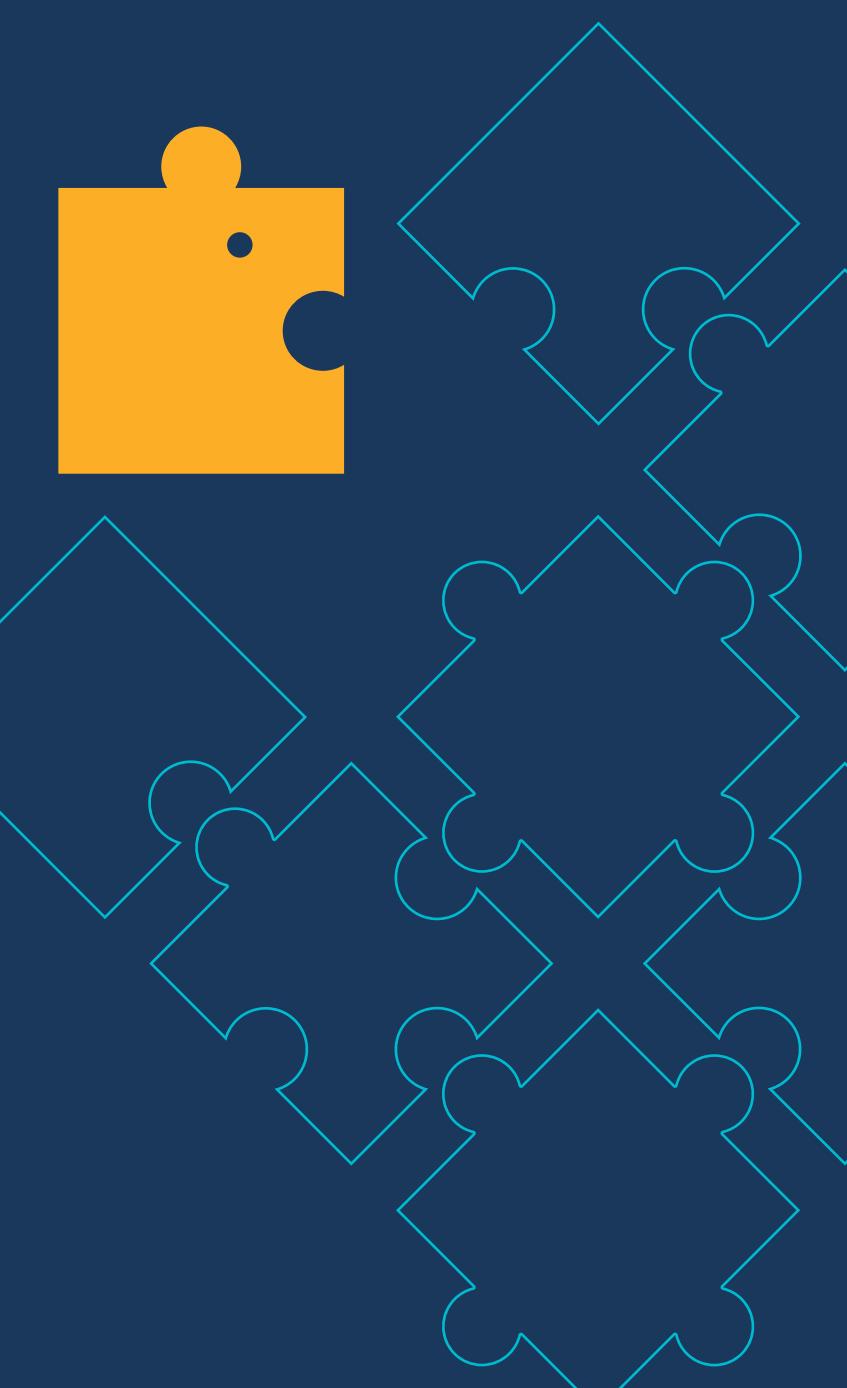


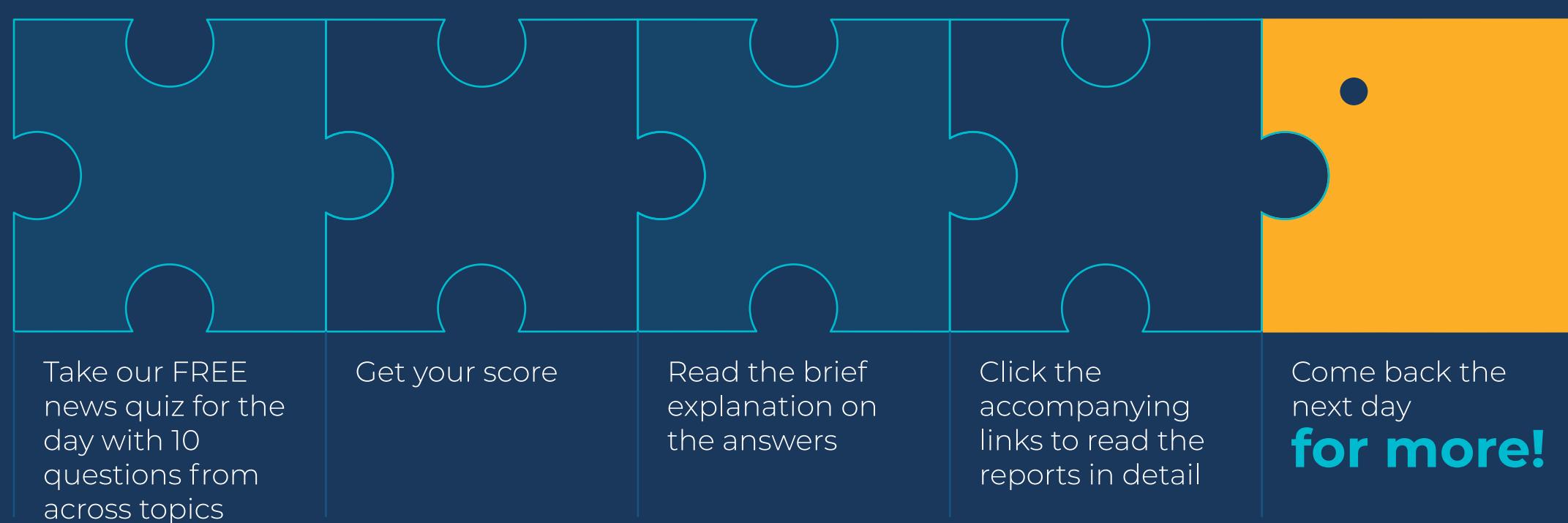
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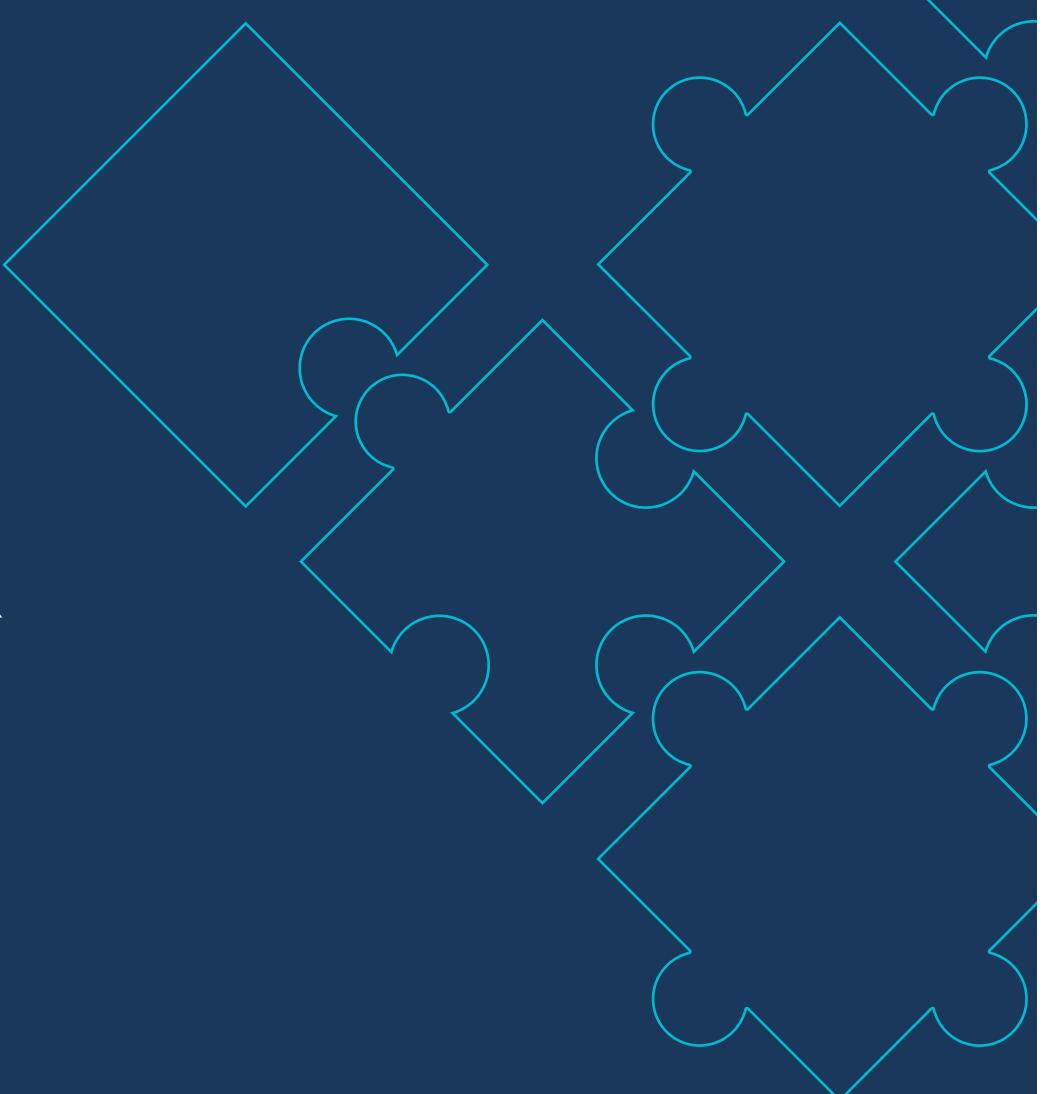


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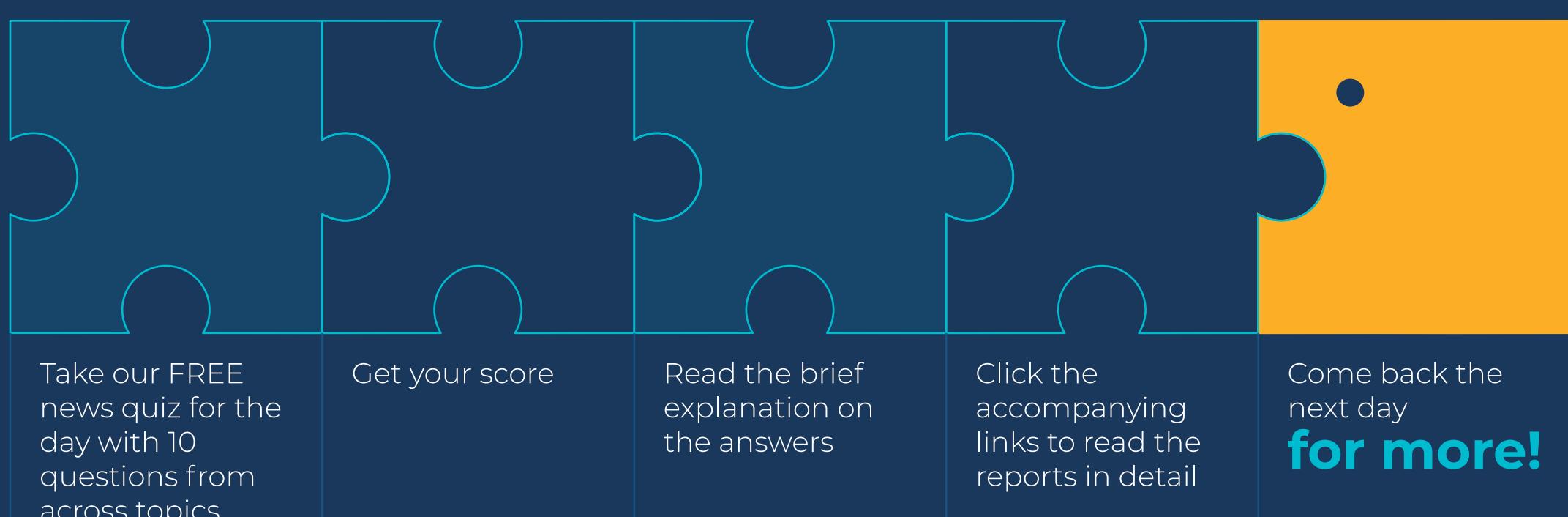
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NEARBY



Activist Disha Ravi in one-day police custody

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Monday sent climate change activist Disha Ravi, arrested for her alleged involvement in sharing a 'toolkit' on social media in connection with the ongoing farmers' protest against three farm laws, to one-day police custody.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Assam poll dates likely by early March, says PM

GUWAHATI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Election Commission was expected to announce the dates for the Assam Assembly election in the first week of March. Mr. Modi made this announcement after launching five projects worth more than ₹3,000 crore.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

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Congress-led govt. falls in Puducherry

CM Narayanasamy resigns, blames BJP for political crisis; NDA not to stake claim to form government

RAJESH B. NAIR
PUDUCHERRY

The Congress-led government in Puducherry fell on Monday after Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy submitted his resignation to Lieutenant-Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan as it became apparent that he had lost the confidence of the House.

A motion of confidence moved by Mr. Narayanasamy in the Assembly was not put to vote. However, Speaker V.P. Sivakolandhu announced that it stood defeated after the Chief Minister, questioning the right of the three nominated members to vote, led a walkout of the legislators of the ruling Congress-DMK alliance. Fourteen Opposition MLAs from the All India N.R. Congress (7), AIADMK (4) and BJP (3 nominated) were in the House when the Speaker gave his ruling.

Spat of resignations
Resignations by half-a-dozen legislators – five from the Congress, including two Ministers, and one from the DMK – in recent weeks and the disqualification of a Congress legislator last year had reduced the government to a minority. The House



■ T. SINGARAVELOU

strength came down to 26 from 33 due to which the Opposition outnumbered the ruling alliance – Congress (9, including the Speaker), DMK (2) and Independent (1).

Soon after the House assembled at 10 a.m. on the directions of the Lt. Governor to the government to prove its majority, Mr. Narayanasamy moved a motion of confidence and spoke for about an hour on the hurdles they faced from the Centre and from former Lt. Governor Ki-

ran Bedi over the past few years. As soon as he finished his speech, Government Whip R.K.R. Amantharaman sought a clarification from Mr. Sivakolandhu on the voting rights of the three nominated legislators belonging to the BJP. When the Opposition started arguing with the ruling party members, Mr. Narayanasamy and the ruling party members staged a walkout.

Soon after they left the Assembly, Mr. Sivakolandhu in-

formed the House that the confidence motion moved by the Chief Minister stood defeated. Mr. Narayanasamy then left for the Raj Nivas to hand over his resignation to the Lt. Governor.

BJP leaders said the National Democratic Alliance would not stake claim to form the government before the election. "The National Democratic Alliance will form the government only after the election," nominated legislator and BJP local unit

Congress sees a familiar pattern

Congress leaders on Monday lashed out at the BJP for "toppling" elected governments, with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot claiming that the saffron party had tried it in his State as well. "Luring Congress MLAs has been their modus operandi in all Congress-ruled States. We saw this in Karnataka, M.P. & now in Puducherry. They tried it in Rajasthan but people of Rajasthan taught them a lesson," Mr. Gehlot tweeted. ▶ PAGE 9

president V. Saminathan told *The Hindu*.

Addressing reporters after submitting his resignation, Mr. Narayanasamy said they had staged the walkout as the Speaker did not clarify on their demand on the voting rights of the nominated legislators. He said the Speaker did not agree to "our view" that only members elected by the people had voting rights.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 9

Xi may visit India for BRICS summit

Border crisis won't impact meet: China

ANANTH KRISHNAN
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

China's President Xi Jinping may visit India in the second half of this year to attend the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) leaders' meeting, if a physical summit is held as is increasingly expected.

The visit will come in the aftermath of the most serious border crisis between the neighbours in decades.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

China on Monday expressed its "support" for India hosting this year's meeting, and said the meet would not be impacted by the border crisis. "We will work with India and other members to strengthen communication and dialogue, and consolidate the three-pillar cooperation," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

Varavara Rao gets bail for 6 months on health grounds

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday granted interim bail for six months on medical grounds to poet Varavara Rao, 82, in the Bhima Koregaon violence case.

The court said, "This is a genuine and fit case to grant relief or else we will be abdicating our constitutional duty and function as a protector of human rights and right to health covered un-

der right to life guaranteed by the Constitution of India."

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Manish Pitale directed that Mr. Rao be discharged from the private hospital where he is admitted depending on his health condition and be released on bail for six months on furnishing a bond of ₹50,000.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Over ₹26 cr. disbursed to Delhi riot victims'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has provided compensation of over ₹26 crore to more than 2,200 claimants over the last year since the northeast Delhi riots broke out in

February 2020, according to statistics compiled by the authorities.

The disbursal of compensation was monitored directly by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the government said, in one of

the "swiftest" instances of awarding compensation related to riot cases in the country, even as fresh claims being raised on a daily basis are being dealt with.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

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Shubhra Ranjan: Indian Polity with Current Updates (2 days)
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Man who climbed Red Fort dome on R-Day held

'He is an associate of Maninder Singh'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 29-year-old man who allegedly climbed one of the domes of the Red Fort during the violence in Delhi on Republic Day has been arrested, the police said on Monday. Jaspreet Singh from Swaroop Nagar in north-west Delhi, was arrested by a Crime Branch team on Saturday.

Jaspreet is one of the associates of Maninder Singh, who was arrested on February 16 for allegedly swinging swords with the intent of "motivating" and "energizing" the protesters at the monument.

"Jaspreet was standing behind Maninder and also climbed up one of the domes that are located on either sides of the ramparts at the Red Fort. Jaspreet was identified from the pictures and videos," an officer said.

The police had alleged that 30-year-old Maninder had "motivated" people



Many of the protesters hoisted religious flags on the domes of the Red Fort on Republic Day. ■ FILE PHOTO

who had accompanied the farmers' tractor parade, to move from the Singhu border protest site towards Mukarba Chowk.

Thousands of protesters had clashed with the police during the farmers' tractor parade on January 26, demanding repeal of the Centre's three contentious farm laws. Many of the protesters entered the Red Fort and some hoisted religious flags on its domes.

Jindal plans to invest ₹1K cr. for university expansion

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Industrialist Naveen Jindal, who is also the Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU), has announced an investment plan of ₹1,000 crore for sustained futuristic expansion of the university in line with the 'JGU Vision 2030'.

According to the university, the focus of the investment plan will be on academic infrastructure development, creation of new world-class student facilities, hostels, schools, faculty offices and teaching facilities.

JGU VC, C. Raj Kumar said: "Mr. Jindal's endorsement of the expansion plan and the investment of ₹1,000 crore for JGU for the new decade is the right impetus we needed to do even better."

Keeping cool



A batch of coolers arrives at the Singhu border for protesting farmers in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

DU to conduct 97th convocation on Feb. 27

Due to the pandemic and MHA norms, parents or guests will not be able to attend

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi University (DU) is set to conduct the 9th annual convocation on February 27. Senior university officials said that 631 PhD and over 59,000 undergraduate and postgraduate degrees will be conferred.

A senior DU official said that 156 medals and 36 priz-

es will also be awarded at the convocation.

Additionally, over 1.18 lakh degrees will be awarded to students from the School of Open Learning.

Aarogya Setu app

Installation of Aarogya Setu app will be mandatory and social distancing has to be maintained during the cere-

mony, the university said in a notification.

Masks or face covers will also be required.

"No request for receiving the degree, medal or prize in person" shall be entertained once the final roll call is over. Due to the pandemic and MHA guidelines, we regret that parents or

guests of students are not

allowed," the notice read.

Students who are to receive the degrees, medals or prizes will be allotted seats before the ceremony.

"In case of candidates who fail to receive their degrees in person at the convocation, the degree will be sent to their faculty, department or centre after the convocation," DU stated.

In a letter to the CM, DU-

TA president Rajib Ray said:

"Inordinate and unreasoned delays repeatedly in the release of grants has a crippling effect on institutions and is totally unacceptable, more so in the current context, when employees are also battling health issues. It is extremely unfortunate that employees have had to take recourse to the courts to get

their salaries released."

Demanding the release of adequate grants, the letter further stated: "The grants sanctioned till date are not adequate to even meet the basic requirements of payment of salaries and pension. We demand an immediate end to the crisis in these colleges which has persisted for over a year."

