



Congress and BJP
announce their list of
candidates in Kerala
page 10



Sachin Vaze sent to NIA
custody till March 25 in
Antilia bomb scare case
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At least 38 killed during
protests in Myanmar,
says advocacy group
page 14



Virat Kohli, Ishan Kishan
power India to
series-leveelling win
page 15

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NEARBY



HC to resume physical
hearings from today

NEW DELHI

After a year, the Delhi High Court from Monday will resume complete physical functioning, which was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The High Court, however, will consider requests by parties to join the court proceedings through videoconferencing in "exceptional cases".

CITY ▶ PAGE 4



Starting 22nd Mar. FEE ₹10,000/- GST ₹8826486658, 8826496658

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 7

Centre likely to allow residents to fill their NPR details online

No 'biometrics or documents' will be collected, says Home Ministry report

The big count

A look at the next stage for updating the NPR database

- The questions for the fresh NPR have not been made public yet but the pretest conducted in 2019 included questions such as date and place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence, mother tongue, Aadhaar (optional), voter ID card, apart from mobile phone and driver's licence numbers
- No 'biometrics or documents' are to be collected by enumerators
- A month before Census/NPR begins, residents will be given an option to enter details online, a reference code will be generated that will be provided to the enumerator. After entering the code on the mobile app, the details will be displayed and further updated in the database



be collected. These details will then be stored in the system.

The first phase of the de-

cenial Census exercise – the House-listing and Housing Census – along with updating the NPR was sche-

duled to be held from April 1, 2020. It was postponed inde-

finitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is unlikely to be held this year. The second and main phase of Census – the population enumeration – was to be concluded by March 5 this year.

As reported by *The Hindu* on January 21, 2020, residents were to be given an option to self-enumerate only in the second phase.

As per an annual report of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, the option will now be made available for updating the NPR also. The NPR earlier collated in 2010 and 2015 has an electronic database of more than 119 crore residents.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

India logs 25,320 new virus cases

Biggest daily spike this year; 88% cases from seven States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

India recorded 25,320 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, the biggest daily rise this year, taking the overall case tally to more than 1.13 crore. The active cases stood at 2,07,703.

This is the fourth day in a row that the daily case count has surged over the 20,000-

mark. Until March, cases had breached this mark only twice, in January.

Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 87.73% of the new cases, with Maharashtra alone recording 15,602 new infections.

With 161 new fatalities in the 24 hours to 8 a.m. on

Sunday, the death toll rose to 1,58,607, a notable spike considering an average of nearly 100 daily deaths since February. Most of the deaths were recorded in the States with the rising caseload, with Maharashtra registering 88 fatalities, followed by Punjab (22) and Kerala (12).

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

We are 'protectors' of the Congress legacy: Sibal

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The group of 23 Congress members (G-23), who had written to party chief Sonia

Gandhi last August asking for reforms, were not "dissenters but



protectors of the Congress legacy", senior leader and a key member of the G-23, Kapil Sibal, said on Sunday.

Referring to their public meeting in Jammu on February 27, Mr. Sibal said the leaders spoke about "strengthening the Congress" during the meet.

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mark. Until March, cases had breached this mark only twice, in January.

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CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Poll panel orders suspension of two IPS officers in Bengal

Unidentified people allegedly pushed Mamata Banerjee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Sunday ordered the suspension of two IPS officers for their failure to protect West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during an incident in Nandigram on March 10 that left her with injuries.

Ms. Banerjee was campaigning for the Assembly election when she was allegedly pushed by unidentified people, leaving her with injuries on the leg.

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SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Kunal Shrivastava, who works with a Gurugram-based MNC, had a narrow escape on Delhi-Gurugram Expressway last Monday. He was driving when the flashlights of an onrushing car blinded him for a split second. It took him five seconds to regain vision, and in that nowhere moment, he nearly crashed onto the divider.

Using high beam is prohibited in city limits, but due to a lack of awareness and absence of technology to stringently monitor the violation, drivers go scot-free, putting the lives of others at considerable risk.

According to Delhi traffic police, in January and February, they had fined 82 drivers for using high beam. The prosecution figure was 427 in 2020, 3,427 in 2019 and 5,710 in year 2018. While 2020 was a washout year for most activities, these numbers show a declining trend and even by those standards, an abysmally low prosecution rate this year.

"Using high beam is an offence punishable under Motor Vehicles Act. We fine car drivers for ₹500 for first offence and ₹1,500 for second and subsequent offences. Traffic policemen deployed at various junctions keep check on violation and educate drivers if they are unaware of traffic violations like high beam," said a traffic police officer.

Accident prone

The officer added that high beam lights including modified ones can temporarily blind drivers, especially elders, coming from the opposite direction and might cause accidents.



A matter of light and death

Though using high beam in city limits is prohibited, monitoring the offence is difficult as many drivers are ignorant about it, leading to avoidable accidents

posite direction and might cause accidents.

Rohit Baluja, head of the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE), said that Central Motor Vehicles rule clearly defines the deflection of lights but most drivers don't abide by it. The driver should always use a low beam and police should carry a drive to enforce the rule strictly, he asserts.

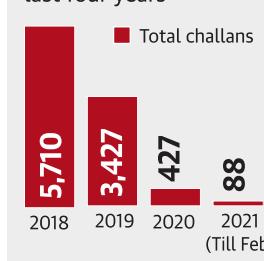
"Under the new Motor Vehicles rule, any modification to the vehicle is to be fined by the transport department but it never happened. Any type of modification should follow Automotive Industry Standard [AIS] and Bureau of India Standards [BIS]. Motorists using chunky headlamps should be fined heavily and vehicles should be impounded," said Mr. Baluja.

Need for technology

He added that large numbers of road accidents are happening due to this violation, especially at night. The reason for road accidents due to high beam never gets mentioned in any police FIR or accident report. Hit and run cases are the most common

Headlight Hassle

Challans dispensed to the offenders in the last four years



SOURCE: DELHI POLICE

mon road accidents caused due to high beam. The enforcement authorities should come up with the latest technology to fine drivers involved in high beam violation, besides creating an awareness drive," said Mr. Baluja.

Another driver Gaurav Singh said that expensive cars come with projector headlights for more brightness, which often creates trouble for two-wheeler drivers like him.

"I can bet upon that 90% of the drivers will be unaware of the rule regarding the prohibition of high beam within city limits. Car drivers use intense bright headlamp in narrow lanes in areas like Karol Bagh, Kirti Nagar and other internal roads. Only self-awareness is the way out," said Mr. Singh.

Not just the high-beaming cars coming in from the opposite direction, but those from behind too can make life difficult. The illumination reflects into the eyes of the person driving the vehicle in front through rearview mirrors or side view mirrors, said Mukesh Rana, a cab driver.

One dead, 2 hurt in 3 separate firing incidents in north-east Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 47-year-old man was shot dead and two others

were injured in three separate firing incidents in north-east Delhi in the last two days, police said on

Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Sharab Ansari of Khajuri Khas while the

injured are Al Tasleem and Manoj Sharma, both from Jafarabad, said a police officer.

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- Graduates in any discipline and students awaiting their degree examination results are eligible to apply.
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- A processing fee of INR 2360/- (inclusive of GST) must accompany the application. Candidates applying for both programmes need to pay only one processing fee of INR 3540/- (inclusive of GST). The fee can be remitted online or sent as demand draft. Please see website for details.
- SC/ST candidates are exempt from application fee on production of their community certificates.
- Selection for admission is based on an online test in real time on Sunday May 16, 2021 followed by an online interview between Thursday May 20, 2021 and Saturday May 22, 2021.

Heat and harvest result in dwindling protesters

Fewer numbers is not a sign of weakening protest: farmers

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Queues at langars for food has thinned at the Ghazipur border protest site as most of the protesters have left to their villages for harvesting work at their farms after the farmers' leaders went to poll-bound States for campaigning.

Gurnam Singh, who works at a langar, said they only prepare food for around one hundred people during breakfast. "Less number of takers and shortage of storage capacity of cooked food are the two reasons for preparing less food. We can't hold cooked food for long during this season. Around a month ago, they used to prepare food for around 350 people during single shift. It is just a routine thing as protesters will come back after harvesting season," said Mr. Gurnam.

There are more than 15 functional langars at the Ghazipur protest site preparing food, apart from snacks and tea, in three shifts.

Still strong

Manpreet Chaudhary, a protester said that the crowd will come back when their leader Rakesh Tikait, who is busy strengthening their movement in other States, returns. "Around 500 protesters are still at the Ghazipur protest site at any time of the day. Farmers haven't called off their protest; they have just gone home



Farmer resting inside a mosquito net at the Ghazipur protest site on Sunday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Around 500
protesters are still
at the Ghazipur
protest site at any
time of the day.
More than 10,000
farmers are on
standby and will
march to Delhi in
case of an
emergency

MANPREET CHAUDHARY
A protester

crowd swells during morning and evening when temperature is moderate. We have placed drinking water coolers at several points. To avoid protesters falling sick, we have maintained rotation of people at the site," said Gopal Singh, a farmer.

No shortage
Protesters said there is no shortage of supplies but they can't stay away from farms for a lengthy spell. After harvesting rabi crops, they have to prepare their farms, which is a long process and requires a lot of human involvement and expertise.

