sowed potatoes, sugarcane, and flowers – serves as a



The mini garden set up by farmers at the Ghazipur border. ■ JATIN ANAND

symbol of all arable land in the country that they take turns to water and cultivate.

"Police have used the sign to warn us against moving towards the Capital, which they want to protect through all these barricades and sharp wires. Our sign is to ward off the evil eye of cor-

porates and the ill wishes of the government," said Meghraj Malik, a farmer from Meerut.

#### Peace lovers

"Farmers are peaceful by nature. The government does what it does best by pointing guns at us and we reply the

only way we know how to – by tilling the soil. Our answer will become louder with every inch the crops grow," said Om Prakash Awana from Kasna in Uttar Pradesh.

As the noonday sun grows hotter by the day, efforts beyond rotational participation are being made to make

the farmers feel as less inconvenienced as possible.

In addition to setting up more surface-level roadside tenements where the elderly can rest and increasing the number of bathing sites, water is being provided even at medical camps. Oranges too are being distributed to keep participants hydrated.

"It is not that farmers aren't used to the heat. We face all kinds of weather head-on in the fields. But the elderly need to be taken proper care of wherever they are," said Ishwarchand Bidhuri from Dasna as he proceeded to hammer a nail onto two bamboo stalks to prepare a resting camp.

"Days are getting hotter and summer is not even here yet; but no matter what happens, we will not cede an inch till the three black laws are repealed by the Centre," he added.

Additional DCP (Outer) Sudhanshu Dhama said they are looking into the matter. An FIR has been registered, he added.

## Protesters at Tikri 'thrash' policeman

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A policeman, who went to the Tikri border protest site to paste posters of missing persons, was allegedly thrashed by protesters on Friday night.

A senior police officer said that a policeman of Nangloi police station went to the Tikri border to paste posters of protesters missing since the violence that broke out on Republic Day. He was allegedly thrashed by the protesters. He received injuries on his head and other body parts. He was rushed to a hospital where he is undergoing treatment, said the officer.

Practising the English alphabets repeatedly as they await turn to get their homework evaluated, Luv and Kush have come a long way since they first began collecting trash at the farmers' protest site at Ghazipur border.



A volunteer teaching children at one of the tents at the Ghazipur border on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## From rag picking to learning alphabets

'Pathshala' at stir site is making a difference

JATIN ANAND  
GHAZIABAD

Kumar from Dankaur in Uttar Pradesh, a civil services aspirant who has left his studies midway to be part of the initiative.

#### Two shifts

Run by a floating team of close to a dozen, the school functions in two shifts from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Taught English and basic mathematics among other subjects in addition to being provided stationery, the children are also treated to chocolates and biscuits and instructed in cleanliness and social etiquette.

According to Mr. Kumar, all the children had been registered and efforts would be made to ensure that their education continued well after the tent at the protest site was wrapped up for one reason or another. "The sweets were actually a big draw for the students, initially. Once they began trusting us we could move forward with trying to instil discipline and a sense of cleanliness in them," he said.

"The children start coming around 9 a.m. even though the first class is supposed to begin at 11 a.m. For most of them, a majority of them rag pickers and slum dwellers, this is the first time they are attending any academic programme," said Dev Kumar, who administers the programme on behalf of the Mata Savitri Bai Phule Mahabaha.

"We have been here since January 22 and began the initiative for farmers' children accompanying them to this protest with just 12 children. But most of them chose to leave after what happened on Republic Day," added Mr. Kumar.

## Age, pandemic and motor neurone disease not a problem for Dr. Rai

The 64-year-old from Tripura, along with Dr. Ashish Rai Chaudhary, has been attending patients at the Singhu border

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

A 64-year-old doctor from Tripura, who is suffering from motor neurone disease, has been offering his services in a makeshift hospital run by Life Care Foundation at the Singhu border since last Sunday. Kishan Rai retired in 2017 from an Agartala hospital as Senior Medical Officer before he started working in public healthcare. Now, Dr. Rai, who claims to have treated more than 700 COVID-19 patients, is doing his bit for the protesting farmers.

The service, he says, gives him immense peace. "I could not sleep at my home after seeing the news of farmers staying on the road in biting



Dr. Kishan Rai (right) and Dr. Ashish Rai Chaudhary at the makeshift hospital at the Singhu border on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

cold, weather and rain. I contacted my doctor friends who knew people here and they told me that there are medicines here but experienced

doctors are not enough," he said.

He was also concerned by the death toll, as more than 200 farmers had died, and

many of them due to heart attacks. "I thought of coming here and screening people of any possible heart condition. We have taken ECG of about 40 people every day so that any such condition can be treated earlier or referred to a better centre," he said.

**Worried son**  
Dr. Rai lost his wife over two decades ago. So his son, who works in South Africa, was worried when he told him about his decision. "He was scared if something happens to me. But I knew nothing would happen," he said.

His satisfaction only grew once he reached here. "Every day, I am enriched by meeting the warm people of the

Sikh community. It feels like all the sins of this lifetime are being washed out," he said.

With him has come Ashish Rai Chaudhary (62), a rheumatologist, who is associated with Tripura Yuktibad Bikash Mancha. "We demand food, security and nutrition for all. If farm laws come into force, farmers will be at a loss and ultimately, people won't get nutrition. This is a great movement and with our small effort, we are trying our best," he said.

Dr. Chaudhary said he felt it was their responsibility to be a part of this movement and "moreover we wanted to know if what is being shown on TV channels is true or not". For instance, they saw

on TV that the Ghazipur protest site is empty but when they visited the premise on Thursday, they realised "it was a lie because there were so many people".

He said that he has been practising telemedicine for the last 15 years in which he meets the patient once and then stay connected with them online. "This increases outreach because of which I am even able to reach rural areas. Here also, I am sharing links with them so they can stay in touch with me for follow up," he said.

Both doctors urged people and their friends back home to not only send donations but also come and serve people.

## Advocate, five aides arrested for extorting money from wine shops

They accused liquor shops of selling alcohol to minors

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

An advocate and his five associates have been arrested for allegedly posing as representatives of an NGO and extorting money from employees of wine shops by accusing them of selling liquor to minors, police said on Friday.

Kumar Shashank (27), a resident of Neh Sarai, formed a gang by roping in two personal security officers (PSOs) – Naresh and Pardeep – a bouncer named Neeraj (24), driver Nitin (30) and Shatrughan (21), who posed as a customer at wine shops, they said.

The matter came to light on Thursday after an employee of a liquor outlet approached the police team deployed near a mall in South Delhi's Saket. He informed them that some people claiming to be officials of the 'International Human Rights Commission' had come to his shop and demanded money from the manager after accusing him of selling liquor to minors.

However, when the manager called the owner to inform him, the latter narrated a similar incident that had taken place at their other outlet where the matter was settled for ₹40,000, he said.

When a police team rushed to the spot, the shutter of the shop was found to be shut.

Later in a written complaint, Naresh Singh, manager of the wine shop, stated that five men came to his shop, two of whom were armed. They claimed to be officials of International Human Rights Organisation' was found parked there. After opening the shutter, five men, including two armed men claiming to be the PSOs of the officer of the organisation were found there, a senior police officer said.

**Hired PSOs, bouncer**  
During interrogation, Kumar disclosed that he worked as a legal advisor in a NGO named 'International Human Rights Organisation', which had its office in Pandav Nagar. He had hired a taxi with a driver at ₹50,000 per month and two armed PSOs for ₹32,000 each per month. He had also hired a bouncer and was paying him ₹25,000 per month to run the extortion racket, said DCP(South) Atul Kumar Thakur.

The police have recovered a car, letterhead of the organisation, ₹20,000 in cash and two rifles from the PSOs, the DCP said.

## Action against policemen for inaction

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The station house officer (SHO) of Lodhi Colony has been sent to the district lines and two beat constables suspended after a raid by a vigilance team found gambling in the area, an officer said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Thakur said in the intervening night of February 11 and 12, a raid was conducted by the team of South District Vigilance Cell. During the raid, they reached Prabhu Market and saw people gambling by using plastic charts and chits.

On seeing them, they tried to escape, but 17 people were apprehended. Later all of them were arrested under sections of Public Gambling Act at Lodhi Colony police station.

"In view of the above, two beat constables have been placed under suspension and SHO of Lodhi Colony sent to district lines," said Mr. Thakur.

## AQI to be 'very poor' during weekend

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi, Noida, and Gurugram was in the "very poor" category on Friday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

"The ventilation is likely to stay in the same range and no significant change in AQI is expected for the next couple of days. AQI is likely to stay in the very poor category for the next two days. AQI is likely to marginally improve to the lower end of very poor to poor category on Feb. 15," said a statement by SAFAR.

## Delhiites can expect warmer week as temperature to touch 30° Celsius

Mercury touches 27.4°C, four degrees warmer than normal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature in the Capital was 27.4 degrees Celsius, which is four degrees warmer than normal for the season, and the minimum settled at 10.2 degrees Celsius on Friday.

The maximum temperature, according to the forecast by the IMD, is likely to rise steadily and touch 30 degree Celsius by February 16.

There was moderate fog on Friday morning and dense to very dense fog is likely to low visibility over the next few



A worker sweeping Rajpath on a foggy Friday morning. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 27 and 10 degrees Celsius respectively.

Timings

DELHI

SATURDAY, FEB. 13	
RISE 07:01	SET 18:10
RISE 08:11	SET 19:42
SUNDAY, FEB. 14	
RISE 07:01	SET 18:11
RISE 08:44	SET 20:37

MONDAY, FEB. 15	
RISE 07:00	SET 18:12
RISE 09:15	SET 21:32

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	27 10
Safdarjung	27 10
Palam	24 12

Delhi Palam Today	
27°C	Moderate fog at many places during morning. Dry comfortable weather during day with few clouds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow	
28°C	A cool morning with moderate fog and comfortable day likely. Light winds and partly cloudy sky.

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THE HINDU

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# Healthcare workers to get second COVID-19 vaccine dose from today

Capital reports 141 new infections and three deaths; nearly 15,000 get jab

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The second COVID-19 vaccination drive will start from Saturday and eligible healthcare workers have been informed by authorities concerned, said officials.

There will be no extra arrangements made at vaccination sites for the second dose, they said, adding that new beneficiaries will also be able to take the first dose at all sites. A total of 14,843 beneficiaries, healthcare and frontline workers, took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Friday – the highest so far.

#### Seven adverse events

There were seven Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson. The number of people vaccinated on Friday was 57.7% of the daily target of 25,700.



The second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is taken after 28 days of receiving the first one. ■ FILE PHOTO

The vaccination of healthcare workers started in the city on January 16 and frontline workers from the first week of February.

The second dose of the vaccine is taken after 28 days of receiving the first one.

About 46 people, including me, got the vaccine on the first day of the drive. Few of them will get the second dose tomorrow and others

#### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,36,670	10,889

New cases in the past 24 hours

141

New deaths

3

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

will get it on Monday," said nodal officer of COVID-19 in Delhi State Cancer Institute Pragya Shukla.

Dr. Shukla said she got a phone call from the district administration, informing her that she can take her second dose on Saturday.

#### Beneficiaries informed

"Beneficiaries have been informed by district officials. There has been no special communication to the hospital on this matter till now, as there won't be any difference."

ence. People will also be given the first dose of the vaccine tomorrow," said spokesperson of Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), Chhavi Gupta.

Healthcare workers include, doctors, nurses, sanitation staff at healthcare facilities and others while frontline workers include government employees, police, teachers and others.

Delhi witnessed 141 fresh COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,36,670, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

Also, three deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,889.

A total of 63,022 tests were done in the past 24 hours.

Of the total cases, 6,24,728 people have recovered and there are 1,053 active cases.

# North Mayor made fake documents to occupy govt. land, alleges AAP

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday alleged that North Mayor Jai Prakash has made "fake" documents to occupy government land and demanded that he resign from his post.

"Yesterday [Thursday] on behalf of AAP, I exposed Mr. Prakash. We exposed how the BJP Mayor has illegally occupied land of the DUSIB.

I also presented various proofs regarding how the local SHO and the DUSIB have repeatedly requested the civic body to stop this illegal construction but it did not happen.

After the press conference, Mr. Prakash came up with some documents, which were fraudulent," said AAP leader Durgesh Pathak.

"Today, I want to ask questions to Delhi BJP chief Adesh

Gupta and Siddharthan – who look after the organisation – their reaction on these fraud documents. The BJP leadership must clarify whether they believe that in their organisation such fraud is accepted or not. The Delhi BJP leadership should come clean," Mr. Pathak said.

He said AAP has also decided to not participate in any proceeding of the NDMC till the Mayor resigns. The party also demanded the Congress to make their stand on the issue clear.

#### BJP refutes allegations

Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it was shocking that when all its efforts to politically malign civic bodies failed, AAP was trying to malign BJP leaders by raising their personal property matters.

"Today, I want to ask questions to Delhi BJP chief Adesh

# Delhi jolted after quake in Tajikistan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

An earthquake of magnitude 6.3 occurred in Tajikistan at around 10.30 p.m. on Friday, according to an early report from India's National Centre for Seismology. The impact of the quake was significant enough to be registered in the Delhi-National Capital Region with several people running out of their houses. The earthquake was located at a depth of 74 km.

For a brief period, the NCS attributed the location of the earthquake to Amritsar, Punjab. "We can confirm there was no quake in Amritsar. The software picked up a signal erroneously. However we are investigating if another quake occurred," V.K. Bansal, Director, NCS told *The Hindu*.

# 'Through bypolls, Delhiites will express dissatisfaction'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Friday said the upcoming bypolls in five municipal wards will be decisive for Delhiites as they will be able to express their dissatisfaction with the way BJP and AAP have been running the city.

The party said the BJP and AAP have been accusing each other of corruption and misuse of funds through poster and banner-wars without doing any work.

The Congress said it had left behind a clean and green city but all that has now been left in a mess.

#### 'Remedy conditions at Lampur detention centre'

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the AAP government to take "immediate steps" to remedy the "pathetic conditions" at the Lampur detention center.

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## Himachal Pradesh, Public Works Department

Executive Engineer, Kalpa Division, HPPWD Kalpa.

(Name of Authority Inviting Bids

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

1. The Executive Engineer, HPPWD Division Kalpa on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the percentage rate/item rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development for each of the following works from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag Contractors of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag are eligible to participate for the works having amount put to tender above Rs. 100 Lacs. Non registered contractors may submit the bids; however successful bidder has to register in appropriate class with appropriate authority in HPPWD".

District	RIDF	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Total Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Period of Completion	Bid Security (Rs. Lakh)
			Construction	Maintenance		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(8)
Kinnar	XXII	Balance work for C/O link road from Peo Khawani to NH-22 Km. 0/00 to 3/600 (SH-ROFD, R/wall, B/wall, X-drainage work including P/L Kharana soling, Katcha drain, sign board, dumping structure and parapets in Km. 0/00 to 3/600) Under NABARD RIDF XXII	151.84 lacs	--NIL--	151.84 lacs	360 days

- Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 22-02-2021.
- Cost of Bid Form: Rs. 500 per package/job (non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Kalpa Division, HPPWD, Kalpa.
- Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The bidder will be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in NABARD may obtain the same from the website: www. hptenders.gov.in. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.
- \* Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.
- Submission of Original Documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4B(a) (ii) of ITB with Executive Engineer, Kalpa Division, HPPWD, Kalpa (address and details of office where to be submitted), on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand.
- Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 03-03-2021 up-to 17.30 Hours (time)
- The site for the work is available.
- Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore, bids must be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 11.30 Hours (time) on 05-03-2021 (date) in the office of Executive Engineer, HPPWD Division, Kalpa by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.
- The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the Bill of Quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than Seventy Five (75) days after the deadline date for bid submission.
- Bidders may bid for any one or more of the works mentioned in the Table above. To qualify for a package of contracts made up of this and other contracts for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

Executive Engineer,  
Kalpa Division,  
HPPWD, Kalpa.

HP 5727/20-21

(For Superintending Engineer, 11<sup>th</sup> Circle, HPPWD Rampur)

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**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Saturday:** Dense/very dense fog likely in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, northwest Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Gangetic West Bengal

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

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	.....	-28.4	13.8	Kozhikode	.....	-34.0	23.0
Ahmedabad	.....	-32.7	12.6	Kurnool	.....	-32.2	18.3
Aizawl	.....	-23.0	9.7	Lucknow	.....	-27.6	12.2
Allahabad	.....	-30.4	11.5	Madurai	.....	-31.7	17.8
Bengaluru	.....	-29.7	14.6	Mangalore	.....	-33.6	20.6
Bhopal	.....	-29.9	12.6	Mumbai	.....	-32.2	18.4
Bhubaneswar	.....	-33.4	19.0	Mysuru	.....	-30.4	16.4
Chandigarh	.....	-24.5	11.3	New Delhi	.....	-27.4	10.2
Chennai	.....	-30.3	21.4	Patna	.....	-26.0	12.6
Coimbatore	.....	-32.2	17.3	Port Blair	.....	-30.3	24.4
Dehradoon	.....	-24.8	10.4	Puducherry	.....	-31.4	19.2
Gangtok	.....	-13.4	8.5	Pune	.....	-33.0	14.9
Goa	.....	-32.6	19.6	Raipur	.....	-32.3	16.9
Guwahati	.....	-29.5	13.0	Ranchi	.....	-29.0	12.1
Hubballi	.....	-31.0	18.0	Shillong	.....	-18.2	8.1
Hyderabad	.....	-30.8	17.2	Shimla	.....	-16.5	7.2
Imphal	.....	-25.9	5.8	Srinagar	.....	-15.5	2.5
Jaipur	.....	-28.2	14.5	Thiruvananthapuram	.....	-35.5	20.4
Kochi	.....	-31.6	22.6	Tiruchi	.....	-32.5	17.6
Kohima	.....	-19.8	6.0	Vijayawada	.....	-31.4	20.0
Kolkata	.....	-29.6	17.8	Visakhapatnam	.....	-30.8	21.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	36	127	.7	.156	178	.....
Bengaluru	.....	60	19	.82	.104	.....
Chennai	21	19	.79	.65	.....	.....
Delhi	31	69	.57	.426	.378	.....
Hyderabad	6	.32	11	.90	.102	.....
Kolkata	44	.25	.47	.316	206	.....
Lucknow	11	104	.86	.329	.321	.....
Mumbai	.8	49	.328	.306	.....	.....
Pune	.....	123	.29	.182	.124	.....
Visakhapatnam	13	.63	.19	.102	.117	.....

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO<sub>x</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: 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

# Centre's farm laws will hit 40% of population: Rahul Gandhi

He says the three statutes will shift control of farming occupation to big corporates

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said the Centre's controversial agriculture sector laws would push 40% of the country's population to "destitution, penury, hunger and unemployment." The three statutes would effectively shift the control of farming occupation to big corporates, he said.

Addressing two 'Kisan Mahapanchayats' organised by the ruling Congress in Rajasthan's Hanumangarh and Sriganganagar districts, Mr. Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of helping out his "friends in the corporate world" by implementing the farm laws. But he also warned Mr. Modi of the impending rage of peasants and labourers.

**'Who is this Modi?'**  
"This agitation is going to spread from villages to cities. Even the British Empire could not survive in front of the farmers. Who is this Narendra Modi?" Mr. Gandhi said amid a thunderous applause by the farmers of the two districts, which share border with Punjab. The two



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan on Friday ■ PTI

rallies were organised at Krishi Upaj Mandis in Pilibanga and Padampur.

## Village-like ambience

Mr. Gandhi, accompanied by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, AICC general secretaries Ajay Maken and K.C. Venugopal, Pradesh Congress president Govind Singh Datasra and MLA Sachin Pilot, sat on cots and handmade 'mudda' chairs placed on the stage. The arrangement was made to create a village-like ambience and connect the audience with the party leaders.

The former Congress chief, seen wearing a green coloured traditional Sikh turban, was on a two-day visit to Rajasthan for extending support to the farmers' agitation. Throwing a challenge, he said there was no option before the BJP-led government at the Centre other than repealing the three laws.

Mr. Gandhi said the agriculture business of 'Bharat Mata', which was of the size of ₹40 lakh crore, was feeding the nation. "The issue of destructive farm legislation does not pertain to farmers alone. It is the issue of labourers, peasants, traders,

small and medium businessmen and the middle class," he said.