Stating that while new courses were sanctioned, corresponding teaching posts were not, Mr. Ray said, "This has forced colleges to hire faculty on ad hoc or guest basis in order to cater to the needs of the new courses. We appeal to the Delhi government to release commensurate posts immediately."

BJP asks why govt. silent about ₹26K cr. DJB scam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta questioned the "silence" of the Aam Aadmi Party government on an alleged scam of ₹26,000 crore in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

Addressing a public contact campaign near the R.K. Ashram metro station regarding the alleged scam on Monday, Mr. Gupta said the party would launch a mass movement against it soon.

"Though it is the duty of

the DJB to provide water to the entire city, at least 30% of Delhiites are not getting drinking water while there is no sewerage system in 1,600 colonies," he alleged.

"There is no information with the Kejriwal government or the DJB about the funds it gets from the Centre. Kejriwal is using this money for political and personal purposes on advertisements rather than actual work it is meant for," he also alleged.

JMI students demand reopening of campus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A group of Jamia Millia Islamia students staged a protest outside the campus on Monday demanding the reopening of the university, which has been closed since last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The students raised slogans demanding that the university should proceed with phase-wise reopening like Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

A larger group of students had staged a protest last week questioning the university's decision to keep the campus shut when other educational institutions were reopening with COVID-19 protocols.

A senior police officer said a group of around 20 students gathered outside the campus. "They staged a protest and left after a while. Nobody was detained," he said.

Sisodia inaugurates 8th skill centre at ITI campus

It will offer free training to 800 students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday inaugurated the eighth World Class Skill Centre at ITI Campus, Jail Road, to continue to help with "upskilling and reskilling students so they can gain rightful employment and cater to the demands of the market".

Mr. Sisodia said the first World Class Skill Centre in Delhi was started in 2015 in collaboration with the Sisodia government.

The centres have shown tremendous results and the students secured much better placements compared to Delhi University colleges because there was a clear demand for skills in the job market, he said.

"Skilling is the only way to tackle the problem of unemployment. Every year, there are 2.5 lakh students who graduate from schools in Delhi. Around 50% of the

Deshbhakti course to instil wisdom in students'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Education Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday reviewed the progress of the Deshbhakti Curriculum, which the Delhi government plans to launch in all its schools for children of Classes KG-8 from the 2021-22 academic session.

The Deshbhakti Curriculum is aimed at instilling values that will prepare children to be active and committed citizens who contribute to nation building, the curriculum shall comprise themes related to understanding self, family, school, community/society.

"The biggest gap in our education system is that it seeks to deliver knowledge but not wisdom. Deshbhakti Curriculum shall strive to bring wisdom to the centre of the education discourse," Mr. Sisodia said.

AQI to improve today

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida was in the "poor" category on Monday, as per Central Pollution Control Board data.

"Marginal improvement in ventilation index is forecasted for Tuesday. AQI is likely to marginally improve and stay at the lower end of the 'very poor' to 'poor' ca-

tory," said government-run monitoring agency SAFAR. The AQI of Delhi was 288 on Monday. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 296 and 290.

The weatherman has forecast mainly clear sky with mist and shallow fog on Tuesday.

The maximum temper-

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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The Tender invited vide this office NIT No. 7131-180 dated 11.11.2020 and was opened on 04-12-2020 but some administrative reasons it was postponed to open on 28.12.2020 and again due to model code of conduct the invited tender was postponed to open on 28.01.2021, but again due to some administrative reasons invited tender was postponed to be opened on 22.02.2021. Now once again invited tender is hereby postponed to be opened on 18.03.2021 due to administrative reasons. The detail of the invited tender is as under:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)	Cost of Tender	Time	Eligible firms/ class
1.	C/o link road from Shamsherpur to Nawada via Heerup Matlalon Rampurhat road Km. 0/0 to 7/270 under NABARD RIDF-XXVI (SH-FC, Missing cross drainage works. Metalling Tarring, side drain, Parapets and road sign boards including five years maintenance).	Rs. 3,03,61,000/-	Rs. 6,06,000/-	5000/-	Eighteen months	A Class
2.	Improvement of road including metalling and tarring, and cross drainage works on Jamniala to Bodhwala bridge via Rihala Basti Jamniala to Khadar Basti in Gram Panchayat Pardoni, Tehsil Paonta Sahib, District Sirmour (HP). (SH- C/O 5/7 mtrs wide road including retaining walls, earth filling, C/O cross drainage works, P/L granular Sub-base, WBM Grade-II and III, Premix Carpet Surfacing, Cement concrete pavement road, C/O essential parapets and drains in Km. 0/0 to 2/567) under NABARD RIDF-XXVI.	Rs. 2,13,61,000/-	Rs. 4,26,000/-	5000/-	Eighteen months	A Class

The other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.

3. New Key Dates for tender:

1. Date of Online Publication	03-03-2021 4:30 HRS
2. Document Download Start and End Date	03-03-2021 5:00 HRS Up-to 17-03-2021 5:00 HRS
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date	03-03-2021 5:00 HRS Up-to 17-03-2021 5:00 HRS
4. Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document	18-03-2021 up-to 11:30 HRS
5. Date of Technical Bid Opening, Evaluation of Technical Bid followed by Opening of Financial Bid	18-03-2021 up-to 11:30 HRS

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CM YK

Man breathes life into ruins at Singhu, builds home for family

He had been staying in a rented bus, then shifted to a tent with family of four

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Just 10 days after 35-year-old Amritpal Singh came from Hoshiarpur to the Singhu border protest site in November last year, his family followed him.

Initially, the family of four stayed in a rented bus along with another family. They later shifted to a tent.

Now, Amritpal has started rebuilding a dilapidated structure located near the protest site into a "new home". Over the past five days, he has cleaned up the two-room building, created a bathroom space, cemented the floor, painted the walls blue, installed a bulb, and put up a trellis to keep mosquitoes away. He plans to shift to the 'new house' by the end of this week.

Amritpal, a cable operator and small-time financer, had come to the border on No-



Amritpal Singh with his family inside their makeshift tent at the Singhu border on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

member 26. He had been living in a rented bus with his wife Rupinder Kaur, four-year-old son Elamjot and three-year-old daughter Jasgun, and another family till the first week of February.

"The rent was expensive so the elders decided to send it back," he said. Since then, the four of them have been living in a tent where the bus was earlier parked.

A few days ago, Mr. Singh spotted the dilapidated

structure and decided to rebuild it, essentially to safeguard his children from the heat and mosquitoes.

"We have a table fan as the tent gets hot. At night, we fight mosquitoes. We are worried that the children might fall sick," he said.

Recalling an incident when he first arrived at the site, he said that a grocery store owner offered him a place to stay above his shop but he had refused.

"I had told them that we are here to stay on the roads, but now we are worried about our children's health," he said, adding: "Desperate times call for desperate measures." He plans to keep one room for his family and the other for anyone who might need it. He also plans to install an air conditioner.

Nearby school

With no plans to return home till the three contentious farm laws are repealed, the family has been looking for a school for their son.

"We had gone to a private school. They told us admissions are in April. If the decision [on farm laws] does not go in our favour by then, we will get Elamjot enrolled in a school here," said Rupinder.

Monday was Jagvir's birthday, but the family said it wishes to cut a cake in the "new house".

Toolkit case: Nikita, Shantanu quizzed for over eight hours

Activist Disha Ravi also questioned

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Lawyer Nikita Jacob and engineer Shantanu Muluk on Monday were questioned for around eight hours in connection with the toolkit case, a senior officer said.

The Delhi Police, probing the toolkit case, had summoned Ms. Jacob and Mr. Muluk to join investigation at CyPAD (Cyber Prevention Awareness Detection) office in Dwarka at 11 a.m.

At 5.30 p.m., arrested climate activist Disha Ravi was also brought to the office.

All three of them were then questioned.

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, FEB. 23
RISE 06:53 SET 18:17
RISE 14:16 SET 03:50
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 24
RISE 06:52 SET 18:18
RISE 15:14 SET 04:42
THURSDAY, FEB. 25
RISE 06:51 SET 18:19
RISE 16:16 SET 05:32

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	29 11
Safdarjung	29 11
Palam	28 13

Delhi Palam Today
30°C Mist/shallow fog at some places during morning. Dry comfortable weather with moderate surface winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C A cool morning with patchy fog and comfortable day with light to moderate winds and bright sunny sky.

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27,219 more beneficiaries take vaccine

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A total of 27,219 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Monday, which is the highest so far. Also, there were eight minor Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson.

With COVID-19 cases increasing in many States, district officials have been asked to increase the number of tests being conducted and keep a close watch on the situation, according to officials.

Of the total beneficiaries, 4,775 healthcare workers received the first dose and 5,459 their second dose. Also, 16,985 front-line workers received their first dose of the vaccine. Till now, a total of 1,35,034 healthcare workers and 1,71,079 front-line workers have received the vaccine, as per the government.

128 COVID-19 cases
Delhi witnessed 128 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,38,028, according to a government bulletin. One death was reported and the death tally touches 10,901. A total of 42,242 tests were done in a day.

Govt. launches month-long campaign to register construction workers

Camps to operate till March 22 at 45 sites across the Capital

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the government has started registration camps for construction workers at 45 sites across the city, which includes 29 government schools and 16 major construction sites, from Monday. The process will go on for a month.

He said that only 2.12 lakh out of the estimated 10 lakh construction workers have registered to avail a large number of schemes, including pension and maternity benefits.

calling 1076.

Under different schemes, workers can get ₹3-5 lakh for construction of house, ₹30,000 under maternity benefit scheme, ₹20,000 as loan for the purchase of work-related tools and ₹5,000 as grant for the purchase of tools.

"Workers' families get assistance of ₹1 lakh in case of natural death and ₹2 lakh in case of death due to accident. They may also avail ₹1 lakh in case of permanent total disability and a disability pension of ₹3,000 per month," the statement said.

Construction workers can get them registered using Delhi government's doorstep delivery service by

Two-time Cong. councillor Vikas Tonk joins AAP

AAP expanding for several months'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

AAP senior leader and party in-charge of municipal corporations, Durgesh Pathak, on Monday said that Vikas Tonk, a two-time councillor of Congress, has joined the party.

"AAP has been expanding in a significant way for the past several months. Looking into the development work and the government policies of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, people from various fields, irrespective of their affiliations, are joining AAP. Today, a ve-

ry renowned face from Civil Lines and Chandni Chowk Vidhan Sabha, Vikas Tonk, is joining our party. He was a two-time Congress councillor," said Mr. Pathak.

Mr. Tonk said that he joined AAP taking into consideration the work done by the Delhi government.

"I am hopeful that our party will become stronger after his [Tonk] joining. We all will work shoulder-to-shoulder. In the last six years, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has established a model of development," Mr. Pathak added.

'Gap in education deepened during pandemic'

Government schools are back to dealing with student enrolment, says Atishi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

AAP MLA Atishi said that over the past one year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of students were unable to access any kind of formal education and the ensuing gap is a very disturbing one. She was speaking at the Harvard-India conference 2021 on the topic 'Tackling Unequal Access to Education Worsened by COVID-19' on Monday.

"In India, the quality of education worsens as you go down the economic spectrum. But during the pandemic, the gap deepened even more," said Ms. Atishi.



She added that pre-COVID-19, the Delhi government schools had crossed the access barrier and were focusing more on the learning barrier. However, with COVID-19, government schools are back to dealing with student enrolment.

Access to education

"What we have effectively had in one year is a very large segment of children who have just not had access to any formal education. I think this gap that has been created is a very serious one," said Ms. Atishi. She added: "Education in elite private schools

has been virtually uninterrupted but in government schools, there are no laptops, mobile phones or Wi-Fi at homes and children have missed an entire year."

She added that during the lockdown, Delhi govt. schools have regularly reached out to parents to keep them in the loop and enquire about challenges faced at home. On whether students should be tested on what they have learnt during the year, Ms. Atishi said: "Rather than asking whether we should postpone board exams this year, we have to ask ourselves what are we assessing children on?"

Will float plan to grant legal status to temple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

North Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor Jai Prakash said a "high-level meeting" of senior leaders and officials of the civic body was held on Monday and it was decided that a proposal will be put up in its House to get a "legal status" for a prefabricated Hanuman temple that has come up at Chandni Chowk.

The meeting of the House is slated to be held on Thursday.

Police say nearly 50% of cases related to riots yet to be solved

'Investigations are on in full swing; 471 peace meetings held'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Monday said that 355 out of 755 cases registered in connection with north-east Delhi riots are yet to be solved and the investigations are on "full swing".

"As of now, investigation of riot cases is in full swing. All possible efforts are being made to solve the unsolved riot cases, besides taking the ongoing investigation to logical conclusion in a time-bound manner," Delhi Police said in a statement.

The government also disbursed a total of ₹20 lakh as compensation to three schools in north-east Delhi, which were damaged during the riots, which lasted around 72 hours in late February last year.

In addition to compensation, the government had also disbursed immediate financial relief between ₹20,000 and ₹25,000 to those affected by the riots through a team of 18 Sub-Divisional Magistrates.



Riots broke out in north-east Delhi in late February last year. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

had rebuked Delhi Police for arresting three men from the minority community and objecting to their bail with "no evidence whatsoever, either direct or circumstantial or forensic".

Calling the riots a "well calculated conspiracy", Delhi Police said, "The timings of the north-east district riots were almost meticulously executed by key conspirators. They were aware of the fact that any communal violence in Delhi during [former] U.S. President Donald Trump's visit would immediately be picked up by international media and would cause huge embarrassment to the Indian government. They decided to resort to 'chakka jam' at communally sensitive spots and attacked police personnel to escalate violence which coincided with the visit of the U.S. President."

The High Court on Friday

bile locations, a total 12 accused have been arrested in the vicinity of the incident site for he resides in Shakti Vihar which is close to the site," Rashid's lawyer argued.

Additional solicitor general S.V. Raju, appearing for Delhi Police, submitted that during the course of probe, statements of the eyewitnesses were recorded. The ASG argued that an eyewitness whose house was looted and torched by the mob named, identified and that Rashid was involved in the riots which caused the death of Negi.

Rashid is also facing charges in another FIR lodged in connection with the murder of one Dilbar Singh Negi, a waiter at Anil Sweet Corner, whose limbless body was found lying in burnt condition on the second floor of the sweets building.

After the FIR was registered, the investigation of case was transferred to Crime Branch Special Investigation

Team (SIT). It was found that on February 24, 2020, a riot had taken place on the main road in front of A-29, Ghaman Park, Main Brijpuri Road, where the mob threw stones, chanted slogans, ransacked and torched many shops.

It is prosecution's case that some persons in the mob killed the deceased, Negi, and burnt him along with the whole building. Petrol bottles and bag of *kanche* have also been seized from the roof of the building.

On the basis of the eyewitness, CCTV footage and mo-

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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 Tuesday: Thunderstorm with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-30.7	14.2	5.4	Kozhikode	5.4	33.4	22.9
Ahmedabad	...-34.9	15.6	5.4	Kurnool	...-33.4	20.5	5.4
Aizawl	...-26.0	8.7	5.4	Lucknow	...-28.7	14.6	5.4
Allahabad	...-28.5	11.8	5.4	Madurai	...-33.8	24.4	5.4
Bengaluru	...-3.2	28.8	18.1	Mangaluru	...-34.1	22.2	5.4
Bhopal	...-31.1	12.1	5.4	Mumbai	...-36.1	21.5	5.4
Bhubaneswar	...-36.5	16.2	5.4	Mysuru	...-32.0	18.8	5.4
Chandigarh	...-30.2	13.1	5.4	New Delhi	...-28.9	11.0	5.4
Chennai	...-31.4	24.2	5.4	Patna	...-28.0	13.6	5.4
Coimbatore	...-31.7	21.6	5.4	Port Blair	...-30.7	25.7	5.4
Dehradoon	...-27.9	12.5	5.4	Puducherry	...-43	30.2	21.2
Gangtok	...-18.3	9.3	5.4	Pune	...-31.9	17.5	5.4
Goa	...-34.8	24.1	5.4	Raipur	...-32.1	17.4	5.4
Guwahati	...-32.0	14.2	5.4	Ranchi	...-29.4	13.1	5.4
Hubballi	...-28.0	19.0	5.4	Shillong	...-21.1	10.2	5.4
Hyderabad	...-30.6	19.4	5.4	Shimla	...-20.9	8.5	5.4
Imphal	...-28.6	9.1	5.4	Srinagar	...-17.7	5.3	5.4
Jaipur	...-32.0	15.1	5.4	Thiruvananthapuram	...-33.6	24.7	5.4
Kochi	...-33.4	24.0	5.4	Tiruchi	...-33.8	22.9	5.4
Kohima	...-21.0	7.2	5.4	Vijayawada	...-33.2	22.4	5.4
Kolkata	...-31.2	17.6	5.4	Visakhapatnam	...-33.2	20.4	5.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	45	115	26	.133	153	■■■
Bengaluru	.4	33	80	.35	52	■■■
Chennai	.9	21	42	.52	58	■■■
Delhi	.5	126	26	.350	.286	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.3	94	36	.115	.114	■■■■■
Kolkata	49	.25	.58	.363	.278	■■■■■
Lucknow	.26	69	.67	.243	.247	■■■■■
Mumbai	.8	43	.69	.202	.137	■■■■■
Pune	.58	.52	.117	.97	.97	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	15	.66	.22	.97	.97	■■■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 345 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Madikeri, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 30.

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

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

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Chhagan Bhujbal is fifth minister to test positive in a week

Sharad Pawar cancels all his public programmes till March 1 in view of rising cases

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and Maharashtra Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal is the latest among the State's top politicos to test positive for COVID-19.

After a rapid antigen test conducted on Mr. Bhujbal had returned positive, the same result was seen in the RT-PCR test. According to sources, he has been moved to Mumbai for further treatment. "I have tested positive for Covid-19. All those who have come in contact with me in the last three days should get themselves tested. My health is fine and there is no reason to worry. All citizens must take proper care in the backdrop of rising Covid-19 cases. They should wear masks and use sanitisers regularly," tweeted Mr. Bhujbal, who is also the Guardian Minister of Nashik.

Mr. Bhujbal is the fifth minister in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Agadhi government to test positive for the virus in less than a week.



Chhagan Bhujbal

Minister Ajit Pawar.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sharad Pawar has cancelled all his public programmes till March 1 in the wake of the alarming spike in cases across the State. In a bid to add weight to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's announcement on Sunday urging all citizens to behave responsibly, Mr. Pawar, along with his daughter, Baramati MP Supriya Sule, as well as his grand-nephew, Karjat-Jamkhed MLA Rohit Pawar, have all cancelled their public engagements in the coming week. While Nashik district has a robust recovery rate of 96.64%, Nashik city remains a virus hotbed with more than 250-300 cases being reported each day.

Markets, schools closed

Last week, Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil, Health Minister Rajesh Tope, Food and Drug Administration Minister Rajendra Shingne, and Minister of State for Water Resources Bacchu Kadu tested positive. NCP leader Eknath Khadse and his daughter-in-law, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Raksha Khadse, too tested positive.

Mr. Bhujbal had attended

a slew of programmes and social gatherings in the last three days, including the wedding function of Deolali MLA Saroj Ahire which also

saw the attendance of both NCP chief Sharad Pawar and his nephew, Deputy Chief

Minister Ajit Pawar.

With cases mounting in Nagpur district, Guardian Minister Nitin Raut has announced that all schools, colleges, and weekly bazaars will remain closed as a precautionary measure till March 7, while all political, social and cultural pro-

grammes will be cancelled.

"While Nagpur is not under any lockdown as yet, there will be strict enforcement of rules henceforth," said Dr. Raut, who is also the State Energy Minister and a senior Congress leader.

On Sunday, Dr. Raut had announced that he was cancelling his son's wedding reception owing to the uptick in cases in the district.

Districts in Vidarbha, notably Nagpur and Amravati, have seen a massive rise in cases in the last week with both districts reporting 750-800 cases daily during this period. As Amravati commenced its week-long lockdown starting Monday, Amravati Municipal Commissioner Prashant Rode said that 12 containment zones had been formed and that cases were emerging from almost 60% of the city. "We have appealed to citizens to desist from congregating in crowded places. We are focusing on keeping the mortality rate down and we are getting an encouraging response from the public," Mr. Rode said.

Train services resume in Valley after 11 months

Two trains begin services between Banihal and Baramulla in the first phase

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The Kashmir Valley on Monday saw resumption of inter-district rail services after 11 months of suspension following the pandemic.

An official said two trains started ferrying passengers in the first phase between Banihal in south Kashmir and Baramulla in north Kashmir. The official said the trains started from 11.25 a.m. from Banihal and 9.10 a.m. from Baramulla.