"We have to maintain a balance between protest and farms. If they leave farms for protest then what will we eat and how will we earn. It is a cycle that we have to take care. We support farmers' protest and demand repeal of laws but can't afford to ignore our farms," said Hanuman Rathi, a farmer.

DUTA seeks V-C's mediation in running colleges

Teachers' body calls for university shutdown, says future of institutions in jeopardy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association wrote to interim Vice-Chancellor P.C. Joshi on Sunday to intervene into the functioning of 12 colleges of the university that are fully funded by the Delhi government.

The DUTA wrote: "The future of these colleges and their status appears to be in serious jeopardy. We seek your immediate intervention and request you to urgently discuss the matter in the Executive Council," the DUTA said.

The teachers' body has been on strike over the issue



DUTA has been on strike over salary issue. ■ FILE PHOTO

have been released and have decided to go ahead with a university shut down.

Insufficient grants

"We have taken cognizance of the fact that the Delhi government has released ₹82.79 crore under salary head and an amount of ₹9.50 crore under other salaries' head on March 12. However, the grants released are insufficient, and, in most colleges, will find requirements for payment of salaries only up to January," the DUTA said.

The teachers also alleged that the Governing Bodies of the 12 colleges are being asked to adopt a document called Pattern of Assistance issued by the Directorate of Higher Education, to redefine association of these 12 colleges with Delhi University and divest Delhi government of its funding responsibility.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia directed the Directorate of Higher Education to set up an inquiry committee to look into alleged financial irregularities in these 12 colleges. The Minister said that stringent action shall be taken against responsible officials if irregularities are found.

Two held for cheating plot buyers of ₹8 crore

Accused posed as DSIIDC officials

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested for allegedly cheating buyers of industrial plots after posing themselves as Delhi State Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC) officials, police said on Sunday.

The accused have been identified as Vikram Saxena, a resident of Dehradun in Uttarakhand and Mithun Bhatnagar, a resident of Saharanpur in UP. They have cheated victims to the tune of ₹8 crore, they said.

Police said they received complaints from one Naresh Jindal and fourteen others. Jindal had applied for industrial plot of DSIIDC in 1998 in the reallocation scheme, but his application form was rejected, police said.

In 2018, accused Vikram Saxena and Ajay Saxena met him and introduced themselves as employees of DSIIDC. They showed him their identity cards and his original application form, which had been rejected earlier by DSIIDC, a senior police officer said.

They lured him to take his rejected plot in lieu of extra expenditure. They also guided him to tell other known persons to get their notice of the court.

allotted plots, police said. Later, the complainant and his six other known persons agreed to pay extra money to get their plots, police said.

"Vikram and Ajay asked them to deposit money for file and other charges. The complainant gave ₹7 lakh to the alleged persons, but did not get his plot," DCP (Economic Offences Wing) Mohammad Ali said.

Worked as DSIIDC agent

The accused were arrested on Saturday. Interrogation revealed that Vikram used to work as an agent at DSIIDC and help the persons to complete their file work. He came to know that in 1996, DSIIDC launched a scheme for industrial plots in Patparganj and at that time, the name of the DSIIDC was DSIDC, the DCP said.

In order to cheat people, they started a company Dev Sewa Income Development Company and opened a bank account in the name of DSIDC, police said. They got the list of names and addresses of rejected applicants from the DCP said.

HC takes into account age, quashes case against youth

It directs him to do service at gurdwara

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed a 21-year-old youth, who had stabbed a man on his stomach, to do community service at Bangla Sahib Gurdwara here for a month while quashing the criminal case against him.

Justice Subramonium Prasad while coming at the decision noted that the accused Mohd Umair is a 21-year-old youngster having entire life ahead of him and also that he and the victim has entered into a settlement.

"The accused has expressed regret in the court. The complainant [victim] who is present in the court also states that the life of the youngster would get spoiled if proceedings continue," Justice Prasad said.

The incident took place on March 26 last year at Jama Masjid area when the victim while on his way to a friend's home in the locality found Umair arguing with his mother on the alley. When the victim asked Umair not to argue with his mother, Umair started abusing him and started fighting with him. Umair then took a knife from a vegetable vendor and stabbed the victim.

Umair has already spent

about a month in custody and is currently on bail.

"The petitioner is a youngster of 21 years having entire life ahead of him. The parties are living in the same area. There are no criminal antecedents against the petitioner. He has not absconded," the court said while cautioning Umair "not to indulge in such activities and repeat the offence in future".

"The youngster must learn to control his anger and keep in mind that he cannot take law in his hands," Justice Prasad said, ordering the accused to do one month community service at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib from March 16 to April 16. The High Court also imposed a cost of ₹1 lakh on Umair.

In case of any absenteeism or default on Umair's part, the court asked Gurdwara Bangla Sahib to inform the SHO concerned, who shall in turn inform the public prosecutor, for bringing it to the notice of the court.

They lured him to take his rejected plot in lieu of extra expenditure. They also guided him to tell other known persons to get their notice of the court.

The DCP said.

The ACJ is administered by Media Development Foundation, a not-for-profit public Trust

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, MAR. 15	
RISE 06:31	SET 18:30
RISE 07:44	SET 20:15
TUESDAY, MAR. 16	
RISE 06:30	SET 18:30
RISE 08:14	SET 21:09
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 17	
RISE 06:29	SET 18:31
RISE 08:44	SET 22:02

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 31 14
Safdarjung 31 14
Palam 31 17

Delhi Palam Today
33°C A cool hazy morning and warm day with partly cloudy sky. Chances of thunder clouds development in pockets.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
33°C Marginal rise in temperature. Warm day would continue with partly cloudy sky.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi 209	Gurugram 195		
Ghazabia 195	Faridabad 180		
Noida 174	Greater Noida 182		
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100	Moderate 101-200	Poor 201-300 Very poor 301-400 Severe >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

Over 400 cases in Delhi for 4th consecutive day

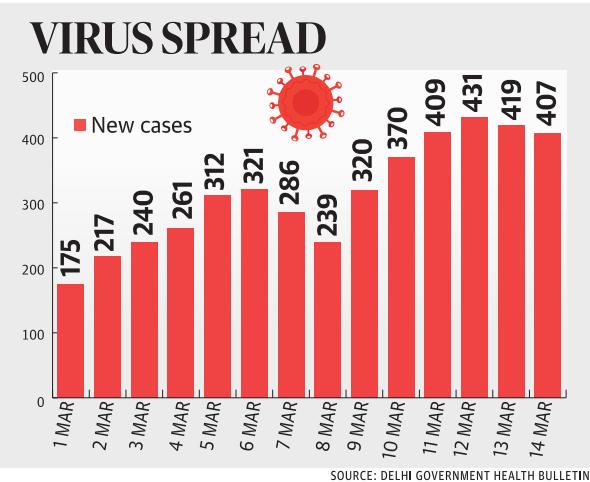
68,223 tests conducted in 24 hours; two deaths reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Crossing the 400 mark for the fourth consecutive day, 407 new COVID-19 cases were recorded in Delhi on Sunday.

On Thursday, the city recorded 409 cases, crossing the 400 mark and then staying at 431 cases and 419 cases on Friday and Saturday respectively. The last time the city recorded over 400 cases before the current spike was on January 3, with 424 cases.

The number of cases in the city had shown a downward trend since the start of the year with Health Minister Satyendar Jain commenting last week that the Capital has reached the "endemic" phase and that the "pandemic" phase was over as the positivity rate had



dipped below 1%.

The health bulletin released by the government on Sunday said that 68,223 tests were conducted in 24-hours, with a positivity rate of 0.60%. There were two

deaths in the same period with 350 recoveries. There are currently 2,262 active cases. The total cases stands at 6,43,696 with 10,941 deaths and 6,30,493 recoveries.

Kejriwal inaugurates sewerage project work worth ₹480 crore

It will be carried out in Kirari and Mundka constituencies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday inaugurated the commencement of work of a sewerage project costing ₹480 crore in 114 unauthorised colonies and six villages of Kirari and Mundka Assembley constituencies.

Speaking at the launch at Kirari, Mr. Kejriwal said that despite the shortage of funds, he had come to fulfil a promise made during the Delhi Assembly elections last year that the sewerage works would commence.

"I remember visiting this area and taking a tour through all the lanes before the elections. You all were upset with me. Many roads were in despicable condition, the sewers were overflowing, several lanes were filled with garbage. Your bit-

ness with me was justified. I have come here today to fulfil my promise," Mr. Kejriwal told those gathered.

He added that the Delhi government had already provided water to every household in Kirari. It now aims at providing sewer lines to every household and good roads and lanes over the next four years.

The sewerage project is being carried out by the Del-

hi Jal Board and is likely to benefit a population of 7.25 lakh under the Sewerage Master Plan 2031.

The area has already been covered under the water supply system, the Delhi government said.

The scheme has been prepared to facilitate the public at large, residing in these colonies and villages with a sewerage system facility to achieve better sanitary conditions and reduce the pollution of the Yamuna, the government added.