## Ladakh issue

Referring to the disengagement of Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh, Mr. Gandhi alleged that the Modi government had ceded the territory between fingers 3 and 4 on the banks of Pangong Lake. "Mr. Modi does not have the courage to face China, but he threatens the farmers," he said.

The Congress leader explained the provisions of the three laws to the audience, while affirming that they would lead to closure of government mandis, hoarding of agricultural commodities, monopolistic practices in the farm sector and denial of judicial redress to cultivators.

Mr. Gandhi asserted that the enactment of farm laws amounted to an attack on common people in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, after the onslaughts of demonetisation, goods and services tax and an abrupt lockdown. He said the Congress would not let the new laws ruin farmers and make sure that they were withdrawn.

have to repent for this," he asserted.

## RLD panchayat

Meanwhile, responding to PM Narendra Modi's statement that the minimum support price (MSP) would remain, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) vice-president Jayant Chaudhary said on Friday, "MSP is only on paper. The MSP of paddy is ₹1868 [per quintal] and the rate that the farmers got this year is ₹1,200 [per quintal]. The same happened with soybean and mustard."

He was addressing a large gathering of farmers at Baldev in Mathura district. Reacting to the FIR lodged against him and 5,000 others in Aligarh on Wednesday, Mr. Chaudhary said, "If they [the government] would come us, it would give us strength. There would be no compromise on pagri (dignity)," he asserted.

Mr. Chaudhary said farmers wanted reforms in the APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) system but the Prime Minister, through the farm laws, was ensuring that the APMC faded away. "This kind of treatment is expected from a quack, not a doctor," he remarked.

He said that this was not the first time that farmers had protested against an incumbent government but "we have never been insulted like this before". "We have been ridiculed as *andolan jeevi*, called part of a *jamaat*. Panchayat is being called a *jamaat*. They will

# People from Gujarat not being allowed to join stir: Tikait

The Red Fort incident was a conspiracy to target a community and the farmers alleging insult to the Tricolour'

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Friday said the farmer unions aimed to connect 40 lakh tractors with the ongoing agitation and hold meetings across the country to mobilise more people in support of their demands for repeal of three laws and legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price.

Speaking at a 'Sarv Khap Mahapanchayat' organised by Dal Khap 84 at Jhajjar's Bahadurgarh, Mr. Tikait alleged that people from Gujarat were not being allowed to take part in the farmers

agitation. He claimed that around 120 people in Gujarat were in jails and there was a need to fight for the freedom of the people in Gujarat. "India has attained freedom, but the people of Gujarat are not free as yet," Mr. Tikait said.

He called upon the people to be prepared to march to Delhi if required.

Mr. Tikait said the Red Fort incident was a conspiracy to target a community and the farmers alleging insult to the Tricolour. Without naming anyone, Mr. Tikait said that a "boy" was misled to issue a statement an evening before the tractor



Farmers attending a 'Sarv Khap Mahapanchayat' at Bahadurgarh in Haryana on Friday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

tor parade and the next morning he was at Red Fort. "How did he reach there?" asked the farmer leader.

Mr. Tikait said there was

no need for the farmers to go to the Red Fort as laws were not made there. "The police put barricades on the route agreed upon for the tractor

parade, but the roads leading to Red Fort were left free," he said. Mr. Tikait said it was a conspiracy to demoralise the farmers and send them back homes.

He called upon the farmers to write 'Kisan Kranti Yatra 26 January 2021' on their tractor-trolleys and be part of the movement. "We will go back home, only after the laws are taken back," said Mr. Tikait. He added that farmers won't allow business over hunger.

Mr. Tikait also coined a new slogan saying that the hands that plough the land would not beg for their rights. He alleged that a cam-

paign was being run through IT cell to spread rumours about the movement and target its leaders.

BKU (Charuni) president Gurnam Singh Charuni said the agitation was the battle for the economic freedom of the farmers.

## Huge participation

Supported by the khaps across Haryana, the mahapanchayat saw a huge participation of farmers, including women and youth. Several leaders of the 40-member committee holding talks with the government on the farm laws were present.

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## Applications against 7 NPF MLAs dismissed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The Kohima Bench of the Gauhati High Court has dismissed two interlocutory applications filed by the Naga People's Front (NPF) that sought to keep seven of its suspended MLAs off the 60-member Nagaland Assembly.

The seventh session of the 13th State Assembly began on Friday.

The applications were dismissed pending a final verdict on a plea by the seven MLAs challenging the maintainability of a writ petition relating to their disqualification.

The suspended MLAs are E.E. Pangteang, Eshak Konyak, Kejong Chang, B.S. Nganlang Phom, Toyang Chang, N. Thongwang Konyak and C.L. John.

## TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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ject was sanctioned in 2008-09. The anticipated cost of the 51.38 km project is about ₹5521.45-crore. Till last year, ₹3763.6-crore has been spent on the project," an NFR statement said.

A statement



## Regulation lite

Self-regulation code for OTT channels must be given a chance to work to foster creativity

**I**ndia's Internet-based Over-The-Top (OTT) streaming services have operationalised a code of self-regulation from February 10, soon after the I&B Ministry announced that it had prepared a set of guidelines and directives for the industry. The inexorable growth of OTT channels has infused creative talent into film-making, aided by the absence of overbearing censors and vested interests, although it might be argued that it also has a small minority pursuing crass commercialism. COVID-19 buoyed subscription revenues from home-bound viewers for OTT ventures streaming films, reality shows, serials and documentaries, and with cinemas closed, even broke the industry taboo against online-first film releases. Yet, the urgency of this code arises not from any challenge to law and order or morality posed by films, but the gauntlet of police and court cases that film-makers and the channels are now having to run. Governments are also lending tacit support to the view that creative expression may be becoming too influential to be left free. The FIRs in U.P. against the Amazon Prime Video series, *Tandav*, invoking legal provisions on cyber terrorism, obscenity, promoting social enmity and defiling places of worship, on the ground that its portrayal of god was derogatory, and a plea in M.P. on the same series seeking a court direction to bring OTT channels under censorship laws indicate the growing oppressive environment. It is time the Centre took a firm stand against displays of manufactured outrage and let newer channels of creativity flourish.

The collective initiative of the OTT services under the aegis of the Internet and Mobile Association of India, which places emphasis on abiding by the IPC, laws on women's and children's rights, copyright and age-appropriate certification and parental control, while upholding Constitutional provisions on free speech, should be given an opportunity to work. Such a voluntary code is consistent with the recommendations of the I&B Ministry's Expert Committee on film certification chaired by Shyam Benegal in 2016. The panel upheld creative expression and full ownership of any visual production, leaving viewing decisions to audiences, more accurately classifying films by viewer age, and ensuring transparency in the way reviewing bodies are constituted. The idea that films must be pre-censored and arbitrary cuts made by government-appointed nominees, mostly out of prejudice, is antiquated and repugnant to liberal societies. Clearly, a plethora of laws are available to assess, based on complaints, whether there has been an egregious violation of law, and this determination ought to be made by unimpeachable bodies representing a wide spectrum of civil society. A policed approach to films and media can only grow a monoculture of propaganda.

## Setting the tone

Biden's calls stress the U.S.'s commitment to internationalism, regional cooperation

**U**.S. President Joe Biden has sounded the starting bell for the great game of bilateral give-and-take between Washington and major world powers, including India and China, when he made his first calls, as President, to key allies and partner nations. Already, it is evident that the issues and tensions that will define the cadence of U.S.-India ties and U.S.-China ties are variegated and embrace the complexity of today's multi-dimensionally interconnected world. While some analysts complained that Mr. Biden took "too long" to call Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on February 8, it is noteworthy that the call was shortly after the White House had reached out to immediate neighbours and treaty allies, thereby indicating that Washington's engagement with India will continue to be a priority. Mr. Biden's call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, which came two days later, reflected a sharper, even strident, exchange of views, with palpable diplomatic choke points, including China's actions towards Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Uighur minority community in Xinjiang, making their presence felt in the call readouts. What is clear is that the Biden administration will seek to retain a few elements of the Trump White House paradigm – such as persisting with trade tariffs – while pursuing foreign policy objectives that resonate far more closely with core Democratic Party values, including fighting for the integrity of democratic institutions abroad.

Indeed, the Biden White House's insistence on keeping respect for democratic institutions front and centre amidst the gamut of bilateral issues might be causing South Block some discomfort. Given the State Department's comments so far on the farmers' protest in the NCR, including statements that could be interpreted as pushback against Internet outages imposed at the protest locations, Mr. Biden's flagging "his desire to defend democratic institutions and norms around the world", and a "shared commitment to democratic values" as the "bedrock for the U.S.-India relationship", might not be the solace Mr. Modi's foreign policy team was looking for. But Mr. Biden has adopted a softer approach with New Delhi than he did with Beijing – he had "fundamental concerns about Beijing's coercive and unfair economic practices", in addition to the points of diplomatic tension regarding Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang. In their core message, Mr. Biden's calls to Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi hint that unlike the transactional approach of the "America First" dogma, the thread of the U.S.'s foreign policy paradigm now will comprise progressive values, a commitment to internationalism, and reliance on regional cooperation on global governance subjects including climate change. Indeed, this could put the brakes on the accelerating global trend toward nationalism in foreign policy across the world.

# Amid fault lines, a revival of the farmers' identity

Signs of a polarised western U.P. and its agrarian communities uniting are visible in the ongoing farmers' movement



SATENDRA KUMAR

**T**his year in Uttar Pradesh, thousands of farmers gathered on January 29, at the government inter-college ground, Muzaffarnagar, following a call by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) president, Naresh Tikait, for a 'mahapanchayat' to express solidarity with the protest at the Ghazipur border led by his brother, Rakesh Tikait. Among the key speakers was Ghulam Mohammad Jaula, the most influential Muslim leader of the BKU, and considered to be a close friend of the late Mahendra Singh Tikait.

The presence of Mr. Jaula and Muslim farmers at the meet has been read as a sign of a re-emerging Jat-Muslim alliance under the *kisan* identity after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots affected the social fabric in rural western U.P. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its regional leadership were behind a local caste dispute growing into a communal issue that polarised villages along religious lines. At the time, it seemed that Jat farmers had suddenly claimed the Hindutva identity.

But that did not happen overnight. The farmers' polity has had deep roots while farmers' mobilisations have a long history in the western U.P. region. The ongoing agrarian change and crisis generated by neoliberal economic policies have shifted the agrarian economy to non-farm occupations. These new developments caused fissures in the farmer's polity in the northwestern region, giving the BJP a political advantage. Recent events indicate a revival of the farmers' identity as a community.

### A transformation

The Jats have dominated landownership in large parts of western U.P. since at least the mid-19th century.

tury. Muslims form a section of the Jats, and both groups have co-existed in the villages.

Between the mid-1960s- to late 1980s, the Green Revolution boosted the Jats. As landowners, they have been patrons (*jajmans*) of the artisan-services and labour castes who are largely Pasmanda Muslims. The artisan-service castes are either landless or small-marginal landowners. The BKU has provided an inclusive platform to various rural groups including labourers, marginal and middle farmers across religions. In the 1980s, the BKU led by Mahendra Singh Tikait, along with Muslim farmers and landless labourers, organised protest movements for cheap electricity and higher crop prices.

However, in the early 1990s, when the Green Revolution had advanced, farmers' income stagnated and land holdings became smaller through subdivisions. Neoliberal economic policies, a decline of state subsidies to agriculture, the rising cost of farming inputs, growing stagnation in farm production, and ecological precarity, all led to non-farm economic activities, and a further weakening of Jat farmers and the BKU's politics.

### Definite social changes

Increasingly, villagers are found more at urban sites than in the fields. Face-to-face interactions among different communities and individuals, once common, are now a rarity. Farmers who would depend on the artisan-service castes for everyday services (repairing agricultural implements, hair dressing and washing clothes) now look to new technologies or nearby towns for these services. The breakdown of the *jajmani* system has resulted in a cash flow. The young generation across caste groups has come under the spell of the consumer culture. Villagers who live on non-farm incomes and remittances now self-identify as middle class. Family, kinship and an obligation-based rural economy have been transformed into an individual-centric economy based



on skills and cash transactions. Intra-caste, family and kin inequalities are on the rise. The formation of rural middle class is under way which includes the Muslim artisan-service castes. Independence from *jajmani* relations combined with universal suffrage has not only created political competition between the Jats and their clients but also changed their mutually dependent economic interests into competing ones.

In the resultant shift in attitudes among the younger generation toward the dominant caste patrons, the young generation of artisan-service castes are now asserting their rights. Such assertion by the marginalised groups often leads to skirmishes and conflicts. But the disintegration of vertical relations and everyday face-to-face interactions between different caste-communities and individuals (who work in urban areas), and the growing disconnect from the village and its social norms have all weakened the capacity of rural society to absorb and resolve everyday conflicts.

More importantly, these changes have also reduced the ability of the Jats and other dominant castes to use their power and resolve conflicts in their favour.

### Shifting identities, BJP's rise

District in agriculture has led Jats to look for new avenues of employment as well as new political alliances. In a globalising economy, these shifts have brought the younger generation in proximity with the large urban Hindu middle class, influencing their tastes, language, rituals, symbols, politics and ethos. Changes in aspirations and identities forged by the new mediatised culture and mobilities

have created an altered socio-cultural landscape. Communication and entertainment technologies have aided new social and economic connections, providing spaces for different socio-political formations. Economic and spatial mobilities have fragmented the Jat community.

By giving representation and political offices, the BJP has tapped into the political and economic aspirations of youth. An increasing number have shifted away from their Arya Samaj roots and joined different religious and spiritual sects that are urban based and have spread to rural western U.P. With agricultural and village festivals on the decline, Hindu rituals and festivals, and religious meetings and functions organised by member-groups of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are the new centre of focus. The BJP has appropriated their symbols of pride by organising celebrations such as on the birth centenary or 'sacrifice day' of Jat freedom fighters. Certain TV channels (Astha) have become quite popular too. Increased interactions with the wider world have had an influence on the sense of caste and religion.

Similarly, religious channels such as QTV and Peace TV are quite popular among the Muslims in this region and who are also influenced by ideas shared by young Muslims who work in West Asia about being Muslims there. In the last three decades, backward Muslims have begun to exhibit (pan-Islamic) religious symbols in public places. There are now more men and women participating in the Tablighi Jamaat, a religious movement. The ideas, norms and practices of the Tablighi Jamaat have changed the public presence of the Muslim identity. There is a growing intensification of a pan-and fundamentalist-religiosity among Muslims and Hindus in the region.

### Crises and a re-assemblage

The political aspirations of the rising new middle class among the Jats had fragmented and weakened the *kisan* identity and polity

in the region. In the general elections (2014 and 2019), and the U.P. Assembly elections (2017), the Rashtriya Lok Dal lost badly and a new political leadership emerged among the Jats. This new leadership of the BJP represented the aspirations of youth who perceived Muslims as a threat. However, continued agrarian distress, rising electricity charges, diesel and fertilizer costs, and unpaid dues of sugarcane by mills have severely affected Hindu and Muslim Jat farmers.

The Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government's stringent anti-cattle slaughter measures have devastated already broken farmers as stray cattle ruin crops. The COVID-19 pandemic has also hit the rural economy. Jat farmers have had a hard time getting agricultural labour and help since a large number of Muslim artisan and service castes displaced by the 2013 riot have left the villages. These everyday hardships have changed their perceptions about each other. The realisation for cooperation is what compelled leaders such as Mr. Jaula, Vipin Balyan, and Puran Singh to organise joint Hindu-Muslim *kisan* panchayats in 2017 and 2018. Rakesh Tikait, under the banner of the BKU, organised a massive rally just before the 2019 election and led a march to Delhi. Both Hindu and Muslim farmers were participants.

In addition, the Centre's three reform farm laws have not only created fear among the farmers of losing land but have also disenchanted them as far as the BJP is concerned. Finally, the events of the night of January 27, 2021 have hurt the dignity of Hindu and Muslim Jat farmers, and accelerated the process towards a new farmers' alliance. The ongoing farmers' movement has shown the potential to heal old wounds and unite the polarised western U.P. society. A new dawn beckons amidst the many insurmountable fault lines.

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## Climate change resilience actions, in step with India

A well-equipped Australia is working with major economies to transfer technologies supporting lower global emissions



BARRY O'FARRELL

**L**ast year tested the strength of our communities and the resilience of our countries. It was a year dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. And yet, for Australians, it also started with the most devastating bushfires in our history.

For all its challenges, 2020 demonstrated the importance of innovation, resources and leadership to protect and support our communities and countries.

Climate change is an increasingly pressing global issue, which will require our collective will to ensure a sustainable future for our countries and for the world. By working together, we can reduce emissions – which will remain critical to ensuring global average temperatures stay well below 2° Centigrade – and adapt and build resilience to the climate change already occurring.

### Opportunity at summit

The virtual Climate Adaptation Summit hosted by the Netherlands on January 25-26 provided a valuable opportunity to the international community for collective action to realise a more climate-resilient future. At the summit, Australia reaffirmed our commitment to ambitious and practical action to combat the impacts of climate change at home, in our region, and around the world.

**LAC disengagement**  
That the marathon rounds of Corps Commander Level talks, backed by diplomatic dialogue could finally be paying off, brings cheer (Page 1, February 1). However, even if China has indeed agreed to take simultaneous reciprocal steps to disengage, as it is known to renege on its agreements, India losing the strategic advantage it gained by seizing the

Australia is one of the driest inhabited continents in the world. We also have the oldest living cultures and some of the richest biodiversity in the world. We are fortunate to be able to learn from the continuing connection of the First Australians, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, to their country. For over 65,000 years their traditional knowledge and practices have been preserved and protected Australia's natural environment.

The recent bushfires demonstrated the importance of bringing together traditional Indigenous knowledge about the land with modern science. Indigenous Rangers are on the frontline of this work, preserving and protecting Australia's natural and cultural heritage. For example, using traditional fire management practices, through cool and controlled burns.

**Ensuring resilience**  
Australia has committed over ₹1,500 crore to making our natural resources, environment and water infrastructure more resilient to drought and climate disasters. We are spending more than ₹200 crore on bushfire recovery efforts, supporting local communities to design their own economic, social and environmental recovery. This includes the important job of regenerating habitats, helping native animals recover and building knowledge for better land management. By July 2021, Australia will establish a new National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency to drive the reduction of natural disaster risk, enhance natural disaster resilience and ensure effective

disengagement is no victory. In fact, we have given more in the 'breakthrough' than received. One, we have lost our leverage by agreeing to vacate from the dominating Kailash heights. Two, we are withdrawing from our own territory, while China is going back from its occupied territory since April 2020. Three, a moratorium on military activities, including patrolling, in areas which we were dominating before the

live relief and recovery to all hazards. While our adaptation and resilience work starts at home, Australia is also committed to supporting neighbouring and global communities tackle climate change.

Australia has pledged at least ₹50 crore over the period 2020 to 2025 for global climate finance; ₹50 crore of this funding will directly help our Pacific neighbours deploy renewable energy, and improve their climate change and disaster resilience.

We are sharing our climate adaptation expertise, experiences and skills with the world through our development programme and the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific.

**Working with India**  
Australia's strong support for the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, spearheaded by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is another example of how we are working together with partners – such as India – to help ensure our infrastructure is resilient and adapts to the effects of a changing climate.

As is our ongoing engagement with the International Solar Alliance – a global initiative designed to harness solar power to provide for the energy needs of

members of the alliance.

Our work with India on Water Resources Management is another important initiative initiated by India and designed to further enhance each country's water management capabilities and share expertise and best practice.

**Green technologies**  
To support our resilience and adaptation efforts, Australia is also investing in and developing the green technologies of tomorrow. Indeed, Australia is aiming to leverage ₹7,000 crore of new investment in low emissions technologies by 2030.

To get there, we recently released our Technology Investment Roadmap – a comprehensive plan to invest in the technologies we need to bring emissions down, here and around the world.

We are focussed on accelerating technologies like hydrogen, carbon capture use and storage, soil carbon, energy storage to backup renewables and decarbonise transport, and low or zero emissions steel and aluminium. Dr Alan Finkel, Australia's Special Adviser for Low-Emissions Technologies, spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January on the enormous potential of these technologies to support the global transition to net zero emissions.