Passengers boarding a train at Srinagar railway station on Monday. PTI

Ahead of the resumption of the services, the railways had carried out a dry run of 137 km on Sunday. The trains will be able to pick passengers from 17 stations now.

Meanwhile, security forces on Monday morning defused a roadside Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in the outskirts of Srinagar, close to the main train stopover in the city.

Police officials said a bomb disposal squad was pressed into the service immediately after the IED was spotted by a road opening party on the Pantha-Chowk-Nowgar road in Srinagar.

"It was defused successfully," the police said.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar found dead in Mumbai hotel

Suicide note in Gujarati was found: police



Police officers coming out of Sea Green South Hotel in Mumbai where Lok Sabha member Mohan Delkar's body was found on Monday. • VIVE BENDRE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Mohan Delkar, seven-term Lok Sabha member from Dadra and Nagar Haveli, was found dead in a Mumbai hotel on Monday, police said.

The body of Delkar (58), Independent MP from Dadra and Nagar Haveli Union Territory, was found at the sea-facing hotel in south Mumbai's Marine Drive in 2009 and 2014. However, he successfully contested the 17th Lok Sabha elections as an independent candidate.

The official said a suicide note in Gujarati was also found along with the body. The cause of death would be known after autopsy, he added. An accidental death report was being registered based on preliminary information, the official said.

Delkar was in May 2019 elected to the 17th Lok Sabha, his seventh term in the House. He was also a member of the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice and a member of the Consultative Committee, Ministry of Home Affairs, of the Lower House. Delkar is survived by wife, a son and a daughter.

An advocate for tribal rights, Mohan Sanjibhai Delkar began his career as a trade union leader in Silvassa. He was first elected to the ninth Lok Sabha from Dadra and Nagar Haveli constituency in 1989 as a Congress nominee. He won six consecutive elections from the constituency during 1989-2009, failing to retain the seat in the Lok Sabha polls in 2009 and 2014.

Those who require assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts may contact: BMC mental health helpline 022-24131212 (24x7); Vanavrevala Foundation: 18602662345/18002333330 (24x7); I Call: 022-25521111 (8 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday to Saturday); The Samaritans Mumbai: 8422984529/8422984530 (3 p.m. to 9 p.m., all days).

Sachin Joshi remanded in judicial custody in slum rehabilitation fraud case

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

Actor and businessman Sachin Joshi has been remanded in judicial custody by the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court, in connection with a slum rehabilitation fraud case involving Omkar Group.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) probing the case said, "Explanations provided by Mr. Joshi reveal that funds were received by him and his companies from various companies of Omkar Group. Part of funds was shown as investment and part of them was shown as received against rendering of services. With respect to funds received as investment, Mr. Joshi said the same were towards development of land near Pune."

The agency contended that the term sheet of investment was simply used to disguise the real intention of diversion of funds received from Omkar Group of companies and park these funds on behalf of promoters of

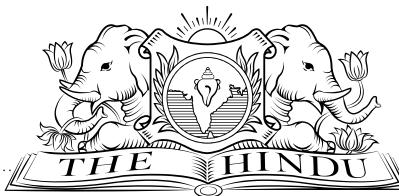
Omkar Group. "It can be seen that any prudent business transaction would involve definite black and white agreement about investment/utilisation of such huge funds," the ED said.

According to the ED, Mr. Joshi informed the agency that no actual slum rehabilitation work was done by him but he was involved in facilitation with Omkar Group, where Omkar Group was to use his name and brand name in order to rehabilitate the tenants/settle with the tenants.

From the cash flows of Omkar Realtors & Developers Pvt. Ltd. for various years, it is observed that there are huge inter-company transactions with group companies, including the companies from which funds have been transferred to the accused and his companies. Loans availed from Yes Bank have been diverted and Mr. Joshi has helped promoters of Omkar Group in such diversion for an amount of at least ₹87 crore," the agency said.

Boy electrocuted while playing with iron ladder

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI



Level platforms

Other governments might take the cue from Australia's law making platforms pay for news

A new law in Australia that seeks to make technology platforms such as Google and Facebook pay news publishers for use of their content presents governments in democracies with an idea worth considering, if not emulating. The law, which is based on the realisation of a severe power imbalance between giant Internet platforms and news media, marks a rare intervention by any government in platform-publisher relationships. It seeks to level the playing field by mandating that platforms negotiate with publishers of news regarding payment for their content. The platforms are not used to paying for such content. The power imbalance is not just an Australian reality, though. It is everywhere. This imbalance has only intensified over the past decade or so, during which time platforms have gained so much power that they have become *de facto* gateways to the net. They have also grown massively to become some of the richest companies on earth today. Unfortunately, during the same time, there has been a precipitous decline in the fortunes of the news media, which provides the journalistic resources on the ground to keep a population, especially in a democracy, well informed. Journalism houses have struggled to stay afloat, what with their long, successful offline business models becoming less viable. As a result, across the world, many have gone out of business and hundreds and thousands of journalists have lost their jobs.

It is no one's case that this law is flawless. Far from it. Leaving aside Google and Facebook, which unsurprisingly opposed it, many experts do reckon that it is against the principles of an open Internet. Many others do refer to the pressure from the traditional media lobby, which includes the likes of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. But the point to note is the intent. In launching the Bill, which is now just a few days away from getting passed by the Senate, the Australian Government has shown that it realises that the cost of not intervening in this unequal battle is high. At stake is the sustainability of the news media industry. That Australia chose to intervene is critical as countries, outside of the European Union, have often adopted a laissez-faire approach to administering tech giants. But this may change. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has himself taken the initiative in reaching out to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about the Bill. With France already having given shape to new European Union copyright rules, thereby forcing Google to negotiate licensing deals with its publishers, the heat is on the Internet platforms. Other governments might take the cue.

Loss of trust

By engineering defections in Puducherry, the BJP might have lost more than it gained

The month-long political instability in Puducherry has ended with the resignation of Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Monday after he failed to prove his majority on the floor of the House. Though the fall of his government appeared imminent a few days ago, the way in which the political events played out highlighted the limits of the constitutional provisions to discourage defection of elected legislators. Not long ago, the Narayanasamy Ministry had a comfortable majority with 19 members in the 33-member Assembly. The disqualification of a Congress MLA in July last year did not make any difference to the situation. But, in the last one month, six MLAs from the Congress-DMK combine quit the House. Among them were two Ministers and a couple of MLAs who gave up their seats just a day before the floor test. Two of those who quit the Assembly have since joined the BJP. Under the changed circumstances, the non-Congress front, comprising the All India N.R. Congress (AINRC), the AIADMK and the BJP, gained an edge with 14 members, as the strength of the House was reduced to 26. With the Assembly elections in the Union Territory just a few weeks away, the Lt. Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan should recommend placing the Union Territory under President's rule. Any other course would only serve to highlight the unprincipled nature of the defections.

Parliamentary democracy thrives not just through adhering to the letter of the law but also by building and respecting healthy precedents and conventions. This was given a go-by when the Centre, in June 2017, nominated three BJP functionaries as MLAs. There was nothing illegal about it, but this raised questions of political propriety in the light of the BJP drawing a blank in the 2016 Assembly election. When one of the nominated MLAs died in mid-January this year, the ruling party at the Centre lost no time in nominating an office bearer of the party to fill the vacancy, though the term of the present House ends on June 8. The recent events have to be seen against the backdrop of the BJP's efforts to gain a foothold in the Union Territory, where its principal adversary, the Congress, has been the pole star. Besides, for the last few years, the BJP has been relentlessly attacking the Narayanasamy regime. The month-long resignation drama can only be seen as part of the BJP's larger game plan of realising its goal of "Congress-mukt Bharat" (Congress-free India). There would have been no objection to the BJP's pursuit had it played the game in a fair manner. The BJP should be aware that any negative role on its part will not go well with the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who, in his first monthly radio address, Mann Ki Baat, after getting re-elected in May 2019, said: "...beyond laws and rules, democracy is embedded in our *samskaar* [tradition]; democracy is our culture. Democracy is our heritage." By engineering defections so close to the election, the BJP might have lost more than it gained.

Dealing with the bigger neighbour, China

Unlike its ties with Russia, bellicosity seems the signature element of Beijing's approach to India



NIRUPAMA RAO

Our two countries have a basic misreading of each other's priorities," a Chinese scholar, generally known for his hard line on India, told me in Beijing in 2014. The usual broadside about India "belittling" China's sovereignty in Tibet followed. How could India support the McMahon Line when Tibet had "never possessed the right" to conclude sovereign agreements with the outside world, he asked. China, he continued, had practised "restraint" (hinting ominously that it could well do otherwise) in the Eastern Sector (the sector covered by the McMahon Line) of the boundary with India. And, as if foreshadowing the events in Galwan in the summer of 2020, he said that in the Western Sector of the boundary China was "practising a forward policy because there are so many grey areas". On the other hand, if India launched "a new edition of the forward policy" in this sector, problems would "re-occur".

An unravelling

The conversation was a grim reminder of the underlying problems in the India-China relationship even as their leaders practised bucolic, informal summits. To the outside world, the two countries held up their relations as an example of how despite an unresolved boundary question, they had not allowed these differences to prevent the development of relations in other areas, including trade and economic ties as well as people-to-people interaction in various spheres. Peace and tranquillity in the border areas had also been maintained for over four decades. But the unravelling had begun. Two nationalisms were contending and the untrammelled rise of China was generating new global power equations and alignments. The gulf between India and China was

growing. Come 2020, Galwan signalled the collapse of the edifice of bilateral relations built on these weak foundations over three decades. Measures to strengthen peace and tranquillity and confidence-building in the border areas had obviously been rendered obsolete and inadequate as armed confrontation replaced a flimsy structure of so-called peaceful coexistence.

Peace agreements over time

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Since 1993, India and China had arrived at a number of agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity and promote confidence building measures (CBMs) in the border areas. These were (<https://bit.ly/3u32lU>), starting with 1993: the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas; the Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas (1996); Protocol between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas (2005); Agreement between The Government of the Republic of India and The Government of the People's Republic of China on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (2012); Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Border Defence Cooperation (2013).

Some of the key features of these agreements were: the boundary question would be resolved peacefully; neither side would use or threaten to use force against the other "by any means"; that the two sides would respect and observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC); that they would jointly



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

check and determine the segments of the LAC where they had different views as to its alignment and further, speed up clarification and confirmation of the LAC since a common understanding of the Line was necessary; that military forces (including field army, border defence forces, paramilitary forces) and major categories of armaments in mutually agreed geographical zones along the LAC would be kept to a minimum level compatible with friendly and good neighbourly relations and the "requirements of mutual and equal security"; military exercises would be undertaken only at specified levels with prior notification being given for such exercises near the LAC; prior notice would be given regarding flights of combat aircraft within 10 kilometres from the LAC; if border personnel of the two sides came face-to-face due to differences in alignment of the LAC they would exercise self-restraint and avoid an escalation of the situation; channels of communication and border personnel meetings in case of contingencies were stipulated.

The China-Russia thread

The inspiration for the first two of these Agreements, signed in 1993 and 1996, came from the example set by first the Soviet Union and then Russia in concluding such understandings on CBMs with China. As the scholar, Jingdong Yuan, has noted, at the heart of the normalisation of Russia-China relations was the resolution of the border dispute between the two and the development of CBMs in the border regions. Military confrontation – a defining feature in their relations from the 1960's (the bloody incident of 1969 on the Damansky island may be recalled) – was removed. A strategic partnership of equality and trust oriented towards the 21st century was deve-

loped. After the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union conceded a long-standing Chinese demand to allow the adoption of the median line of the Amur-Ussuri River as the boundary between the two countries. It was a major concession and quite contrary to the conventional view that the bigger country is usually unwilling to cede ground in negotiations. Further Soviet moves to reduce China's sense of insecurity followed. These were the removal of SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles including from along the border with China and agreement to negotiate military CBMs. Moscow also made unilateral troop reductions.

In April 1990, an Agreement on the Guidelines of Mutual Reduction of Forces and Confidence-building in the Military Field in the Area of the Soviet-Chinese Border was signed. This committed the two governments to the reduction of military forces to the lowest level suited to normal good neighbourly relations on "an equal basis for mutual security". (The term "mutual and equal security" often used by our analysts and experts on India-China relations owes its currency to this reference in the 1990 Soviet-Chinese Agreement just referred to and what we learnt from the Russians when they briefed us about their discussions on CBMs with the Chinese in the early 1990's). In May 1991, an Agreement on the Eastern Sector of National Boundaries was concluded by the two countries, resolving 98% of outstanding boundary issues. They also agreed that the zone of military CBMs would be 100 km on each side of the border.

What made it work

The main characteristic of these CBMs was the willingness of the bigger power – the Soviet Union – to undertake unilateral concessions and asymmetric reductions in military strength *vis-à-vis* China. The collapse of the Soviet Union, far from hindering the process of normalisation only smoothed it further – Russia and China continued to improve relations, their

strategic convergence spurred on by shared suspicion about the overwhelming preponderance of U.S. global power at the end of the Cold War.

The success of their alignment post-1989 and the Deng Xiaoping-Gorbachev Summit (held against the backdrop of the Tiananmen Square student demonstrations) was that they identified common interests and were committed to building a relationship that was "broadly based and institutionalized" (Jingdong Yuan). What this signified is that military CBMs and tension-reduction along the border were 'nested' and fostered in a vast network of cooperative alignments that Russia and China built up in numerous areas once they agreed to normalise their relations.

Points to note

Where our experience with China on CBMs and tension-reduction along the border differs from the experience of Russia is that first, the five Agreements we signed between 1993 and 2013 were not nurtured in an environment of a steady enhancement of mutual trust and political commitment for building a strong infrastructure of bilateral relations between India and China that promoted both bilateral and regional understanding and cooperative endeavour. Second, unlike in the Russia-China case, no final boundary settlement accompanied these CBMs to sustain and strengthen their operation. Even a joint clarification of the LAC remained unattainable. Third, China as the bigger power, unlike the Soviet Union under Gorbachev in its dealings with Beijing, has never signalled willingness to make asymmetric or unilateral concessions to India or act in a manner, especially in our neighbourhood, that enhances India's trust or confidence. The bellicosity underlying the remarks by my Chinese interlocutor in 2014 is the signature element of Beijing's approach to India. It renders the future of our relations with China uncertain and problematic.

Nirupama Rao is a former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to China. She specialised in India-China border issues

Adding heft to diplomacy with some help from science

The pandemic gives India a unique space to mainstream science and technology in its domestic and foreign policies



HARSH V. PANT & MANOJ SAXENA

India's ongoing 'Vaccine Maitri' campaign, which is aimed at provisioning COVID-19 vaccines to countries both near to and away from its immediate neighborhood, is one of the most important recent initiatives to leverage its science and technological advantages for the furtherance of its foreign policy objectives. While the appreciation of leaders such as President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil and the reluctant outreach of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for securing vaccines manufactured in India have gained much attention, New Delhi's efforts to address this health emergency were met with even more vocal appreciation by leaders from its partners from the Global South such as the Dominican Republic and Barbados.

Setting the template

India's global priorities in science and technology were clearly articulated by its first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during his address to the country's Science Congress on January 21, 1959 (<https://bit.ly/2NujfVd>). Nehru was aware of both the constructive and destructive power of science and made India's intention of seeking international scientific advances for the country's development and

rise clear with added emphasis on averseness to inter-state rivalries. This template would set the tone for India's international science and technology engagement for much of the 20th century, and met with mixed results as more powerful states such as the United States sought to curb its ambitions in critical spheres such as its nuclear and space programmes.

Assertion of interests

Despite limitations, India still managed to assist its partners from the Global South in key areas of science and technology such as health across Asia and Africa. The country's national confidence would also rise during the final decade of the last century as economic dynamism led to a more proactive assertion of its interests. New Delhi established the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India in November 1999. And by the early years of the 21st century, it sought to reduce its dependence on foreign countries to then emerge as a net provider of development assistance in the international system.

The 21st century international system was more conducive to the country's science and technology designs in spheres such as nuclear and space technology due to a thaw in ties between India and the United States given the rise of an aggressive China and other consequential challenges to the international system.

India would also sign strategic partnerships bearing substantial science and technology compo-

nents with advanced economies such as the United Kingdom, Japan, Israel, Germany, the European Union, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, South Korea and Australia even as it strengthened its traditional partnerships with countries such as France and Russia.

India's ambitions would also become evident from its critical policy frameworks. Both the country's Science and Technology Policy 2003 and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2013 clearly related international science and technology cooperation with national interest. More recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been categorical in placing science and technology at the forefront of the country's diplomatic system.

India's state instruments of diplomacy would also begin to show a more visible alignment to international science and technology cooperation. India currently fields four Development Partnership Administrations under its Ministry of External Affairs – consequential given that President Ram Nath Kovind, in Cuba in June 2018, declared that the country had "placed science and technology at

the center of its development cooperation strategy".

The Ministry of External Affairs too has seen a restructuring with a Cyber Diplomacy Division, an E-Governance & Information Technology Division and a New Emerging & Strategic Technologies Division to manage science and technology issues in the nation's diplomatic matrix.

The COVID-19 response

India's science and technology prowess would be tested internationally by 2019 through an unprecedented global disruption originating from China in the shape of the COVID-19 pandemic. New Delhi was swift to address the global challenge by initially sending medicines such as hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol to over 150 countries, welcomed by its partners across the world. India's pharmaceutical firms such as the Serum Institute of India competently partnered with the U.K.'s Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine project while others such as Bharat Biotech gave rise to indigenous vaccines in the shape of Covaxin. India's response came at a time where the developed world was pre-occupied in trying to address its own domestic issues and China's health diplomacy – much like its other development assistance – came with prohibitive costs.

As scientists developed vaccines to fortify human beings against an aggressive COVID-19 virus, it was India, an established leader in vaccine manufacturing, that rose to the challenge of global provision. Beyond idealist invoca-

tions, India's COVID-19 response also came closely aligned with its Neighbourhood First, Act East, Indo-Pacific and Look West policies.

Areas for review
As India, through its Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, attempts to secure maximum self-reliance through capacity building and creating an environment where science and technology can not only answer its own national needs and cross-border interests but also global challenges, there are issues that must be addressed. India's financial apportionment to science and technology related research must rise to enable the country's own rise – as must participation of its states, universities and private sector in research and development efforts.

The time is also right for India's young scientists and technologists to be made more aware of the country's foreign policy objectives, and to also enable all stakeholders in the policy establishment to learn more about science and technology to bridge the intellectual divide. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has presented the country a unique space to mainstream science and technology in its domestic and foreign policies. It is now up to India's decision-makers to conclusively convert this crisis into an opportunity.

Harsh V. Pant is Director of Research at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and Professor of International Relations at King's College London. Manoj Saxena is a PhD candidate at King's College London

 GETTY IMAGES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Case surge

It is most alarming that a few States are again reporting a surge in COVID-19 cases. There seems to have been a false sense of well-being after a dip in cases. In fact after the unlocking, there seems to have been much carelessness and a lax attitude. Unless citizens cooperate again, there could be a second wave

especially as the States affected do have large-scale movement to and from other parts of the country. The Central government should immediately start a mass vaccination drive.

J.P. REDDY,
Nalgonda, Telangana

I write this letter as professor and chairman of a biochemistry and microbiology department in

a college of science and technology. The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over as seen by the spike in the number of cases in several States. With new mutant variants of the virus on the prowl, identification of active cases by RT-PCR is of prime importance. A review of the existing antigen and RT-PCR kits needs to be done and assessed for sensitivity in detecting these variants.

New technology such as RT-LAMP assay, which is more sensitive and faster, must be standardised and used wherever possible. Data needs to be collected for the efficacy of the existing vaccines against the variants, and corrections need to be introduced in the basic structure of the vaccine. Remodelling vaccines, if necessary, and testing their efficacy against the variants

should be the course of action. Strict adherence to protocols is mandatory.

D. Biju C. MATHEW,
Thiruvananthapuram

Tennis and its duels
In these grim times, Novak Djokovic has scripted a remarkable piece of tennis history. It is astonishing to think that we live in an era where three legends have been able to reach dizzying

heights in men's tennis and still have utmost respect for each other, showing the world a perfect model of sportsmanship among rival stars. The triumvirate of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Djokovic will go down in the history of tennis as possibly the best of all time.