Under the scheme, there are provisions to lay the sewer lines in the length of about 423 km. The scope of work also includes the construction of Waste Water Pumping Stations at Prem Nagar, Bhaigya Vihar, and Pratap Vihar having a capacity of 6.5, 9.0, and 41 MGD, respectively.

STF for Delhi Master Plan gets 77,000 complaints

PRESS TRUST INDIA
NEW DELHI

A special task force (STF) set up to comprehensively oversee effective and proper enforcement of the provisions of the Delhi Master Plan and byelaws received over 77,000 complaints till February 28, officials said on Sunday.

Action taken on the complaints were reviewed during the 64th meeting of the STF on Saturday, they said, adding that officials from all local bodies and other agencies took part in it.

"In total, 77,186 complaints have been received by the STF till February 28, and action has been initiated on 71,531," a senior Delhi Development Authority official said.

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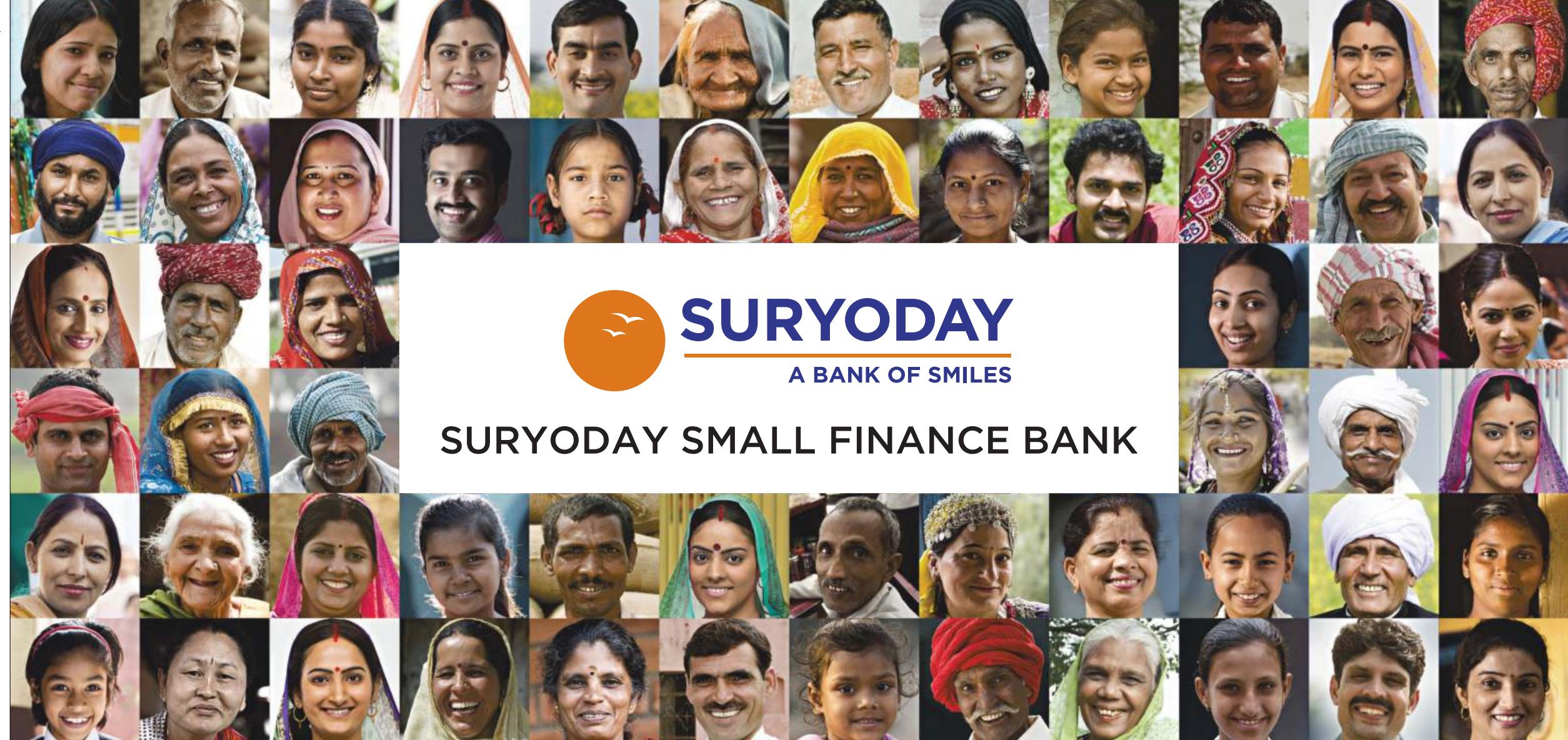
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Adfactors 826

HC to resume full physical hearing from today

It will consider request of parties to join proceedings via videoconferencing in exceptional cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court will on Monday resume full physical hearing of all its Benches a year after it started restricting functioning of courts due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from full physical hearing, the High Court will also consider request of parties to join the court proceedings through videoconferencing in "exceptional cases".

This hybrid form of hearing is one, where some of the parties or their counsels may be physically present in the courtroom when the matter is taken up by the court for hearing, while others may participate through the online mode.

Judges' discretion

"As to what would constitute exceptional cases, would have to be left to the discretion of the Judge/Judges before whom the cases are listed,



ed, and before whom the request for videoconference hearing is made," the High Court said.

The High Court also said it would be appropriate that such a request is permitted to be made at least one working day in advance, so that it is considered by the judges and a decision is communicated to the counsel and parties well in advance.

The senior counsels appearing for Delhi High Court Bar Association, Bar Council of Delhi and Co-ordination Committee of All District Bar Association have supported the full-fledged resumption of physical hearing from Monday and have also supported the decision that the hybrid system of hearing should be permitted only in "exceptional cases".

After the imposition of the first nationwide lockdown, the court had started conducting hearings through videoconferencing from March 24 last year to contain the spread of the virus.

Over five months later, the High Court resumed physical hearing of courts proceeding initially with five of its Benches on a rotation basis from September 1. The number of Benches conducting physical hearing was increased gradually.

"Considering the fact that the number of COVID-19 cases has declined considerably, and services and facilities have been opened in the last few months, it is high time that the courts should resume physical hearing,"

High Court Bench

courts should also resume physical hearing," a Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli said.

"A beginning has to be made and the fear that has gripped people, including the advocates, has to be shaken off. It also appears to us that some amount of complacency has crept in, and a large number of people have found comfort in working from home, and do not wish to get out of their comfort zone," the Bench said.

"At the same time, there can be no denial to the fact that with an increase in intermingling and congestration of people, there is a possibility of a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases," it remarked.

As far as district courts here are concerned, since the infrastructure to put hybrid form of hearing is not in place, a similar arrangement cannot be directed for the district court for the time being, the High Court said.

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Whereas, the Central Government vide S.O. No. 1151 (E) dated 11th of March 2021, after being satisfied that the land, the description of which is given below, is required for public purpose i.e. four laning of National Highway (NH-44);
Whereas, any land owner/interested person having any objection to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose, may, within 21 days from the date of publication of this notification in the official gazette, file objection, in writing, either in person or through a legal practitioner in the office of undersigned. No objection shall be entertained after the expiry of abovementioned stipulated period/days.

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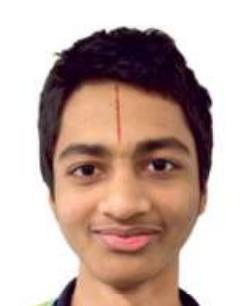
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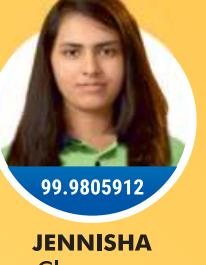
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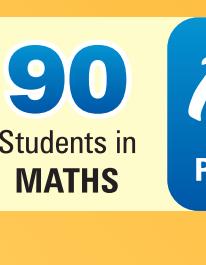
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DELI THE HINDU | MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2021

INTERVIEW | SARBANANDA SONOWAL

'Not anti-Muslim, but enemies of State need to be identified'

Benefits have reached every household because we have upheld spirit of democracy and principle of secularism: Assam CM

RAHUL KARMAKAR

A former president of the All Assam Students' Union forged in the fire of jatiyatabadi (Assamese nationalism), Sarbananda Sonowal's political graph began rising after he played a major role in getting the allegedly pro-foreigners Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act scrapped. His five years at the helm of a BJP-led alliance government largely escaped corruption charges but it faced challenges such as the publication of the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The 59-year-old bachelor is seeking re-election from Majuli, an "island" Assembly constituency. Excerpts:

You approached the election with a call to eject the Mughals from Assam. Does this indicate the BJP has no space for Muslims, who are almost 35% of the State's population?

■ It is a myth that the BJP is anti-Muslim. We strongly believe in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credo of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas' (development for all, gaining everyone's trust). Nobody has been deprived of any scheme. Benefits have reached every household irrespective of religion, caste and creed because we have

upheld the spirit of democracy and the principle of secularism. But we have to identify the enemies of Assam. We will never allow certain forces that are a threat to the nation to raise their heads, threaten relationships, art, culture, land, language.

But your rivals say CAA, which they claim would open the floodgates for Hindu Bangladeshis, is a bigger cultural and linguistic threat.