Widespread global deployment of those technologies will reduce emissions or eliminate them in sectors responsible for 90% of the world's emissions – 4,500 crore tonnes. Our goal is to get the cost of deploying these new technologies to parity with existing, higher-emitting alternatives. This is a practical pathway to achieve net

zero emissions that also presents economic opportunity. But of course, we cannot do it alone, which is why we are working with the major economies in the region – such as India – to transfer technologies which will support lower global emissions. The Australia-India Joint Energy Dialogue will strengthen cooperation between our two countries in pumped hydro storage, cost-effective battery technologies, hydrogen and coal gasification, adoption of clean energy technology, fly ash management technologies, and solar forecasting and scheduling. And there are many more opportunities for Australia and India on low-emissions technology which we will continue to explore together as partners.

**Partnerships are key**  
Whether in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, or tackling the ongoing challenge posed by climate change, we need to embrace innovation and strengthen global partnerships. We need to consider those most in need, engage all stakeholders equally and respect indigenous culture and knowledge in taking climate action.

Our scientists tell us that, even with the most ambitious global emissions reductions, we will still need to adapt to changes in our climate over the coming decades. Practical actions that help us adapt to those changes and strengthen the resilience of our local environments are critical.

Together with India, we can make a difference.

Barry O'Farrell is the Australian High Commissioner to India

Chinese incursion in 2020, is our loss. Four, dismantling of our defence structures, and demolishing thousands of troops, armoured vehicles and guns, which we did with great effort, and by sacrifices by our troops, is a setback for us. China cannot be trusted and can strike again when we are weak on ground. So let us maintain our leverage at the bilateral and international fronts, and stand firm and strong against the belligerent neighbour.

R.D. SINGH,  
Ambala Cantt, Haryana

### Disinvestment

Wealth building is no longer dependent on the hand holding by governments. The future of PSUs will become irrelevant unless they undergo a sea change and are out of the governance ambit of influence of politicians and government officials. However, the

government cannot be given a free run on its proposal of privatisation. It needs to be debated in Parliament, ensuring that some areas which are major and safe nests for the common man are protected. Besides the funds generated through disinvestment should be utilised transparently.

SHIVARAM SINGARAVELU,  
Chennai

CM YK

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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A-NODE

# In shrinking habitats, desperate cats

In separate incidents, two people were killed by tigers in Kumram Bheem Asifabad district of Telangana in a span of just 20 days in November last year. While the tiger population has increased, habitats have diminished leading to more man-animal conflicts, reports **Swathi Vadlamudi**

Pedda Vagu, the sinuous stream which originates in the Kerameri Hills of the Kumram Bheem Asifabad district in north Telangana, was a silent spectator of a ghastly incident over three months ago.

On November 10, a Koya tribal youth, 20-year-old Sidam Vighnesh, and his cousin, 12-year-old Sidam Srikanth, went fishing in Pedda Vagu. They laid their catch to dry on a flat boulder on the banks and went home. The next day, the two of them along with their neighbour P. Naveen (14) decided to divide the catch equally, so that they could use it as bait for bigger fish. Vighnesh went to the nearest semi-grown teak tree to pluck its leaves into which he could apportion the dried fish. Little did he know that a tiger lay in the thickly grown fire flame bush beside the teak.

"We thought Anna (brother) was playing hide and seek when he didn't return. We approached the tree stealthily, but found him crouching near it," Naveen recalls.

Vighnesh was gesturing to them frantically, asking them to leave as he had spotted the tiger. He did not notice that the feline was already creeping up on him. As Srikanth and Naveen ran for their lives, they heard Vighnesh scream.

Villagers from Digida, the remote hamlet in the Rebbana forest range where Vighnesh lived, rushed to the spot with drum beats and whistles, but they found neither Vighnesh nor the animal. Tell-tale signs of blood-soaked foliage, pug marks, and drag trail took them deep inside the thick forest, where, near a clearing, they found the body, a small portion ripped and eaten.

The tiger vanished into the woods on hearing the clamour, and then took a detour to head into the Pedda Vagu. "We saw the animal turn around mid-stream in an attempt to return. It fled after we threw stones," recalls Kurshinga Diwakar, an eyewitness. This was the first human kill by a tiger in about 20-25 years in these parts.

## A second victim

Eighteen days after the incident, on the other side of the Pedda Vagu in Penchikalpet forest range, Pasula Nirmala, 16, from Manneguda hamlet of Kondapalli village panchayat, was taken down by a tiger while picking cotton in a field.

"I was close by. Suddenly I heard her scream. I turned and saw her in the tiger's jaws. Running behind, if I hadn't fallen down on my face, I would have been able to save her," rues her mother Pasula Lachumamma.

But her nephew Annam Chakravarthi bravely ran behind the tiger and threw a stick at it. "The tiger dropped her and crouched. When I went closer and retrieved the body, the animal started following me, growling and roaring. It left the spot after we threw stones, but lurked in the surroundings for a long time," says Chakravarthi, 20.

Following the ghastly deaths, the Telangana Forest Department has issued advisories to the villagers to be followed while moving outside their homes; supplied them with masks to be worn at the back of their head, to deflect tiger attacks; laid camera traps; and collected pug marks. A committee has been formed as per the standard operating procedure prescribed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), for technical guidance and monitoring of the situation on a day-to-day basis.

"We have stopped going for work in the fields after the tiger attacks. We are not sure how effective the masks are," says Tekam Sunitha from Manneguda. Chintapudi Gundaiah, another villager, says tigers are not new to this territory, but this one is different as the presence of humans does not seem to scare it.

The human kills by a tiger have caused panic and dismay in the villages. But they are not surprising: widespread habitat destruction, cattle grazing and resource extraction, along with an increase in the tiger population, have led to a man-animal conflict in the region and a dwindling prey base for the tigers.

## Crossing the border

For a tiger to be declared a man-eater, it should have committed a series of human kills and partaken the flesh, according to the NTCA. In these cases, the proof is inconclusive as the bodies were retrieved soon after.

Besides, there is always the question of the identity of the attacker as there are several tigers in the region. Five adult tigers (two female and three male) were moving around in the Rebbana and Penchikalpet forest ranges, which fall in the corridor region of the Kawal Tiger Reserve, when the incidents occurred.

According to sources, the suspect tiger, identified as A2, was a male which had drifted into the area from the periphery of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra. It was among the big cats that had made the premises of the Chandrapur Super Thermal Power Station its home for want of territory in Tadoba, where the tiger population is



A girl accompanying her mother from work in a field in the Kagaznagar forest area of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district wears a mask given by the Forest Department that is meant to deflect tiger attacks. The masks, to be worn at the back of the head, were a huge success in the Sundarbans, officials say. (Below): Forest officials from the Rebbana forest range in Asifabad division capture tiger pug marks near Digida village in Kumram Bheem Asifabad district, a month after the first tiger attack which claimed a life. ■ NAGARA GOPAL



rapidly expanding. Maharashtra forest officials have reportedly confirmed that this feline was typically unafraid of human presence. It was listed there for capture before it entered Telangana.

Efforts by the Telangana foresters to capture the animal, in coordination with their Maharashtra counterparts, have intensified since. Expert teams trained in the use of tranquilliser guns have been brought, and baits have been tied. The suspect, meanwhile, has been moving across the Pranabha river between the two States, keeping the foresters on their toes. Officials tracking the tiger say that the animal makes multiple kills in a short span, and does not return twice to the same kill, thereby thwarting attempts to capture it.

Areas outside the Tadoba and Tipeshwar tiger sanctuaries, which are located in the Chandrapur and Yavatmal districts of Maharashtra, respectively, have a sizeable tiger population. These tigers often cross the border in search of territory and enter the Kawal Tiger Reserve landscape in Telangana.

As per the All India Tiger Estimation, 2018 (Tiger Census) figures, the number of adult big cats in Maharashtra increased from 106 in 2006 to 312 in 2018 through successful conservation efforts. Of these, 93 were enumerated from regions outside the protected areas, such as the Chandrapur and Brahmapuri forest divisions.

The Kawal landscape, including the core, buffer and the corridor areas, recorded two adult tigers in the Census. According to the Forest Department, the number of adult tigers in the core and corridor areas has now grown to at least 10, owing to increased protection.

## An extended habitat

The Kawal Tiger Reserve was notified in 2012. It covers an area of 2,015.35 sq km under the present Nirmal, Mancherial, Adilabad and Asifabad districts. Of this, 892.23 sq km is classified as the core area, and the remaining as buffer. Given its connectivity with Tadoba in the north and the Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh in the east, Kawal was hoped to be an extended habitat for the spillover tigers from both States.

To facilitate migration of the big cat, the Telangana Forest Department has, in its Tiger Conservation Plan submitted to the NTCA, declared a tiger corridor in the Kagaznagar and Asifabad forest divisions.

The foresters counted 26 tigers entering the Kawal landscape so far, based on

the data obtained from camera traps and pug marks. But several big cats which came either left or disappeared, till the arrival of Phalguni, the matriarch that gave birth to two litters of four cubs each in the Kadamba forest range in the Kagaznagar division.

With many tigers disappearing, the corridor area earned the disrepute of being inhospitable to the striped cats. Very few could stay/survive due to serious man-animal conflict. Of Phalguni's first litter, only one tigress is seen roaming in Chenmuri division, with a wire snare around its hip as a remnant of a failed poaching operation. None of its siblings can be seen as adult members anywhere in the core, buffer or corridor areas. From Phalguni's second litter, two female tigers are presently seen moving in the forest ranges of the Asifabad-Kagaznagar divisions, while a male is reported to have crossed over to Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district in search of domain. Phalguni herself has not been seen for the past two years.

While foresters routinely explain away disappearance of every tiger as a migration to Maharashtra, doubts linger about the truth in these claims. Official records mention three tiger deaths in the region since 2016, of which the last two were discovered within a short gap in January 2019. Both the instances came to light only when tiger body parts were confiscated from poachers.

An uproar ensued and a public interest litigation was filed in the Telangana High Court by wildlife conservationist Diya Sur Banerjee, who sought judicial intervention for unified control of the Kawal Tiger Reserve. "I had done a survey for the High Court, which exposed roads and electric wires going through the core area. Deliberate electrocution caused the tiger deaths. Like any other tiger reserve, Kawal too should have one demarcated core and one buffer which helps in unified protection and management," Banerjee said, while speaking on her petition.

Responding to the petition, the High Court issued a slew of directions, which included controlling poaching, aerial bunched electric cabling in the core area, and unified command.



This led to a major reshuffle in the Telangana Forest Department. Anti-poaching measures were intensified, and wire snares and other poaching devices were confiscated from the farmers who used them against marauding wild boars. Subsequently, the number of tigers entering and surviving in Telangana has increased.

## Agricultural encroachments

The next issue is heavy fragmentation of the habitat in the corridor region. As a consequence, tigers are unable to cross over to the core area.

Agricultural encroachments into the reserve forest are aplenty, especially in Kagaznagar division, often with political sanction. According to the Forest Department, encroachments in the Kagaznagar division amounted to nearly 17% of the forest land in the division. The Forest Department claims that the majority of them happened around the time of promulgation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, owing to ignorance about the cut-off date, and misconceptions about the future regularisation.

The corridor area has 111 villages, of which 30-40 are unnotified tribal hamlets. Acres of cotton crop welcome visitors to these villages. 'Cotton mafia' is how the Forest Department officials and NGOs term the chain of cotton trading right from sowing up to the sale.

"The Sahukar lends us everything – seeds, fertilizers and pesticides – and helps us with money for the labour too. After the crop is harvested, he comes to the doorstep and purchases it," says Maneppali Chinnaiah from Manneguda. The Sahukar is not keen on investing in foodgrains. The higher the area under cotton, the louder the chimes in his coffers. Fertile forest lands brought under cotton cultivation yield better crop and double his profits. Besides, cotton does not need irrigation.

Kondapalle village, under the limits of which the tiger claimed its second victim Nirmala from a cotton field, has agricultural intrusions into the forest lands to the extent of 1,500 to 1,600 acres. In fact, a very narrow forest link remains amid a vast expanse of agricultural fields, due to which encounters

with tigers have become common.

Also, since 2005, more than 200 new families have arrived and settled in the village with 480 households. "Since 2010, forest felling spiralled in the hope that the State of Telangana, once formed, would regularise the land. Blade tractors were deployed for clearing the woods. All this could not have happened without the connivance of the Forest Department. Now, officials from the department are claiming even our own titled lands as theirs," says the Sarpanch of the Kondapalli Panchayat, Sanjeev Upasi.

Since registrations have been stopped for the lands till a joint survey is conducted by Revenue and Forest officials, none of the benefits announced by the government for the farming community are reaching the villagers. This issue assumed more importance than the tribal girl's death when the villagers gheraoed Forest Minister A. Indrakaran Reddy, demanding titles for the lands, during his visit to the girl's family.

'Podu', a form of shifting cultivation practised by Adivasis, is routinely invoked by political leaders to justify forest felling. But when an exorbitant premium is placed on land value, it is a fact that cultivation never shifts once the forest is cleared.

"In the past, when there was plenty of forest area and populations were low, 'Podu' was perhaps a sustainable practice, but not anymore. In northern Telangana, the routine encroachments by non-tribal people with political patronage cannot be termed as 'Podu,'" says Imran Siddiqui, founder of the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society and NTCA's representative in the committee formed in the aftermath of tiger attacks.

## Inhabitants and foresters

The Mannewar Gond tribals populating the Manneguda hamlet do not have much land anyway. Even the little they had got in the Forest Rights settlement has been lost to moneylenders. Pasula Nirmala's parents lost theirs to the Praharita-Chevella project which is shelved now. The family has to depend on daily wage labour and occasional hunting for livelihood, as a result of which they are seen as wildlife poachers by the foresters.

However, when it comes to forest felling, all communities in the village use the services of this tribe. "Tribals hardly gain anything from forest clearance. They become pawns in the hands of other communities who use them to file cases against us," says Forest Range Officer, Rebbana, B. Purnima.

The Revenue Department routinely grants land titles to the villagers in the same survey numbers previously allotted to the Forest Department for compensatory afforestation, which complicates the problem.

Mistrust defines the relations between the inhabitants and the foresters, evident in the former's assumption that the feline attacker was let loose by the department in order to evict the villagers. The same suspicion was aired by

the MP of Adilabad, Soyam Bapu Rao, who had warned the Forest Department officials to capture the tiger soon or see it poisoned.

Uninformed personnel slap criminal cases and penalties against people over small pretexts such as carrying an axe into the forest. Confrontations between villagers and the forest officials are frequent and occasionally violent.

Though relocation of villages from the core areas is part of the Project Tiger funded up to 60% by the NTCA, the initiative has not taken off in Telangana, as the State government has not released its grant, even after two villages were identified for a pilot and the residents volunteered to shift.

**No smooth journey for the big cat**  
State and Central government projects in the corridor area too act as major disturbances for the migration of tigers. The Goleti mines of the Singareni Collieries and a minor irrigation project on Pedda Vagu at Ada village are existing disturbances, while a third broad gauge railway line connecting with the national capital, and the expansion of a national highway between Mancherial and Chandrapur, are upcoming hindrances.

"For Project Tiger to be sustainable, there should be undisturbed right of way for the tigers from Central India up to the Eastern Ghats. If they are obstructed from migrating, their gene pool can't be maintained and inbreeding will threaten the very existence of the species," says Field Divisional Officer, Kagaznagar, M. Vijaya Kumar.

As a consequence of habitat destruction, cattle grazing and resource extraction, there is a dwindling prey base for the tigers. For a sustainable prey base, there should be a minimum of 15 ungulates per sq km, as per the Wildlife Institute of India's norms. Frequent cattle kills in the corridor area are evidence that the tiger is unable to hunt its natural prey.

"We are taking measures such as ridge-to-valley water shed management and grassland development to improve the prey base. We are making attempts to reduce biotic pressures. They are paying off, and we are hopeful that one female tiger making the core area its home and breeding here will change the picture of conservation in this region," says Field Director-Project Tiger of Kawal Tiger Reserve, C.P. Vinod Kumar.

Calls are also mounting to declare the corridor area as the 'satellite core' of the Kawal Tiger Reserve, for intensive monitoring and better funding.

Considering that each tiger/tigress requires an inviolate territory of 25 to 40 sq km, all these measures could fall short of any result, if the human-animal conflict is not reduced to its minimum.

If the experience of Maharashtra and Telangana is any lesson, tiger conservation cannot be seen in isolation from the associated issues of poverty and livelihoods, which in turn determine political will. Without collaboration of actual stakeholders, there is a risk of Project Tiger becoming counterproductive.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Not conceded any territory, says govt.

"The agreement mentions in as many words that suspension of patrolling is temporary and will resume once both countries take a final decision. The right to patrolling in traditional areas is not compromised," the official said.

The suspension of patrolling is similar to what exists in the Galwan Valley. A buffer zone has been created here, said the official, adding that this was also a temporary mechanism.

According to the Defence Ministry statement, the Defence Minister's statement also made it clear that there are "outstanding problems to be addressed, including at Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang". "The outstanding issues are to be taken up within 48 hours of the completion of the Pangong Tso disengagement."

Stating that the assertion

that the Indian territory is up to Finger 4 at Pangong Tso is categorically false, it said the territory of India is as depicted by the map of India and includes more than 43,000 sq km currently under illegal occupation of China since 1962. "That is why India has persistently maintained the right to patrol up to Finger 8, including in the current understanding with China," it said.

Permanent posts of both sides of the north bank of Pangong Tso are longstanding and well-established, the Ministry said. On the Indian side, it is Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3 and on the Chinese side, east of Finger 8.

"The current agreement provides for cessation of forward deployment by both sides and continued deployment at these permanent posts," it said.

## China causing mutual distrust, says Army chief

"A common thread that runs along the northeastern States is lack of coordination amongst various agencies. The policy disconnect is further accentuated by the feeling that affairs of the North East Region are being run from Delhi..." he said at a webinar organised by the United Service Institution of India.

To set the score right, he said, there was a need to establish an organisation that can synergise multi-agency coordination and optimise resource and effort. The realigned strategy for the northeast proposed a robust and effective northeast integrated security council.

## + 'Oppn. creating fake narrative on Budget'

Listing data, she said during the UPA era the government could not for a single year spend the money allocated under the scheme. Her government, she said, has in fact spent the highest ever on the scheme, with allocation of ₹90,500 crore so far.

Ms Sitharaman said for 2020-21, the Budget Estimate was ₹61,500 crore for the scheme, which has been increased to ₹11,500 in the Revised Estimates.

The Minister dedicated much of the time in countering senior Congress leader and former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's speech on Wednesday speech on the Budget. Referring to Mr. Chidambaram's remark that major numbers are suspect in the Budget, Ms. Sitharaman said it was the Congress finance minister who had artificially

increased capex numbers during 2007-08 when UPA was ruling the country. "He talked about competence, I do not want competence to fudge the numbers."

Accusing the UPA government of issuing bonds to oil marketing companies and fertilizer manufacturers in lieu of cash subsidy to "make balance sheets attractive", the Minister said, "Fake narratives were created... Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not depend on fudging." She also denied the Opposition charge that the budget on health and defence have been reduced. As far as defence is concerned, she said the reduction is for the pension payout. "Last year, the pension bill was more because of OROP (One Rank, One Pension) and other arrears," she said.

## 15 killed in cracker unit accident in Tamil Nadu

Though the cause of the accident was under investigation, the Collector said it was suspected that one of the workers had negligently handled chemical-filled fireworks that triggered a series of blasts. "Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation officials are investigating," he said.

The accident occurred at 1.30 p.m. at the unit in Achankulam. Video footage of the accident circulated on social media shows fire crackers bursting and smoke visible from a distance, for a long while.

Fire and Rescue Services personnel had to wait for long to enter the unit as the chemicals inside the factory kept bursting, according to Virudhunagar District Fire Officer K. Ganesh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted about the accident, offering condole-

nces, and announced an ex gratia of ₹2 lakh for the families of each of those who died in the accident. An amount of ₹50,000 will be given to those seriously injured from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami condoled the deaths and announced a solatium of ₹3 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. He ordered an inquiry into the incident.

He also instructed District Collectors concerned to visit cracker-making units at regular intervals to ensure that safety parameters are met. He announced a compensation of ₹1 lakh to those who suffered serious injuries. In a statement, Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit said he was shocked and grieved to hear about the fire accident.

## Unable to pay dues: Padmanabhaswamy temple

SC told pandemic led to financial crunch in one of India's richest temples

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The administrators of Kerala's Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple, one of the richest in India, informed the Supreme Court on Friday that its closure during the pandemic resulted in a "financial crunch".

The dent left by the virus is such that the temple, for the time being, is unable to pay the State of Kerala the ₹11.7 crore owed in "upkeep" expenses.