SIVAKUMAR KUMAR,
Chennai

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Sedition lies in the effect, not in content

It is not seditious acts but the persecution and labelling of dissenters that is creating cracks in society



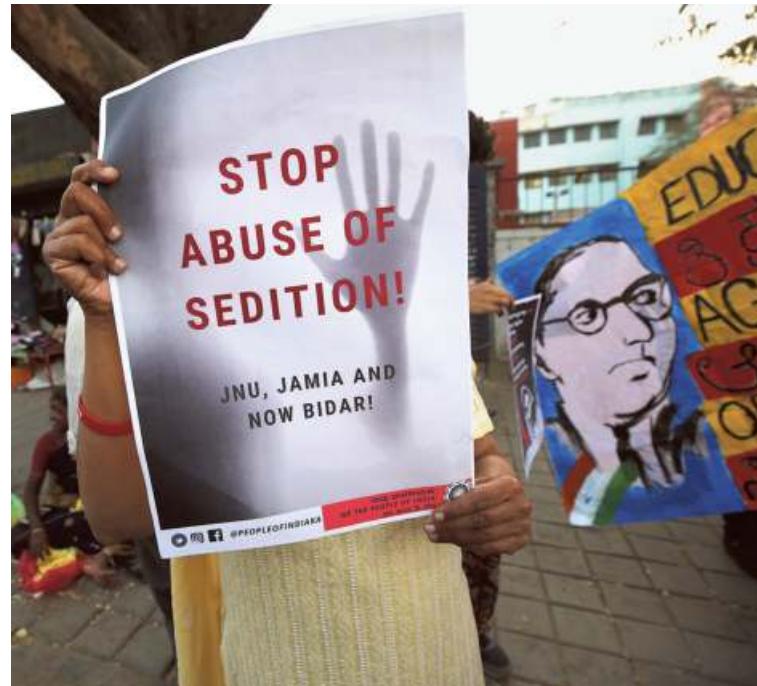
SATVIK VARMA

Recent charges of sedition against individuals have brought back focus to a law introduced in the Indian Penal Code in 1870. In *Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar* (1962), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of sedition and noted it as being a reasonable restriction on free speech as provided in Article 19(2) of the Constitution. It made clear that a citizen has the right to say or write whatever she likes about the government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comments, as long as she does not incite people to violence against the government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder. One wonders, if the law provides this protection, then why is this archaic, yet powerful, law often used to quell dissent?

Why the law needs a relook

Following the *Kedar Nath* case, the Bombay High Court, in the case of cartoonist Aseem Trivedi, issued guidelines which the police must follow prior to invoking the provisions of sedition. These *inter alia* include an objective evaluation of the material to form an opinion on whether the words and actions cause disaffection, enmity and disloyalty to the government as they must be of the magnitude that they incite violence or tend to create public disorder. The Court also directed obtaining a legal opinion in writing from a law officer of the district who must give reasons on how the pre-conditions are met. This needs to be followed by a second opinion from the State's public prosecutor. And while courts have on numerous occasions cautioned law enforcement agencies not to misuse the provisions on sedition, and follow court directions, regrettably, they are grossly ignored. The problem therefore lies in the poor implementation of the law and guidelines.

This is evident from recent reports, based on data from the National Crime Records Bureau. Between 2016 and 2019, the number of cases of sedition under Section 124A in-



A protest against the sedition case filed by the police against a school after a play performed by students denounced the new citizenship law, in Bengaluru in February 2020. ■ AP

creased by 160%, while the rate of conviction dropped to 3.3% in 2019 from 33.3% in 2016.

Notably, many charged were individuals protesting government action, which the Constitution Bench in *Kedar Nath* held falls outside the ambit of sedition. Consequently, the staggering numbers have got people saying that "the aim is not to punish or convict anyone but to incarcerate them... the process itself is the punishment."

This data and the gross misuse of the legal provisions compel one to state that even though a Constitution Bench upheld the vices of the law of sedition, the circumstances now require a complete relook at the provision. After all, when the situation changes, the statute calls for a change as law cannot afford to remain static. In the Internet age, where we are all consumed by social media and where information travels at the speed of lightning, what can lead to public disorder has itself become debatable. With cyberbullies and a select few being able to make things trend, even the wrong ones, a lot has changed from 1962 when the *Kedar Nath* case was decided. Even otherwise, clutching on to a foreign

legal order is no longer needed.

Interestingly, however, the present situation is the reverse. The U.K. repealed the offence of sedition in 2010 and India is holding onto a relic of the British Empire. As recent as 2018, the Law Commission of India took note of this and questioned how far it is justified to retain Section 124A, especially in view of the fact that several existing statutes take care of various actions which were earlier considered seditious. It also sought consideration on whether keeping Section 124A would serve any purpose and whether reducing the rigour of the law of sedition would be detrimental or beneficial to the nation. The outcome of this consultative paper is unknown, but the discussion needs to be rekindled.

An effect-based test

And till the law on sedition continues to remain on our statute book, courts must adopt what some Western countries follow: an effect-based test which examines the effects of the seditious text rather than a content-based test which reviews the text alone. As an Additional Sessions Judge recently noted while granting bail in a case on sedition, "the law of

sedition is a powerful tool in the hands of the state to maintain peace and order in the society. However, it cannot be invoked to quieten the disquiet under the pretence of muzzling the miscreants." Not for a minute is one saying that the perpetrators of violence must not be brought to book. They must, but following the process established by law.

The issue is not about liberals, the right wing, conservatives or the left wing. It's about India as one nation. It's about following our syncretic traditions and accepting that in a country of over 1.3 billion people, our unity rests in our diversity. After all, Vedic spirituality as one of its core ideas postulates "Aano Bhadrach Krtavo Yantu Vishwatah (let noble thoughts come to us from all directions)". Following this sagacious advice, rather than asking those with a different view to prove their nationalism, let us prove ours by respecting the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity as noted in the Preamble to our Constitution which assures to all individuals dignity and unity and integrity of the nation above all else. Instead of repeatedly testing the allegiance of those we disagree with, let us test our abilities by reforming our own mindset and outlook towards those who muster up the courage to voice their dissent and stand apart.

If we do this, the only 'toolkit' we all really need is our Constitution and the principles it enshrines to protect citizen freedoms, life and liberty. The hashtags we all need to spread and make trend are the ones which detail the #RuleOfLaw and our commitment to it and the values it puts forward as regards executive excesses and judicial restraint. What we must disseminate on all social media outlets is our allegiance to due process, the need for speedy trials and our commitment to the doctrine of presumption of innocence. It is not the alleged seditious acts that are creating fragments in our society; it is in fact the persecution of individuals and labelling them that are really creating cracks in our socio-politico ecosystem. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

Satvik Varma is an advocate based in New Delhi

I looked up to see the tall, willowy figure filling my office door. It was common to see Obaid Siddiqui on the path from the laboratory to the canteen, but a pleasant surprise to see him in my laboratory. It was 2008. I had joined the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) as a young faculty member in 2005. "Can you test for swine flu in your laboratory," he asked. Swine flu was spreading at the time in India, and he was curious. My research was on genetic variations in animals. I collected field samples, isolated genetic material from these samples, and sequenced or 'read' parts of this genetic code. Sometimes we were unsure what animal the material was from, so we designed protocols to look for specific genetic material. This is exactly what is done in a diagnostic test that is based on genetic material. Biosafety protocols notwithstanding, yes, it was possible. We had the equipment that was needed, and the students and postdocs had the skills. Yet this had never occurred to me. Our research was long term and attempted to address basic questions, not nimble and responsive to real-life situations or service oriented.

COVID testing

I remembered this conversation in March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic was spreading across the world. India was going into lockdown. The thought of COVID-19 spreading across the Indian populace was mind-boggling. The best strategy was to increase number of people tested daily. But how? Only 15 laboratories in Karnataka were equipped to test for SARS-CoV-2.

What would it take to set up a diagnostic facility to test for SARS-CoV-2 on our academic, basic science-focused campus? An office order issued by the Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India, encouraging central research labs to begin testing, and strong support from the Secretaries, Department of Biotechnology and Department of Atomic Energy, gave impetus to our efforts. Following rigorous regulatory approvals by the institutional biosafety and human ethics committees, and networking with the Karnataka State COVID cell, we were ready to start testing. We identified a laboratory space, and a dedicated team of volunteers from the campus community. A few of us faculty would supervise all aspects of the process,

including sample receipt and inactivation, testing for the presence of the virus and reporting these results on the ICMR portal.

The testing facility became operational on April 13, 2020. From the trepidation of the first set of 15 samples, we were soon testing hundreds a day. Daily and consistent efforts from campus volunteers, staff and faculty, with unwavering support from the campus leadership, made this a reality. Summer gave way to the monsoon, and the festive season, and cases in Bengaluru soared. Volunteers were replaced by regular staff. Our diagnostic centre prevailed, testing samples non-stop. Alongside mushroomed several applied and basic research efforts. Our scientists developed tools to study the virus more effectively, used genome sequencing to characterise viral evolution over time, and set up pipelines to test the efficacy of Food and Drug Administration approved drugs.

Larger crises

We recently reported 1 lakh tests, reminding me what this journey has taught me. Like many born in the 1970s, I grew up on a diet of nationalism. Inspired by Gandhi's speech, my paternal grandfather and his brother walked from their village in Tamil Nadu to Sabarmati to participate in the independence movement. I longed to have been alive then, to do something real in a time of crisis for the nation. The pandemic provided scientists this opportunity. But as a scientist who works on biodiversity, I know larger crises are brewing. Global meta-analyses reveal that zoonoses tend to emerge in areas with many mammal species, high land use and land cover change, and high human population density. Studies predict that India will be a hotspot for possible zoonotic disease emergence. India's approach to addressing zoonoses has primarily been reactive, with research and public health intervention beginning when there is an outbreak. The scientific question remains: can we proactively predict an outbreak? Can we sample viral and bacterial diversity from wild reservoirs like bats and rodents in our biodiversity hotspots? Can we understand how ecological and evolutionary dynamics of possible pathogens and their wildlife hosts can become hotspots of spillover? Can we then monitor these possible hotspots to detect spillover events very early or before they happen? Understanding these questions will require teams of interdisciplinary scientists and sustained efforts. Working with the testing efforts taught me that we can come together for a common cause.

Uma Ramakrishnan is Professor at NCBS, TIFR and a member of the Biodiversity Collaborative

New paradigm in animal husbandry

Boosting the sector will bring social, economic, and nutritional benefits

ATUL CHATURVEDI & NAINA SHARMA

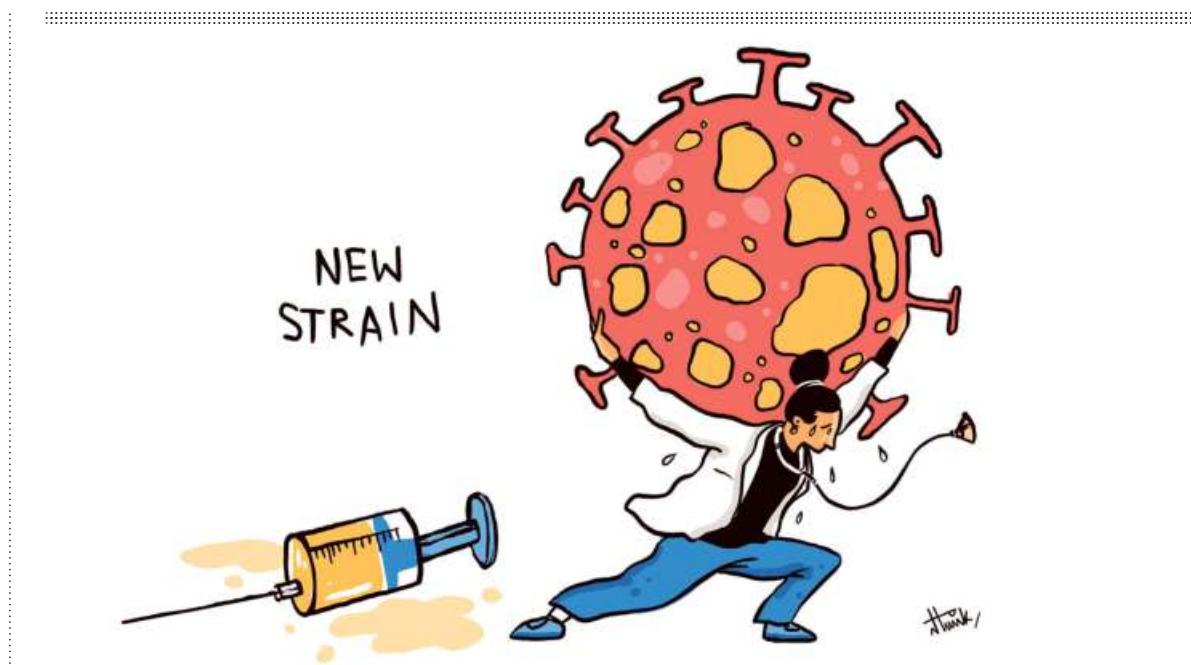
needs for milk processing and distribution are included, then the overall potential investment opportunity is to the tune of ₹1,40,000 crore across the dairy value chain.

There is also considerable potential to increase the productivity of cattle, especially by enhancing the quality of animal feed. With this in mind, the AHIDF has been designed to support the establishment of animal feed plants of varying capacities - including setting up of mineral mixture plants, silage making units, and animal feed testing laboratory. To spur on innovative solutions, the Ministry in collaboration with Invest India has invited ideas from domestic start-ups for the development of new varieties of green fodder and enriched animal feed. The infrastructure gap of 10-18 MMT in the production and supply of affordable compound cattle feed translates into an investment potential of around ₹5,000 crore.

Boosting the poultry industry
In a similar vein, there are not only economic but nutritional benefits to boosting the poultry segment's output, efficiency and quality. India is the fourth largest chicken meat producer and the second largest egg producer in the world and is well-positioned to help mitigate rampant malnutrition given that chicken meat provides the cheapest source of protein per unit. With eggs being introduced as part of the mid-day meal within several anganwadis in the country, an upgradation in poultry infrastructure would be closely intertwined with social justice outcomes too.

Finally, macro benefits regarding climate change and employment are linked to this sector. Enhanced infrastructure can make processing units more energy-efficient and help mitigate their carbon footprint. The AHIDF also has the potential to create over 30 lakh jobs, even as it overhauls domestic infrastructure towards giving greater prominence to India's dairy and livestock products in the global value chain.

Atul Chaturvedi is the Secretary, Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries; and Naina Sharma works at Invest India

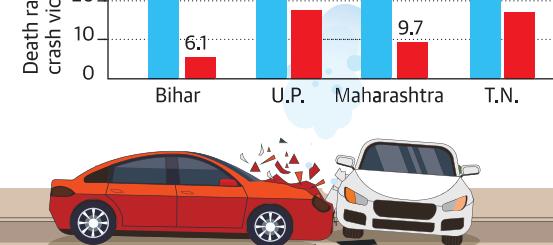
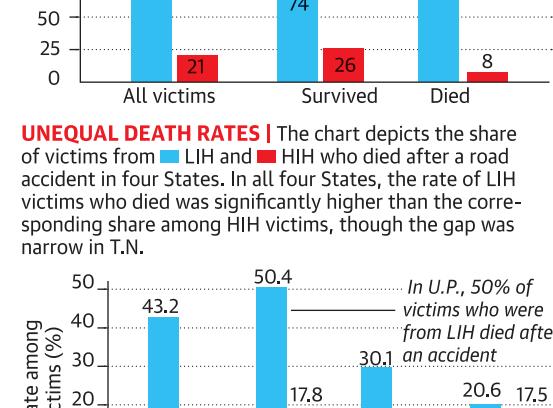


DATA POINT

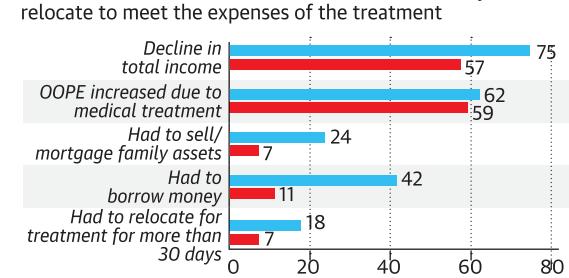
Crash impact | The fatality rate among people involved in accidents and belonging to low-income households or LIH (36%) was higher than those belonging to high-income households or HIH (12.5%), according to a World Bank report. The report surveyed victims involved in road accidents between January 2005 and July 2019 in four States — T.N., Maharashtra, U.P. and Bihar — which cumulatively account for one-third of road accident deaths in India. The survival rates of LIH victims from Bihar and U.P. were much lower compared to the other two States. The financial impact on LIH victims who survived was more severe. The share of victims from LIH who availed of medical insurance was also much lower.

SKEWED SHARES | Though victims from HIH comprised 21% of all road accident victims, their share among those who survived was higher (26%) and their share among those who died was much lower. However, LIH victims had a disproportionately higher share among those who died

UNEQUAL DEATH RATES | The chart depicts the share of victims from LIH and HIH who died after a road accident in four States. In all four States, the rate of LIH victims who died was significantly higher than the corresponding share among HIH victims, though the gap was narrow in T.N.

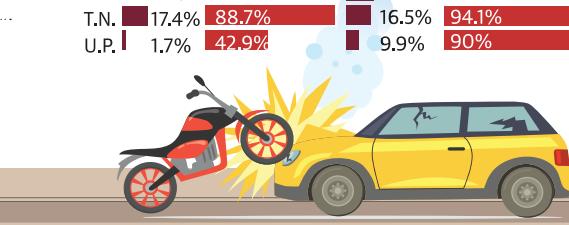


FINANCIAL IMPACT | While the shares of LIH and HIH households that reported an increase in out-of-pocket medical expenditure were similar, a significantly higher share of victims from LIH had to sell assets, borrow money, or relocate to meet the expenses of the treatment



COVER STORY | The share of victims from HIH who availed of medical insurance was more than twice that of victims from LIH. The difference was starker in Maharashtra

	Among LIH	Among HIH
Claims filed	7.5%	16.9%
Received compensation	79%	74%
Overall	8.7%	20.5%
Bihar	2.4%	19.5%
Maharashtra	17.4%	81.8%
T.N.	1.7%	16.5%
U.P.	42.9%	90%



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 23, 1971

India cautions U.K.

India to-day [New Delhi, February 22] warned Britain that the very existence of the Commonwealth would be in jeopardy if the British Government decided to supply arms to South Africa before the study group set up the last Commonwealth conference in Singapore completed its work.

The warning was contained in a statement issued by the External Affairs Ministry spokesman on reports of the imminent possibility of British arms supplies to South Africa. "India had already made it clear at Singapore that should Britain decide to supply any arms before the study group had completed its work, the functioning of the study group would be rendered infructuous and this could have serious implications for the very existence of the Commonwealth," the spokesman said.

The spokesman said the entire question was essentially political and not military. He said that India had made it clear that any accretion to the military strength of South Africa would not only enable it to reinforce its racist policies, but would also make it possible to give greater assistance to the illegal racist regime in Rhodesia and the colonial oppression by Portugal of the peoples of Angola and Mozambique.

"It would increase the threat to international peace and security not only in Southern Africa but also in the Indian Ocean area. The United Nations Security Council recognises this. Britain has itself subscribed to various U.N. resolutions directing member States not to supply arms to South Africa." The statement added, "the Lusaka Declaration had outlined the non-aligned position on this subject. The Government of India reaffirmed its adherence to this position during the Singapore conference."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 23, 1921

Indian grievances

Replying to a complaint from a prominent Indian journalist that he was not permitted to enter Australia and that Indian merchants were unable to establish agencies in that country, Mr. Poynton recalls that at the Imperial Conference in 1918, the Australian Government extended the arrangement made in 1905 whereby Indian merchants, tourists and students were permitted to enter the country on passports and also the wives and children of Indians permanently domiciled in Australia.

FROM PAGE ONE

Congress-led govt. falls in Puducherry

"As the Speaker did not agree, we staged a walkout. Even in our absence, he should have put the motion of confidence to vote. In the meantime, Speaker himself gave a ruling, which is absolutely wrong. But we have the moral responsibility to resign. So I tendered the resignation," he said.

The Opposition and Centre used the three nominated legislators to destabilise the government, he charged. Of them, two had contested in the 2016 Assembly polls and lost their deposits. BJP leaders, who were rejected by the people, were directly appointed by the Centre and then used as an instrument to topple a democratically elected government, he said.

Lt. Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has forwarded the resignation letter of Mr. Narayanasamy and a report on the Assembly proceedings to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs for its consideration, a source in the Raj Nivas said.

Xi Jinping may visit India for BRICS summit

He was referring to economic cooperation, political and security cooperation, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

Expectations are that by the second half of the year, the summit will not have to be held virtually. While the COVID-19 situation will determine whether that is the case, other major summits in Europe and the U.K. are likely to take place this summer, before the BRICS meet.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to make his first overseas trip after the pandemic to Bangladesh in March and is also likely to attend the India-E.U. meet in Portugal in May and the G7 summit in the U.K., where India has been invited as a guest country, the following month. Preliminary discussions on a date for the BRICS summit were held during Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's recent visit to Moscow.