■ They are making a mountain out of a molehill called CAA. Some elements spun a

web of lies around CAA to fulfil their selfish interests. Some said CAA will bring in 1 crore (Hindu Bangladeshis), some said 2 crore. But their lies were exposed in time. The people saw through that and gave us a clear mandate in the panchayat polls (December 2018), the tribal council polls (January 2019) and the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. People know CAA does not harm the country's integrity. And we are not the first to amend it. Congress did it too.

Why do you think people will vote for you again?

■ Because after we came to power, they saw the end of anarchy, corruption, nepotism, terror, reign of middlemen and the start of good governance, peace, proper implementation of schemes, roads, bridges and other infrastructure completed in record time, people receiving 100% benefits after elimination of fake beneficiaries



The tea workers have been loyal to us and we will reward them for loyalty

passed on as a Congress legacy. We took on corruption head-on, closed down 156 illegal check gates on national highways, investigating agencies were given a free hand. This was reflected in the transparent recruitment of sub-inspectors of police, the conduct of the Assam Public Service Commission exams. We checked rhino poaching, fast-tracked punishment for poachers, freed forests and satra (Vaishnav monastery) land of encroachment. We will

claim to have been perfect, but people have seen us deliver in housing, midday meal, old age and widow pension and various other schemes. We have addressed issues that matter the most to people. These are the reasons why people want us to hold the reins again. There is no anti-incumbency.

Don't you think the wage hike issue may affect the BJP in the tea-growing areas where your rivals have made it an issue?

■ Our tea community brothers and sisters know we are their true friends. We raised their daily wage by ₹80. Congress has no moral right to talk about wages. By how much did they hike in 55 years? The tea workers have been loyal to us and we will reward them for loyalty.

The BJP was part of the only alliance that took on individual parties in 2016. You are facing an eight-

party alliance headed by the Congress and a regional front this time. Do you foresee a tough fight?

■ The Congress and the AIUDF (All India United Democratic Front led by perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal) always had an unholy alliance. Only this time it is official. I had always said they are two sides of the same coin, their ideologies and principles the same. They don't raise the voice for the greater Assamese people, the Indians at heart. They always work to endanger the existence of our people, never in the interest of the nation. People have understood their design and will reject them despite bringing so many parties on board. As for the new parties (Assam Jatiya Parishad and jailed activist Akhil Gogoi's Rajor Dal), people have seen many such. People are wise enough to know which party or alliance can give them stability, peace and development.

BJP drops MLA for minor ally

Seven of eight MLAs renominated in final list of candidates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The BJP's third and final list of candidates had no surprises with seven of the eight party MLAs having been retained.

The only MLA who missed out was Dipak Kumar Rabha, whose Duhdhai seat went to Shyamjit Rabha of the Rabha Joutha Mancha, a minor ally of the BJP. The Mancha leader, however, would be contesting under the BJP symbol.

Party insiders said there

had been murmurs about the likelihood of at least three MLAs, including Law and Justice Minister Siddhartha Bhattacharya, being dropped. But the final list followed the "continuity" script as he was retained for the Gauhati East seat.

The other two MLAs who made it "against the tide" are Atul Bora for the Dispur seat and Suman Haripriya for the Hajo constituency. The latter is the daughter of former Union Minister Bijoya Chakraborty.

The BJP has a new face in Sankar Chandra Das for the Sorbhog seat in western Assam. Incumbent Ranjeet Kumar Dass, the State party president, would be contesting from Patacharkuchi.

Campaign time



Supporters of CPI(M) and Sonjukta Morcha participating in a rally in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ PTI

NORTH & EAST

'We can tilt scales in Uttar Pradesh'

We are no B-team, say AIMIM president Owaisi and SBSP chief O.P. Rajbhar

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

"We are no B-team. We are that side of the scale, those we tilt towards will sit on the *taktak* (power) and those whom we abandon, will be flattened on a *taktha* (board)," said All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday while addressing a joint rally with backward caste leader Om Prakash Rajbhar in Balrampur.

Mr. Owaisi and Mr. Rajbhar, chief of the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party, are part of a Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha, a front of almost a dozen smaller parties in U.P., including outfits run by former BSP Minister Babu Singh Kushwaha and Krishna Patel, mother of BJP ally Anupriya Patel.

At the rally, Mr. Owaisi urged people to embrace the

"alternate political platform" provided by the Morcha for the 2022 Uttar Pradesh elections, as he took on the BJP government but also issued warnings to its opponents, the SP, the BSP and the Congress.

Targets CM

Mr. Owaisi targeted U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his recent comments at an event that secularism was the biggest threat to India's traditions getting world recognition. Mr. Owaisi advised Mr. Adityanath to read Articles 14 and 19 of the Constitution and wondered if the price of diesel and petrol had touched ₹100 because of secularism.

"Instead of removing pain of the poor, U.P. CM talks of secularism," Mr. Owaisi said. "Is this government working as per the Constitution? Is

the rule of law in U.P. or rule by gun," he asked referring to the "*thok do*" comments made by Mr. Adityanath and the string of killings of suspected criminals by the police since March 2017.

After success in Bihar, Mr. Owaisi hopes to replicate his performance in U.P. where roughly one-fifth of the voters are Muslims. The BJP's opponents were also in his cross hairs.

In an apparent attack on the SP, which is arguably the strongest claimant to the Muslim vote in the State, Mr. Owaisi said, "they could not save secularism but only their families and relatives."

The BJP's coming to power did not cause any loss to the person who was the CM then, Mr. Owaisi said, "they could not save secularism but only their families and relatives."

"Instead of removing pain of the poor, U.P. CM talks of secularism," Mr. Owaisi said referring to former CM Akhilesh Yadav. Muslims suffered and their voices were crushed,

he said. A former ally of the

party before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Rajbhar is the chief organiser and face of the Morcha. He commands the support of the

Rajbhar backward caste in

East U.P. Claiming that it was

due to his support that the

BJP managed to form the

government in U.P. in 2017, Mr.

Rajbhar said now he was

on defeating it.

"If anyone can finish the BJP government in U.P., it is Om Prakash Rajbhar," he said.

Mr. Rajbhar asked the pe-

ople to say no to divisive is-

ues of "Hindu-Muslim,

mandir-masjid and agrar-

picchda" and urged the pe-

ople to chant "abki baar

bhaichara" (brotherhood)

wali sarkar, abki baar

shiksha (education) wali sar-

kar."

In the matter of farmers,

he said, he would go as far as

possible. "It is because grow-

ing up, I have worked in the

fields, I understand the pain

of farmers," he said at a felici-

itation programme in

Baghpat.

Farmers should not go empty-handed from Delhi, says Meghalaya Governor

He says no atrocities should be committed against them

ANUJ KUMAR

GAZIABAD

The farmers' protest against the contentious farm laws got a new supporter on Sunday as Meghalaya Governor Satya Pal Malik said farmers should not go empty-handed from Delhi's borders and that no atrocity should be committed against them. "During my last visit, I met both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister and requested them not to use force against the protesting farmers. Don't fiddle with farmers," he said.

In the matter of farmers,

he said, he would go as far as

possible. "It is because grow-

ing up, I have worked in the

fields, I understand the pain

of farmers," he said at a felici-

itation programme in

Baghpat.



Satya Pal Malik

Mr. Malik said he later told a journalist close to the Prime Minister that sending farmers back empty-handed would be imprudent. "First, they would not go and even if they returned, they would not forget the insult for 300 years. So, give them something. There is not much to be done. Just give the MSP legal recognition. The rest of it can be resolved easily. I am ready to negotiate."

If it (the protest) was allowed to fester, he said, it would have repercussions. "I know [the temperament of] Sikhs. Don't use force against them. Even on the day [Rakesh] Tikait was about to be arrested, I intervened."

He reminded that after Operation Blue Star, "Mrs. Gandhi organised a month-long mahamritunjaya yagna. She could sense..." he said.

'Can't keep quiet'

Earlier, Mr. Malik said as a Governor he was not expected to make statements, but on certain issues, he could not keep quiet.

Mr. Malik, who hails from Hiswada village of the district, said he was known to speak candidly and sometimes suffered because of it.

RLSP merges with ruling JD(U) in Bihar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

After much flip-flop, the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) on Sunday merged with Bihar ruling Janata Dal (United) and its chief and former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha was appointed as president of the JD(U) parliamentary board.

"The decision to merge with the JD(U) was taken at the party's two-day meeting here and the people of Bihar too wanted it. It will make Bihar stronger and we'll work under leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar," said Mr. Kushwaha before rushing to the State JD(U) headquarters for the ceremony.

Mr. Kumar and senior party leaders welcomed him into the party.

In the video, Shringi could be seen twisting the arm of the boy and abusing him. As the boy cries in pain, he shoves the boy to the ground and kicks him repeatedly.

"Badhiya se dono ka chehra aana chahiye [our faces should be clearly visible]",

Shringi could be heard telling his aide making the video before thrashing the boy.

'Taxation' forcing businesses out of Nagaland, says trade body

Regain market lost by up to 75%, Dimapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry advises State govt.

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

Almost a year after Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi poked the government for letting "armed gangs" reign and carry out "gunpoint extortions", the State's largest trade body has warned of such groups driving business out.

The Dimapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), based in Nagaland's commercial hub, said "unabated taxation" by the government as well as the "Naga political groups (NPGs)" - a euphemism for armed extremist groups - had made many traders shift base to Assam.

The traders have been forced to exit Nagaland because they have had enough of paying 50-75% of their profit margin to the NPGs, the DCCI said in a statement issued on Saturday evening.

Assam benefits

While Assam has gained, the business volume of Nagaland has shrunk by 60-75%, the DCCI said as it advised the State government to wake up to this alarming development and try to regain the market lost.

The Bharatiya Janata Party is the minor partner in the alliance government headed

by Neiphiu Rio of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party.

The trade body said the business scenario in Nagaland has hit its lowest ebb because of being taxed heavily. "If the State government and the NPGs do not take immediate corrective steps, business in Nagaland is heading towards a point of no return," it warned.

The DCCI gave the example of Manipur-bound businesses that shifted to Silchar in southern Assam over the last few years. These businesses depended on goods and services to and from Manipur via the highway linking

Dimapur and Manipur capital Imphal.

These businesses are now focussed on the alternative highway to Imphal via Jiribam bordering southern Assam. "Consequently, the chain-support business such as hotels, transport and way-side dhabas in Nagaland have been hit hard," the DCCI said.

The trade body also said the number of monthly train wagons arriving at Dimapur railway station has come down to a "miserable" 20 from 120 a year ago. The number of trucks entering Nagaland has similarly reduced drastically, it added.

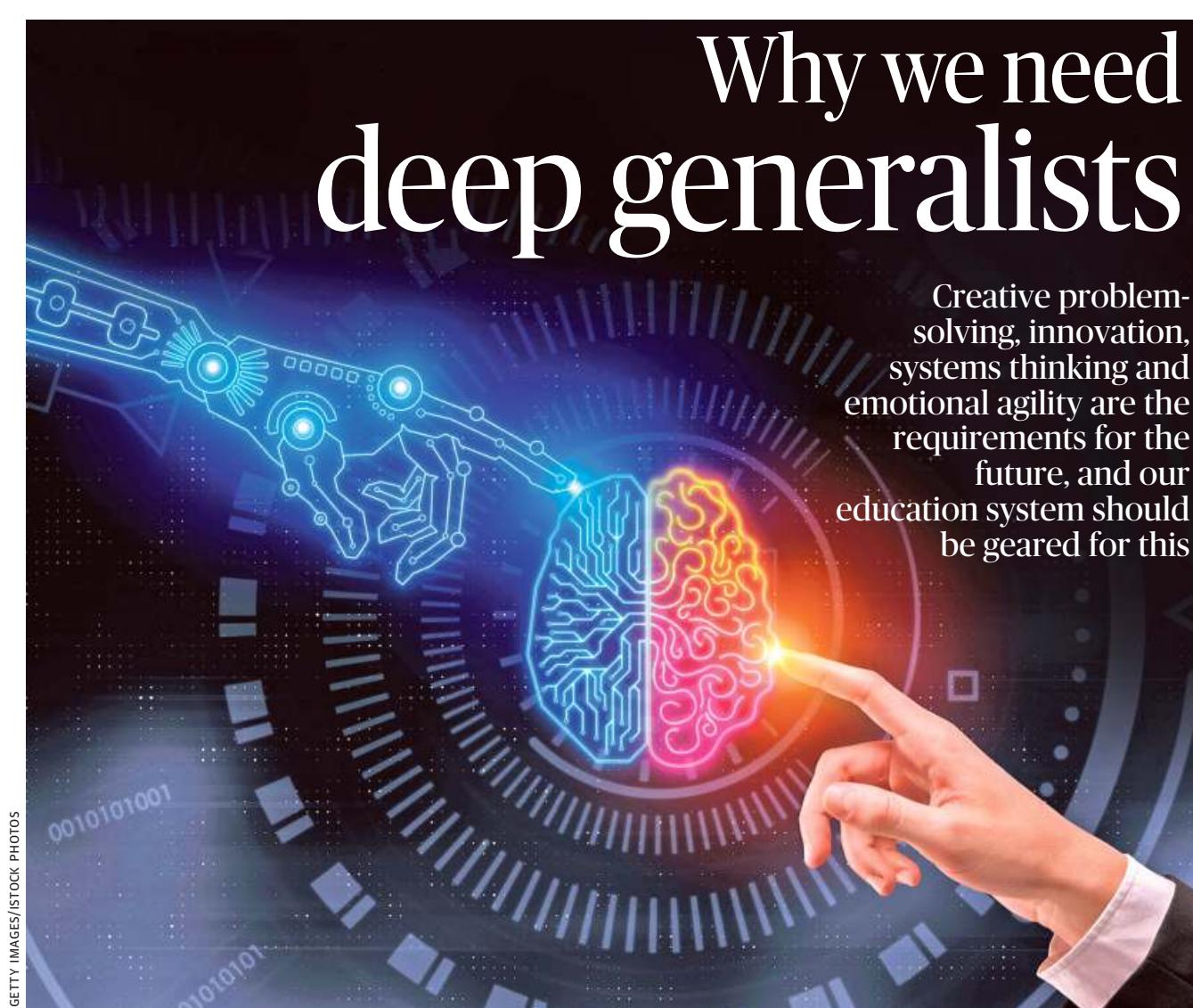
■ SALIL SAHADEV

It was as a classroom game inspired by *Ikigai* and some psychometric tests. We wrote the abilities, talents, skills, and interests of each student on different sticky notes and asked them to visualise their future educational paths. But the exercise did not result in any clear paths; instead, it opened up uncharted roads with different skill trees and revealed new specialisations for which courses do not exist. It led to an array of looped domains for which mono-specialisations are insufficient. It spurred unexpected disciplinary connections for which our curriculum is unprepared – a realisation that our education cannot afford to remain limited to narrow specialisations.

The game evokes the old debate between specialists who have expertise in a limited area versus generalists who have divergent skills in varying areas. Mainstream society generally favours specialists over generalists, partly due to the perceived expertise and educational credentials. But the actual question is whether we have the learning choices to experiment across domains. This stems from the new debate on the skill sets that can help us navigate an uncertain future.

Making connections

According to Vikram Mansaramani of Harvard University, it is not a specific skill but the sort of thinking that connects multiple domains that will get us ahead in the future. Authors like David Epstein argue for learning by doing a variety of things to develop an intellectual range – a deep generalist, a term attributed to scholar Warren Bennis and popularised by corporate



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTOS

A daily thought exercise to link unrelated developments and predict their impact in a variety of domains...

leader Aytekin Tank. Scientists like Kepler, Maxwell and Newton were polymaths. Innovators and artists always combined knowledge areas; the most significant feature of a deep generalist. Leonardo da Vinci was adept in art and engineering. Steve Jobs

blended design and technology. The idea is not to discard specialisation; on the contrary, it is to blend knowledge units from different domains to make a cross-disciplinary thinker.

Tools for diversified learning

How can we develop expertise in multiple areas within a limited time? Visual artist Jake Chapman demonstrated one way. He laddered the level of expertise into five stages – layman, beginner, apprentice, journeyman and master. Let

us apply the Pareto principle (which states that, for many outcomes, roughly 80% of the consequences come from 20% of the causes) and assume that mastery takes 20 years of practice. In that case, reaching journeyman status will take only 48 months and 10 months to reach the apprentice level. If we structure our learning around this approach, a learner can move across two or three domains with cross-learning possibilities in limited time.

As a beginning, if we permit youngsters to play with

Creative problem-solving, innovation, systems thinking and emotional agility are the requirements for the future, and our education system should be geared for this

helps to zoom-in and zoom-out of the context, on-demand.

Another tool is signal spotting. Signals are seeds of future events, discoveries and news items. A signal seeker has an interdisciplinary mind. A daily thought exercise to link unrelated developments and predict their impact in a variety of domains is yet another useful way. This will make us a theme-based or problem-centred learner. Tinkering with options and combinations is no more limited to designers.

In an age of open courses, web resources, learning communities and social networks, it is not hard to create deep generalists, even within the constraints of current syllabi.

Why now?

Automation continues to wipe out many jobs, and algorithms are taking over routine decision-making. This allows us to engage more with creative problem-solving, innovation, systems thinking and emotional agility. We need deep-thinking humans in addition to deep-learning AI, observes author Scott Hartley, whose extensive work shows that liberal arts and technical literacy complement each other. These are much needed to solve the problems plaguing the world, from climate change to terrorism and resource depletion to unemployment.

If students focus on specialisations with the sole objective of getting placed, they will most likely be unemployed soon after. Let us prepare them for anything they can fix their minds and hands to – as deep generalists.

The views expressed are personal.

The writer is Education Officer, University Grants Commission.

SCHOLARSHIPS**HDFC Bank Parivartan's ECS Scholarship**

HDFC Bank supports meritorious and needy students from underprivileged sections.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to Indian nationals only. Students from classes VI to XII or studying in Diploma, Undergraduate or Postgraduate (including professional and non-professional) courses can apply.

For merit-cum-means-based scholarship, applicants must have passed their previous qualifying exam with at least 55% marks, and their annual family income must be less than or equal to ₹2.5 lakh.