"The money expended by the State should be returned to the State by the temple," Justice Lalit addressed advocate Uttara Babbar, appearing for the temple's adminis-

trative committee, at the beginning of the hearing.

Ms. Babbar said there was a "financial crunch... The temple was closed... They [administrative committee] have sought time". The court left it to the State and the administrative committee to discuss and resolve the issue.

**Audit under way**

The exchange came while the Bench was perusing a report filed by K. Babu, district judge, Thiruvananthapuram, who said most of the directions issued by the Supreme Court in a judgment on July 13 last year on the management of temple had been complied with.



Fund crunch: The Padmanabhaswamy temple owes ₹11.7 crore to the Kerala government in upkeep expenses. ■ FILE PHOTO

The court scheduled the case for the second week of September to "consider the progress with respect to the auditing of the accounts of the temple".

In its July 2020 judgment, the court had ordered an au-

dit to be conducted for the past 25 years. Advocate G. Prakash, for Kerala, said the audit was going on.

In its verdict last year, the top court had also declared the former royals as the manager or *shebaits* of the proper-

ties of Sri Padmanabha, the chief deity of the famed temple in Thiruvananthapuram. The court had also accepted the royals' submission that the temple was a "public temple".

It had issued a slew of directions for its transparent administration in the future, including the formation of a temple administrative committee with the Thiruvananthapuram district judge as the chairperson.

The other members of the committee include a nominee of the trustee (royal family), the chief *tantri* (priest) of the temple, a nominee of the State and a member nominated by the Union Ministry of Culture. This committee would take care of the daily administration of the temple. It had also ordered a

## SC issues notice to A.P. on polls in border areas

Odisha had petitioned against elections in disputed villages

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Andhra Pradesh government on a contempt petition filed by Odisha for notifying panchayat elections in disputed inter-State border villages despite a status quo order from the top court.

A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar gave Andhra a week to file its response to the contempt plea but did not stay the polls for now. "Whatever consequences flowing from our orders will follow," Justice Khanwilkar remarked.

The second phase of the panchayat elections will be held in A.P. on Saturday.

The remark was in response to a submission by senior advocate Vikas Singh, for Odisha, that "tomorrow they plan to go ahead with the polls" in the disputed villages. Advocate Mahfooz A. Nazki appeared for Andhra

Poll row: The Supreme Court did not stay the gram panchayat polls, which will be on till February 21. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pradesh. The court scheduled the next hearing for February 19.

The dispute over territorial jurisdiction over 21 villages, popularly called as 'Kotia Group of villages', first reached the top court in 1968, when Odisha, on the basis of three notifications – issued on December 1, 1920, October 8, 1923 and October 15, 1927 – claimed that A.P. had trespassed into its well-defined territory.

During the pendency of the suit filed by Odisha, the

court, on December 2, 1968, directed both States to maintain *status quo*. The court dismissed the suit on technical grounds in 2006. With the consent of both States, it then directed that *status quo* be maintained till the dispute is resolved.

Now, the Odisha government has sought contempt action against three A.P. officials: District Collector Mudda Hari Jawaharlal, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, and State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar.

## BJP serves notice on Yediyurappa critic

Govt. moving away from PM's ideals'

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

The BJP that gave a long rope to dissenter MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, who has been openly critical of Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and consistently broached the issue of leadership change, has finally cracked the whip and served him a show-cause notice.

However, Mr. Yatnal, who has been suspended from the BJP twice earlier over similar charges, only to be later re-induced, remained defiant.

"I have not indulged in any anti-party activity. Yes, I have criticised people in my own party, saddened that the go-



Basanagouda Patil Yatnal

vernment in the State was moving away from the ideals and standards set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

He repeated certain charges he had made against the Chief Minister, including that of inducing "blackmailers" into the Cabinet.

Excessive alcohol consumption can cause irreversible changes to DNA

## Excessive alcohol can cause irreversible changes to DNA

Impact persists even if one stops drinking: study

AFSHAN YASMEEN  
BENGALURU

A study by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru has debunked the assumption that damage to health from excessive consumption of alcohol can be reversed if one stops drinking.

Excessive alcohol consumption can cause irreversible changes to the DNA and these can persist even when alcohol is no longer consumed, revealed a study conducted by a team of researchers at NIMHANS. The study has been published online in the *American Journal of Medical Genetics*.

The study tracked patients at NIMHANS' Centre for Addiction Medicine outpatient clinic from March 2015 to April 2016, Head of the Department of Psychiatry Pratima Murthy told *The Hindu* on Friday.

"Although we inherit genes from our parents, their expression is regulated in a unique manner in each



of Medical Genetics.

The study tracked patients at NIMHANS' Centre for Addiction Medicine outpatient clinic from March 2015 to April 2016, Head of the Department of Psychiatry Pratima Murthy told *The Hindu* on Friday.

"Although we inherit genes from our parents, their expression is regulated in a unique manner in each

person, and may be influenced by their lifestyle. Exposure to alcohol affects the pattern of gene expression, and may explain some of the systemic complications," said Dr. Murthy, a consultant in the Centre.

"We find that the chemical changes in the DNA associated with excessive alcohol consumption may not be reversed," she explained.

Researchers analysed the DNA chemistry of individuals who had been drinking on an average of 10 drinks/day.

"The effects of alcohol were more pronounced in those who had started drinking at an early age. This suggests that starting to drink early may physically alter many genes, including those of the brain," she added.

## No fresh case in 3 districts, T.N. reports 483

Chennai tops table with 142 fresh infections; 18 districts clock cases in single digits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Three districts – Ariyalur, Dharmapuri and Tirupathur – reported no fresh case of COVID-19 on Friday, even as 483 persons tested positive for the infection in the State. As many as 18 other districts clocked cases in single digits.

While Chennai topped the table with 142 cases, Chengalpattu and Coimbatore had 45 cases each. There were 21 cases in Tiruvallur. The fresh cases included five returnees – one from Bangladesh and four from West Bengal.

The State accounts for a total of 8,44,173 cases. Another 486 persons, including 137 in Chennai and



A COVID-19 testing lab set up at the Chennai airport.

■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

and 239 in Tiruvallur. There were six fatalities in the State, taking the toll to 12,408. Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Ranipet, Thanjavur and Theni recorded one death each.

The deceased included four persons in their 50s, two of whom did not have co-morbidities.

A 58-year-old man from Coimbatore was admitted to a private hospital on February 3 with complaints of fever, cough and breathing difficulty for four days. He died on February 11 due to acute respiratory distress syndrome and COVID-19 pneumonia. A 54-year-old man from Chennai, who was admitted to the Government

Omandur Medical College Hospital on February 8, died on February 10 due to COVID-19 pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, acute respiratory failure and septicemia.

As many as 55,290 samples were tested in 24 hours, taking the total figure to 1,66,55,151.

**15,856 inoculated**

A total of 15,856 persons were vaccinated on Friday. As many as 2,27,340 persons have received the COVID-19 vaccines in the State so far.

As many as 10,210 healthcare workers, 3,137 frontline workers and 2,509 police personnel were covered on Friday.

## Pawar reluctant to let Kerala NCP unit exit LDF

MLA Kappan may shift to UDF camp

STAFF REPORTER  
KOTTAYAM

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and Kerala MLA Mani C. Kappan's plan to take the party's State unit out of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) following a row over the Pala Assembly seat appears to have hit a stumbling block following party president Sharad Pawar's reluctance over the proposal.

Sources said here that a discussion between Mr. Kappan and NCP State president T.P. Peethambaran with Mr. Pawar on Friday remained inconclusive but the Pala MLA was determined

to go ahead with his plan to join the United Democratic Front (UDF). A formal announcement in this regard is expected on Sunday, when a rally led by Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chemmuthala enters Pala.

"Mr. Pawar stood dispassionate about the idea of a coalition change and sought more time for hearing the other side led by Transport Minister A.K. Saseendran before taking a final decision. Mr. Kappan, however, is running out of time as he has already set the plan for sharing the stage with Mr. Chemmuthala on Sunday," said an NCP leader.

## IN BRIEF



Ayyappa temple opens for monthly puja

PATHANAMTHITTA  
The Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala opened here on Friday for the five-day puja in the Malayalam month of Kumbham. In view of the COVID-19 situation, only 5,000 devotees who have booked slots through the virtual queue will be allowed darshan on a daily basis. Only those with COVID-19 negative certificates will be permitted entry.

## 4 killed, 22 injured as bus falls into valley in Araku

VISAKHAPATNAM  
Four persons, including a seven-year-old, died and at least 22 others were injured when a private travel bus fell into a valley while negotiating a hairpin bend near Damuku in Visakhapatnam Agency on Friday night. The victims are said to be tourists from Hyderabad who were returning from the Araku Valley. Six of the injured are critical and have been shifted to KGH, Visakhapatnam.

## YSRCP corporator mowed down by car

KAKINADA  
Kampa Ramesh, a corporator from the YSRCP, was mowed down by a car allegedly driven by Gurajana Chenna, a real estate agent, on the outskirts of Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district on Friday. Mr. Ramesh was the 9th Ward Corporator in the Kakinada Municipal Corporation and also a real estate agent. The incident

# Ph.D. entry in IITs tougher for students from marginalised communities

Despite official policy, OBC, SC and ST applicants are less likely to gain admission to the premier institutes as compared to those from the General Category

PON VASANTH B.A.  
CHENNAI

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe applicants are half as likely to get selected for a Ph.D. programme at leading IITs in the country as aspirants from the General Category (GC) are.

Data collated from a series of RTI applications, including from *The Hindu*, on the number of applicants versus the number of those admitted to Ph.D. programmes in the five older IITs have indicated that the acceptance rate is skewed against students from the SC, ST, and Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities.

The acceptance rate, which refers to the number of students selected for every 100 students who applied, stood at 4% for students from historically privileged castes (General Category). It falls to 2.7% for OBC students and further down to just 2.16% for SCs and 2.2% for STs.

#### Policy ignored

This finding comes against the backdrop of the Education Ministry's data submitted to Parliament last year showing the failure of the IITs to fill Ph.D. seats as per reservation.

It showed that of the total admissions made by all IITs from 2015 to 2019, only 2.1% went to STs and 9.1% to SCs. The government's reserva-

tion policy mandates allocation of 7.5% seats for students from the STs and 15% from SCs.

Similarly, 23.2% seats went to applicants from the OBCs against the 27% mandated by reservation. Remaining 65.6%, or roughly two-thirds of all the seats, went to GC applicants.

The IITs have often cited the lack of applicants from the marginalised communities for the situation. However, the RTI data reveal quite the opposite.

#### Five-year period

The RTI query data covered 3,279 Ph.D. admissions made from among 95,445 applicants in the five-year period from 2015 to 2019 in the four popular departments of civil (CE), electrical (EE), computer science (CSE), and mechanical (ME) engineering in the IITs of Madras, Bombay, Delhi, Kharagpur, and Kharagpur.

These five IITs accounted for nearly 60% of all Ph.D. admissions made by all 23 IITs. Within these five IITs, the four departments included in the analysis accounted for roughly 25% of all the admissions made in around 80 different departments offering Ph.D.

The trend of acceptance rate being significantly higher for GC students is more pronounced in the Delhi, Madras, Bombay and Kan-

#### Skewed acceptance rate

Ph.D. admissions into four departments across five IITs (Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and Kharagpur) between 2015 and 2019 show that the acceptance rates for students from SC, ST and OBC categories were lower than the General Category students

A	B	C	D	E	F
Category	Students applied	Students admitted	Acceptance rate % (C/B)	% among applied (B/total)	% among admitted (C/total)
General	59,068	2,363	4%	61.9%	72.1%
OBC	23,549	638	2.7%	24.7%	19.5%
SC	11,019	238	2.16%	11.5%	7.3%
ST	1,809	40	2.2%	1.9%	1.2%
Total	95,445	3,279	-	-	-

Students admitted if...		
C	...reservation quota was followed	...acceptance rate is 4% for all
2,363	1,656	2,363
638	885	942
238	492	441
40	246	72

pur IITs. Though the skewed acceptance rate was observed in IIT Kharagpur also, it did marginally better.

In absolute numbers, only 238 of the 11,019 SC applicants and 40 of the 1,809 ST applicants got selected, according to the RTI data.

The disparity is more visible when the proportion of each category of applicants was compared with their proportion among those who gained admission.

The percentage of GC students among those admitted was always higher than their percentage among those applied. However, the converse was true for OBC,

SC and ST candidates. Their percentages among those admitted was always lower than their respective percentages among applicants.

For instance, in IIT Delhi, while 63.3% of all applicants were from GC, they accounted for 76.3% among those admitted. In contrast, the percentage of OBC, SC and ST candidates dropped from 22.9%, 11.9% and 1.9% in the application stage to 17%, 6% and 0.7%, respectively, in the admission stage.

Few of the specific instances where the skewed admission rate was striking included the January 2019 admission cycle in EEE in

IIT Delhi. Of the 195 SC applicants, only three were selected (acceptance rate of 1.5%) while none were selected from the 30 ST applicants. In contrast, 50 students were selected from the 1,071 GC applicants (4.7%).

In the July 2016 admission cycle in EEE in IIT Kanpur, 29 candidates were selected from 396 GC applicants (7.3%) while not a single one of the 46 SC applicants made it.

**Bucking the trend**  
Interestingly, data from IIT Guwahati painted a different picture, countering the explanations for the dispari-

ty in other IITs.

According to data on 456 admissions and 13,033 applicants provided by IIT Guwahati, the acceptance rates for students from marginalised communities were roughly similar or even higher than GC students.

While the acceptance rate for GC candidates was 3.3%, it was 4% for OBCs, 3.4% for SCs, and 4.9% for STs.

While IIT Guwahati also failed to fulfil the reservation-mandated allocation of seats, it was the only major IIT that came closest to the desired numbers. The percentage of OBC, SC and ST candidates among those admitted were respectively 21%, 12.3% and 5.5%.

#### Selection bias'

Responding to the data, Professor and Chair in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University Ajantha Subramanian said it was far more likely that the failure to fill the reserved seats was due to selection bias.

Professor Subramanian, who has written on the workings of upper caste privileges in the IITs in her book *The Caste of Merit*, told *The Hindu*, "There has been long-standing opposition among IIT administrators and faculty to reservations, which they see as a form of unjust government intervention in their meritocracy."

According to data on 456 admissions and 13,033 applicants provided by IIT Guwahati, the acceptance rates for students from marginalised communities were roughly similar or even higher than GC students.

Pointing out that the number of applicants from reserved categories was many times higher than the reserved seats, it urged the IITs to follow reservation in letter and spirit.

*The Hindu* reached out to the six IITs for their comment. IIT Delhi and IIT Kharagpur did not respond to repeated queries.

The other IITs ruled out the possibility of any bias in the selection process, and said the admissions were conducted in a fair manner. Confirming that the reservation policies were followed in all seats funded by the Education Ministry and different cut-off marks were followed for reserved category students, they said efforts were being made to fill seats as per reservation.

IIT Guwahati did not directly answer a question on reasons for the acceptance rate being uniform. The institute, however, said it was working towards admission policies to ensure all seats under reserved categories were filled.

(To be concluded)

₹8 crore spent on farm laws campaign'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre has spent almost ₹8 crore on a publicity campaign for three new farm reform laws, including myth busters, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar told the Rajya Sabha in a written response to a question on Friday.

In response to a question about the Centre's time-bound proposal to end farm protests, Mr. Tomar made no mention of the proposal given to unions for suspension of implementation of the laws for a year and a half. Instead, he only mentioned the government's push for a clause-wise discussion of the laws versus the unions' demand for repeal.

The query from Jharna Das Baidya of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) asked for "the details of time-bound proposal of government to overcome the struggle of farmers".

## Rahul accuses PM of 'cowardice'

Modi has given away land to China, betrayed sacrifices of our Army, he alleges

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

A day after the Union government announced that India and China had reached an agreement on disengagement at the Eastern Ladakh border, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "cowardice" and "giving away Indian territory to China".

On Thursday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh informed Parliament that Indian and Chinese troops had agreed on disengagement on both sides of the Pangong Tso (lake) in a "phased, coordinated and verified manner".

At a press conference at the party headquarters, Mr. Gandhi said the Indian territory was up to Finger 4 in the Pangong area where the Indian post used to be located, but now the government had moved back to Finger 3. It was China that could claim success, as Mr. Modi had "handed over a portion of



Tough talk: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressing the media at the AIIC headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. ■ PTI

*Bharat Mata* [Mother India] to them". "Why has Prime Minister Modi given up Indian territory to the Chinese? This is the question that needs to be answered by him and the Defence Minister," he stressed and charged Mr. Modi with "betraying the sacrifices of our Army".

While the Army, the Air Force and the Navy were ready to take on China, the Prime Minister was not. The forces had "risked every-

thing they had to capture" the Kailash range but the government had now asked them to move back without spelling out "for what", he said.

Most important, the Chinese were still in strategically important areas such as the Dapsang Plains, Gogra, Hot Springs, he said, and questioned the Defence Minister for "not uttering a word about these areas".

"It is absolutely 100% cowardice to give our holy

land. The Prime Minister is a coward who cannot stand up to the Chinese. That's the fact, and he is spitting on the sacrifice of our Army," he alleged.

**Lauds armed forces**  
Accompanied by the Congress's Lok Sabha leader, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, and party general secretaries K.C. Venugopal and Randeep Surjewala, Mr. Gandhi lauded the efforts of the armed forces in protecting the borders. "None in India" should be allowed to undermine them, he said. "I think the people should be enraged. I am surprised the press is behaving the way it is. You [the press] have a responsibility to raise these things," he said. He had full faith in the capability of the armed forces, he said. "It is the responsibility of the Prime Minister to protect the territory of this country. He has ceded Indian territory to the Chinese. It's his responsibility to solve it," he added.

## Kharge to lead Opposition in RS

Incumbent Ghulam Nabi Azad's term ends on February 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge is all set to become the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, as incumbent Ghulam Nabi Azad's term ends on February 15.

A letter from Congress President Sonia Gandhi was sent to Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu's office to inform the Upper House of Mr. Azad's replacement.

Former Law Minister and



Mallikarjun Kharge

senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid was among the first leaders to congratulate Mr. Kharge.

## Drop charges against Faruqui'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

An international group of artists, comedians, writers and activists on Friday called for the charges against comedian Munawar Faruqui to be dropped. They stated that the recent case against him had implications on the freedom of speech.

Along with him, five others were also arrested.

The public statement signed by 110 people said: "Mr. Faruqui has now been released on bail, but the charges against him in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh remain. We call for the dropping or dismissal of these trumped up charges."

Mr. Faruqui was arrested for allegedly hurting religious sentiments.

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**INTERVIEW FOR RECRUITMENT ON CONTRACT BASIS TO THE POST OF SENIOR RESIDENTS AND JUNIOR RESIDENTS**

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for the post of Senior Residents and Junior Residents on contract basis. The last date for receipt of application is 27.02.2021 by 5.00 p.m.

The details regarding vacancies, age limit, educational qualifications, remuneration, method of selection, other conditions etc., can be viewed in the official website [www.igmcri.com](http://www.igmcri.com)

F.N.183(4) / IGMCR/RI/Adm/Est.II/SR-JR/Recr./2020 Director i/c

Director i/c

■ NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited upto 5.00 p.m on 15.03.2021 for **admission to Ph.D Degree in Siddha** in Six Specialties for the academic year 2020-21 in the National Institute of Siddha, Tambaran Sanatorium, Chennai-600 047. Selection will be based on the marks scored in the Entrance examination to be conducted for this purpose, applicable rules and regulations, reservation policy & other criteria. Detailed Prospectus and Application form can be downloaded from our website [www.nischennai.org](http://www.nischennai.org) from 13.02.2021.

DIRECTOR

**ଓଡିଶା ଆଦର୍ଶ ବିଦ୍ୟାଲୟ ସଙ୍ଗଠନ**  
**ODISHA ADARSHA VIDYALAYA SANGATHAN**  
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#### Advertisement

Applications are invited in prescribed format eligible candidates for filling up the Post of 01 (one) **Financial Consultant** to be engaged at State Office, Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan, Odisha, Bhubaneswar on contractual basis. The detailed advertisement is available in Website: [www.oav.edu.in](http://www.oav.edu.in). The last date for receipt of application is 25.02.2021. The mode of receipt of application is Reg

# Relief operation on in Chamoli

Death toll rises to 38; 11 of the recovered bodies have been identified so far

DEVESH K. PANDEY  
VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The rescue operation at the Tapovan hydel project tunnel in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand continued on Friday, following confirmation that there was no immediate danger of the water level rising in the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers due to the formation of a lake upstream.