Mr. Wang expressed China's support to India hosting the meet when asked whether the border crisis would impact it. "In recent years, BRICS has seen greater solidarity, deeper practical cooperation, and greater influence," he said. "It is now a positive, stable and constructive force in international affairs. China attaches importance to this mechanism and we are committed to deepening strategic partnership within it to consolidate solidarity."

While disengagement is under way along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, having been completed last week at Pangong Lake and now in progress in other areas, de-escalation is yet to take place, with thousands of troops on both sides still present in depth areas beyond the LAC and yet to return to their peace-time positions.

Varavara Rao granted bail for 6 months

"The prisoners of advanced age like the undertrial, who suffer from various health ailments induced by old age when put beyond bars, certainly face the danger of their health conditions worsening and accelerating their journey towards the end of their life. This is an aspect, which cannot be ignored while considering the prayer for grant of an order of release from custody, despite rejection of bail application on merits," the 92-page order said.

"There can be no doubt about the fact that a person in the health status of the undertrial would face intensification of ailments if he continues to be in custody. The condition of old age, sickness and multiple health ailments suffered by the undertrial indicate that his continued custody would be incompatible with his health conditions and that sending him back to Taloja Central Prison would amount to endangering his life."



The two-year-old leopardess that was killed at Arsikere in Karnataka ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tempted to tranquillise the animal. While he was in action, the animal jumped on him and bit his left arm.

Later, it attacked two per-

sons on a motorbike going to Bendekere. When they screamed for help, those who had gathered at the hamlet to attend a marriage spotted the animal and beat it up with sticks. By the time officials could reach the spot, the animal was dead.

Deputy Conservator of Forests K.N. Basavaraj said officers had laid a trap for the animal. "We attempted to dart the animal. But the veterinarian was also attacked," he said. Another veterinarian from the Bhadra Tiger Reserve in Chikkamagaluru was called in. "By the time he reached, the animal was dead," the DCF said.

The Forest Department would register a case against the villagers under the Wildlife Protection Act, he said.

On Monday, Justice Eswaraiah, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, argued that the phone chat

Kerala govt. annuls agreement with U.S. firm

₹2,950-crore pact was to build and operate a deep-sea trawling fleet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has invalidated a controversial agreement that the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC) had reached with a U.S.-based firm, EMCC International, to build and operate a deep-sea trawling fleet to harvest the marine wealth off the State's coast.

In one stroke, the government has attempted to stymie the Opposition's political gambit to stir up resentment against the ruling front for entertaining an investment proposal that seemed at odds with the vast coastal community's inalienable right to harvest their traditional fishing grounds exclusively.

KSINC Managing Director N. Prasanth and Shiju Vargh-

ese, president of the firm, recently inked the ₹2,950-crore pact for building 400 deep-sea fishing trawlers and new harbours and port development activities.

The government found that the agreement contravened the Left Democratic Front's policy to allow only traditional fishers to own or operate deep-sea trawlers.

Only they would receive new boat permits.

Govt. stand

The government felt the KSINC had "misled" the critical pro-

viso when inking the agreement. The KSINC "failed" to vet the firm before inking the memorandum of understanding. The company "lacked" the financial heft to build a vast fleet and allied infrastructure. Its seed mo-



Deep discontent: Youth Congress protesters throwing an effigy of Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma into the Azhikode estuary in Thrissur on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ney was less than ₹10 lakh, an official said.

The Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation also appeared taken in by the firm's pitch to build modern

fishing harbours and a marine product processing centre. Consequently, it agreed to allocate four acres for the firm in an industrial park in Alappuzha. The go-

vernment found the firm had attempted to take advantage of its programme to modernise the State's ageing fishing fleet incrementally.

Home Secretary T.K. Jose

is examining the sequence of events that led to the signing of the agreements.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said shifting blame to officials would not help the political executive. The government could not absolve itself of the guilt of sacrificing traditional fishers at the altar of private business. The motive for engaging the U.S. firm remained suspect, he said.

Congress workers, led by T.N. Pratapan, MP, protested in front of the KSINC office in Kochi.

Mr. Varghese came out against the cancellation of the agreement. "On what basis is the government cancelling the MoU? We are not any monopoly coming to plunder the fish stock of the State. Why did the Fisheries Minister not tell us prior if the project is against the State's fisheries policy?" he told a television channel.

(With PTI inputs)

IN BRIEF



Kerala's PSC rank holders launch indefinite fast

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Public Service Commission (PSC) rank holders in Kerala, agitating for appointments, began an indefinite fast on Monday night. The decision to ratchet up the 27-day-old stir came after the State

Centre. The State government would seek the Centre's intervention to lift the border restrictions, he said while chairing a COVID-19 review meeting.

The decision has raised

concern among the public,

who during the initial days of COVID-19 outbreak had suf-

fered much hardship due to

closure of border roads.

Members of the Congress

and the Indian Union Mus-

lim League staged a protest

at Thalappadi and blocked

vehicles entering the State

from Karnataka. They said

several people in Kasaragod

depended on Mangaluru for

medical needs.

Karnataka has also put up

check-posts across Belagavi,

Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Kalab-

uragi, and Bidar districts

bordering Maharashtra.

(With inputs

from Belagavi)

Maharashtra police take Ravi Pujari into custody

BENGALURU The Maharashtra police on Monday took underworld operative Ravi Pujari into its custody for 15 days from the Parappana Agrahara prison here. The Maharashtra police are probing his links with the Mumbai underworld. Pujari, who is involved in 97 cases in Karnataka, was brought here from Senegal last year.

Bineesh Kodiyeri's bail petition rejected again

BENGALURU The city civil and sessions court on Monday rejected the bail plea of Bineesh Kodiyeri, son of former CPI(M) Kerala State Secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan. This is the

fourth time that his bail plea has been rejected since his arrest in October last year for his alleged links to the drug peddling racket busted by the Narcotics Control Bureau.

Mani C. Kappan launches political party in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Incumbent Pala legislator Mani C. Kappan announced a new political party, Nationalist Congress Kerala (NCK), here on Monday.

The former Nationalist Congress Party leader had exited the ruling Left Democratic Front recently over the move to cede his sitting seat to Jose K. Mani of the Kerala Congress (M).

New laws will destroy farming: Rahul

Cong. leader takes part in a tractor rally in Wayanad

STAFF REPORTER
KALPETTA

The new farm laws brought in by the Union government will hand over agriculture business to a few corporates and destroy the country's farming system, Congress leader and Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi said on Monday.

Mr. Gandhi was addressing a public meeting at Muttill in Kerala's Wayanad district after participating in a tractor rally to express solidarity with the farmers' protest in various parts of India.

The rally covered a distance of 3 km from Mandad to Muttill. Farmers on nearly 100 tractors, apart from hundreds on foot, took part in the rally.

After providing them shelter for a few days in West Bengal, the gang obtained Aadhaar cards for the illegal immigrants who were later sent to Bodhan to get passports and visas.



Wayanad drive: Rahul Gandhi leading a tractor rally in his constituency Wayanad on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"The whole world can see the difficulties being faced by our farmers, but the government in Delhi is unable to feel their pain. The Centre will not take back the new laws unless forced. The laws are designed to let two or three friends of Prime Minis-

ter Narendra Modi take control of the entire agriculture-related business," Mr. Gandhi said.

The agriculture business, which fed the country, was owned by 40% of the population. "In Parliament, I had said 'Hum do humaare do'

ter Narendra Modi take control of the entire agriculture-related business," Mr. Gandhi said.

The agriculture business, which fed the country, was owned by 40% of the population. "In Parliament, I had said 'Hum do humaare do'

Calling for a repeal of the notification, Mr. Gandhi said the government should mitigate human-wildlife conflict in the district.

SC reserves orders in former judge's chat case

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday reserved orders on a plea filed by former Andhra Pradesh High Court judge Justice V. Eswaraiah against a State High Court decision to launch an inquiry into his WhatsApp phone chat with a suspended judicial officer.

The High Court, on August 13, ordered a judicial inquiry by former Supreme Court judge Justice R.V. Reddy into the phone chat. It termed the conversation an attempt to "manipulate" a senior sitting Supreme Court judge and the then Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

On Monday, Justice Eswaraiah, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, argued that the apex court cannot be expected to inquire into the facts of the case.



Justice V. Eswaraiah

was a "private conversation". "No crime has been committed... I have filed the complete transcript of the entire conversation in an affidavit," Mr. Bhushan contended.

However, a Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R.

Subhash Reddy said the apex court cannot be ex-

pected to inquire into the

facts of the case.

Private schools in Karnataka shut as staff members protest

They oppose govt. order to charge only 70% of tuition fees

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

A majority of private schools in Karnataka have declared a holiday on Tuesday with the teaching and non-teaching staff going on strike against the government's order asking schools to charge only 70% of the tuition fees this academic year.

The holiday applies to both online and offline classes. All schools, including those affiliated to the State board, Central boards and international schools, have declared a holiday.

However, a Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R.

Subhash Reddy said the apex court cannot be ex-

pected to inquire into the

facts of the case.

Staff Coordination Committee stated that their staff would take out a rally from the City Railway Station to Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Tuesday. The committee consists of 11 private school associations.

Many private schools have communicated to parents through circulars that they supported the rally and the classes on Tuesday would remain suspended.

In distress'

D. Shashi Kumar, convener of the committee, said the school managements and their staff had to protest as they were facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that many of their staff had lost jobs or faced salary cuts as a majority of parents had not paid the fees for the academic year 2020-21. He expressed disappointment that the government did not provide any assistance during the pandemic.

The committee said the Department of Primary and Secondary Education was making it difficult for private schools to function as it demanded that they fulfil norms required for new schools.

M ND-NDE

Vet who tried to tranquillise animal injured

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HASSAN

Residents of the Bendekere hamlet at Arsikere here beat a leopardess to death on Monday. It had attacked five persons, including a veterinarian, on the day.

The animal, aged around two, was spotted around 7.30 a.m. at Byrandonahalli, where it attacked a woman and her son, who were going to their field. As the information reached the Forest Department, the staff rushed to the spot to trap the animal. They kept a watch on its movements. Dr. Murali, a veterinarian, at-



The two-year-old leopardess that was killed at Arsikere in Karnataka ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tempted to tranquillise the animal. While he was in action, the animal jumped on him and bit his left arm.

Later, it attacked two per-</p

Disha Ravi in police custody

Delhi police say her custodial interrogation is required

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday sent climate change activist Disha Ravi, arrested for her alleged involvement in sharing a 'toolkit' on social media in connection with the ongoing farmers' protest against three farm laws, to one-day police custody.

The end of the latest police custody will coincide with the pronouncement of order by another Delhi court on her bail plea on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old was arrested on February 13 and sent in five-day police custody the next day.

After the end of the police custody, on February 19, she was sent to three-day judicial custody and it expired on Monday.

During the hearing, the public prosecutor stated that the Delhi Police required her custodial interrogation to confront her with the co-accused.

The other two accused in the case – Shantanu Muluk



In the net: Disha Ravi, accused in the 'toolkit' case, being brought to the Cyber Cell on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

and Nikita Jacob – have joined the investigation, he stated.

Recently, the Bombay High Court granted protection to both Mr. Muluk and Ms. Jacob from arrest in connection with the case.

Ms. Disha, a permanent resident of Bengaluru, was arrested by a Cyber Cell team of the Delhi Police from Bengaluru and brought to the capital.

According to the Delhi Police, Ms. Ravi is an editor of the "Toolkit Google Doc"

and was a key conspirator in the document's formulation and dissemination. It alleged that she started a WhatsApp group to make the Toolkit doc in collaboration with alleged pro-Khalistani organisation Poetic Justice Foundation to spread disaffection against the Indian state.

Ms. Ravi, in her defence before the court, had said she had just edited two lines in the 'toolkit' and that she was in support of the farmers and was influenced by their protests.

A familiar pattern, says Cong.

Party lashes out at the BJP for toppling the Narayanasamy govt. in Puducherry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As the V. Narayanasamy government in Puducherry collapsed on Monday, Congress leaders lashed out at the BJP for "toppling" elected governments, with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot alleging the saffron party had tried it in his State too.

The elected government in Puducherry became the second Congress government to have been dislodged in an identical manner in less than a year.

Last March, the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh lost power after 22 MLAs, many of them Jyoti-radiya Scindia loyalists, resigned from the Assembly. Many of them eventually joined the BJP and have been re-elected.

Reacting to the developments in Puducherry, Mr. Gehlot, in a series of tweets, said this was yet another case of how the BJP was destabilising the Congress governments to grab power



Tough times: V. Narayanasamy addressing the media after submitting his resignation on Monday. ■ T. SINGARAVELU

through unethical means.

"First, they created problems in running the administration through the Lieutenant-Governor and now this has happened," Mr. Gehlot said. "Luring Congress MLAs has been their *modus operandi* in all Congress-ruled States. We saw this in Karnataka, M.P. & now in Puducherry. They tried it in Rajasthan but people of Rajasthan taught them a lesson."

In the past few years, open revolt against a Chief Minister followed by resigna-

tion of MLAs has been a common route to bring down State governments while escaping the provisions of the anti-defection law. The law requires two-thirds of the lawmakers to quit the parent party to legally merge with another party.

In 2018, the Congress-Jana Dal (S) government led by H.D. Kumaraswamy collapsed after 15 MLAs from the two parties resigned.

"@BJP4India kills democracy again. Using ED, IT & other agencies, spending

crores of rupees they have toppled an elected govt," tweeted Dinesh Gundu Rao, the All India Congress Committee in charge of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Goa.

While a section of the Congress leaders in Delhi believe that the fall of the Puducherry government may help the party with the "sympathy" factor and negate anti-incumbency, others believe it to be a warning sign for poll-bound Tamil Nadu. During the 2017 Assembly elections in Goa and Manipur, the Congress had emerged as the single largest party but the Governors had invited the BJP-led alliances in these States.

Pinarayi's charge

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan accused the BJP of replacing democracy with money and communalism.

He said Congress MLAs had reduced the party to a commodity.

(With inputs from
T.N. Bureau)

SC adjourns contempt plea against Kamra

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

For the second time in a row, the Supreme Court adjourned hearing a bunch of contempt petitions accusing stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra of scandalising the Supreme Court with his tweets.

A Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R. Subhash Reddy, on Monday, scheduled the case to be taken up after four weeks. The case was adjourned after the court received a request from one of the petitioners for time to file a rejoinder. The petitioners are Abhyudaya Mishra, Skand Bajpai and Shriram Katneshwaran.

Last time too, the Bench had adjourned the case by two weeks.

On that occasion, a petitioner had sought time to file his response to Mr. Kamra's affidavit.

Taking offence is now seen as a fundamental right, Mr. Kamra had said.

Politics of appeasement in Bengal: PM

Development of State impossible with cut money culture, syndicate rule, he says

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday accused the Trinamool Congress of indulging in politics of appeasement and asserted that the BJP would give Bengal a government that "ensures development of all, appeasement of none".

Addressing a public rally at Chinsurah in Hooghly district, Mr. Modi raised the issue of the house of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who wrote *Vande Mataram*, lying in a dilapidated state. The Prime Minister described this as an insult to the pride of West Bengal. He alleged that there was a particular kind of politics behind such developments.

"It is the kind of politics that gives more importance to vote bank than the love for the nation. It is that kind of politics that prevents the people of the State from organising Durga Puja and pre-



Reaching out: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing a gathering in Hooghly on Monday. ■ PTI

venting immersion of idols," he said.

Development of the State was not possible as long as cut money culture, syndicate rule and *tolabaji* (extortion) persisted, he said. He called for *asal parivartan* (real change). "It is important for the lotus to bloom in the State so that the real change which the youth of the State have been dreaming of can be ushered in," he said.

change the situation. The State people have made up their mind to change the government," he said in his half-an-hour speech.

Piped water supply

The Prime Minister, while targeting the Trinamool government on the denial of benefits of PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and Ayushman Bharat, also added the subject of supply of piped water in rural households of the State. He said that of the 1.5 crore to 1.75 crore rural households in the State, piped water was reaching only two lakh households and had increased to nine lakh households after the Centre's intervention. "The pace at which the State government is working here to provide piped water connectivity, it will take several years. The Centre sent ₹1,700 crore for piped water connectivity. Of this, only ₹ 609 crore has been spent," he stated.

'Assam poll dates likely by early March'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Election Commission of India (ECI) was expected to announce the dates for the Assam Assembly election in the first week of March.

Mr. Modi made this announcement while addressing a gathering at Silapathar in Dhemaji district of northeastern Assam after launching five projects worth more than ₹3,000 crore.

Assam is going to the polls by May along with Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

The projects in the oil and gas sector that the Prime Minister inaugurated virtually are in Bengal, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts. He unveiled an engineering college in Dhemaji and laid the foundation stone of another at Sualkuchi, a town near Guwahati synonymous with the production of indigenous silk. "The Election Commission had declared the last [2016] Assembly election dates on March 4. Likewise, we expect the dates this time to be announced in the first week of March," he said.

Assam is going to the polls by May along with Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

SC nod for NLCT process on ₹24,713 crore RIL-Future deal

But Tribunal cannot pass final order, says Bench

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed National Company Law Tribunal (NLCT) proceedings in connection with the proposed ₹24,713-crore deal between Future Group and Reliance Industries to go on, but directed the Tribunal to refrain from passing any "final order of sanction of the scheme".

"We are not saying anything on merits now... We have read the files thoroughly and we know exactly what is happening," Justice Nariman told the lawyers.

When senior advocate Ranjit Kumar asked whether the apex court's intervention and notice in the case would mean the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court could not proceed further, Justice Nariman replied "obviously, show them the order".

+

In its order, the Bench, while issuing notice to Future Retail and other parties arraigned by Amazon as respondents, said they would get two weeks to file their counter while Amazon was given a week to file its rejoinder thereafter. The case would next come up for hearing after three weeks.

"In the meantime, the NLCT proceedings will be allowed to go on but will not culminate in any final order of sanction of the scheme," the apex court directed.

In its petition challenging the February 8 order of the High Court, Amazon, represented by senior advocate Gopal Subramanium, had said the order was "ex-facie arbitrary and illegal".

Willing to join probe: Trinamool MP's wife

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Responding to the notice served by the CBI, Rujira Banerjee, wife of Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee, on Monday said she was willing to join the probe.

"Though I am unaware of the reason for being called for questioning or the subject matter of the investiga-

tion, you may visit my residence, as per your convenience between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. i.e February 23, 2021," Ms. Banerjee wrote in a letter addressed to Umesh Kumar, Investigation Officer of the case. She also urged the CBI to inform her their schedule.

The CBI on Sunday sent the notice in connection

with a case registered on November 27, 2020 involving alleged "coal theft". The agency served a notice also on Menaka Gambhir, Ms. Banerjee's sister.

Mr. Banerjee, also president of the party's youth wing, had described the CBI notice to his wife "predictable" and "desperate".

Mr. Banerjee said if the

agency uses such measures to "intimidate us, they are mistaken. We are not the ones who would ever be cowed down".

A CBI team visited the residence of Ms. Gambhir. The team, which also included women officers, was at the residence for more than a couple of hours and recorded her statement.

Pakistan actions to be reviewed at FATF plenary

DEVESH K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

The three-day virtual plenary session of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), during which Pakistan's performance in terms of measures taken against money laundering and terror funding will be reviewed once again, commenced on Monday.

Pakistan has been in the FATF's 'greylist' since June 2018 when it was presented with a 27-point action plan.

"Given the lack of full compliance on the part of Pakistan in certain key areas related to terror funding, it is likely to remain in the 'greylist,'" said a government official.

During the last FATF plenary in October 2020, Pakistan was given an extension for full compliance with the recommendations till the next session. It had not fully complied with six of the 27 directives, while the other obligations were largely met.

**ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
PATNA - 801507**
(An Autonomous body under MoHFW, Govt. of India)
SPOT COUNSELLING (SESSION- JANUARY 2021) FOR THE ADMISSION IN SUPER-SPECIALITY POST-GRADUATE COURSE (DM/MCH) AT AIIMS, PATNA

Admission to Vacant Super-Speciality PG Seats (DM/MCh) in AIIMS Patna, for the session Jan 2021 will be held on 26th February 2021 from 12:00 noon onwards. The seats will be filled as per the Post-Graduate Entrance Examination conducted by AIIMS New Delhi on 20th November 2020 on the basis of Merit List.

The Eligible candidates for participating in the Spot Counselling has to report in person latest by 9:30 am for the registration and document verification.

The details of the vacant Super-Speciality PG Seats available for this spot counselling is available on AIIMS, New Delhi website i.e. www.aiimsexam.org and AIIMS Patna website i.e. www.aiimspatna.org

For any queries/information regarding Spot Counselling, please contact Mr. Padam Pratap Singh Yadav, JAA, Dean Office, AIIMS Patna Mobile No. 9097773477, Email ID: padamp@aiimspatna.org

Venue for above counsellings:- E-Classroom, Medical College Building, AIIMS Patna.