For a need-based scholarship, applicants must be facing a personal or family crisis that occurred during the past three years, due to which they are unable to bear the cost of education and risk dropping out.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹75,000

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: July 31

b4s.in/edge/HEC9

IIM Bangalore Doctoral Research Fellowship

The Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, invites applications for a joint research project with the supervising faculty on a topic of mutual interest.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to candidates below 45 years of age, who have finished or are close to finishing their Ph.D in finance, banking, economics, statistics, econometrics, or related areas. The candidate is expected to work under the supervision of the faculty.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹90,000 a month

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: March 21

b4s.in/edge/MBP7

Mi Scholarship

Xiaomi India invites applications from meritorious students from underprivileged sections.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to Indian nationals only. Applicants must be studying in class XI or XII, or an undergraduate course (any stream), and have secured at least 70% marks in their previous qualifying exam.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹5,800

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: March 31

b4s.in/EDGE/MISC1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com



Summit spirit

The Quad broadens India's interests on its geopolitical horizons further

The virtual summit that brought together leaders of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, last week, contained both broad substance and deep symbolism. Countering any perception that the Quad is merely a "talk-shop", the outcomes announced by U.S. President Biden and Prime Ministers Modi, Morrison and Suga include a vaccine initiative and joint working groups to cooperate on critical technology as well as climate change. The vaccine initiative comes with an ambitious deadline: a billion vaccines by the end of 2022, made in India with U.S. technology, Japanese funding and Australian distribution networks to reach as many Indo-Pacific countries as possible. The four Quad countries will ensure emissions reduction based on the Paris accord as well as cooperate on technology supply chains, 5G networks, and biotechnology. Mr. Biden, who hosted the summit, managed some powerful atmospherics, by coordinating a joint statement – and a first – called "The Spirit of the Quad", and a joint article by the four leaders that committed to an open Indo-Pacific "free from coercion". The leaders are expected to meet later this year, at the G-7 summit. For Mr. Biden, the early push for the Quad engagement is part of his promise that "America is back" in terms of global leadership, reaffirming regional alliances, and taking on the growing challenge from China. For similar reasons, and due to maritime tensions with China, trade and telecommunication issues, Australia and Japan are keen on taking the Quad partnership to deeper levels of cooperation. For India, the new terms of the Quad will mean more strategic support after a tense year at the LAC, as also a boost for its pharmaceutical prowess, opportunities for technology partnerships, and more avenues for regional cooperation on development projects and financing infrastructure, especially in South Asia, where China has taken the lead.

It would be a mistake, however, to portray the Quad summit as a "throwing down of the gauntlet" to China. The new U.S. government is still exploring its own relationship with China; its first engagement with Beijing's top diplomats is in Alaska, on Thursday. For Japan and Australia, China remains the biggest trading partner, a relationship that will only grow once the 15-nation RCEP kicks in. India, given its own ties with China, sensitivities over ongoing LAC disengagement talks, and its other multilateral commitments at the BRICS and SCO groupings, also displayed caution in the Quad engagement, keeping the conversation focused on what Mr. Modi called making the Quad a "force for global good" rather than pushing plans for a militaristic coalition. In that sense, the Quad's new "summit avatar" has given India yet another string to its bow, broadening India's interests on its geopolitical horizons even further.

Salutary reminder

Policymakers must focus on maintaining price stability given the volatile food and fuel costs

With just over two weeks left to the March 31 deadline for the government and RBI to complete the quinquennial review of the current inflation target under the monetary policy framework, the latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) reading provides a salutary reminder for policymakers to maintain a ceaseless vigil over price stability. Retail inflation, measured by the CPI, accelerated to a three-month high of 5.03% in February, data released by the National Statistical Office on Friday showed. The jump of almost 100 basis points from January's 4.06%, while partly attributable to a base effect given that price gains had relatively eased in February 2020, is a clear signal that food and fuel costs continue to pose a threat to broader price stability in the economy. Specifically, the RBI's early February prognostication of continuing pressures in the prices of pulses and edible oils has been borne out by the last two months' CPI data. Inflation of both essential food products has persisted in the double digits during the period, and in the case of the latter, accelerated disconcertingly to 20.8% last month. Price gains with respect to two other key sources of protein, meat and fish and eggs, also remain stuck above 11%. And the deflation in vegetable costs, which had helped offset the generalised pressure in food inflation, also waned considerably in February to minus 6.7% from minus 15.8% in January. The upshot was that food and beverages as a combined category, with a weight of 54.2% in the CPI, witnessed an almost 160 basis points quickening in inflation to 4.25% last month, from January's 2.67%.

Another equally worrisome source of inflationary pressure is the continuing upward trajectory in the prices of petroleum products. Transport and communication, which directly reflect these prices, saw inflation rocket by more than 200 basis points to 11.4% in February, from 9.3% the preceding month. Diesel, the main fuel for freight carriage, is now hovering around ₹85 per litre in many parts and will most certainly feed into the costs of everything requiring to be transported. Brent crude oil futures have surged by close to 40% in the three-month period through March 11 in the wake of output cuts by major oil producing nations, another worrying portent for inflation. With the RBI's own researchers having so cogently laid out the case for persisting with the current flexible inflation targeting regime of ensuring that price gains stay within the 2% to 6% band in the central bank's first Report on Currency and Finance in eight years, policymakers must stay laser focused on keeping price stability front and centre of their fresh framework for the next quinquennium. Any effort to dilute the focus in a purported bid to prioritise growth, risks putting the economy on a perilous path that may secure neither objective.

Forestalling a cyber Pearl Harbour

It would be a grievous error if India were to underestimate the extent of the cyber threat it faces, especially from China



M.K. NARAYANAN

The threat posed to key Indian entities by antagonistic forces such as China is beginning to merit critical attention in all the right quarters. This follows revelations by the U.S.-based cyber security firm, Recorded Future, which were carried by the media in the United States.

Infrastructure as target

According to a despatch by *The New York Times* (<https://nyti.ms/2OW0jze>), in the lead-up to the India-China border clashes, Recorded Future had found an increase in malware attacks targeting the Indian government, defence organisations and the public sector. Also that, coinciding with Chinese incursions in Eastern Ladakh, certain Indian power facilities had been targets of a cyber attack. Furthermore, that there was still some evidence of ongoing intrusions, though the intensity of the activity appeared to have ceased by mid-February 2021.

A needless controversy did erupt in the wake of these disclosures, as to whether the October 2020 blackout in Mumbai was directly linked to this cyber attack. State authorities in Maharashtra attributed the blackout to the attack by the Chinese cyber group, but authorities in Delhi blamed it on human error. Far more crucial than merely assigning blame, and what should have been of real concern, is that key infrastructure facilities, such as the power sector, were now in the crosshairs of a hostile China, which appeared intent on deploying cyber weapons to target India. China's intention evidently is to keep India in thrall, while outwardly demonstrating a conciliatory posture, such as vacating some of the areas in Eastern Ladakh that it had occupied post April 2020.

The reported events are a wake-up call for India, and it would be a grievous error if India were to un-

derestimate the extent of the cyber threat posed to it by China. Indian government agencies, such as the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) and the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) may have more information on China's aggressive cyber campaign, but if what Recorded Future has indicated is true, *viz.*, 'that since early 2020, there has been an observation of a large increase in suspected targeted intrusion activity against Indian organisations from Chinese state-sponsored groups' concentrating on infrastructure targets, including the power sector and ports, then India needs to be on its guard.

At least 10 Indian distinct power sector organisations are said to have been targeted, in addition to two Indian ports. What adds verisimilitude to these revelations is the identification of the network infrastructure *viz.*, AXIOMATICASYMPTOTE, whose servers are known to be used by RedEcho, a China-linked activity group, that targets India's power sector, and facilitates the employment of a malware known as ShadowPad. ShadowPad is a network intrusion malware affiliated to both the Chinese Ministry of State Security and the People's Liberation Army. ShadowPad is depicted as a "backdoor 'Trojan' malware which creates a secret path from a targeted system to a command and control server to extract information". If indeed the future is digital, and if China has indeed embarked on an all-out offensive of this nature, India needs to adopt comprehensive measures to forestall a potential 'Cyber Pearl Harbour', as far as India is concerned.

An offensive by China

Across the world, Beijing does appear to be engaged in a major cyber offensive, directed not only against countries like India but against many advanced nations as well. In attempting this, what China is doing is essentially exploiting to perfection the many vulnerabilities that software companies (essentially those in the West), have deliberately left open (for offen-



sive purposes at an opportune time). Exploiting this loophole, and also turning matters on its head, it is companies in the western world that are now at the receiving end of such antics, having 'left vulnerabilities for future exploitation'.

Chinese cyber espionage sets no limitations on targets. Towards the end of 2020, and as the world prepared for large-scale deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, their attention was directed to vaccine distribution supply chains around the world. A global 'spearfishing' campaign targeting organisations responsible for vaccine storage and transportation was reportedly unleashed, and while concrete evidence as to which country was indeed responsible for this is not available, the shadow of suspicion has fallen mainly on Chinese hackers. Their objective seems to have been targeting vaccine research, gaining future access to corporate networks, and seeking sensitive information relating to COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Cyber warfare by others
Very recently in 2021, several thousands of U.S. organisations were hacked in an unusually aggressive Chinese espionage campaign. The Chinese group, Hafnium, which has been identified as being responsible for this breach, exploited a series of flaws in the Microsoft software, enabling attackers to gain total remote control over affected systems. Each hour of the day, thousands of Microsoft servers were compromised as a result, till the breach was discovered.