"Scientists from the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun, carried out an aerial survey of the lake. They confirmed water discharge from the lake," said an official, adding that scientists had indicated there was no immediate threat of a flood in the two rivers.

Earlier on Friday, following reports about the formation of a lake, a State Disaster Response Force team of eight personnel, five porters and two guides reached the spot to assess the situation. It is also readying a temporary helipad. More information would be available once the



**Fresh build-up:** A view of the 350-metre-long lake that formed after the avalanche in Chamoli. ■ UTTARAKHAND POLICE

team returned, said Deputy Inspector-General of Police (Law and Order) Niles Anand Bharne.

At the Tapovan tunnel, where about 35 workers are trapped, an Indo-Tibetan Border Police official said the drilling to study a silt

flushing channel located about 12 metres below was completed late on Friday evening.

"As informed, a 75-mm-diameter drilling has been done. This is good sign as there is no water/slush pressure observed in the silt

flushing tunnel. However, a camera could not be inserted due to the presence of slush midway. Drilling of a larger hole [250-300 mm] has been planned now and the machine is being deployed at the location immediately. Meanwhile, sludge removal from the main tunnel is in progress," the official said.

The death toll in the aftermath of the snow avalanche rose to 38 on Friday. The identities of 11 of the dead have been determined so far. One of them, Basharat A. Zargar, an engineer posted at the Rishiganga power project site, was a resident of Soura in Srinagar, said a National Disaster Response Force official.

While 30 bodies have been found in Chamoli, three were recovered from Rudraprayag and one from Tehri Garhwal. "DNA sampling is being done to facilitate the identification of the victim," Mr. Bharne said. Eighteen severed body parts have been found from different places in Chamoli.

and responsible manner by keeping the reactions to such content in mind. Such reflection would minimise offensive posts. Provocation should not be the objective. Sharing of views for better perspectives should be," he said.

Samajwadi Party MP Chaudhary Sukhram Singh Yadav on Friday had raised the issue of his Twitter account being withheld. "I have not done anything to direct Twitter to suspend my account. I only posted what-

# Inter-marriages can reduce caste tensions, says court

SC commends young people showing the 'way forward'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Educated youngsters are showing the way forward to reduce caste and community tensions in India by tying the knot in inter-marriages, the Supreme Court said in a recent judgment.

"Educated younger boys and girls are choosing their life partners, which, in turn, is a departure from the earlier norms of society where caste and community play a major role. Possibly, this is the way forward where caste and community tensions will reduce by such inter-marriages," a Bench, led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, said.

Justice Kaul quoted B.R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste*, in which the Father of the Constitution said, "I am convinced that the real remedy is intermarriage. Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin, and unless this feeling of kinship, of being



kindred, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling – the feeling of being aliens – created by caste will not vanish."

Even as more and more cases challenging religious conversion laws enacted by several States reach the Supreme Court, Justice Kaul observed in the judgment on February 8 that "consent of the family or community or clan is not necessary once the two adult individuals agree to enter into a wedlock and that their consent has to be piously given primacy".

The judgment came in a case filed by a lecturer, an MBA graduate, who fled from Bengaluru to Delhi to marry a man, an M. Tech. and assistant professor.

The investigating officer, on a complaint filed by her relatives, directed her to leave her husband and be present at the police station. She refused, saying they were legally married and it was her choice to do so.

The court quashed the case against the couple and directed the police authorities to not only counsel the investigating officers but devise a training programme to deal with such cases for the benefit of the police personnel.

"We expect the police authorities to take action on this behalf in the next eight weeks to lay down some guidelines and training programmes how to handle such socially sensitive cases," the Supreme Court ordered.

Chanda Kochhar granted bail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

A Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court on Friday granted bail to former managing director and chief executive officer of ICICI Bank Chanda Kochhar in an Enforcement Directorate case pertaining to the bank and Videocon Group.

After taking cognisance of the chargesheet filed by the ED on January 30, the special court had summoned all accused including Ms. Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar and Videocon Group promoter Venugopal Dhoot.

Special judge A.A. Nandgaonkar granted bail on a cash bond of ₹5 lakh and directed Ms. Kochhar not to leave India. On November 12, 2020, the court rejected the default bail granted to Mr. Kochhar. The ED has relied upon an FIR registered by the CBI charging Ms. Kochhar with cheating and criminal conspiracy and causing loss to ICICI Bank.

## Against curbing social media: V-P

Venkaiah Naidu says platforms should not be misused and abused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

At a time when the government is involved in a tug-of-war with social media giant Twitter, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu called for 'moderation' in the use of social media to prevent abuse.

Speaking to presspersons at the end of the first part of the Budget session, he said while he was against controlling the social media, the principle of moderation should be followed. "Content for social media should be generated in a restrained



Venkaiah Naidu

platforms should not be converted into war theatre and principle of moderation should be followed. "Content for social media should be generated in a restrained

and responsible manner by keeping the reactions to such content in mind. Such reflection would minimise offensive posts. Provocation should not be the objective. Sharing of views for better perspectives should be," he said.

Samajwadi Party MP Chaudhary Sukhram Singh Yadav on Friday had raised the issue of his Twitter account being withheld. "I have not done anything to direct Twitter to suspend my account. I only posted what-

## Triangular fight in Bengal, says Yechury

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Communist Party of India (Marxist) Sitaram Yechury said on Friday that contrary to the perception being created by the media, the Assembly election in West Bengal will be a triangular fight where the Left democratic secular alliance is the most promising alternative.

"However hard the media houses try to project the West Bengal election as bipolar, West Bengal is going to witness a triangular fight," he said at a press conference at the party headquarters in Kolkata.

Mr. Yechury expressed hope that an understanding between the Left parties and the Congress on seat-sharing would be announced soon and the Left democratic secular alternative would be the rising political force in the State.

The Left and Congress had announced seat-sharing in almost two-thirds of the 294 Assembly seats in the State.

Asked about the resignation of Trinamool Congress leader Dinesh Trivedi from the Rajya Sabha, he said that party had been reduced to a platform where people were boarding trains every day.

## SC seeks response on petition against Twitter

Plea says hate speech is promoted

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday decided to examine a plea that says the social media platform Twitter is "sympathetic to terrorist groups".

The petition alleged that 35 million Twitter handles in India are bogus.

his case. He referred to how the Home Ministry had, on February 1, directed Twitter to block 250 handles "promoting fake and provocative content".

Mr. Goenka said the Delhi Special Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) had made a statement that 300 Twitter handles were generated from Pakistan between January 13 and 18 to organise the tractor rally to disrupt the Republic Day celebrations. Twitter "did not care to censor" these handles, the petition alleged.

The petition said a mechanism or law needed to be put in place for social media accounts in order "to stop the hatred, fake, investigative and other news which are contrary to the law".

It said 10% each of the 35 million Twitter handles in India were bogus.

## President will decide on Rajoana's plea

Solicitor-General points to gravity of facts in Beant Singh assassination case

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government informed the Supreme Court on Friday that President Ram Nath Kovind will take a decision on the mercy plea of Balwant Singh Rajoana, who has been in jail for 26 years for the assassination of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh.

"The process has started. The President will take a decision," Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta informed a Bench led by Chief Justice of

India Sharad A. Bobde.

Mr. Mehta specifically drew the court's attention to the gravity of the facts in the case, saying Rajoana was "accused of the killing of a former Punjab Chief Minister".

The court asked Mr. Mehta to indicate a time frame by which the decision would be taken. "I cannot speak on behalf of the Honourable President," Mr. Mehta replied flatly.

"We know that, but you can speak on behalf of the

government," Chief Justice Bobde reacted.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi said the mercy plea was filed in 2012. "The man has been waiting for several years," Mr. Rohatgi objected to the six-week adjournment.

Rajoana's plea for presidential mercy has been hanging in limbo despite the government having decided over a year ago, in 2019, to spare his life in commemoration of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

In his petition to the Supreme Court from his jail cell, he said his repeated pleas to the government about the fate of the mercy plea were met with silence.

The court said the law was settled that once the government had decided to recommend a presidential pardon for a condemned man, the pendency of appeals in the Supreme Court of his co-accused cannot delay the process initiated under Article 72 (presidential pardon) of the Constitution.

## COVID-19 vaccine for people over 50 years from March

Those above 20 and with co-morbidities also to get shots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The population above 50 years of age and those with co-morbidities in the 20 to 50 age group are scheduled to start receiving the COVID-19 vaccine from March, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Director Randeep Guleria said on Friday.

He was replying to questions related to the COVID-19 vaccination drive at an interactive programme organised by the Health Ministry.

Explaining that it was not clear for how long the COVID-19 vaccination offered protection, Dr. Guleria said: "A good amount of antibodies will develop in about 14 days after the second vaccine shot. Though the exact time length about the protection offered is not clear, we believe that the cover will last for at least eight months, or may be longer."

As people travelled and became carriers of viruses, he said, "everyone needs to be vaccinated globally to control the spread. There-



**First round:** The Health Ministry said that 77 lakh people had been administered the vaccines so far. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

fore, all countries need to get their share of vaccine."

The Ministry said the distribution of daily deaths among States and Union Territories in the 24 hours reflected a significant decline in the number, with 18 reporting no new mortalities. India reported 9,309 new confirmed cases and 15,858 new recoveries during the period.

The Ministry said that a total of 77,66,319 beneficiaries had been vaccinated till 6 p.m. as per provisional reports. The main petition will be heard on March 16.

## HC extends interim relief to Arnab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government agreed to not take coercive action against Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami and other employees of ARGOutlier Media Private Limited till March 5 in the alleged television ratings point (TRP) manipulation case.

A Division Bench of the Bombay High Court with Justices S.S. Shinde and Manish Pitale was hearing a plea filed by ARG Outlier Media challenging the investigation undertaken by Mumbai Police in the TRP scam. The court noted that the rejoinder affidavit filed by ARG Outlier was of 105 pages.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the Maharashtra government, said, "There are documents and pleading that were not part of the petition. If they begin arguments, it should be done without relying on the documents. There are so many items that are not part of the petition. I will have to file something."

According to the site, NewsClick is owned by PPK NEWSCLICK Studio Private Limited. It was founded by Mr. Purkayastha. NewsClick said that as mentioned in its editorial statement of February 10, "these raids appear to be part of a trend of deploying government agencies against those who refuse to toe the establishment's line".

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## ED searches on for 80 hours: NewsClick

News platform premises raided

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Digital news platform NewsClick on Friday said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) searches at the house of its editor-in-chief Prabin Purkayastha had been going on for the past 80 hours.

"Despite this harassment, NewsClick has cooperated fully with the authorities, and will continue to do so. We have nothing to hide, as we have operated completely in accordance with the law."

We are, however, disturbed to note reports in various media outlets based on information allegedly provided by senior officials of the Enforcement Directorate. The selective leak of misleading facts is nothing but a malicious attempt to smear the image of NewsClick and discredit our journalism. It also constitutes a violation of the sanctity of the legal and investigative process."

NewsClick said that as mentioned in its editorial statement of February 10, "these raids appear to be part of a trend of deploying government agencies against those who refuse to toe the establishment's line".

## Editors Guild webinar disrupted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India on Friday said the repeated disruptions of its webinar on reporting in Naxal areas by unknown persons was an attack on the freedom of speech and demanded police investigation.

The guild had organised a webinar via Zoom on challenges of reporting from Naxal areas as a part of its series "Unheard Voices: Reporting from Conflict Zones", it said. The webinar was to start at 3 p.m. on Friday.

"Some of the participants started posting frivolous song videos. The meeting host tried shutting down the window of each such guest, but the number of such disruptors kept on increasing. Soon, some of them started posting obscene messages on group chat as well as shared screens with pornographic content. Eventually the meeting had to be ended without even one of the guest speakers getting a chance to speak," the guild said, seeking a Cyber Crime Cell probe.

Police in Bulandshahr and Kanpur districts of Uttar Pradesh have lodged FIRs against persons accused of trying to dupe people in the name of collecting funds for the Ram temple in Ayodhya through fraudulent receipts and slips. In Bara police station in Kanpur, a case was lodged under Section 420 (cheating) of the IPC. In Bulandshahr, two were held in a case where receipts were printed in the name of the Ram temple trust.

4 booked for Ayodhya temple fund fraud  
LUCKNOW

CMK

AN-ND-NDE



## Instapick

**We Are:** Chennai's Indira Nagar railway station has been a hive of activity for the past two months, as the longest panoramic mural in India was being created. Titled *We Are*, it highlights non-discrimination of HIV positive persons. Created by city-based graffiti artist A-KILL and St+art artist Khatra, it features diverse faces against an abstract background and red ribbons. @startindia on Instagram.



## Talking Point

**Framing Britney:** The pop star has been the subject of several jokes since her very public 2007 breakdown. Now *The New York Times* documentary, which charts her legal struggles, has renewed the fan-led #FreeBritney movement. Since its premiere last Friday, it has racked up over a million tweets, with comics like Sarah Silverman expressing regret at her jokes at Britney's expense.

### SPIT TAKE

# Open letter to Rihanna

Educating the singer on nationality, rights and the consequences of having an opinion

KRISHNA SHASTRI DEVULAPALLI

Dear Barbadian Behen,

Following your thoughtless and most unnecessary tweet, as a proud Indian, I have no choice but to write this letter to put things in perspective for you.

#### Your position

As you well know, there are two types of West Indians. The first kind is a superior race of noble, fair, courageous folk who are never wrong. They eat *khakhra*, *thepla*, *dholka* and *fafda*, and do the *garba* with devotional *majama* during *Navratri*. Examples of this upstanding race are Nirav Modi, Amisha Patel, the Gir Lion and Amitabh Bach-

chan (yes). They are so admirable that our entire ancient nation is currently in the process of following what has come to be known as the West Indian Model

Then there is Type Two. The set *you* unfortunately belong to. Let's just say this group possesses none of the qualities associated with the world over with Type One. Your sort is known to spend time lazing about at picturesque beaches in minimal gear, sporting dreadlocks, drinking rum, smoking hallucinogenic herbs, eating highly unsanskari things like barbecued pig tails, and twerking.

#### Our rights

Please note, in Chapter 6, Subsection (iii) of our ancient text, *Sri Mahad Jhajjanaka Charita* (revised edition, 2014), these four points are made with extreme clarity.

A. As per the incontestable celestial rights bestowed on us, all *pardesis* may – and *should* – praise us freely and fearlessly, and embrace us in a *sanskari* fashion when we go to meet them for important multi-billion dollar deals.

B. *Pardesis* are encouraged to sell us cool watches and suits, serve as background dancers for our patriotic heroes in song sequences,

practise yoga, and give us jobs as CEOs.

C. However, all *pardesis* must completely refrain from criticising us in any manner. Unless, of course, it is to do with urban naxals, librus, *tukde-tukdes* or Nehru, in which case we will laugh uproariously, *lol!*

D. Finally, we, the special blessed few, *can* – and *will* – tell white, black and other multi-hued *pardesis*, how to lead their lives, who to vote for and how not to wear revealing clothes as and when we feel like it.

#### The consequence

The most upsetting thing about your unwarranted tweet, dear Barbadian behen, is the deleterious effect it has had on our tireless cru-



■ ILLUSTRATION:  
SATHESH VELLINEZHI

sader, our modern day *Mahatmi*, Kangana Ranaut. You diverted her from her righteous path by highlighting this minor issue regarding a few farmers.

This inadvertently made her lose track of the real problems this country is facing.

I speak of Malaika Arora and her dog Casper, of course. And the dis-honour they are bringing our great nation. Deflected by your tweet, Kangana hasn't noticed that every single time Malaika – sporting yet another gym look – takes Casper out for a walk, the nepotistic canine urinates with impunity on the nearest parked car.

Or, for that matter, that Alia Bhatt is in the Maldives wearing a bikini and dancing to a Hrithik Roshan song. Or that the nepotistic kids party that KJo threw for Yash and Roohi had Taimur in attendance. Or that Hrithik Roshan (him again) and Susanne Roshan *both* attended Rakesh Roshan's party. Or how Taapsee Pannu and Swara Bhasker are posing in bargain basement rip-offs of Kangana's carefully-curated designer looks.

What will happen to our nation, our culture, if Kangana doesn't remedy these injustices?

Whatever you do, Barbadian behen, in the interest of global peace, stay out of Kangana's way. Please let her work, work, work, work. And if you must sing, why can't you emulate Falguni Pathak?

Yours *sanskarily*,  
A concerned Indian

*Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a satirist. He has written four books and edited an anthology.*

## Pick of the week

**Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss.**



#### How to 'eco' network

If you want to navigate the greenwashing maze and learn how brands are improving their sustainability index, sign up for virtual sessions at *Ethical New York Fashion Week* (NYFW). Themes include Exploring Made in Covid, Building Social Enterprises, Expanding Circularity, and more. February 15 to 19. Meanwhile, eco-social network *WeNaturalists* has launched a mobile application that brings together everyone from forest rangers and nature guides to environmentalists and photographers. On Google Play and iOS.



#### JJ's Instagram show

Going the Sabyasachi and Tarun Tahiliani way, designer **JJ Valaya** will launch the second chapter of his *Bursa* couture collection on Instagram. The SS21 collection's highlight is the Emroid bejewelled border. Tomorrow, at 8.30 pm, @jjvalaya on Instagram. The Spring Summer RTW collection from **Genes Lecocet Hemant**, titled *A New Symbiosis*, draws inspiration from nature. Men and women can shop from clean silhouettes featuring simple details. From ₹2,000 on genesleco.net/theant.com and in stores.



#### Jaipur Lit Fest goes online

Like most events in the past year, the 2021 edition of the **Jaipur Literature Festival** is going virtual. The lineup includes eminent speakers such as authors Mark Haddon and Avni Doshi, journalist Anne Applebaum, poet Moin Mir, historian Ramachandra Guha, and cultural theorist Ranjit Hoskote. The 10-day event will cover myriad themes: history, politics, environment, technology and AI, poetry and music, food and literature, and geopolitics. From February 19 to 28. Details and registration: jaipurliteraturefestival.org



#### Shiny happy people

Scouting for V-day gifts? Check out **Outhouse Jewellery**'s tech accessories. Featured on the OH V Birdy collection, the phone bag (₹24,250) and Apple AirPods case (₹15,500) are crafted in bright red vegan leather. If you're going traditional, **EcoSareeClub** has a new range of saris, in hues of red, made from natural wild silk.

• 9667793940. Team this with **Amrapali Jewels**' new ruby collection comprising chokers, earrings and necklaces. For details, log on to amrapalijewels.com.



#### For the bookworm

To commemorate a decade in the fashion industry, designer **Arpita Mehta** turns author with *The Mirror*. Featuring the likes of actors Sonam Kapoor, Madhuri Dixit Nene, and Malaika Arora, it comes with campaign shoots and candid captures. View on arpitaamehtaofficial.com. In the virtual world, **Audible** joins **Alexa**'s third anniversary celebrations by offering three audiobooks, including Ruskin Bond's *Great Stories for Children* (narrated by Adnan Kapadia), for free to Alexa users in India until February 28.



#### Some gourmet love

Upsize V-Day with a monster cookie from **Ricky's Cookies**. You'll find fresh strawberries from Ooty paired with Valrhona's Ivoire white chocolate (35% cocoa butter) and white pepper from Coorg (₹1,050 per piece). There's a **Valentine's Day theme brunch** at The Oberoi's 360° (₹3,959 excluding taxes and alcohol, per person); Masala Library by Jiggs Kalra has a chef's tasting menu (₹5,000+taxes per couple); The Lodhi is offering a five-course dinner with alcohol at Pool Café (₹14,000+taxes per couple).