Dean, AIIMS, Patna

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Law Ministry on Monday notified the appointment of new judges to the High Courts of Kerala and Delhi.

"The President of India appointed Shri Jasmeet Singh and Shri Amit Bansal

as the judges of the Delhi High Court," a Law Ministry statement said.

In Kerala, Murali Purnothaman, Ziyad Rahman Alekkatt Abdul Rahiman, Karunakaran Babu and Kauser Edappagath have been appointed as additional judges.

A.P.COOPERATIVE OILSEEDS GROWERS' FEDERATION LTD.
55-17, 2 to 4, 4th Floor, "C" Block, Road No.2, IDA Automagar, Vijayawada-07
Phone & Fax No: 0866-2974545 Email: tender.apoilfed@gmail.com
Dated: 22.02.2021
Request for proposal (RFP)

APOLIFED invites RFP from interested bidders for onboarding as "Principal Brand Franchisee" of APOLIFED to Procure, Pack & Sell multiple food products in the various segments (Groceries, Pulses, Spices, Dry fruits, Ready to Eat Etc.) in a phased manner under the brand name "Vijaya". The RFP is requested for Principal Brand Franchisees for the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Other states respectively.

The RFP document containing the details of qualification criteria and other details can be downloaded from the website www.tender.apoilfed.in from 24-02-2021 at 12:30 pm onwards. The Last date for submission of bids is 10-03-2021 at 5:00 pm.

Sd/- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

IndianOil LNG PUBLIC TENDER

IndianOil LNG Private Limited is inviting following Tenders:-
(1) Tender No.: IOLPL/2020-21/PT-01/MEchanical Works.
Name of the work: Erection, Commissioning assistance of Natural Gas compressor along with supply, fabrication, erection, testing and commissioning of piping, valves, insulation, structural steel etc. at Ennore LNG Terminal, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India 600120

Tender sale period: 23.02.2021,

10:30 hrs. – 22.03.2021, 17:30 hrs. (Both days inclusive)

Covaxin uptake below 1% in 12 States, UTs

Even accounting for differential allocation of vaccines, only a small fraction took the shot, data show

R. PRASAD
CHENNAI

As on February 21, the uptake of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for COVID-19 across India was about 10%, Health Ministry data show. The reception to the vaccine stands in contrast to Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, which accounts for 90%. Of the 10.6 million doses administered, 10,37,565 are Covaxin.

On January 3, the Indian regulator approved Covaxin for restricted use "under clinical trial mode" as a matter of "abundant caution" when no interim data of phase-3 trial was available.

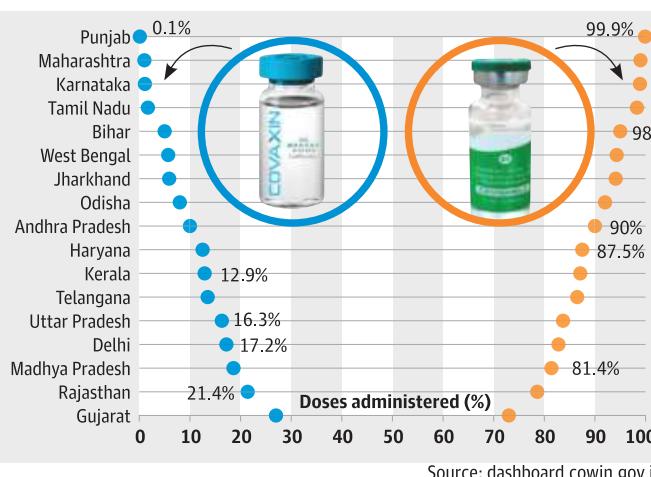
No dose

Not a single dose of Covaxin had been administered in Chhattisgarh, while three Union Territories – Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Daman & Diu – did not report any uptake as on February 21.

Many States and UTs reported low uptake compared to Covishield. Punjab administered the vaccine only to

Less takers for Covaxin

Of the 10.6 million COVID-19 vaccine doses administered across India as of February 21, 10,37,565, or 10% (●) were Covaxin, while about 87,20,000, or 90% (○) were Covishield. The chart shows the share of both vaccines in total doses across major States



Source: dashboard.cowin.gov.in

91 people, while Goa immunised just one person with it. The other States with low uptake were Nagaland (4 people), Mizoram (4), Lakshadweep (4), Chandigarh (9), Manipur (29), Tripura (30), Ladakh (31), Himachal Pradesh (38), Meghalaya (49), Arunachal Pradesh (54), Uttarakhand (69), and Sikkim (128). Except Sikkim, where the uptake was 1%, it was less than 1% in 12 States and Union Territories.

The 8,332 Covaxin doses given in Maharashtra ap-peared high in absolute numbers but represented only 0.95%. The percentage refers to share of all vaccine doses. Covishield doses stood at 8,63,235. In Tamil Nadu, Covaxin doses stood at 4,421 and Covishield at 2,51,944, putting the former's share at 1.72%.

Karnataka administered Covaxin to 5,873 people (1%) and Covishield to 5,41,714.

Telangana reported 13.5%

Covaxin 37,473 and Covishield 2,40,068), Kerala 12.8%

(Covaxin 52,355, Covishield

3,54,743) and Andhra Pradesh nearly 10% (Covaxin 41,740 and Covishield 3,76,894).

At 27%, Gujarat reported the highest figure at 2,19,211

compared to Covishield at 5,91,762 doses. High uptake was also seen in Uttar Pradesh at 21.3% (Covaxin 1,65,255, Covishield 6,07,984), Rajasthan 21% (Covaxin 1,65,255, Covishield 6,07,984) and Madhya Pradesh 18.6% (Covaxin 1,17,779, Covishield 5,14,469).

"The difference in cover-

age is a function of differential allocation of Covaxin doses to different States. This is further confounded by delayed communication of the information and lack of data on efficacy," epidemiologist Dr. Giridhar Babu, a member of Karnataka's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee, said in an email to *The Hindu*.

In response to a Parliamentary question, the Health Ministry said on February 5 that as on February 1, nearly 2.6 million Covaxin doses were distributed to 19 States and UTs. At 1,89,920, Tamil Nadu got the most (Covishield was a little over one million). Other States with large Covaxin supplies included Telangana and Rajasthan (1,72,960), Maharashtra and Delhi (1,70,400), Odisha (1,69,760), Assam (1,68,160), Karnataka (1,66,240), Uttar Pradesh (1,65,280), Andhra Pradesh (1,64,320), Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (1,50,400).

Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab, and Kerala each got the lowest number (37,760).

The country reported 83 deaths in the last 24 hours and five States accounted for 78.31% of them. Maharashtra saw the highest of 35, while

IN BRIEF



Fuel price hike: Robert Vadra cycles to work

NEW DELHI
A day after Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on fuel price hike, her son-in-law and businessman Robert Vadra registered his protest against high fuel prices by riding a bicycle to his office.

Inter-State online extortion racket busted

MUMBAI
Three people were arrested for allegedly running an extortion racket online that involved befriending the well-heeled through fake profiles of women and then blackmailing them with porn clips, the Mumbai police said on Monday. The gang had been operating from areas of Rajasthan, U.P. and Haryana, an officer said. PTI

Mehbooba Mufti re-elected PDP president

SRINAGAR
Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti was re-elected president of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Monday. "Ms. Mufti was unanimously re-elected as J&K PDP president for a period of three years. Her name was proposed by G.N.L Hanjra," PDP spokesman Suhail Bukhari said.

ISRO asked to make landslip warning system

NEW DELHI
The parliamentary standing committee on science and technology has asked the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop an alert system to warn on landslips, following a brief discussion on the Chamoli flooding in a meeting on Monday.

IMA shocked by claims of certification for Coronil

WHO certification a 'blatant lie', it says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association on Monday expressed shock and dismay at what it called a "blatant lie of WHO certification" for Patanjali's Coronil tablet, which the company said can be used to fight COVID-19. It has also demanded an explanation from Health Minister Harsh Vardhan about his presence at the event where Coronil was launched last week.

The association's two-page note comes after the World Health Organization clarified that "it has not reviewed or certified the effectiveness of any traditional medicine for the treatment of COVID-19".

Health Minister present

On Friday last, Ramdev launched the product in the presence of Mr. Vardhan and Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport & Highways and Minister for Micro,

Small and Medium Enterprises.

The IMA said it was shocked to note the "blatant lie" of certification for a "secret medicine" launched in the presence of the Health Minister, who is a doctor as well. The country "needs an explanation" from him, it said in a statement.

Patanjali Ayurved managing director Acharya Balkrishna put out a clarification shortly before the WHO tweet. "We want to clarify to avoid confusion that our WHO Good Manufacturing Practices compliant COPP certificate to Coronil is issued by the Drugs Controller General of India, Government of India. It is clear that WHO does not approve or disapprove any drugs. WHO works for building a better, healthier future for people all over the world," he said.

The AYUSH Ministry had earlier said Coronil can be sold only as an immunity-booster and not as a cure.

According to sources, the IT Wing of the Computerisation & Information System

Following instances of cyber attacks during the ongoing pandemic across its network, the Ministry of Railways has roped in the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to educate its officials on Internet ethics, cyber hygiene and best practices in the use of IT equipment, including mobile phones. This is a part of its National Cyber Security Strategy.

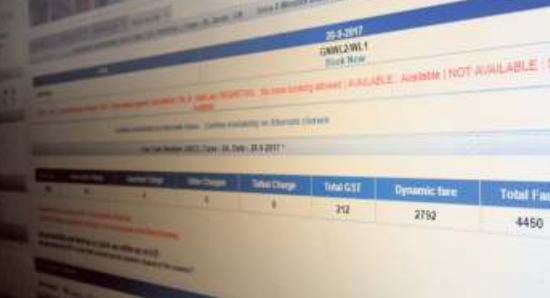
In a note to the General Managers, production units and other major establishments recently, the Railway Board said a number of incidents had come to notice regarding breaches in various IT applications as electronic working has got further proliferated. A majority of them were applications related. Incidents occurred due to "improper handling of the IT assets by the personnel".

According to sources, the IT Wing of the Computerisation & Information System

Directorate sends out periodic alerts on cybersecurity vulnerabilities and threats to the staff directly handling IT-based systems. One of the major IT functions is the Passenger Reservation System (PRS).

Periodic alerts

In January 2019 alone, 6.61 crore passengers booked from 10,394 PRS terminals in 3,440 locations and the IRCTC website resulting in a



Major function: The PRS involves passengers disclosing their identities and other details. ■ PICTURE FOR REPRESENTATION

revenue of ₹3,962.27 crore. While 9.38 lakh passengers made bookings on January 10, 2019, 671 bookings were made per second nine days later. The PRS involves passengers disclosing their identities along with proof of address, mobile phone number and netbanking/card payment details.

The Railways also uses its IT infrastructure for Unreserved Ticketing System which served 2.11 crore passengers in January 2019, generating revenue of ₹3,962.27 crore. While 9.38 lakh passengers made bookings on January 10, 2019, 671 bookings were made per second nine days later. The PRS involves passengers disclosing their identities along with proof of address, mobile phone number and netbanking/card payment details.

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Ditch your ordinary playing cards, PowerPlay is here to get you thinking about data breaches and Government intervention

An ace up your privacy sleeve



All on the table Some of the Powerplay card designs, and the game's creator Ishita Begani

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SOWMYA RAMASUBRAMANIAN

When Ishita Begani, a Delhi-based UX designer, had to finalise the topic for her undergraduate thesis in 2019, she was torn between multiple ideas. What stuck with her was a need to make an impact on society. With the controversial Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, making the rounds on social media at the time, Ishita became aware of the confusion surrounding data privacy and wondered how to make it comprehensible.

In four months, PowerPlay was born. The 22-year-old designed India's first privacy card game centred around building awareness about data protection.

Inspired by Cards Against Humanity, a card game known for its crude, Mad-Libs style humour, PowerPlay aims to create conversations about data breaches and help users become informed of the repercussions of intrusive personal data collection by the Government.

The game also aims to help users distinguish between public and private data when the Government infringes upon privacy. The approach may also be effective in making people realise their Right to Privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution, helping them exercise it at the time of need. In August 2017, the Supreme Court ruled that the Right To Privacy is a fundamental right for Indian citizens under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. The announcement came about after the issue of privacy was questioned in light of the Aadhaar controversy. Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), a Delhi-based digital liberties organisation, now holds the licence to produce Ishita's

creation. It took the organisation about two months to complete the packaging and production before IFF announced the game on February 9.

The deck comprises 112 cards of four types – characters, Government events, data points and privacy hacks. The character cards represent different roles in the game, helping give more context to real-life problems, Ishita said over the phone. "For example, health data may be personal and important to a pregnant mother. The character may choose to preserve it, thus giving the player an understanding of why data privacy matters," she added.

Government event cards put forth significant situations, based on which the game moves forward. This includes 'bribing for elections' and 'Aadhaar data breach'. Data points and privacy hack cards help fuel the game by providing insights to help understand the impact of government events.

Ishita pondered several op-

Pretty little things

Are the Samsung Galaxy Buds Pro worth the hefty price tag?



DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

It is no secret that Samsung wants to get into your head – by that I mean, with their range of Galaxy in-ear earbuds such as last year's Galaxy Buds Live.

This year, however, with the new Buds Pro, there is a look back to the earlier Buds+. The question is are they worth the almost ₹16,000 price tag?

The Buds Pro have a fairly ergonomic design. While not everyone found the Buds Live suiting their ear shape, these seem to work better thanks to protruding wingtips and the weighted balance, owing to the two-way speakers: an 11 millimetre woofer and a 6.5 millimetre tweeter.

The features

The earbuds are equipped with Samsung's Intelligent ANC, which works best with the Wearable app.

This unique feature for the Buds Pro has active noise cancelling, filtering out much of the ambient noise, whether I was lingering in traffic or in a house full of video chats and binge-watching.

Through this, I was able to customise the le-

Sits well These earbuds come with Intelligent ANC ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

vel of active noise cancelling – between high or low.

I found this a nifty feature but it is good to alternate between keeping on Ambient Noise and activating ANC, to avoid the dizzying effect.

The Buds Pro were created not only to play music or stream films, but also for communications. Voice Detect within the Intelligent ANC lets me automatically turn the volume down when you speak.

The overall sound profile of the Buds Pro is impressive; no scratchy bass and treble, and they do sit well in your ear during even the most gruelling of workouts.

There is unfortunately not much responsiveness with Bixby, the brand's voice assistant, via the Buds Pro.

While this alone does not stave off the Galaxy Buds range of earbuds, I am still not convinced about the price. There is a lot out there available for a lot less.



OTHER SECURITY-ORIENTED GAMES

Cyber Chronix and **Happy Online**, by the European Union

Interland, a game part of Google's Be Internet Awesome programme for children

Datak, by Radio Television Suisse

Data Defenders, by MediaSmarts

tions before finalising on a card game. While a smartphone app is an interesting source of information, a physical card game will have a more prolonged effect in the minds of players, Ishita said.

Immersive and educational Data privacy has been an important conversation in the past few years. As technology advances and becomes more accessible, privacy concerns have become imperative. While we have grown up playing entertaining card games like UNO and Sequence, PowerPlay is said to provide an immersive as well as an educational experience.

"Privacy is intangible since it relates to personal data and people cannot foresee the risks and harms of surveillance," says Apur Gupta, executive director at IFF. "Ishita has made an engaging game in which people are forced to make choices surrounding their privacy – literally by holding their privacy in their hands!"

PowerPlay is for players above the age of 18, and does not require prior knowledge of laws. The game will be available to IFF Visionaries – those who donate to the organisation on a monthly basis. IFF hopes to champion a culture of awareness in the form of a card game.

While the organisation fights to defend online freedom every day, the card game is a step toward equipping a new generation with information. The game is currently available as part of the Internet Freedom Visionaries membership tier.

Details on how to get Powerplay can be found at internetfreedom.in.



GAMESPOT

Inspired by the comic of the same name, Scott Pilgrim vs. The World is a retro treat that is at home on the Nintendo Switch

Love-punch, in 16-bit

JULIAN ALMEIDA

The success of Streets of Rage 4 proves that the world is hungry for more retro beat-em-ups plus the nostalgia from the world of 8-bit and 16-bit consoles and ar-

cades. Scott Pilgrim vs. The World: The Game was one of those games, embodying everything that was great about that era.

First released in 2010, the game was de-listed in a few years and disappeared off



KICKY VIBES
Screenshots from the video game ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the face of the earth. Until now, on its 10th anniversary and the 2010 Michael Cera-starrer, Ubisoft brings the game back in the form of The Complete Edition which includes all the DLC and rectifies one of the biggest issues with the original: the lack of online co-op.

Scott Pilgrim is an average 22-year-old from Toronto, who falls madly in love with the enigmatic Ramona Flowers. Which is all good, except in order to win her heart, he has to defeat her seven deadly evil exes – all with special powers and abilities. While the story is well-told in 16-bit, I felt myself mentally pop into the movie, and returning to the game to beat up those exes – as that is the way I seem to remember it. However, it

could be different for you, as the game does retelling well, stretched across a number of levels. The game stretches the story framework to fit its levels, and sort of gets lost in translation. What is not lost, however, is its spirit.

The game-play of Scott Pilgrim vs The World is inspired by a popular 8-bit

SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD: THE GAME - THE COMPLETE EDITION

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Chengdu, Ubisoft Montreal, Ubisoft Pune

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

PRICE: ₹2,499 on Nintendo Switch, Playstation 4, Xbox One, PC



game known as River City Ransom, that faded over the years. Featuring a somewhat similar art style, Scott Pilgrim and his friends Ramona Flowers, Knives Chau and Stephen Stills are all rendered in that similar round chibi style of River City Ransom: cute, angry characters with their large fists bared.

The

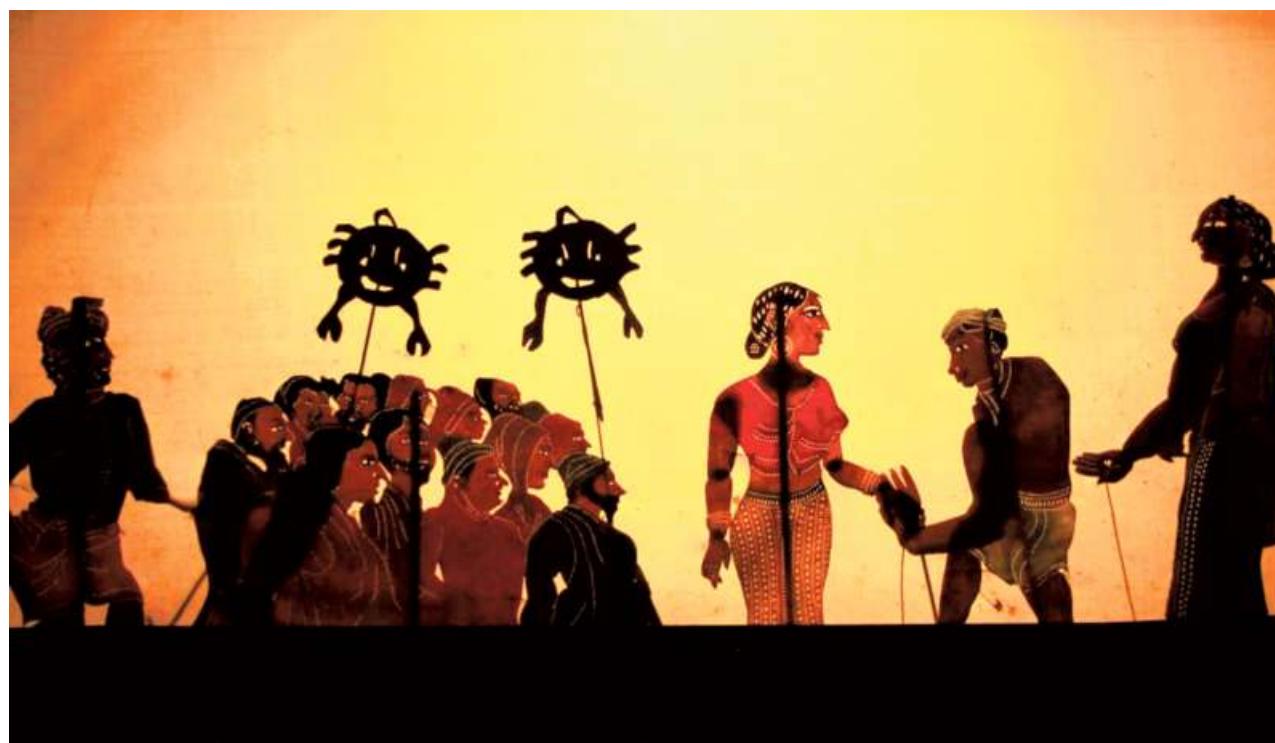
game's aim is get to the next screen after beating up all the baddies, side-scrolling arcade style. The combo system is easy to master...you will be juggling enemies, calling in your friends for power attacks or unleashing super moves to level up, in no time. Things get frantic almost all of the time in Scott Pilgrim, as there is always a lot of sprites on screen. Yet, the core of the game takes its fighting mechanics seriously and lives up to its inspirations, especially with the humongous bosses, who turn the evil exes into something akin to Contra bosses.