While Chinese cyber espionage may be the flavour of the month, what must be recognised is that

many other countries, including the U.S. and Russia, do engage in the same kind of cyber warfare. Little is publicised about western cyber espionage, and while these may not match that of either China or Russia, it does happen. The U.S. has extensively publicised Russia's cyber antics from time to time. Best known are accusations of Russia's cyber interference in the U.S. presidential elections in 2016, which approached the level of a major scandal. Russia is currently the prime suspect in one of the greatest data breaches concerning the U.S. Federal government, involving the Departments of Defence, Energy, State, Homeland Security, Treasury, etc. Headlined SolarWinds, the late 2020 breach

is a prime example of the damage that can be caused by a cyber attack.

Sharpening attacks

Cyber attacks and cyber espionage could rewrite the history of our times. We are witnessing only the tip of the iceberg at present and most nations are truly unaware of the extent to which breaches are taking place. Nations should beware and be warned about how cyber attacks can bring a nation to its knees. This was well demonstrated way back in 2016, when a major attack on Ukraine's power grid took place and set an ominous precedent in this respect. The attacks were carried out by skilled cyber security professionals, who had planned their assaults over many months, testing the quality of the malware, carrying out detailed logistics planning, and conducting a very sophisticated operation. The Ukraine example should be a wake-up call for India and the world, as in the intervening five years, the sophistication of cyber attacks and the kind of malware available have become more advanced. India, could well be blindsided by Chinese cyber attacks on critical infrastructure if the latter sets out to do so, unless prophylactic measures are taken in time.

There are no readymade solutions to counter the cyber offensive emanating from different quarters. No nation can hope, or

claim, to be insulated from such attacks. The U.S. seemed to fully wake up to the cyber threat only in 2017 when U.S. security tools were hacked, having preferred for long to indulge in a kind of 'active defence' by seeking to hack enemy networks. U.S. President Joe Biden is now understood to have included a sum of over \$10 billion for cyber security in his COVID-19 Relief Bill, which is clearly intended to improve U.S. 'readiness and resilience in cyber space'.

Part of Beijing's world view

From an Indian perspective, the Chinese cyber threat could prove to be truly daunting. The reasons for this are many. China's analysis of the state of current relations between China and India is that they remain antagonistic to the point of 'de-coupling', and the confrontation between Chinese President Xi Jinping's 'Community with shared future for mankind' and India's current posture could lead to a 'long period of volatility'. As India grows closer to the U.S., this gap between the two key Asian nations can be expected to become still wider.

Under Mr. Xi, China has forged a firm nexus between authoritarianism, global ambitions and technology, and is determined to transform the global order to advance its interests. 'Cyber' could well be one of China's main threat vectors employed against countries that do not fall in line with China's world view. China's 2021 Defence Budget (amounting to \$209 billion) gives special weightage to the Strategic Support Force (SSF), which embraces cyber warfare – an ominous portent that bodes little good for countries that posit a challenge to China's ambitions, such as India. Drawing up a comprehensive cyber strategy, one that fully acknowledges the extent of the cyber threat from China, has thus become an imperative and immediate necessity.

M.K. Narayanan, a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal, is currently Executive Chairman of CyQureX Pvt. Ltd., a U.K.-U.S.A. cyber security joint venture

The job crunch and the growing fires of nativism

Unless States in India have the autonomy to create jobs, they will only resort to reserving existing jobs for locals



PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

The Haryana government has recently passed legislation that mandates companies in Haryana to provide jobs to local Haryanvis first, before hiring people from outside the State.

The unemployment rate in Haryana is the highest of all States in India, as per data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, or CMIE (<https://bit.ly/3tnokOx>). A whopping 80% of women in Haryana who want to work cannot find a job. More than half of all graduates in Haryana are jobless. The jobs situation in Haryana is staggeringly dismal.

Many factors control jobs

Politically, 11 out of the 18 million voters of Haryana do not have a regular job. World history warns us that when such a vast majority of adults are jobless, it inevitably leads to social revolutions and political upheavals. So, it is entirely understandable that the democratically elected Haryana government panicked and chose to reserve the few available jobs for its own voters.

Haryana is not alone in this quandary. The cabinet of the government of Jharkhand approved similar legislation to reserve jobs for Jharkhand residents. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu announced a similar proposal to reserve jobs for Ta-

mils in its manifesto for the upcoming Assembly elections. Many States in India have embarked on this nativism adventure to protect the interests of the vast number of their jobless locals.

Predictably, this has attracted criticism from economists and commentators, as it militates against their liberal idea of a free economy. 'Focus on creating more jobs, not on reserving the few available ones' is the popular refrain. But, it is a false binary. Creation of new jobs is not entirely in the control of State governments. It is a complex interplay of multitude of factors.

States and key parameters

Job creation is obviously an outcome of the performance of the larger economy. If say, the American giant retailer, Amazon, believes that the Indian economy is poised to grow robustly, it may choose to expand its operations in India. The Chief Minister of a State in India has limited control over the management of the larger economy and thereby, attract new investors and businesses who can create jobs. When Amazon, enticed by a buoyant Indian economy, decides to expand its Indian operations, then presumably, the State governments can compete to lure Amazon to their State and help create new jobs.

Ostensibly, Amazon needs abundant high quality skilled and unskilled labour, land at affordable prices, uninterrupted supply of electricity, water and other such 'ease of business' facilities for its expansion. State governments in India can theoretically compete with each other on these parame-

ters to attract Amazon to set up operations in their State. Further, any tax advantages that a particular State can provide *vis-à-vis* others will increase its attractiveness for Amazon. In fact, this is exactly what happened in America in 2018 when Amazon decided to build its second headquarters and various States, towns and cities publicly competed with each other to woo Amazon and its jobs to their area. But, realistically in India, in very few of these parameters can a poorer State compete against a richer State to attract Amazon.

Critical factors

An elected State government can certainly, during its five-year tenure, attempt to provide high quality local infrastructure to attract new businesses.

State governments also have the ability to provide land at affordable prices or free to attract investments. However, the availability of skilled local labour is a function of many decades of social progress of the State and cannot be retooled immediately. After the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), State governments in India have lost their fiscal autonomy and have no powers to provide any tax concessions to businesses. So, while State governments have the ability to use land and local infrastructure as tools to attract busi-

nesses, they do not have control over immediate availability of skilled manpower or to use taxes as a tool to lure. In America, States compete against each other vigorously using tax concessions and land offers to bring new jobs to their States.

But, beyond all these, the most critical factor in the choice of a location for a large business is what economists term as the 'agglomeration effect' – the ecosystem of supply chain, talent, good living conditions and so on. A State with an already well-established network of suppliers, people, schools, etc. are at a greater advantage to attract even more businesses than the States that are left behind. Put simply, if Amazon's competitor Walmart is already established in Karnataka, then there is a greater incentive for Amazon to also locate itself in Karnataka to take advantage of the established ecosystem. This leads to a cycle of the more prosperous States growing even faster at the expense of the lagging States.

The '3-3-3' danger

This phenomenon is already evident in India's increasing economic divergence among its States. In previous published joint research, I have called this the '3-3-3' effect – the three richest large States (Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) are three times richer than the three poorest large States (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), in per capita income, compared to 1.4 times in 1970. This gap between the richer and poorer States in India is only widening rapidly and not narrowing, due to the agglomeration impact of mod-

ern economic development paradigms.

Subnationalism

In the absence of a level playing field and with no fiscal autonomy, it is enormously difficult for developing States in India to attract new investments and create new jobs. In this context, an elected government that operates on a five-year electoral cycle, confronted with a power keg of millions of jobless voters will understandably resort to seemingly 'paixa wise, rupees foolish' appeasement policies to salvage whatever it can of an ominous employment situation. After all, how is the Haryana government's policy to restrict labour movement into its borders and protect jobs for locals any different from the Prime Minister's 'self-reliant India' initiative to restrict goods movement into India's borders and protect local jobs?

The potent combination of widening inter-State inequality, a 'rich States get richer' economic development model, an impending demographic disaster and shrinking fiscal autonomy for elected State governments in a politically and culturally diverse democracy will inevitably propagate nativist sub-nationalism among the various States of India. Until the economic playing fields for the various States are levelled and much greater fiscal freedom provided to the States, "don't protect but create jobs" will only remain a topic of a hollow lecture and moral sermons.

Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and a senior office bearer of the Congress party



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.

Cases and vaccines

While on the one hand India is witnessing a rise in COVID-19 cases, on the other we see vaccination targets falling. And unless the mismatch in COVID-19 vaccinations is bridged, the country may soon find itself in trouble as far as the health crisis is concerned (Page 1, "Over 60% of active COVID-19 cases recorded in

Maharashtra", March 14). Urgent steps are necessary to ramp up vaccination of vulnerable sections of the population.