Luxury car maker **Maserati** has launched the 2021 Ghibli and Hybrid models in India. Inspired by auto designer Giorgetto Giugiaro's 'boomerang' rear lights, watch out for the tail lights of the new MY21. From ₹1.15 crore upwards. Details: maserati.com. For those who prefer two wheels, **Triumph's Tiger 850 Sport** hits the market with a re-tuned 888cc BS6 engine. Access road and rain modes via a five-inch TFT display. The entry-level model is priced at ₹11.95 lakh ex-showroom. Details: triumphmotorcycles.in



VINITA MAKHija

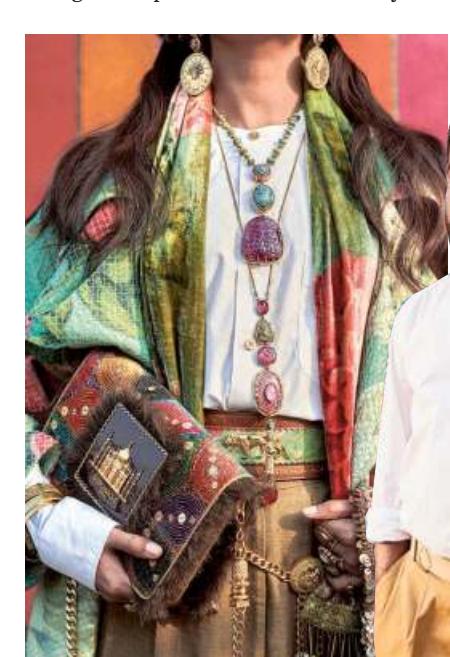
**Sabyasachi: Back at Bergdorfs**

The designer talks about bringing his saris and accessories to New York's luxury retailer and breaks his silence about the Aditya Birla Fashion partnership

"My new line for Bergdorf is a historic moment. Not only are they acknowledging an Indian designer, but they are acknowledging the Indian consumer," he says. This, because for the first time, Bergdorf Goodman will be selling saris and *lehangas* among others, right next to international luxury brands. It is the first time an Indian designer has been invited to sell Indian clothes and not just its sensibility. The timing is particularly sweet to him, as "US Vice President Kamala Harris just broke the glass ceiling, and there are so many Indians on US President Joe Biden's cabinet".

Having returned disillusioned from NYC as a young designer ("everybody wanted a piece of India as long as it wasn't too Indian"), he had promised himself that he would return to the city only on his own terms. Bergdorf is the biggest seal of approval for any designer. While his own NYC store launches in 2022, this move is a strong opening statement.

**Blue hair and silk trench coats**  
The collection and campaign imagery are in his signature palette and is one of his youn-



(Top left and above) From the collection for Bergdorf Goodman and (right) Sabyasachi Mukherjee

**Lockdown skills**  
Mukherjee, who has a lovely home with a wild garden in Kolkata, started gardening during the pandemic. He says he finally took up cooking and candidly shares that he couldn't even boil eggs before.

Apart from this, his parents moved in with him and he finally had the time to spend with them.

gest and breeziest iterations yet. The clothes could easily be gender agnostic (he echoes this generation's voice – conversations on sexuality and gender are no longer debates and should be beyond controversy). One of the models sports blue hair, a departure from his preference towards slicked back hair or big bouffant styles for the bridal campaigns.

In a true celebration of Indian crafts and heritage, quilted silk trench coats in solid colours and loungewear (approx ₹48,000 to ₹1.77 lakh), his signature mixed-media print kaftans, pashmina scarves (approx ₹73,000 to ₹6.99 lakh) and 24K gold Benarsi saris (₹3.97 lakh) make the collection.

There is also a new fine jewellery edit (₹3.61 lakh to ₹2.5 crore). Not bad, keeping in mind that he turned the collection around in a record 60 days.

Bergdorf's will also mark the global launch of the Sabyasachi handbag collection, featuring embroidery and unique motifs, ranging from approximately ₹17,000 to ₹1.3 lakh.

#### Enough with the memes

What does he have to say about ABFRL's acquisition in the Sabyasachi brand, reportedly worth ₹398 crore? "A lot of designers enter partnerships as distress sales. Our brand is a profit-making company," is his response. Mukherjee, who turns 47 this month, wants to use the next decade or so to build the company

and choose a successor to last beyond his years. He is well aware of the rumours and jokes, though. "People have been asking if I am going to be available at Pantaloons now." He makes it clear he is a couture brand and that partnerships are back-end strategies to grow businesses. "Mr Birla and I have immense respect for how the other has built their business. We are clear on wanting to grow the brand together from strength to strength. Value systems cannot be replaced by money." He feels responsible for the people who have worked with him for years and their families – in part, why he entered the strategic partnership with ABFRL.

#### An inclusive manifesto

While Mukherjee is known to be an astute businessman, he is also sentimental. "The brand belongs to the people now," he says.. And of course, there are plans to introduce more products with accessible price points within accessories, and venture into beauty and wellness.

His on-hold H&M collection would have been that thought in motion. "As a middle-class boy, I could never go to a disco or visit malls. I couldn't afford it. I know what it feels to be excluded. H&M was my great moment of joy, to be able to engage with a larger audience." He is under an NDA, but hints that the collection will come back.

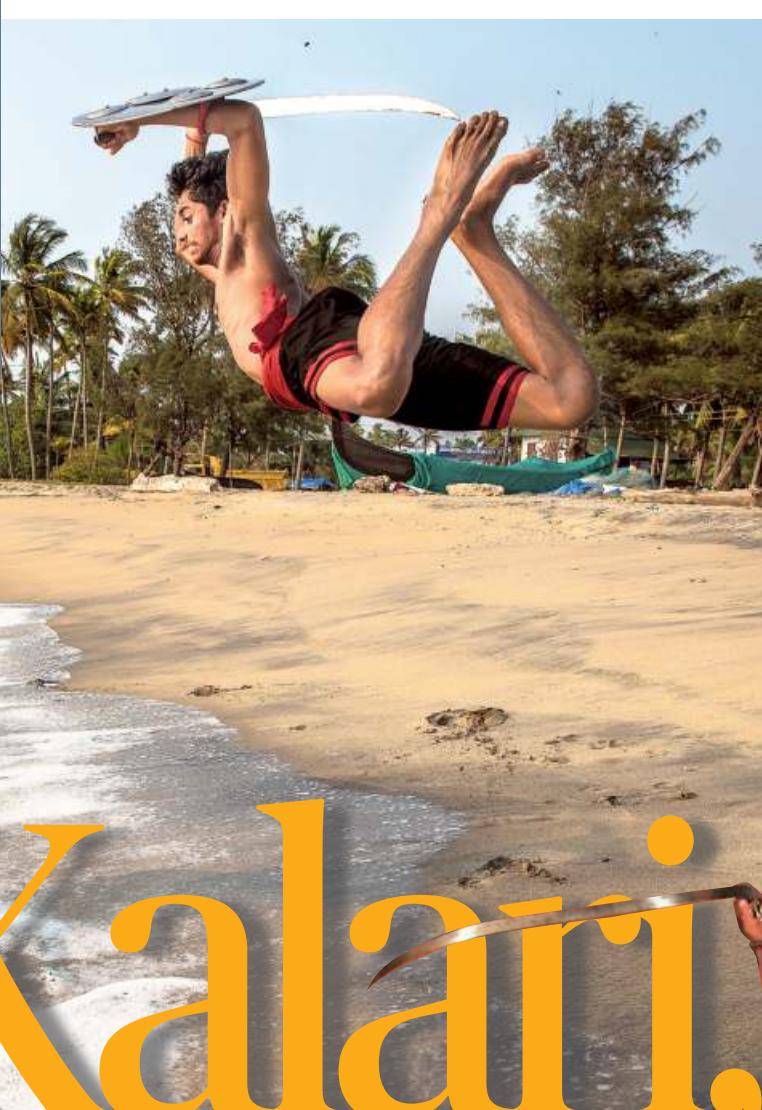
#### But first, India

"It is time for the world to realise that India is not only a back-end service centre for global luxury brands," Mukherjee observes, adding that it irks him when people say India cannot deliver quality. "The only thing India hasn't been able to do is stand up for itself and market itself well!" The pandemic has shifted our value systems, that is evident. The focus is on *karigari*, and products that carry history. To a discerning shopper who can look beyond marketed luxury, India is at the forefront.

For brand Sabyasachi though, an India-first manifesto has been its North star from the beginning. Beyond the glam campaigns and shows, his clothes are simple. There's a *sherwani* or *bundi jacket* for a man, and a *lehenga*, a sari or *salwar kameez* for the woman; no unrealistic trails or power shoulders. The clothes don't confuse you, and they'll last you a lifetime – that is his true gift to India, and now the world.



You know things are headed towards becoming public consumption when someone makes an app (Kalari). Puducherry-based Maneesh VM, who sketched the steps, and his student Jules Morel from France, who added the tech about three years ago, are now out with a book based on it. *Kalaripayattu: Guide Book* (₹449 on amazon.in) is for beginners, to help understand concepts, phrases, and moves. Kshetra Kalari and Yoga Research Centre in Auroville has also just begun to study the body's bio-mechanics around the practice.



(Clockwise from left) Students at Paramu Ashan Memorial Kalari, Kochi, practising the sword and shield fight; Ranjan Mularatt of Kalari Gurukulam; Mularatt with a pupil; Kajal Srivastava; and students at Kalari Gurukulam



# Kalari, the new yoga?

The martial art form is seeing a resurgence through Zoom classes, while its Instagram-worthy visuals and fitness aspects will only grow its popularity



SUNALINI MATHEW

It is 6.30 am on a Tuesday, and 20 of us, between the ages of eight and 48, watch and attempt to copy Lavanya Gladston's moves (*chuvadu*) and stances (*yadidu*). She does a series of warm-up jumps, push-ups, and a split without losing her breath, and though we're not different in age, my 43-year-old body just can't keep up with her Bharatanatyam-dancer-Kalaripayattu-practitioner's form.

"There's a whole bottom row of people who have switched off their videos," she says, referring to her Zoom screen, of the 40-year-olds who are too self-conscious to be seen by the younger people in the class. "But they're also the most diligent, never missing sessions, and always turning up on time. Many of them wish they'd come to Kalaripayattu earlier."

I've thought about learning Kalaripayattu before, the martial arts form calling me in my search for better body confidence, and better reaction time to men who casually bump into me on the road. The fact that the closest studio was 20 km away, that I wasn't thrilled about touching the large-bellied teacher's feet, and that the other students managed to gracefully touch their toes to their hands held high, kept me away. Then the pandemic struck and with the lockdown, everything went online.

**Online anonymity**  
Gladston, an architect, has students from outside of Chennai, where she is

based – even from the US and Canada – who would not have had access to her if it hadn't been for online classes. About 70% are women (for many of whom mobility in a city is a problem). And an online class is much less expensive (she charges ₹500 a month for two classes a week; most charge below ₹2,000).

"The idea is to create awareness," she says, talking of the impact the pandemic had on mental health and family finances. A martial art scores over a regular gym session because "you're learning an art form, with flexibility, balance, and core strengthening built into the movements," says Gladston, whose husband's friend posted about the class on the Facebook group Gurgaon Moms, after which she received calls from the North.

There are limitations, of course: there's no 42 x 21 foot mud pit, and bedrooms and living rooms seldom have enough space to take the large steps that the form demands, while terrace floors can cause chafing, since it is performed barefoot. The aim is to learn the sequence (what Gladston says should not be compromised), and take what you can from it, whether it is the breathing, the grounding, or the basic squats and leg lifts, which were a part of India's culture just a couple of generations ago.

**Find your reason**  
Today, most people come to enhance their dance or fitness practice, since the form is based on animal movements; and students learn to use their minds



and whole bodies to react to a threat. "Those who come for self defence may not be able to fend off a group of men, but they will gain the self-confidence, body awareness, stability, and the ability to think quickly," says Ranjan Mularatt, who runs the residential Kalari Gurukulam in Bengaluru and now does online classes.

During the lockdown, he found students enrolling for a clutch of reasons: to utilise the time on their hands, as a physical activity, and an immunity booster. With communication coming at us about adopting all things *desi* and turning to immunity-led practices, people were perhaps unwittingly drawn to something that gave them both. "Yoga is slow and just half an hour of Kalaripayattu can leave you sweating," says Mularatt, of the cardio-intensive format that also builds strength through its preparatory exercises.

**Kalaripayattu's appeal as a visual art – much like yoga was 10 years ago until it became a daily practice for many – is what got Jeff Schaeffer to begin photographing artists two years ago. In February 2020, the US-based photographer and Madathipparambil decided to put together a book. Through the lockdown, their work was stalled and so they used the time to connect with practitioners across the globe – Thailand, Poland, Dubai, Chile, Australia – stringing together a short sequence of phone-shot video to keep spirits up and try and establish the unity of the form.**

la alone. Murugan Pillai, who runs the Nithya Chaithanya Kalari Ayurveda Kendram in Delhi-NCR and Hyderabad, says a variant began in the 4th century BC. This version is now called Southern Kalari, a closely-guarded Shaivite practice in Tamil Nadu, with the sage Agasthya acknowledged as its first guru. "If you look at different martial arts forms across the world, they are closest to Southern Kalari," he says, pushing forward the thought that it was the root of even Shaolin and other forms.

What is now called Northern Kalari was propagated in the 4th century AD by Parshuram and is a Vaishnavite practice in Kerala, more accessible for today, with schools spread across the country, even the world.

**The next connect**  
Nithin Madathipparambil, a Kochi-based practitioner who also teaches yoga worldwide on Zoom, has seen in-person enrolments increasing. "Before the lockdown, there would be one or two people a week; now there are about five walk-ins." He believes eventually Kalaripayattu will be bigger than yoga, because "yoga and meditation talk about still energy. Kalari is about balanced energy; we still need to go out on the street and interact with people".

Kajal Srivastava, who lives in Delhi, agrees. She took it up three years ago, and hopes to see a *kalari* (training space) at every street corner some day. A former UPSC aspirant, she says it has transformed her as a person, boosting her body strength, her self-confidence, her immunity, and dispelling the depression that came on as she didn't make it through the tough exam. "I lost weight, my thyroid problem was resolved, and now I have muscles. This is where I belong," she concludes.



## FOOD SPOT

Malayali food is now available across the city, and here are the basic foods to start off with

## Kannur on my mind



RAHUL VERMA

I've been dreaming of a good Kerala meal for a while now. If all goes well, I hope to have a satiating Vishu feast in a couple of months at my Malayali friends' place. Since *sadya* is usually vegetarian, I thought I should, meanwhile, make the most of some fluffy *appam* and chicken stew. I went to the net and found that there were two new Kerala restaurants in my neighbourhood. I decided that I'd try both out.

The first was Kannur (Ph: 8750483283), and the second Mariyan (Ph: 8447127533), both in Mayur Vihar Phase III. From Kannur, I ordered some *parottas* (₹10 each), chicken curry (₹120), buffalo meat fry (₹120), tomato fry (₹50) and (by mistake) *kadhai paneer* (₹140). With taxes and delivery charges, the bill came to about ₹660.

From Mariyan, a few days later, we asked for the Mariyan Special Chettinad chicken curry (₹180) – though this is not from Kerala – buff meat dry fry (₹160) and *appam* (₹12 each).



(Top) Appam; Chettinad chicken curry  
•ISTOCKPHOTO

The writer is a seasoned food critic

On the two menus are also dishes such as vegetable *korma*, *kadala* curry, egg roast, *biryani* and various kinds of fish preparations.

I love both *parottas* and *appams*. Kannur's *parottas* were flaky and crisp. I had one *parotta* with the chicken curry gravy, which was nicely spicy, and the tomato fry, which was rather interesting – tart, but not overly so. Even though the *paneer* was not on my list, it turned out to be pretty good: the pieces were soft, and the gravy was thick and creamy.

I was looking forward to the buffalo meat fry, but that sorely disappointed me. I tried out a piece when it arrived, and found it much too hard. So I presume cooked it a bit, but even then it was too chewy. I had thought I'd have one *parotta* with the meat fry, but after bravely struggling with the meat, I gave up.

Mariyan's buffalo meat fry,



however, was delicious. It was a bit different from the ones that I've had over the years. For one, it didn't have the little coconut bits that the Kannur buff had (I really enjoy the fried coconut in this dish). Second, the meat had been cut into strips, like small fish fingers. And the pieces had been dredged with corn flour and masalas, and then fried. It had a heady flavour of garlic, and the cornflour gave it an enjoyable crunch.

The Chettinad chicken curry was delicious, too. The gravy was thick and had a coconutty taste, while the meat was so tender that it fell off the bone. I had the curry with two *appams* (which, despite the 6-odd-kilometre journey, were fluffy and soft when I had them for dinner). I missed not having *parottas* with the buffalo meat.

Well, that can soon be remedied; all that I need to do is make a call. I am glad I have these small Kerala eateries in my neighbourhood. There was a time, not so long ago, when I used to comb the areas around hospitals in search of good Kerala food. Hospitals meant staffers from Kerala, which, in turn, translated into good regional food. Now, these eateries can be found in all parts of Delhi. *Namaskaram*, I say to them.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

## Tears in Leicester Square

Parineeti Chopra and the team from *The Girl on the Train* discuss the last day of shoot and how they adapted the psychological thriller to give it their own spin

KARISHMA UPADHYAY

After a gruelling two-month start-to-finish schedule in London in late 2019, the cast and crew of *The Girl on the Train* found themselves at Leicester Square in the heart of the city. The moment director Ribhu Dasgupta called 'cut' after the last scene, the film's lead Parineeti Chopra broke down. "I was emotionally exhausted. I remember that last day's wrap – I was crying and Ribhu was crying. The whole unit was crying in the middle of Leicester Square because we were all drained in the most amazing way," she says during a Zoom interview.

*The Girl on the Train* is an official Hindi adaptation of Paula Hawkins' bestseller, which was also adapted by Hollywood in 2016, starring Emily Blunt, Rebecca Ferguson

son and Justin Theroux. The latest re-telling of the thriller that drops on Netflix later this month is the story of Meera (played by Chopra), a lawyer with a dark past and a broken marriage who begins to fixate on the perfect life of a couple she sees in their home while on her daily commute in a train.

### Route to adaptation

While the Emily Blunt version was transplanted to New York, Dasgupta chose to keep his version true to the book and set the story in London. "I wanted to adapt this novel and film for a long time, but I didn't have access to it. When I finished my last film with Reliance (Te3n starring Amitabh Bachchan, which was a remake of the 2013 South Korean thriller, Montage), Shibasish Sarkar (Group CEO, Reliance Enter-

tainment) offered it to me saying they have the rights to the book. I had read the book and I'd seen the Hollywood film, so I knew where I should go and where I shouldn't while adapting it," says Dasgupta. It was the way the story has been retold that got Aditi Rao Hydari excited to play Nusrat, the girl on the balcony. "There's a lot of 'Are you seeing what you are seeing or are you not?' that adds to the mysterious element," adds Hydari.

While making a film that's been adapted before, most actors prefer not to watch the source material but Chopra did, as a template for her personal growth as an actor. After all, Blunt's performance did win her a BAFTA and SAG Best Actress nomination.

Still from the film; (below) Ribhu Dasgupta  
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nation.

On the other end of the spectrum, is Chopra's co-star Avinash Tiwari, who is not a big fan of the Hollywood film. "I read this script and loved it. I think actors get all the credit for their performances, but I truly feel it is collaborative. Everything comes together to create a performance – your co-actors, your director and how he's looking at a story and what he wants to say in the film. These things really influence how you want to go ahead and create a performance," says the actor, who was last seen in Netflix's *Bulbul*.

### The OTT switch

*The Girl on the Train* was meant to be released in theatres last summer, when the pandemic hit and theatres shut. While Kirti Kulhari, who plays Aaliya Shergill, a cop in the film, believes 'nothing can replace that feeling of looking at a film or yourself on the big screen', she adds, "The way events have unfolded in the last year, the game has completely changed for the better." Hydari agrees. "It is about feelings and stories at the end of the day."

Girl on the Train releases on February 26 on Netflix.



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# Biden to allow asylum seekers into U.S.

Move is part of a plan to roll back immigration policies started under the Trump administration

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. government next week will begin to gradually process asylum seekers forced to wait in Mexico under a controversial programme put in place by former President Donald Trump, officials said.

The moves are part of a plan by the administration of President Joe Biden to end the programme, known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), an effort complicated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and concerns over illegal immigration.

The Trump administration launched the programme in 2019 as part of a wide-ranging crackdown on the ability to seek asylum in the U.S., which Trump officials depicted as rife with fraud and meritless claims.



**Harsh rule:** Asylum seekers were forced to wait in Mexico for their court hearings by the Trump administration. ■ FILE PHOTO

The initiative forced more than 65,000 non-Mexican asylum seekers back across the border to wait for their U.S. court hearings, although far fewer are believed to still be in Mexico.