While a big screen television or monitor is great, this game is perfect for the peppy Nintendo Switch. The game is flat-out fun, thanks to rectifying the original's biggest flaw. Sure, it is a decent experience playing single-player, but like arcade, this game is all-out fun with your friends on board.

While the graphics are 16-bit style, the animations of the sprites feel a lot more sophisticated. With an excellent art style to complement the game-play, Scott Pilgrim does stand out. However, the real star of the game is the music from Anamanaguchi. Its chip-tune arcade sound will make you pop them into your daily playlists.

Scott Pilgrim vs The World: The Game - The Complete Edition with its DLCs as well as online co-op is a welcome addition to the list of games that are great to play during lockdown – especially if you are a big fan of 16-bit beat-em-ups such as River City Rampage.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel



Standing the test of time (Left) A representation of COVID-19 awareness, (below) Puppets representing Pinarayi Vijayan and Thomas Isaac, Ramachandra Pulavar (down)

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

No longer in the shadows

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

Tholpavakoothu (shadow puppetry), a centuries-old art form from Kerala bridged the past and present with a one-hour recital that showcased the story of coir in the State. KK Ramachandra Pulavar's *tholpavakoothu* show was part of the recently held Coir Kerala 2021, in Alappuzha.

The performance with leather puppets examined the place of coir in the socio-economic history of Kerala, the struggles and difficulties of coir workers and various schemes implemented by the Government of Kerala over the past four-and-a-half years that help the coir industry which was in tatters for various reasons.

Pulavar, a Padma Shri recipient this year, explains that they had to make new puppets for putting up such shows themed on contemporary events. So leather puppets representing Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Finance Minister Thomas Isaac had to be made along with those of coir workers, coir traders, machines for twisting the coir into ropes and so on.

Realising the importance of broadening the thematic content of the heritage art form, Pulavar has been at the forefront of choreographing, writing and developing contemporary themes in *tholpavakoothu*.

"Unlike the narrative in a mixture of Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit in the ritualistic shows that we perform in about 85 temples from January to May, the new ones are in simple Malayalam. Even for shows staged outside the precincts of temples, I prefer using simple Malayalam to the traditional narratives. Such shows are able to capture the viewers' attention when we speak in a language that is familiar to them. I also made the movements a little more dramatic to reach out to the audience," explains Pulavar.

Right from new puppets and shows to awareness programmes

on COVID-19 to performances themed on the *Panchatantra*, *The Mahabharatha* and legends of Lord Ayyappa, Mahabali and *The Bible* (*Yesukoothu*) have been developed by Pulavar. Shows based on the life of Buddha and Gandhi have also been staged at many venues in India and abroad with narrations in Hindi and English.

"*Tholpavakoothu* in temples focuses on the rendering of *The Ramayana* from *Kamba Ramayana*. The *tholpavakoothu* performance at temples lasts for 10 hours. It goes on for 21 days at the Devi temple in our village in Koonathara, Shornur (Thrissur district)," he elaborates.

Narratives of yore
He emphasises that all ritualistic performances in temples follow the traditional narratives of his ancestors. Performing since the age of six, Pulavar says that 13 generations of his family have been staging performances and making the distinctive leather puppets. "I have been a performer for 50 years now. Having learnt the art form from my late father Krishnakkutty Pulavar, I have also been lucky to observe, learn and perform with maestros in the field such as the late Uppathu Narayanan Nair and Balan Nair," he explains.

Dedicating the Padma Shri to their memory, perseverance and hard work, he says he owes the honour for carrying on with the art form even in the face of great odds, to them. He points out that this is the first time a *tholpava-*



Padma Shri recipient KK Ramachandra Pulavar expands the ancient art form of *tholpavakoothu* to address contemporary issues with leather puppets representing Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Finance Minister Thomas Isaac

their memory, perseverance and hard work, he says he owes the honour for carrying on with the art form even in the face of great odds, to them. He points out that this is the first time a *tholpava-*

koothu performer has been honoured with a Padma award.

"Right from the time man observed shadows, this form of performance has existed in many forms and it is perhaps one of the oldest forms of storytelling. It is the precursor of cinema. Is it any surprise that the logo of the International Film Festival of Kerala is that of a *tholpavakoothu* puppet? I see the Padma Shri as an honour for every *tholpavakoothu* performer," he asserts.

He recalls a period when there were limited opportunities and hardly any audience turning up to watch their evocative performances even in temples. "There was a period when puppetry was in doldrums but there has been many positive changes over the last couple of decades. My predecessors democratised the art form and popularised it. Once staged only in temples, they gave it a bigger audience by putting up plays outside temples. There have been revolutionary changes in the themes we take up. We have choreographed performances based on the socio-political developments of Kerala," he says.

Pulavar's three children, Rajeev, Rajitha and Rahul are also following in their forefathers' footsteps. While Rajeev is working with his father, Rahul is working on his doctorate in Assam University while Rajitha is perhaps the only woman performer in the field. A recipient of the junior fellowship of the Kerala Folklore Academy, she is the only woman *tholpavakoothu* performer to have won the Yuva Prathibha award of the Academy.

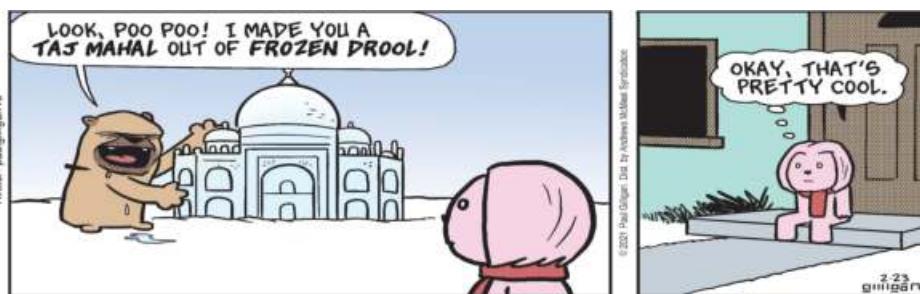
"Rajitha's dream is to form a troupe consisting of only women and choreograph plays that highlight stories with an accent on women. She has given a feminine touch to the artform," adds Pulavar.



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



POOC CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



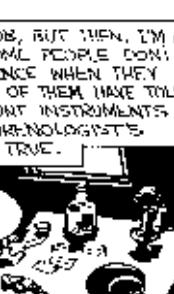
PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



The crow has a story to tell

As the Chennai-based publishing house Tulika turns 25, its founder Radhika Menon discusses the evolution of children's storytelling and their role in it



Bringing joy Team Tulika; (inset) book covers of *Noon Chai and a Story* and *Oonga*

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

it should be in the languages they have grown up listening to," she says.

Over these 25 years, Tulika has explored different styles and themes, as well as the format of the book itself. "Folk stories were told in a contemporary manner and the themes were also unusual. For example *All about Nothing*, which is an imaginative telling of the story of zero by Nina Sabnani, was adapted from her animated film," she says.

Nina Sabnani has also experimented with the shape of the book in itself, making *Home* to look like a Rajasthani *kaavadi*. Some of their books forego illustrations for photographs by herpetologist Shekar Dattatri and Samina Mishra. What is also noticeable is the respect rewarded to the child reader – no issue is taboo as such.

Tulika has so far worked with over 150 illustrators. Discovering and nurturing talent are part of its growth as much as they were for Radhika's personal journey as a schoolteacher at The School KFI, Chennai.

"The creative possibilities that picture books open up are exciting and often powerful. They open up imaginative 'teachable' moments which are so valuable as I discovered when I was teaching and with my own children," she says.

And although her children were in their early teens by the time she started Tulika, "my grandchildren are growing up with Tulika books," she says.

Over these 25 years, Tulika has explored different styles and themes, as well as the format of the book itself

Iran, IAEA reach deal on inspections

Tehran will continue to give access to UN inspectors to its declared nuclear sites for three months

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

VIENNA

The UN nuclear watchdog chief announced on Sunday a "temporary solution" to allow Iranian facility inspections to continue after days of talks with officials, giving some much-needed breathing space for diplomatic negotiations.

However, Rafael Grossi admitted that under the new three-month arrangement, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would not have the same level of access after a law comes into force on Tuesday limiting some inspections.

Mr. Grossi's visit to Iran came amid stepped-up efforts between U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, European powers and Tehran to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal that has been on the brink of collapse since former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from



Back to talks: Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, left, with the IAEA chief Rafael Grossi, right, in Tehran. ■ AFP

it and went on to impose sanctions on the nation.

In December, Iran's conservative-dominated Parliament passed the law demanding a suspension of some inspections if the U.S. failed to lift sanctions by this Sunday.

Mr. Grossi said that under the new "temporary technical understanding... there is less access, let's face it".

"But still we were able to retain the necessary degree of monitoring and verification work," he added.

No real-time access

"What we agree is something that is viable – it is useful to bridge this gap that we are having now, it salvages the situation now," Mr. Grossi told reporters after landing back in Vienna, after a meet-

ing with Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran on Sunday.

They confirmed that Iran will continue to allow access to UN inspectors to its declared nuclear sites.

But Iran will temporarily suspend so-called "voluntary transparency measures" – notably inspections of non-nuclear sites, including military sites suspected of nuclear-related activity.

Teheran will also deny the IAEA real-time access to footage from surveillance cameras installed at some sites and, if sanctions are not lifted within three months, delete it, Iran's Atomic Energy Organization has said.

Mr. Zarif had signalled the Islamic republic wanted to avoid an "impasse" over inspections, but also warned it could further step away from its commitments if Washington does not lift sanctions.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi acknowledged on Saturday that his country's inspection capability would be "reduced by about 20-30%" when Tuesday's law came into effect.

India has offered a grant for the project in Sri Lanka's north

stall hybrid renewable energy systems in Nainativu, Delft or Neduntheevu, and Analaitivu, off Jaffna Peninsula, located in the Palk Bay, some 50 km from the Tamil Nadu coast. Although New Delhi did not officially comment on the move, official sources confirmed that India had offered a \$12-million grant, to execute the same.

The project's proximity to India voicing concern recently.

In a statement issued on Monday, Sinoor-Etechwin Joint Venture said it learned from media reports that "a third party" had protested against Sri Lanka's Cabinet decision clearing the project, on grounds of "so-called self-security". "We firmly oppose any outrageous interference by any third party without legal and factual basis," the firm said.

On January 18, Sri Lanka took a Cabinet decision to engage a Chinese firm to install hybrid renewable energy systems in Nainativu, Delft or Neduntheevu, and Analaitivu, off Jaffna Peninsula, located in the Palk Bay, some 50 km from the Tamil Nadu coast. Although New Delhi did not officially comment on the move, official sources confirmed that India had offered a \$12-million grant, to execute the same.

a loan. But there is no change yet to the January 18 decision.

Outlining the tendering process in 2019, through which it obtained the project, the Chinese consortium said the "third party" – intervention "seriously affected" its reputation and legitimate rights, and "damaged the credibility and image" of the Government of Sri Lanka. The consortium is only responsible for the construction and handing over of the project, it said, adding the firm would "strictly abide" by the laws and regulations of the ADB and the Ceylon Electricity Board.

A group of Sri Lanka's Tamil parties have objected to the Chinese project in the northern islands, noting that India's concerns are "legitimate".

China firm slams 'third-party' interference in Lanka project

India has offered a grant for the project in Sri Lanka's north

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

A Chinese firm, which had won the bid to execute a renewable energy project in Sri Lanka's northern islands, has objected to "outrageous interference" by a "third party", apparently referring to India voicing concern recently.

In a statement issued on Monday, Sinoor-Etechwin Joint Venture said it learned from media reports that "a third party" had protested

against Sri Lanka's Cabinet decision clearing the project, on grounds of "so-called self-security". "We firmly oppose any outrageous interference by any third party without legal and factual basis," the firm said.

On January 18, Sri Lanka took a Cabinet decision to engage a Chinese firm to in-

Maldives Parliament debates defence deal with India

Majlis takes up an emergency motion as Opposition seeks transparency in the pact

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

A day after Male and New Delhi signed an agreement to jointly develop the Maldives National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour, Maldives's Parliament, 'the People's Majlis', took up an emergency motion, demanding greater transparency on the bilateral pact.

Following the signing of the agreement on Sunday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who was in Male this weekend, tweeted: "Glad to sign with Defence Minister @MariyaDidi the UTF Harbour Project agreement. Will strengthen Maldivian Coast Guard capability and facilitate regional HADR efforts. Partners in development, partners in security."



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Shahid. ■ PTI

is "elated" that the project is "finally under way". "This dockyard and harbour will, in time, afford us the opportunity to protect our maritime interests on our own thereby enhancing our sovereignty," she said.

Maldivian Defence Minister Mariya Didhi said the project was "vital" to the effective functioning of the Maldivian Coast Guard. "Given our expansive maritime territory, the need to enhance local coast guard capabilities cannot be overstated," she told *The Hindu* from Male, explaining why the government

2013 – for Indian assistance to enhance the capability of the Defence Forces, according to a joint press statement issued by the two governments on Sunday. Subsequently, Male made requests in 2015 and 2016.

Denying that the Yameen administration had sealed any agreement then, Dunya Maumoon, Foreign Minister in his government, said: "We had discussions at that time but did not get into any agreement. The Maldives values strong and warm ties with India. But having warm ties is not equal to having boots on the ground," she told *The Hindu*.

Concerns over "Indian military presence" were flagged in 2018 too, when the Yameen government asked India to take back two helicopters it had gifted, with a crew and support staff, causing a major strain in bilateral ties. Following the Sep-

tember 2018 defeat of the Yameen administration, which was known for its China tilt, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's government has been pursuing an "India first" policy.

However, not all in the ruling coalition agree with the government's current foreign policy. During Monday's debate in Parliament, government MP Ali Hussain said Male should avoid seeking assistance on military matters from any big power. "Whether it is India, China or the U.S., their agreements here are bound to have conflicting interests. We should not end up in a situation where we have to choose one partner over another, we should not become part of a proxy [geopolitical] war," he told *The Hindu*.

Last year, New Delhi welcomed the Maldives's decision to sign a military agreement with the U.S.

Pandemic used as 'pretext' to crush dissent: UN chief

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

GENEVA

The UN on Monday slammed countries that are using the pandemic to justify cracking down on dissent and suppressing criticism.

Speaking at the opening of the UN Human Rights Council's main annual session, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres charged that authorities in a number of nations were using restrictions meant to halt the spread of COVID-19 to weaken opposition.

"Using the pandemic as a pretext, authorities in some countries have deployed heavy-handed security

responses and emergency measures to crush dissent, criminalise basic freedoms, silence independent reporting and curtail the activities of non-governmental organisations," he said, without naming the countries.

In addition to inequalities within countries, the UN chief slammed inequalities between nations when it comes to accessing the COVID-19 vaccines coming to market as a "moral outrage". A full 75% of all vaccine doses have been administered in just 10 countries, he pointed out, while more than 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

Italian envoy to DR Congo killed in attack on UN convoy

Luca Attanasio was on a field trip near Goma

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

GOMA

Italy's Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo was killed on Monday when a UN convoy came under attack in the troubled east, DRC sources and the Italian government said.

Luca Attanasio died of his wounds after a World Food Programme (WFP) convoy came under fire near Goma while he was on a field trip to the region, a senior diplomatic source said in Kinshasa.

The Italian government confirmed Mr. Attanasio's death and said an Italian policeman, Vittorio Iacovacci, as well as a driver it did not identify, had also died.

President Sergio Mattarella lashed at what he called a "cowardly attack."

"The Italian republic is in mourning for these servants of the state who lost their lives," he said.

Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio



Luca Attanasio

expressed his "great dismay and immense sorrow", breaking off from a meeting in Brussels with EU to make an early return to Rome.

Mr. Attanasio, 43, had been representing Italy in Kinshasa since 2017, first as head of mission, and then as Ambassador from October 2019.

China urges U.S. to lift trade restrictions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

China's top diplomat called on Monday for new U.S. administration to lift restrictions on trade and people-to-people contacts while ceasing what Beijing considers unwarranted interference in the areas of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi's comments come as Beijing presses the new administration in Washington to drop many of the confrontational measures adopted by former President Donald Trump.

Mr. Trump hiked tariffs on Chinese imports in 2017 and imposed bans and other restrictions on tech companies and academic exchanges as he sought to address concerns about an imbalance in trade and accusations of Chinese theft of American technology.

TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LIMITED Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)

Sl. No.	Notice Inviting Authority	Specification No./Name of Work	Due date and time for submission of Tender
1	CE / Projects	SE/E/TH&HYD/ OT/NO.01/2020-21 Tender for Design, Manufacture, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of Balance of Plant (BOP) Package and allied civil works related to BOP including FGD package on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) basis at 2x800 MW Uppar Supercritical Thermal Power Project, Ramnad, Tamilnadu	16.04.2021 Up to 15.00 Hours

For the details of opening viewing and downloading / Due date for submission of e-tenders, please visit the following website: www.tangedco.org and <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgcp/app>

DIPR/1318/Tender/2021

CAD-1314

Procurement Officer – Managing Director, Odisha Construction Corporation Limited Date of Opening of the Technical Bid: 12.03.2021, 12.00 Noon Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>

ODISHA CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LIMITED BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA, PIN: 751012, Tel No.(0674) 2562020, e-Mail: thecctd@odishaconstruction.com GSTIN - 21AAC02571K2ZM

"e" Procurement Notice No- 33/OCL/2020-21 (on-line)

Type of Work – Construction of Cross Regulator-cum-Escape 01 (One) Nos.

Sl No	Bid Identification No	Period of Completion	Amount Put to Tender (approx) (Rs. In Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs. In Lakhs)	Availability of Tender (on-line)	Submission of tender (on-line)
01	OCCL-DGP/08/2020-21	11 (eleven) calendar months	Rs. 973.02 Lakhs	Rs. 9.74 Lakhs	From 24.02.2021, 10.00 AM to 10.03.2021 up to 5.30P.M.	From 24.02.2021, 10.00 AM to 10.03.2021 up to 5.30P.M.

Procurement Officer – Managing Director, Odisha Construction Corporation Limited Date of Opening of the Technical Bid: 12.03.2021, 12.00 Noon

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd/- Managing Director, OCCL

OIPR- 34120/11/009/2021

TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LIMITED NOTICE INVITING TENDERS (E- TENDERING PROCESS)

Sl. No.	Notice Inviting Authority	Specification No./Name of work	Due Date and Time for Submission of Tender
1	CE/TPPS	CE/P/3495/M – Complete design, engineering, procurement, manufacturing, assembly, inspection, testing, at manufacturer, packing, forwarding, transportation and source supply of piping system, Fire Gas Detection System (FGD) system and auxiliaries including supply of mandatory spares, delivery at site, erection, testing, commissioning, trial run, conducting performance guarantee tests and final acceptance of the FGD systems on engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) basis for 5x210 MW Tutticorni Thermal Power Station – Regd.	20.04.2021 at 14.00 Hours

For the details of opening viewing and downloading / Due date for submission of e-tenders, please visit the following website: www.tangedco.org and <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgcp/app>

DIPR/1320/Tender/2021

CAD-1317

ODISHA CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LIMITED BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA, PIN: 751012, Tel No.(0674) 2562020, e-Mail: thecctd@odishaconstruction.com GSTIN - 21AAC02571K2ZM

"e" Procurement Notice No- 34/OCL/2020-21 (on-line)

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	49745	+2.25
US Dollar	72.49	-0.22
Gold	46013	0.97
Brent oil	64.64	1.36

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	673.80	+20.30
Asian Paints	2387.05	-29.40
Axis Bank	719.45	-30.20
Bajaj Auto	3971.55	-29.55
Bajaj Finance	10000.60	-249.85
Bajaj Finance	5376.85	-121.10
Bharti Airtel	570.30	-11.05
BPCL	422.55	-7.45
Britannia Ind	3341.20	10.00
Cipla	792.45	-14.90
Coal India	136.25	-3.00
Divis Lab	3496.65	-26.55
Dr Reddys Lab	4469.25	-212.20
Eicher Motors	2482.35	-102.30
GAIL (India)	142.80	-2.60
Grasim Ind	1230.20	12.50
HCL Tech	920.15	-30.00
HDFC	2651.95	-89.35
HDFC Bank	1548.00	8.90
HDFC Life	690.60	-20.05
Hero MotoCorp	3414.15	-24.45
Hindalco	316.10	8.10
Hind Unilever	2167.60	-13.50
ICICI Bank	609.85	-14.20
IndusInd Bank	1022.90	-43.00
Infosys	1265.20	-26.10
Indian Oil Corp	95.65	-1.90
ITC	207.05	-8.90
JSW Steel	406.10	10.45
Kotak Bank	1949.60	10.85
L&T	1452.20	-56.60
M&M	837.10	-42.15
Maruti Suzuki	7086.45	-236.55
Nestle India Ltd.	16096.30	-280.10
NTPC	102.05	-2.15
ONGC	106.30	1.20
PowerGrid Corp	224.95	-7.25
Reliance Ind	2008.10	-72.20
SBI Life	849.05	-32.45
State Bank	389.45	-10.05
Shree Cement	27090.85	-451.60
Sun Pharma	595.30	-12.00
Tata Motors	304.50	-7.35
Tata Steel	684.55	13.85
TCS	2958.45	-113.40
Tech Mahindra	950.70	-43.25
Titan	1405.25	-20.30
UltraTech Cement	6175.10	-33.40
UPL	539.75	-13.05
Wipro	418.70	-11.25

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.31	72.63
Euro	87.70	88.09
British Pound	101.39	101.87
Japanese Yen (100)	68.45	68.75
Chinese Yuan	11.19	11.24
Swiss Franc	80.43	80.79
Singapore Dollar	54.64	54.89
Canadian Dollar	57.24	57.50
Malaysian Ringgit	17.88	17.98

Source: Indian Bank

P-note investments slip to ₹84,976 crore

NEW DELHI Investments via P-notes dipped marginally to ₹84,976 crore as on January 31 after hitting a 31-month high at the end of the preceding month. PTI

DHFL auditor Grant Thornton reports further fraud of ₹6,182 cr.