The Biden administration will begin by working to pro-

cess about 25,000 migrants with active claims in the program, officials said on Thursday. Mr. Biden vowed on the campaign trail to roll back restrictive Trump-era immigration policies, including MPP, which is informally known as "remain in Mexi-

co". His administration suspended new entries into the program when he took office on January 20, but did not immediately put forward a plan to bring those already in the program into the United States.

Republicans embracing Mr. Trump's hardline immigration views have criticised the ending of MPP and could use it as fuel for political attacks if illegal immigration increases on Mr. Biden's watch.

Top Biden officials have stressed in recent weeks that migrants should not attempt to enter the United States, saying they need more time to build up the capacity to process more asylum seekers.

"Individuals who are not eligible under this initial phase should wait for further instructions and not travel to

the border," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, said in a statement. "Due to the current pandemic, restrictions at the border remain in place and will be enforced."

**Phase 1 from February 19**  
During a call with reporters on Thursday evening, three Biden administration officials described the plans to reverse the programme, with the first phase beginning on February 19. Under the plan, migrants will need to register with international organisations over the Internet or by phone and await instructions. An international organisation will test migrants for COVID-19 while they are in Mexico.

Biden officials declined to identify the organisations on Thursday, saying they would be inundated with inquiries.

# Trump's lawyers all set to rebut impeachment case

Republican lawmakers are likely to vote in his favour

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

Lawyers for Donald Trump take the Senate floor later on Friday to rebut the Democratic-led impeachment of the former President for inciting insurrection, with Republican lawmakers then widely expected to vote to acquit him.

Democratic impeachment managers rested their case on Thursday after two days of often emotional presentations. Now the Republican property tycoon's lawyers will get a chance to respond. They are expected to make arguments brief, hastening the Senate verdict.

"There's no reason for us to be out there a long time. As I said from the start of this thing, this trial never should



Donald Trump

have happened," one of the lawyers, David Schoen, told Fox News. The impeachment team charged Mr. Trump with stoking an insurrection after losing re-election to Joe Biden on November 3.

According to the case against him, the former President began to lay the groundwork for the riot within weeks of refusing to concede with claims that he had only lost because of

mass voter fraud. On January 6 he staged a fiery rally near the White House, calling on the crowd to march on Congress, which was in the process of certifying Mr. Biden's victory.

Impeachment managers insist that Mr. Trump, who has never expressed remorse for his encouragement of the violent crowd, is so dangerous he should be barred from holding office again. But the former President's lawyers are set to argue that his speech was rhetorical and that he cannot be held responsible for the actions of the mob. They also argue that the trial itself is unconstitutional because Mr. Trump is now out of office, although the Senate has rejected this claim.

## IN BRIEF



**Kim blames officials for economic slump**

SOUTH KOREA

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ripped into the performance of his Cabinet and fired a senior economic official he appointed a month ago, saying they failed to come up with new ideas to salvage an economy in decay. "The Cabinet failed to play a leading role in mapping out plans of key economic fields," the KCNA reported him as saying. AP

### Women's rights activists in Nepal hold protest

KATHMANDU

Hundreds of women's right activists and their supporters rallied in Kathmandu on Friday calling for the scrapping of a proposed law that would require women under the age of 40 to get permission from their family and local government to travel to the Middle East or Africa. The government said the regulation would help stop human trafficking. AP

## Slap sanctions on Myanmar, say UN rights envoy and U.S.

'UNSC resolutions for such situations mandate action'

REUTERS  
GENEVA

The United Nations human rights investigator for Myanmar on Friday urged the UN Security Council to consider imposing punitive sanctions, arms embargoes and travel bans in response to a military coup.

The United States, which imposed its own sanctions on Thursday, urged other UN member states to follow suit, in its first remarks to the Human Rights Council since returning to the forum this week.

Special Rapporteur Thomas Andrews said there were "growing reports and photographic evidence" that Myanmar security forces had used live ammunition against protesters since seizing power almost two weeks ago.

"Security Council resolutions dealing with similar sit-

**C** There are growing reports that Myanmar security forces used live ammunition against protesters

THOMAS ANDREWS  
Special Rapporteur

all Council members to join the United States and others ... in promoting accountability for those responsible for the coup, including through targeted sanctions."

But China and Russia – which have close ties to Myanmar's military – said they opposed holding the session. "What happened in Myanmar is essentially Myanmar's internal affairs," said Chen Xu, China's ambassador. "China is in contact and communication with relevant parties in Myanmar to promote the relaxation ... of the situation."

Russian ambassador Gennady Gatilov said human rights issues should be addressed through "open dialogue and cooperation". "Today's special session is clearly not conducive to that ... attempts to whip up hype around the situation in Myanmar need to cease."

## 'Work with military for democracy'

New regime says it will release thousands of prisoners, reduce sentences

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
YANGON

Myanmar's coup leader used the country's Union Day holiday on Friday to call on people to work with the military if they want democracy, a request likely to be met with derision by protesters who are pushing for the release from detention of their country's elected leaders.

"I would seriously urge the entire nation to join hands with the Tatmadaw for the successful realisation of democracy," said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, using the local term for the military. "Historical lessons have taught us that only national unity can ensure the non-disintegration of the Union and the perpetuation of sovereignty," he added.

In addition to General Hlaing's message published in the *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper, the new junta also announced that it would mark Union Day by releasing thousands of prisoners and reducing



**Strong resistance:** Medical workers in Yangon wearing red ribbons during a protest on February 3. ■ REUTERS

other inmates' sentences.

Min Aung Hlaing's February 1 coup ousted the civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and prevented recently elected lawmakers from opening a new session of Parliament.

The military has said it was forced to step in because Ms. Suu Kyi's government failed to properly investigate allegations of fraud in November elections, though the election commission has said there is no evidence to support those claims.

Recent rallies against the coup – now daily occurrences in Myanmar's two largest cities, Yangon and Mandalay – have drawn people from all walks of life, despite an official ban on gatherings of more than five people.

Factory workers and civil servants, students and teachers, medical personnel and people from LGBTQ communities, Buddhist monks and Catholic clergy have all come out against the coup in force.

Thousands of protesters,

including Myanmar celebrities, demonstrated outside the Chinese Embassy in Yangon on Friday to criticise what they said was Beijing's failure to condemn the coup.

"The students and the people are about to face bloodshed," Phy Yadana Aung, a protester, said. She accused state-run media of spreading "misinformation" about the protests.

On Thursday, people from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups, who are concentrated in far-flung, border States, joined in – a striking show of unity in a country where some groups have represented the Burman majority's control and have also had their differences with Ms. Suu Kyi.

The protesters are unlikely to be swayed by Gen. Min Aung Hlaing's call for unity, which came on Union Day, a national holiday celebrating the date in 1947, when many of the country's ethnic groups agreed to unify following British colonial rule.

## Navalny mocks Putin during court hearing

Kremlin critic spars with prosecutor

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Confined in a glass box in a Moscow courtroom, Alexei Navalny berated the judge, mocked a prison official and sparred with the prosecutor.

He was arrested in mid-January after returning from Germany. In turns defiant, mocking, and affectionate, the 44-year trained lawyer has used the court appearances to build up his support, infuriate his opponents and craft an image as Russia's preeminent political prisoner.

Mr. Navalny turned his February 2 hearing – when a judge ordered him jailed for nearly three years on old fraud charges – into a blister-

## UN agencies flag child malnutrition crisis in Yemen

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DUBAI

About 4,000,000 children under the age of five are in danger of dying of acute malnutrition in war-torn and impoverished Yemen, UN agencies said on Friday.

They said half of those in the most vulnerable age bracket, or 2.3 million small children, are projected to suffer from severe malnutrition this year. "These numbers are yet another cry for help from Yemen where each malnourished child also means a family struggling to survive," World Food Programme chief David Beasley said in a joint statement.

The number of Yemeni children in danger of death from lack of food has increased to 4,000,000, an increase of 22% over 2020.

For further details please visit [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in)

### The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.

(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking)  
KMML  
Sankaramangalam, Chavara-691 583, Kollam, Kerala, India  
Phone: 91-476-2686722 to 733 (12 lines).  
Fax: 91-476-2680101. E-mail: contact@kmml.com, URL: [www.kmml.com](http://www.kmml.com)

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The company is presently looking for prospective competent parties for excavating the iron oxide from third pond to old ponds in KMML as is where is condition. Interested parties may submit their proposals / response within 7 days of this notification.

TENDER ID: 2021\_KMML\_414498\_1

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Our Products: Titanium Dioxide, Titanium Tri Chloride, Nano Titanium, Titanium Sponge, Zircon, Rutile, Silimanite

E-mail: julian@factid.com,aneesha@factid.com, Website: <http://www.factid.co.in>

E-Tender for Transportation of Bagged Fertilizers from Tuticorin Port by Road

[ENQUIRY NO: MM/18/22966 DATED 12.02.2021]

e-Tenders (online bidding) two are invited from financially sound and experienced transport contractors for undertaking the work of transportation of Bagged Fertilizers (50 kg bags) from Tuticorin Port by Road for 2 years through <https://eprocure.gov.in> portal. Estimated quantity: 92,000 MT.

Any change / Extensions to this tender will be informed only through our website / CPP e-procurement portal and will not be published in newspapers.

Due date/time for submission of bids is 27.02.2021 / 3.00 PM.

Asst. Gen. Manager (Materials)-T&S

sd/-

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## MARKET WATCH

	12-02-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51544	0.02
US Dollar	72.75	0.16
Gold	46847	-1.3
Brent oil	61.57	0.30

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	616.60	+24.75
Asian Paints	2486.10	-19.40
Axis Bank	750.40	+10.30
Bajaj Auto	4136.05	-45.85
Bajaj Finserv	10278.80	+62.15
Bajaj Finance	5577.45	+10.40
Bharti Airtel	586.25	+11.85
BPCL	418.10	-3.85
Britannia Ind	3421.25	-41.50
Cipla	848.55	-11.25
Coal India	133.85	-3.30
Divis Lab	3719.40	-34.45
Dr Reddys Lab	4792.00	-33.05
Eicher Motors	2781.25	-36.90
GAIL (India)	132.90	-3.55
Grasim Ind	1242.10	+6.65
HCL Tech	960.40	-10.00
HDFC	2791.50	+30.90
HDFC Bank	1581.95	+9.60
HDFC Life	710.95	-3.25
Hero MotoCorp	3515.75	+25.75
Hindalco	290.80	-4.60
Hind Unilever	2241.55	+21.45
ICICI Bank	647.60	+16.95
IndusInd Bank	1027.40	+5.50
Infosys	1309.80	+17.15
Indian Oil Corp	95.10	-1.40
ITC	217.45	-9.00
JSW Steel	403.80	-5.05
Kotak Bank	1951.05	-9.95
L&T	1521.35	-9.15
M&M	908.55	-5.65
Maruti Suzuki	7568.50	-98.85
Nestle India Ltd.	17294.30	-117.95
NTPC	95.95	-1.35
ONGC	97.00	-2.45
PowerGrid Corp	212.65	-1.10
Reliance Ind	2041.60	+14.10
SBI Life	896.85	-10.50
State Bank	393.15	+3.00
Shree Cement	27965.85	-378.35
Sun Pharma	627.15	-16.50
Tata Motors	325.40	+0.40
Tata Steel	680.50	-14.20
TCS	3190.80	+15.20
Tech Mahindra	991.20	+5.60
Titan	1494.20	-30.50
UltraTech Cement	6397.25	+29.90
UPL	535.80	-7.75
Wipro	442.00	+5.00

## EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on February 12

CURRENCY TT BUY TT SELL

US Dollar 72.55 72.87

Euro 87.83 88.22

British Pound 100.04 100.49

Japanese Yen (100) 69.11 69.42

Chinese Yuan 11.23 11.28

Swiss Franc 81.27 81.64

Singapore Dollar 54.68 54.93

Canadian Dollar 56.94 57.21

Malaysian Ringgit 17.94 18.04

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## TAFE introduces new tractor series

CHENNAI TAFE (Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd.) rolled out Dynatrack series, an advanced range of tractors for agriculture, haulage and commercial applications. "The Dynatrack series sets new benchmarks in the tractor industry by offering utility, versatility, comfort and safety, productivity and efficiency," said Mallika Srinivasan, CMD.

## Recyal joins Circulars Accelerator Programme

HYDERABAD Digital waste-com firm Recyal has been selected as the first member from India for The Circulars Accelerator Programme 2021. The programme will connect industry leaders with 17 circular-economy entrepreneurs to scale up cross-sector value-chain innovation. Through digital solutions, the firm connects waste generators with waste processors to ensure more recycling.

## Omega unveils EV to deliver COVID vaccines

MUMBAI Omega Seiki Mobility, in tie-up with air conditioning firm Trans ACNR, has unveiled Rage+ Frost, a three-wheeler electric vehicle (EV) with a refrigerated carriage for last-mile delivery of pharma and food products, more specifically for supply of COVID-19 vaccines. The EV, along with the refrigerated carriage, is priced at ₹5 lakh. It will be available across India in the coming months.

## Govt. extends deadline for SCI bid to March 1

NEW DELHI The government on Friday extended the deadline for submission of preliminary bids to buy Shipping Corp of India (SCI) to March 1. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management in December had invited expressions of interest for strategic disinvestment of its entire stake of 63.75% along with the transfer of management. The last date for submitting the bid was February 13. PTI

## Data buoys: inflation cools to 4.06%, IIP rises 1%

Sharp softening in food prices helps moderate January CPI, while electricity, manufacturing lift December industrial output

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's retail inflation slowed to a 16-month low of 4.06% in January, helped by a sharp deceleration in food prices, while industrial output rebounded to growth of 1% in December aided by increases in electricity and manufacturing.

Inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which was 4.59% in December, continued to decelerate after being stuck above the RBI's upper tolerance threshold of 6% for six months from June to November. Rural inflation eased last month to 3.23%, while urban inflation stood at 5.1%.

The moderation in consumer prices was driven by a broad-based softening in food inflation, with the Consumer Food Price Index ris-

ing just 1.89% in January, ap- preciably slower than December's 3.4% pace.

## Concern over core

However, core inflation, excluding food and fuel prices, was estimated to be at about 5.7% and hovering close to the same level as in December. Economists foresee a resurgence in overall inflation from February as a base effect wears off.

The sequential momentum in core inflation had risen, following the highest ever WPI-core momentum reading in December, rising mobility indicators and falling COVID-19 cases, said Sreejith Balasubramanian, economist at IDFC AMC.

"Going forward, the base effect which helped recent lower prints, will wane in February and March and the



**Tear factor:** The rise in onion prices and higher crude oil prices are areas of concern. ■ VIJAYA BHASKAR

magnitude of disinflation in vegetables would also most likely ease, while the price movement in pulses and vegetable oils needs to be watched closely," he added.

The Index of Industrial

Production (IIP) data for December provided some cheer as it revealed a recovery in output following a 2.1% drop in November. The rebound was led by a 5.1% jump in electricity produc-

tion and a 1.6% increase in manufacturing output.

"There is some comfort in both the IIP growth number and CPI inflation for December and January, respectively," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings, terming the 1% IIP growth a 'gentle surprise' to its forecast of 0.1% growth.

"Our forecast of 0.1% was against the backdrop of negative growth in the core industries, but the situation has been buffered by an impressive performance of consumer goods – both durable and non-durable – with the base effect providing an upward bias," he said, adding that increases in electronics, auto and capital goods output had also helped.

The December data once again reinforced the view that the uptick witnessed in

September and October was due to a combination of festive and pent up demand and the recovery was still fragile, opined Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist at India Ratings. "However, the positive aspect of the December 2020 factory output is that it has now crossed the pre-COVID level," he added.

Aditi Nayyar, principal economist at ICRA, said many non-food categories had recorded a quickening in inflation in January.

"Food prices have displayed a mixed trend so far in February. The rise in onion prices, as well as higher crude oil prices and their transmission into retail fuel prices are areas of concern... We do not think January's inflation numbers create room for an imminent rate cut," she said.

## COVID-hit U.K. output slumps 10% in 2020

## REUTERS

LONDON Britain's coronavirus-ravaged economy suffered its biggest crash in output in more than 300 years in 2020 when it slumped by 9.9%, but it avoided heading back towards recession at the end of the year and looks on course for a recovery in 2021.

Official figures showed gross domestic product grew 1% from October through December, the top of a range of economists' forecasts in a Reuters poll.

This makes it likely that Britain will escape two straight quarters of contraction – the definition of recession in Europe – though the economy is set to shrink in early 2021 due to the effects of a third COVID lockdown.

## Grasim Q3 profit doubles to ₹1,384 crore

Revenue rises 13% to ₹20,986 crore

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Commercial vehicle maker Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL) is planning to focus on Africa to increase revenue from exports, according to a top official.

"International business is important for us," said Gopal Mahadevan, CFO.

"We are much better placed today than four years ago to grow our international presence by scaling up our exports."

"Apart from our traditional markets such as Central Asia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, our focus now will be on African markets. We believe that after a couple of quarters, we can see a substantial increase in export volumes," he added.

Standalone net profit rose 95% to ₹359 crore while standalone revenue dipped 5% to ₹3,672 crore.

Capacity utilisation of its VSF business reached 100%

## Terms objections 'nitpicks'; says unitholders are the best judge of their interest

## KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the validity of poll results showing a wave of consent among unitholders to the winding up of six mutual fund schemes of Franklin Templeton.

The court termed objections raised about the e-voting process and the poll results as 'mere nitpicks'.

Ninety-five percent of the unitholders who voted had expressed consent to the winding up of the six schemes, the court noted in a 52-page judgment. The disbursal of ₹9,122 crore among the unitholders would continue unhindered. "Unithol-

ders are the best judge and are more conversant with their own interests. All that is to be seen is that broad parameters of fairness in the administration, bona fide poll/election, and that fundamental rules of reasonable management of public business have not been

breached," a Bench of Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna observed.

One of the objections raised was against the appointment of former Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy as Observer. The court, however, dismissed the objection, saying Mr. Krishnamurthy was appointed by the court to ensure fairness and transparency.

"We reject the objections to poll results and hold that the unitholders of the six schemes have given their consent by majority to wind up the six schemes," Justice Khanna, who authored the verdict, held. The court also cleared the air on what con-

sidered 'consent' in this context. Justice Khanna said 'consent' had to be given by a majority of the unitholders present and voting as per the Mutual Funds Regulations.

"Consent" in clause (c) of the sub-regulation (15) to Regulation 18 refers to affirmative consent to winding up by "the majority of the unitholders".... Silence on the part of absentee unitholders can neither be taken as an acceptance nor rejection of the proposal," the court interpreted the regulations.

A section of unitholders had termed the decision to wind up as a "smokescreen to conceal misfeasance and malfeasance".

## Llistosella is new CEO of Tata Motors

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Tata Motors Ltd. has announced the appointment of Marc Llistosella as its chief executive officer and managing director with effect from July 1.

Mr. Llistosella was most recently the president and CEO of Fuso Truck and Bus Corporation and head of Daimler Trucks in Asia. He was earlier the MD and CEO of Daimler India Commercial Vehicles Pvt. Ltd.

Guenther Butschek, the present CEO & MD, will relocate to Germany at the end of the contract for personal reasons. He has been with Tata Motors for 5 years. "He has kindly accepted the request of the Board to continue as the MD & CEO till June 30, 2021," the company said.



Prathap C. Reddy

year saw robust growth as we increased focus on non-COVID-19 patients."

AHEL further said that it was terminating its global depository receipts programme and delisting them from the Luxembourg Stock Exchange in view of minimal number of GDRs outstanding and the low trading volume.

## Ather Energy starts making EVs at Hosur

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

EV maker Ather Energy has commenced production at its Hosur facility and deliveries in six cities, the firm said on Friday.

The firm has begun deliveries in Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad.

# Chepauk in the grip of surface tension as India seeks redemption

Think-tank keen on having a rank turner; England makes three changes to its bowling attack

## ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

The interval of the serpentine thriller in Chennai, with several twists, will soon be over with the start of the second Test at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Saturday.

And this match at Chepauk will have an audience. As much as 50% of the stadium will be occupied. And spectators will lend the game colour and character.

All eyes will be on the surface. The first Test saw the team batting first gain an advantage since the pitch played flat for the first two days.

### Toss out of the equation

It appears the Indian team-management is keen on a rank turner for the second Test. Which means it wants the ball to turn from day one and do so quicker off the surface. This will, arguably, take the toss out of the equation.

The surface has a fair amount of black soil. But

what you do not want is a vicious turner that would give an unfair advantage to the spinners.

But then, it can be hard making accurate predictions about the pitch, particularly in these times when you get to see the surface only on the day of the Test.

The pitch also has clay content that will help bind the surface, and this could slow it down. So, we might still get a sluggish turner.

India is likely to see two changes, with left-arm spinning all-rounder Axar Patel replacing Shahbaz Nadeem and wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav coming in for Washington Sundar.

Dropping Washington would be unfortunate because his 85 in the first Test was a high-quality innings under pressure.

Asked to bowl to a 7-2 field, he could not be his own self with the ball. India's relentless use of DRS meant that when Washington found the edge of Jos Buttler's bat, the team had run out of reviews.

Then Rohit Sharma put down a sitter at mid-wicket.

And in the second innings, Washington, almost totally ignored, sent down just one over in the fag end of the innings. It just did not appear.

Whatever be the combination or the nature of the track, Virat Kohli's rather bizarre management of overs has to improve.

If you compare the symphony between the field settings and the bowling changes in the first Test here with Ajinkya Rahane's captaincy in the last three Tests in Australia where India came back gloriously, the Mumbaikar's handling of the bowling and the field placements was far superior.

Meanwhile, England announced its 12 and there will be four changes in the eleven. Crucially, India's nemesis James Anderson has been rested. Jos Buttler has flown back to England, Jofra Archer is injured and the inconsistent Dom Bess dropped.

Anderson's pace partner, match cricket was missing. So to have that back will be great. Players thrive out of having that atmosphere," said Joe Root.

"We are excited that there will be fans. It means a lot for us to get support from the crowd," said Ajinkya Rahane.

the tall Stuart Broad – he could be a handful with his bounce and leg-cutters – accomplished wicketkeeper Ben Foakes, off-spinning all-rounder Moeen Ali and the pacey Olly Stone come in.

Stone – a like-for-like replacement for Archer – will fight it out with all-rounder Chris Woakes, whose bowling style is similar to that of Anderson. It will be an intriguing choice.

### The teams (from):

**India:** Virat Kohli (Capt.), Ajinkya Rahane (Vice-capt.), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant, R. Ashwin,

**England:** Joe Root (Capt.), Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Dan Lawrence, Ben Stokes, Ollie Pope, Moeen Ali, Ben Foakes, Chris Woakes, Stuart Broad, Jack Leach and Olly Stone.

**Umpires:** Nitin Menon & Virender Sharma. **Third umpire:** Anil Chowdhary. **Match Referee:** Jagat Singh.

Play starts at 9.30 a.m.  
Live on Star Sports 1 (SD & HD).

## Both teams happy that fans will be back

### SPORTS REPORTER

CHENNAI

With fans being allowed for the first time in over a year for an international cricket game in India, players from both sides are happy.

"The atmosphere within the ground is something Test

match cricket was missing. So to have that back will be great. Players thrive out of having that atmosphere," said Joe Root.

"We are excited that there will be fans. It means a lot for us to get support from the crowd," said Ajinkya Rahane.

## What the records say

India has lost the first match of a four-Test series 13 times\*. Though it has suffered a series reverse on nine of those occasions (eight away from home), it has won twice (both against Australia).

The complete list of four-Test battles where the Indians have trailed 0-1 going into the second match.

### SERIES DRAWN (2)

Year	Result	Home/Away
1987-88	drew with West Indies (L   D   D   W)	Home
2002	drew with England (L   D   W   D)	Away

**SERIES LOST (9)**

Year	Result	Home/Away
1952	lost to England (L   L   L   D)	Away
1967-68	lost to Australia (L   L   L   L)	Away
1975-76	lost to West Indies (L   D   W   L)	Away
1979	lost to England (L   D   D   D)	Away
2004-05	lost to Australia (L   D   L   W)	Home
2007-08	lost to Australia (L   L   W   D)	Away
2011	lost to England (L   L   L   L)	Away
2011-12	lost to Australia (L   L   L   L)	Away
2014-15	lost to Australia (L   L   D   D)	Away

\* excluding the defeat in the first Test of the ongoing series against England



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

## Freshness essential in these conditions: Root

England skipper says that Woakes or Stone is likely to partner Broad

### SPORTS REPORTER

CHENNAI

After announcing four changes to the playing XI, England skipper Joe Root hoped that freshness in the bowling attack could make a difference for his side.

When asked about pacer Olly Stone's lack of experience outside England, Root said, "In these conditions, freshness is essential when you come into the game. Attack your spell for 3-4 overs, have a real impact and that could work in our favour going into this match."

Root added that the final decision on whether Chris Woakes or Stone will play alongside Stuart Broad would be made after Friday's practice.

### Similar balance

"We can have a similar balance to the last Test with Stone having the extra bit of pace. With Woakes, we can capitalise on reverse-swing, control and try to build pressure. He also strengthens



**Steaming in:** Broad will look to make the Indians hop around.

our batting," said the English skipper.

Another change to the attack is the return of Moeen

Ali in place of Dom Bess and the skipper hopes the former's experience in these conditions will come in handy.

**ROOT**  
about the first Test

"I'm very excited for him to get this opportunity. He obviously had a rough tour [in Sri Lanka], having to deal with COVID and quarantine but since then has applied himself extremely well."

### Have the talent

Speaking about the win in the first Test, Root said, "The thing that impressed me was how well we implemented our game-plan. We managed to get those big first-innings runs that we often talk about. Hopefully, guys can take confidence from performances like Anderson or Stokes or mine and believe they can deliver those big performances to win the series. We have the talent to do that."

## It will turn from day one, says Rahane

### S. DIPAK RAGAV

CHENNAI

Ajinkya Rahane dismissed any concerns regarding his form after a string of low scores ahead of the second Test against England which begins here on Saturday.

"I don't need to worry about what happened in the first Test. It is about what the team wants from me for this Test match. I am going to contribute. I am very confident about it," said Rahane who had scores of 1 and 0 in the first Test, which India lost by 227 runs.

The vice-captain has a lower average at home than overseas and has just one score above fifty in the last seven Tests, but pointed to his record in India's previous home games, against South Africa and Bangladesh, when he scored a ton and a couple of half-centuries.

"We are playing at home after two years. We last played at home against South Africa [sic: Bangladesh] in 2019. If you take that record, you will find something over there."



**The fizz:** If he is picked, Kuldeep will be eager to extract the best out of a pitch that is expected to aid the spinners.

that it will offer turn from the first day.

"Yeah, it looks completely different. I am sure it will turn from the opening day. But we will have to wait and see how it plays and take it

**I don't have an idea regarding this issue and what has happened. So I don't think I should comment on it**

**RAHANE**

on Jaffer's controversial exit as Uttarakhand coach

from there. We have to forget what happened in the first Test. We know these conditions well. We have to put our best foot forward as a team."

**Not a big challenge**  
While this will be the first time that an Indian Test venue will be hosting back-to-back games in a series, Rahane felt it was not a big challenge.

"I don't think it will be tricky as such. Yes, the wicket will be slightly different and we will have to adjust accordingly. We have to change our plans according to how the pitch behaves and we have played quite a lot in Chennai. So the sooner we adjust to the wicket, the better it will be," he said.

## Sportstar Aces Awards 2021 to celebrate Giants of the Decade

The 2021 Sportstar Aces Awards: Giants of the Decade Special, powered by MRF, will celebrate the consistency of performance and the impact of sports stars in the decade between 2011 and 2020.

Awards will be given across 23 categories, and top sports personalities like former India captain M. S. Dhoni, 2016 Rio Olympics sil-

ver medallist P. V. Sindhu, India football and cricket captains Sunil Chhetri and Virat Kohli are part of the nominees for the 11 categories of the Popular Choice Awards, which are open for voting now. Sports fans can cast their votes for their favourite sport stars by visiting [sportstarthehindu.com/aces-awards/popular-awards](http://sportstarthehindu.com/aces-awards/popular-awards). The results of the popular votes will be

shared with the jury, who will decide on the final winner. The 12 Jury Awards will be decided solely by a six-member panel comprising Sunil Gavaskar, M. M. Somaya, Viswanathan Anand, Anjali Bhagwat, Aparna Patpat and Bhaichung Bhutia.

Relaunched in 2019, the second edition of the Aces awards last year saw Kapil Dev honoured with the Life-time Achievement Award, while P. V. Sindhu was named Sportstar of the Year. Rohit Sharma was chosen Sportsman of the Year (Cricket) for a hugely successful 2019 as he finished as the top run-scorer at the World Cup. Smriti Mandhana emerged the Sportswoman of the Year (Cricket). The Indian cricket Test team was declared Team of the

### SPORTSTAR ACES GIANTS OF THE DECADE

**#SportstarGoD**

Powered by

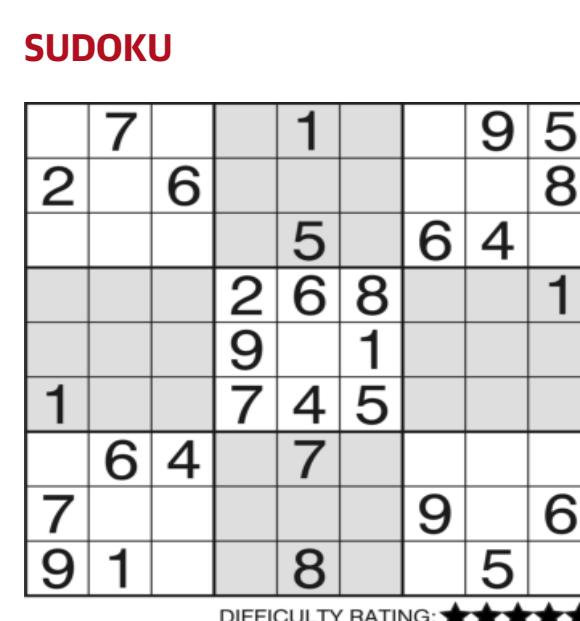
**MRF**

first innings on the back of half-centuries from Joshua Da Silva (92), Nkrumah Bonner (90) and Joseph (82).

The hosts required 104 runs to avoid the follow-on.

**The scores:** West Indies – 1st innings 409 in 142.2 overs (K. Brathwaite 47, J. Campbell 36, N. Bonner 90, J. Blackwood 28, J. Da Silva 92, A. Joseph 82, Jayed four for 98, Taijul four for 108) vs Bangladesh 105 for four at stumps on the second day after posting 409 runs in its

## SUDOKU



No. SS948 Date/Time: www.mysudoku.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13169 Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

A S T I T C H I N T I M E  
T N O N O N O E  
B R A S S P I C T O G R A M  
L R T E E L C A  
O U T L A N D I S H H U R L  
C L L S T R F  
K E E P M U M A N O D Y N E  
B E I N U A  
U N W I N D S T H R E A D S  
S I L T C H M N D A  
T A C K C R U S T A C E A N  
E H K E H M N C  
R E I T R A T E P O D E  
T N N A N M  
R A N O U T O F S T E A M

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

## FAITH

### Qualities of bhaktas

Uddhava has many questions for Lord Krishna, all of which the Lord answers patiently. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, we find Uddhava's question on how a bhakta can be identified. Lord Krishna tells him about the qualities of bhaktas, said P.T. Seshadri in a discourse. A bhakta is anxious to worship the Lord in His archa form. He is eager to pay his respects to the Lord's devotees. He praises and worships Krishna's devotees. He likes to tell others about the qualities and deeds of bhaktas. A bhakta likes to hear stories about the Lord. He always meditates on the Lord. Whatever he gets in this world, he places it at

## TV PICKS

**India vs England:** 2nd Test, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 9.15 a.m.  
**Pakistan vs South Africa:** 2nd T20I, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.  
**Australian Open:** Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. & 1.30 p.m.; Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.  
**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m., 8.30 p.m., 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)  
**ISL:** Star Sports 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



## Alonso undergoes surgery after mishap

ESTONE (UK) Formula One driver Fernando Alonso was operated on for a fractured upper jaw following a cycling accident, his Alpine F1 team said on Friday. Alonso was taken to hospital after an accident in Switzerland on Thursday and will remain under observation for a further 48 hours. AP

## Hawks' Young fined \$20K for ref remarks

NEW YORK Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young was fined \$20,000 by the NBA on Thursday for "inappropriate language" directed at a game official after the Hawks' 118-117 loss to Mavericks in Dallas. Young believed he was fouled by Willie Cauley-Stein on the final play of the game, when the Hawks couldn't make a potential game-winner. AP

## Pakistan to tour South Africa

JOHANNESBURG Pakistan will play three One-Day Internationals and four Twenty20 Internationals in South Africa during April, Cricket Africa announced on Friday. The touring team will stay in a bio-secure environment and matches will be confined to SuperSport Park, Centurion and the Wanderers, Johannesburg. AFP

## Arjun Kadhe loses in quarterfinals

POTCHEFSTROOM Arjun Kadhe and Roberto Cid Subervi of the Dominican Republic were beaten 3-6, 6-4, 10-6 by the British pair of Liam Broady and Jack Draper in the doubles quarterfinals of the \$52,080 Challenger tennis tournament here.

## Wasu beats Soni for over-45 title

KARNAL Eighth seed Gagandeep Wasu beat Gopal Soni 6-4, 7-5 in the over-45 final of the ITF seniors tennis tournament at the Chamunda Academy on Friday. In the last and decisive league match of the women's over-35 event Simi Begum Sharma outplayed Nazneen Rahaman for the loss of two games to clinch the title. **The results (finals): Over-45:** Gagandeep Wasu bt Gopal Soni 6-4, 7-5.

**Over-55:** Ajete Bhardwaj bt Pawan Jain 3-6, 6-4, 6-4.

**Over-65:** Narendar Janweja bt Ramesh Mavelikalam 6-1, 6-4.

**Women: Over-35:** Simi Begum Sharma bt Nazneen Rahaman 6-1, 6-1.

## Samiksha wins title the hard way

JHJAR Samiksha Dabas bounced back from the brink of defeat to beat her doubles partner and top seed Hannah Nagpal 4-6, 7-6(6), 6-3 in the girls' final of the AITA Super series under-16 tennis tournament at the Joygaon Academy on Friday. In the boys' final, Rushil Khosla got a walkover from Manish Yadav. **The results (finals): Boys:** Rushil Khosla w/o Manish Yadav. **Doubles:** Khosla & Daksh Prasad bt Dhruv Kumar & Bhavya Singhmar 7-5, 6-1. **Girls:** Samiksha Dabas bt Hannah Nagpal 4-6, 7-6(6), 6-3. **Doubles:** Ananya Dhankhar & Tamanna Takoria bt Ananya Kamlesh Bhatia & Ikaraju Kanumuri 1-2 (retired).

## Thiem rallies to oust Kyrgios

Spectators asked to leave ahead of a lockdown; Karatsev stuns Schwartzman

## AUSTRALIAN OPEN

REUTERS  
MELBOURNE

Local fans had a night to remember as well as one to forget at the Australian Open on Friday after home favourite Nick Kyrgios took U.S. Open champion Dominic Thiem to five sets before spectators were asked to leave ahead of a lockdown in Melbourne.

With his back against the wall and a fired-up home crowd cheering every Kyrgios point, third seed Thiem came back from two sets down to triumph 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 in a see-saw battle.

"There are easier things to do," Thiem said when describing playing in front of a raucous crowd that will be absent for the next five days.

## Djokovic tested

Top seed Novak Djokovic battled through an injury scare and came through an epic five-setter to beat Taylor Fritz 7-6(1), 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-2 inside an empty arena after fans were asked to leave 30 minutes before midnight.

Second seed Simona Halep eased past Russian Veronika Kudermetova 6-1, 6-3 while seven-times winner Serena Williams was tested in the opening set of her 7-6 (5), 6-2 victory over Anastasia Potapova.

Argentine eighth seed Diego Schwartzman suffered a blowout loss to Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev.



Kyrgios after losing to Thiem

## The day in numbers

0 After his loss to Dominic Thiem, Nick Kyrgios is 0-8 against top-10 players on hard courts in best-of-5 set matches

4 This is the fourth time Thiem has come back from two sets down in a Grand Slam match

5 became just the fifth player to reach the fourth round on his Grand Slam main draw debut since 2000

Right now I know it's a tear, definitely, of the muscle. I don't know if I'll be able to recover from that in less than two days

Novak Djokovic on the injury he sustained during the match against Taylor Fritz

**C** I have a big heart. I am pretty proud of myself, and the way I prepared

Kyrgios after losing to Thiem

## THIRD ROUND RESULTS

**Men:** 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt 27-Taylor Fritz (USA) 7-6(1), 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-2; 14-Milos Raonic (Can) bt Marton Fucsovics (Hun) 7-6(2), 5-7, 6-2, 6-2; 23-Dusan Lajovic (Srb) bt Pedro Martinez (Esp) 6-7(6), 7-5, 6-1, 6-4; 6-Aljaz Bedene (Slo) bt 32-Adrian Mannarino (Fra) 6-3, 6-3, 6-1; 3-Dominic Thiem (Aut) bt Nick Kyrgios (Aus) 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; 18-Grigor Dimitrov (Bul) bt 15-Pablo Carreno-Bustamante (Esp) 6-0, 1-0 (abandoned); 20-Felix Auger-Aliassime (Can) bt 11-Denis Shapovalov (Can) 7-5, 7-5, 6-3; Aslan Karatsev

Naomi Osaka beat Ons Jabeur 6-3 6-2 with a power-packed performance but also displayed her delicate side when she escorted a butterfly that had settled on her face out of harm's way.

Felix Auger Aliassime dispatched higher seed Denis Shapovalov 7-5, 7-5, 6-3 in an all-Canadian affair while French Open champion Iga Swiatek advanced with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Fiona Ferro.

Argentine eighth seed Diego Schwartzman suffered a blowout loss to Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev.

## Top pugilists for Spain event

## BOXING

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

Six-time World champion M.C. Mary Kom and Worlds bronze medallist Manish Kaushik will return to competition, after almost a year, in the Boxam International tournament in Castellon, Spain.

Mary, who was recovering from dengue, and Manish, who was going through rehab following a surgery, missed the Europe tour late last year.

Their last competition was the Asian Olympic qualifier in Amman, Jordan, in March 2020.

They will be part of the Olympic-qualified and probable boxers' group which will take part in the Spanish

## Carlsen and So take lead

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Magnus Carlsen missed a checkmate-in-one but still managed to beat Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2.5-0.5 in the first set of their semifinal clash in the \$100,000 Opera Euro rapid online chess tournament on Thursday.

In the other semifinal, Wesley So continued his winning run by stopping Teimour Radjabov 2.5-1.5.

After three decisive games, the drawn fourth game clinched victory for So.

**Semifinal results (Set One):** Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 2.5-0.5; Wesley So (USA) Teimour Radjabov (Aze) 2.5-1.5.

## Trail Blazers topple Sixers again

Butler triple-doubles as Heat begins road trip with win

## NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LOS ANGELES

Damian Lillard drained a pair of crucial late free-throws and Robert Covington made a clutch defensive play with three seconds left as Portland Trail Blazers beat Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia 76ers 118-114 on Thursday.

**Tense moments** With three seconds to go Portland was ahead by two points, 116-114 when Covington stole the Sixers inbound pass. A foul by Philadelphia sent Portland to the free-throw line.

Butler registered his 10th

career triple-double and sixth with the Heat – surpassing Dwyane Wade for the second most in Miami history.

**Three-pointers galore** Elsewhere, Semi Ojeleye scored 24 points and Payton Pritchard added 20 as Boston Celtics drained 20 three-pointers en route to a 120-106 victory over Toronto Raptors.

**The results:** Boston Celtics 120 bt Toronto Raptors 106; Houston Rockets 94 lost to Miami Heat 101.

Detroit Pistons 95 lost to Indiana Pacers 111; Golden State Warriors 111 bt Orlando Magic 105; Portland Trail Blazers 118 bt Philadelphia 76ers 114.

Lillard sank both baskets to put the game out of reach as the Blazers defeated Philadelphia for the second time this month.

Lillard finished with 30 points and seven assists.

and veteran Carmelo Anthony had a throwback game for Portland, coming off the bench to score 17 of his season-high 24 points in the fourth quarter.

In Houston, Jimmy Butler's triple-double of 27 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists propelled Miami Heat to a fourth straight victory, a 101-94 win over Houston Rockets to open a seven-game road trip.

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**Samiksha wins title the hard way**

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