Transaction auditor cites deals that were 'undervalued, fraudulent, preferential'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL) on Monday said its transaction auditor, Grant Thornton, had reported further fraudulence amounting to ₹6,182 crore in the company.

The administrator of the company received an initial report from the agency appointed as the transaction auditor indicating there were certain transactions that were "undervalued, fraudulent and preferential in nature", DHFL said in a regulatory filing.

"The monetary impact of the above transactions covered under the application amounts to ₹5,381.90 crore towards outstanding prin-



Peeling away: DHFL has filed an application with NCLT against Kapil Wadhawan, Dheeraj Wadhawan and others. ■ REUTERS

pal, ₹589.36 crore towards accrued interest and ₹210.85 crore towards notional loss of interest on account of charging lower rate of interest," said the filing about the estimated impact on the company. The administrator later appointed GT as the transaction aud-

itor to conduct an investigation of the affairs of the firm.

Based on the observations by the auditor, the Administrator has filed an application before the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) in respect of disbursement made to certain entities as other large project loans, against Kapil Wadhawan, Dheeraj Wadhawan, Creatoz Builders Pvt. Ltd., Ikshudip Fincap Pvt. Ltd., Rite Developers Pvt. Ltd. and some other entities.

DHFL said the application to NCLT has been filed against 33 respondents, including Kapil Wadhawan, Dheeraj Wadhawan, Creatoz Builders, Ikshudip Fincap, and Rite Developers.

Sensex falls 2.25% on virus concerns, valuation

Posts biggest 1-day slump in 2 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Spiralling lower for the fifth straight session, the Sensex plummeted 1,145 points while the Nifty crashed below the 14,700-level on Monday as across-the-board selling hammered stocks amid a prolonged spell of weakness in global equities.

A firm trend in the rupee was not enough to bolster sentiment, which has been hit by rising COVID-19 cases in multiple States and concerns on the valuation front, traders said. Posting its biggest single-day slump in two months, the BSE Sensex tumbled 1,145.44 points or 2.25% to 49,744.32. The NSE Nifty sank 306.05 points or



2.04% to 14,675.70.

"FPI inflows that led the rally slowed due to global vulnerabilities from rising bond yield and inflation. However, a short-term correction will trigger new buying, as economic fundamentals have improved," said Vinod Nair, head, Research, at Geojit Financial Services.

double-digit growth for the segment.

The company on Monday unveiled the all-new Safari SUV priced in the ₹14.69 lakh-₹21.45 lakh range.

"After Diwali, there is a 35% drop in demand, which has not happened this year," he said, adding this showed there was sustenance of demand that the supply side was unable to meet. "It remains uncertain because the macroindicators are not... great. When you talk about fuel prices, it's not that good," he said.

He said while the shortage of semiconductors as well as steel prices were going to be a 'real issue', there was 'no reason to panic'.

Growth momentum needs to be strengthened'

Policy support required: MPC minutes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The growth momentum needs to be strengthened for a sustained revival of the economy and a quick return to the pre-COVID trajectory, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said, pitching for a status quo on rates, at the last meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

All the six members of the MPC had voted for keeping the policy repo rate unchanged at 4% at the three-day meeting which began on February 3, citing similar reasons.

The RBI kept the policy rate unchanged for the third time in a row in its last monetary policy review for 2020-21 on February 5.

The MPC also decided to continue with the accommodative stance as necessary.

Paramount Group Chairman Ivor Ichikowitz said all its technologies have been developed with portable production in mind. "The Kalyani M4 is based on one of our flagship armoured vehicles designed... for in-

Bharat Forge, Paramount ink defence deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Bharat Forge on Monday said it had inked a pact with global aerospace and technology firm Paramount Group to manufacture armoured vehicles in the country.

An agreement to this effect was signed by both companies during the International Defence Expo in Abu Dhabi, Bharat Forge said in a statement.

This collaboration brings together the manufacturing and technology excellence of two leading companies. The Kalyani M4 is a fantastic new-generation vehicle, and we want to position it as the future of protection in all markets worldwide," said Bharat Forge Deputy MD Amit Kalyani. The Kalyani M4 is designed to meet the specific requirements of armed forces for quick mobility in rough terrain and in areas affected by mine and IED threats.

Paramount Group Chairman Ivor Ichikowitz said all its technologies have been developed with portable production in mind. "The Kalyani M4 is based on one of our flagship armoured vehicles designed... for in-India with our partners, the Kalyani Group," he added.

Jet stock surges 5% on restart hopes

But, agency sees higher stress from retail loan segment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Shares of grounded airline Jet Airways surged almost 5% on Monday after Murari Lal Jalan of the Jalan-Kalrock consortium said they expected to restart operations of the defunct airline in four to six months after receiving NCLT approval for their resolution plan.

The airline's share rose 4.98% to hit the upper circuit limit of ₹114.90 on the BSE. The scrip hit its upper trading limit on the NSE as well with a gain of 4.98% to ₹114.95.

Jet Airways the once-storied full-service carrier was grounded in early 2019 and subsequently has been undergoing proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).



The last nine months have provided banks the opportunity to beef up their provisions even more for legacy stressed assets, which were existing before the pandemic," said the agency's director (financial institutions), Jinal Haria. "We expect that by the end of FY21, the provisions will go up to almost 75-80%

on those NPAs. This will give banks space to absorb COVID stress," he said.

The agency also revised credit growth estimates to 6.9% for FY21 from the earlier 1.8%, and forecast 8.9% for FY22. Mr. Haria said a lot of the retail stress was coming from unsecured advances and that it would be seen more in private banks because of their higher exposure to unsecured loans.

The stock of stressed retail assets for PSBs could rise to 2.9% in FY22 from 2.1% in FY21, while it could climb from 1.2% to 4.3% for private banks, it said. The agency also expected deposit rates to rise as credit growth revives and capital market flows are enhanced.

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'Winning WTC would be same as winning World Cup'

On the verge of playing his 100th Test, Ishant Sharma looks back at a storied career and lists his immediate goals

ENGLAND IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

From a promising fast-bowler who bamboozled the great Ricky Ponting in Perth in 2008 to a seasoned campaigner whose short-ball ploy gave India a rare victory at Lord's in 2014 to the leader of arguably the best pace attack in the world in 2020, Ishant Sharma has got better just like the fermented grape juice that gets better with age.

On the verge of becoming only the second India pacer to earn 100 Test caps, Ishant sat down for a virtual interaction from Ahmedabad ahead of the third Test against England and looked back on his career. Excerpts:

On reaching the milestone
When it comes to the 100th, I honestly feel it's just a number. I never thought of playing 100 Test matches and once it happens, I won't set a

ISHANT IN TESTS

	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	BBM	Avg.	SR	5WI/10WMM
vs. Australia	25	46	59	4/41	7/117	42.20	80.1	0/0
vs. England	19	32	61	7/74	7/135	31.93	63.6	2/0
vs. South Africa	15	27	31	4/79	5/73	43.51	86.1	0/0
vs. West Indies	12	23	46	6/55	10/108	23.91	47.8	3/1
vs. Sri Lanka	12	21	36	5/54	8/86	35.88	60.3	1/0
vs. New Zealand	7	13	35	6/51	9/162	24.14	42.5	3/0
vs. Bangladesh	7	13	25	5/22	9/78	20.88	38.8	1/0
vs. Pakistan	1	2	5	5/118	5/140	28.00	47.0	1/0
vs. Afghanistan	1	2	4	2/17	4/45	11.25	18.0	0/0
OVERALL	99	179	302	7/74	10/108	32.22	60.9	11/1
HOME	39	73	103	5/22	9/78	30.94	64.1	2/0
AWAY	60	106	199	7/74	10/108	32.88	59.3	9/1

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO | COMPILED BY G. PRASAD

target in terms of games. I will play the 100th with the same feeling, intent, the same aggression that I played my 99th with. As long as it keeps reflecting in my bowling, I would love to keep representing India.

On how he treats exclusion from the limited-overs set-up
Generally I think of it as a blessing in disguise. Obviously

I love to play white-ball cricket. But I don't feel that had I been playing all three formats, I wouldn't have played 100 Tests.

I am just 32, not 42 years old. Had I been playing white-ball cricket, maybe it wouldn't have happened so early but I am sure with the longevity I have and the kind of effort put in my body to

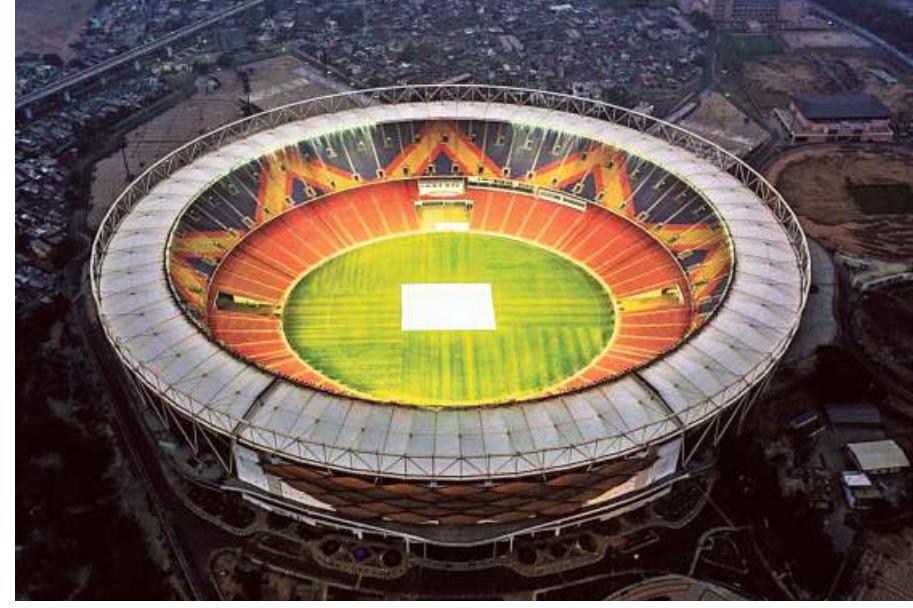
remain fit, it wouldn't have been a problem for me.

On his immediate goals
I have just one format to play, so [World] Test Championship is like the World Cup for me. If we can make it to the final and go on to win it, for me, it would be the same feeling as winning the World Cup or the Champions Trophy.



SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO | COMPILED BY G. PRASAD

Stunning vista



Bird's eye view: The resplendent Sardar Patel Stadium at Motera, the world's largest cricket stadium, bathed in floodlights. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Snehit hogs the limelight, storms into semifinals

The youngster dethrones Harmeet and stuns Sushmit in successive rounds

NATIONAL TT

RAKESH RAO
CHANDIGARH

There is something about the Tau Devi Lal Indoor Stadium at Panchkula that brings out the best in S.F.R. Snehit.

The last time this reigning National youth champion played here in the 2018 North Zone-ranking event, he took out Sharath Kamal on this way to the final.

Snehit and Sathiyan – Snehit's mentors – stayed on course for their much-anticipated final clash at the expense of two former National champions, A. Amalraj and Sanil Shetty.

The scoreline for Sharath could have read a lot differently had Amalraj not missed converting a game-point

table tennis championship.

Favourites in semifinals

Even as Snehit, 20, was enjoying his best day in the Nationals, more illustrious names like Sharath Kamal, G. Sathiyan and Manav Thakkar took their allotted spots in the semifinals. Interestingly, all semifinalists won 4-1.

Sharath and Sathiyan – Snehit's mentors – stayed on course for their much-anticipated final clash at the expense of two former National champions, A. Amalraj and Sanil Shetty.

The scoreline for Sharath could have read a lot differently had Amalraj not missed converting a game-point



Great run: S.F.R. Snehit was in awesome form as he scalped two seeds on an eventful Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in the fourth game for a 2-2 deadlock.

But once Sharath led 3-1, a frustrated and fast-tiring Amalraj committed far too many errors to trail 1-7 in the fifth game and never tested

his senior rival.

Sathiyan carried on with his form by winning all three matches with an identical 4-1 scoreline.

The results: **Quarterfinals:** A. Sharath Kamal

(Pet) bt A. Amalraj (TTFI) 11-8, 11-3, 5-11, 13-11, 11-2; Manav Thakkar (Pet) bt Ronit Bhanja (Ben 'A') 11-7, 12-10, 10-12, 12-10, 11-6 ; S.F.R. Snehit (TS) bt Sushmit Sriram (TTFI) 8-11, 12-10, 11-9, 11-8, 11-3; G. Sathiyan (Pet) bt Sanil Shetty (Pet) 11-9, 11-9, 11-13, 11-8, 11-6.

Important pre-quarterfinal results: Sharath bt Sougata Sarkar (LIC) 7-11, 11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 11-5; Amalraj bt Soumyajit Ghosh (Har) 9-11, 12-10, 9-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-5; Bhanja bt Sudhanshu Grover (Del) 13-11, 7-1, 6-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-8, 15-13; Manav Thakkar bt T. Nitin (TN) 11-9, 8-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-5.

Snehit bt Harmeet Desai (Pet) 11-9, 11-7, 11-9, 11-5; Sathiyan bt Manush Shah (Gu) 11-8, 12-14, 11-9, 11-8, 13-11.

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Babyrojiana Chanu (51kg) and Arundhati Choudhary (69kg) triumphed as Indian women boxers ended with five gold medals in the 30th Adriatic Pearl tournament in Budva, Montenegro.

Silver for Lucky Rana
Lucky Rana (64kg) secured a silver as India emerged as the top team with 10 medals (five gold, three silver and two bronze).

Uzbekistan (two gold) and Czech Republic (one gold) ended at second and third position respectively.

Three-time Khelo India gold-medallist Arundhati

pulled off a dominating 5-0 victory over Ukraine's Maryana Stoiko on Sunday.

Babyrojiana, who trains at M.C. Mary Kom's academy, got the better of Asian junior champion Sabina Bobulova of Uzbekistan 3-2.

Lucky suffered a 5-0 defeat at the hands of Finnish boxer Lia Pukkila to claim silver. With two medals in the men's category, the 19-member Indian team concluded its campaign in an overall second position (12 medals).

Uzbekistan and Ukraine claimed first and third position respectively in the overall standings.

Punching to glory: The Indian boxing contingent that reaped it rich in the Adriatic Pearl tournament in Budva, Montenegro. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13177

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Faith

The seven steps

The most significant marriage ritual is panigrahanam, said V.S. Karunakarachariar, in a discourse. The groom and the bride take seven steps around the fire, and this is called sapta-padi. A mantra is recited by the groom, in which he addresses the bride. He holds her hand and says, "I take hold of your hand. In your old age, I will be like a stick you can lean upon for support." And here is what the groom says for each of the seven steps: "As you take your first step, may our family be blessed with food in plenty. As you take your second step, may we all get nutritive food. As you take your third step, may you help me observe vratas. Let your fourth step bring wealth to my family. May your fifth step bring all material comforts to my family. May your sixth step enable us to enjoy all seasons. As you take your seventh step, may you be one who welcomes saintly persons gladly and respectfully."

For each of these hopes and wishes he expresses to his wife, the groom prays that Lord Narayana should be her support throughout. Finally, he says to the bride, "You and I have walked seven steps together and have become friends." The relationship between them is to be one of mutual trust and friendship, none superior to the other. Both are to be friends, each consulting the other, when important decisions are to be made. When the wedding saree is gifted by the groom to the bride, the mantra says, "Even in your absence, the words spoken about you should be the same that are uttered when you are there." People do not criticise us, when we are present. But the moment our backs are turned, criticisms begin. This marriage mantra means that the daughter-in-law should be so loveable, that she will not be criticised, even when she is absent from the scene.

Archer supports rest and rotation policy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Jofra Archer, the England speedster who missed the second Test against India, has said rest and rotation is absolutely necessary considering the international calendar and life in a bio-secur bubble.

"I think it's necessary, especially during COVID and stuff, there's a lot of quarantine periods. If you hit a good run with the form and then you have to travel with the quarantine, I think rest and rotation is necessary for now," he said on Monday.

England is slated to play at least 17 Tests this year, besides the T

TV PICKS

Champions League: Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m.

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

IN BRIEF



Ingram does the star turn for Pelicans

NEW ORLEANS Brandon Ingram scored 33 points as New Orleans Pelicans overcame a 24-point deficit to defeat the Boston Celtics 120-115 on Sunday. **The results:** Milwaukee 128 bt Sacramento 115; Atlanta 123 bt Denver 115; Cleveland 101 lost to Oklahoma City 117; Orlando 105 bt Detroit 96; Toronto 110 bt Philadelphia 103; New York 103 bt Minnesota 99; LA Clippers 108 lost to Brooklyn 112; New Orleans 120 bt Boston 115 (OT).

Mumbai Falcons finishes third in Formula 3 Asians

ABU DHABI

Mumbai Falcons created history by becoming the first all-Indian racing outfit to finish in the top three of an FIA Championship. The team and its star driver Jehan Daruvala finished third in the drivers' and team category respectively of the Formula 3 Asian Championship thanks to nine podium finishes through the championship.

Olympics dates sacrosanct: Riju

BENGALURU

Union Sports Minister Kiren Riju dismissed speculation that the Tokyo Olympics might be further postponed. "The latest report I have received is that the Olympics will not be postponed further. The Olympics is the biggest event in the world. The dates of the Olympics are sacrosanct. It is not easy to change it," Riju said here on Monday.

United stays second

Atalanta wallops Napoli



Burying it: United's Bruno Fernandes sends Newcastle goalkeeper Karl Darlow the wrong way to score. •AFP

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES
MANCHESTER

Manchester United beat Newcastle 3-1 to stay in second place in the Premier League on Sunday.

In the Serie A, Roma was held goalless at 15th-placed Benevento while Napoli crashed 4-2 at Atalanta.

The results: Premier League: Arsenal 1 lost to Manchester City 1 (Sterling 2); Manchester United 3 (Rashford 30, James 57, Fernandes 75-pen) bt New-

castle 1 (Saint-Maximin 36).

LaLiga: Real Sociedad 4 (Isak 41, 49, 62, Portu 73) bt Alaves 0; Huesca 3 (Escriche 31, Pulido 39, Foulquier 44-og) bt Granada 2 (Quina 8, Soro 59); Athletic Bilbao 1 (Berenguer 44) drew with Villarreal 1 (Moreno 16).

Serie A: Atalanta 4 (Zapata 52, Gosen 64, Muriel 71, Romero 79) bt Napoli 2 (Zielinski 58, Gosen 76-og); Benevento 0 drew with Roma 0.

Bundesliga: Hoffenheim 4 (Becker 26, Baumgartner 44, Dabbur 49, Rutter 90) bt Werder Bremen 0.

Others: Juventus 3 (Cavani 10,

Alvaro 11, Ronaldo 12) bt Bayern 2 (Goretzka 10, Lewandowski 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 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