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

It is heartening to find many senior citizens participating actively in the vaccination drive. Despite various fears, these elders

have demonstrated great faith in science and a profound enthusiasm for life. Such senior citizens should become the face of campaigns to overcome vaccine hesitancy.

LALIT BHARDWAJ,
Vadodara, Gujarat

Job reservation
The BJP government in Haryana recently passed

legislation that seeks to provide 75% of the jobs in the private sector to locals and the same has been challenged in the High Court. If this trend was disturbing enough, the election manifesto released by the DMK promises something

similar. These reservations

go against the provisions of the Constitution which recognise the right of every Indian to live and work in any part of the country. The courts should strike down this vote-catching mechanism which is not just

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Making sense of Rahul Gandhi's politics

Despite a hostile political environment, the Congress has not swerved hard to the right or the left



RAJESH MAHAPATRA & ROHAN D'SOUZA

For the past seven years, a vibrant cottage industry has emerged in India that can be divided into two unequal halves: the first offering political advice gratis to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and the second vigorously writing him off into political exile. However, this industry has failed to help us understand why the Gandhi scion continues to remain a danger to the evolving empire of the BJP. In part, this is because most commentators lack a big picture view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'New India' – a picture that is only now revealing itself and must be grasped in 3D.

New India

First, Mr. Modi's preferred political model is Chinese-inspired. Like the Communist Party of China, the BJP wants total domination of the political landscape. What we are seeing, therefore, is the quest for 'comprehensive politics' that either silences the Opposition or makes it irrelevant. This 'take no prisoners' political approach is expected to culminate with the completion of the Central Vista project. The new Parliament building will not only physically displace Lutyens' Delhi but will also become the grand venue with double the number of parliamentarians after a fresh delimitation exercise.

Those familiar with the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) would know that it has about 2,980-odd members, many of whom are part-time and work pro bono. The NPC functions as a rubber stamp mostly because the numbers make it unwieldy for debate and discussion. The end result is that power has been centralised within a fraction called the Central Committee, which is further distilled into an even tinier faction comprising seven members called the Standing Committee. The exercise of actual power is thus highly centralised and concentrated. There is every possibility that the Central Vista project could mirror



the preference for this 'made in China' political arithmetic and geometry with an Indian variant of the standing politburo comprising only Mr. Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah – a two-part 'partly free' democracy.

The second dimension, the economic, draws from the South Korean strategy for cultivating Chaebols – family-owned conglomerates that are backed by unstinted state support. In a recent article, journalist Harish Damodaran describes how barely a couple of Indian conglomerates have now come to dominate the entire economic landscape. This Indian Chaebol version, in fact, has already been 'imaged' in the world's largest cricket stadium at Ahmedabad, with both the bowling and batting ends unabashedly acknowledging the alliance of government and the two great conglomerates of India.

There is, however, a catch. The South Korean Chaebols were primed for global competition and much of their success and prestige depended on conquering global markets and supply chains. Alas, that does not seem to be the case, as of yet, for the Chaebols of New India. Instead, what one witnesses – from demonetisation, implementation of the Goods and Services Tax and the introduction of farm laws – is the steady transfer of the 'generalised wealth' held by the many (small and medium industries, traders, shopkeepers, middle farmers, etc.) to the few – notably New India's Chaebols. No surprise that the wealth of Indian billionaires rose 35% during the pandemic year, even as much of the earnings and savings of the working population were decimated. Put bluntly, a steady transfer of wealth prior to the COVID-19 outbreak got accelerated during the lockdown.

The third and final part of the 3D involves injecting Hindutva into the lifeblood of India's complex, heterogeneous and historically layered social worlds. These social engineering efforts – peaking with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the reading down of Article 370 – aimed hard at the cultural simplification of India. One is either Hindu or Muslim, vegetarian or a meat eater, bhakt or anti-national, and so on. The otherwise tangled colourful histories of overlap, nuance and ambiguity are now making the Indian a dull humourless monochromatic citizen.

In sum, New India appears as an all-out Asian endeavour that forges China (politics), South Korea (economics) and India (Hindutva society) into a single national bloc. But is this the case? Should we give the BJP under the leadership of Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah all the credit for carrying out this remarkable political script? Not necessarily. Since 2011, global politics has sharply swerved towards a 'right-wing populist' turn. Starting with Viktor Orbán's election in Hungary, populism was unleashed in Brexit Britain, Donald Trump's U.S., Rodrigo Duterte's Philippines, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Turkey and Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil. This populist wave, as pointed out by the Dutch scholar Cas Mudde, was about how strong men (all men, no women) learnt to game political fault lines within liberal democracies. And at the heart of their play was the ability to re-purpose information technology and the social media for dismantling institutions, throttling dissent and gutting democratic society. In other words, Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah were global but not original.

It is only within this big picture that one can meaningfully locate Mr.

Gandhi's persona and tactics. Mr. Gandhi strives to 'hold the centre' in Indian politics. The BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and their affiliates have populated and overwhelmed every conceivable political niche on the hard right with ruthless efficiency and total domination tactics. In contrast, the Congress, which always held the centre, aimed for gradualism, negotiation, adjustment and compromise – it essentially aimed for a moderate social temperature for governance. The Modi-Shah combine, in contrast, have broken this thermostat and now relentlessly churn society and create conditions for a 'permanent bawal (tumult)' – intense politicking and constant popular mobilisation.

The centre can hold

Given such a hard shift to the right, the most important strategy for a party occupying the political centre has to be about holding the line. And here, despite Mr. Gandhi's acts of omission or commission, he has nonetheless been able to make sure that the Congress has not suffered annihilation by making a hard swerve either to the right or the left. Holding the centre, as political analyst Sushil Aaron recently wrote in *The Wire*, has been critically dependent on how Mr. Gandhi has over the years sustained 'an ethic of decency', while also 'offering a vision for a social democratic India' – behaviour and ideas that he has been good at articulating and keeping alive, despite the impossibly hostile political environment. In other words, the message has become louder than the messenger and it makes Mr. Gandhi the carrier of a legacy rather than a mere inheritor of a dynasty.

Increasingly, as the standing politburo of Modi and Shah accelerate the transfer of general wealth to the Indian Chaebols through the Hindutva orchestrated tactics for permanent *bawal*, there might emerge a blowback or even a yearning for a centre that can restore institutional checks and recover public decency. If there are hopes for such a future, then Mr. Gandhi's legacy as the message will remain relevant, if not urgent.

Rajesh Mahapatra is a current affairs and public policy commentator; and Rohan D'Souza teaches at the Graduate School of African and Asian Studies, Kyoto University

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Who pays the piper

There is no clientelist relationship between the management and the Readers' Editor



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Last Wednesday, a Chennai-based reader, M.D. Menon, came up with an interesting proposal regarding my salary as the Readers' Editor. He felt that half my salary should be paid by the readers or at least a group of readers who want the institution of the Readers' Editor and the other half by *The Hindu*. He even worked out a tariff that had an annual member category and a life member category. He also suggested that the cost of the paper should be raised by 25 paise on the days the paper publishes the 'From the Readers' Editor' column. He wrote: "I believe that as long as you are paid by one party [alone], there is a conflict of interest."

We need to contextualise the role of an ombudsman in the news media. Though an ombudsman is appointed by the management of the news organisation, the management provides independence and autonomy to the Readers' Editor while he or she examines complaints and queries from the readers. Further, to ensure accuracy, there should be a formal visible correcting mechanism. Course correction is binding on the news organisation.

Double billing

I have been part of the ethical journalism debate since 2005 and I have worked closely with Aidan White, the founder of the Ethical Journalism Network. He said all the revenue in the media is from the readers. They pay to buy a newspaper, their subscription drives the advertising revenue, and even governmental support for the public interest media is funded through tax revenue, which is essentially readers' contribution. From the management to the editorial, everyone in the news business is paid only by the readers.

The Readers' Editor is no exception. In the judiciary, though the salary for judges comes from governments, we know that the money is from the people in the form of either direct or indirect taxation. Hence, to charge readers for doing my job would amount to double billing.

One of the major lessons that I learned from working closely with Mr. White is how to serve and be effective in a fast-changing

world without losing any of the core values that define journalism. He observed: "In a landscape where global media and supranational organisations are weakening the grip of the nation state, when politics is scarred by extremes and corruption, when many in the media business have lost all sense of mission, we have to rethink our attitudes on how media and journalism contribute to democratic life. How can journalism properly empower a public who are starved of the information they need to hold governments to account, while at the same time overwhelmed by a surfeit of information from the surreal?"

Role of an ombudsman

Mr. White said increasingly, we are permitting media output to become the fast food of the mind: ubiquitous, colourful but of doubtful provenance or nutritional value. The role of an ombudsman is to bring back that missing nutritional value and make clear the provenance of anything that is published in the newspaper. From social media frenzy to intolerant governments and a legal and regulatory framework that is unashamedly tilted towards the executive, there are multiple factors that hamper good journalism. At the Highway Africa conference in Grahamstown, South Africa, in 2012, I spent nearly four hours discussing with Mr. White the way forward. While dealing with complaints from readers, along with the written terms of references and various published codes for ethical journalism, I have often drawn from that engaging conversation.

Mr. White made a distinction between remarkably sensitive yet non-sensational journalism and the harm-inducing shrill reportage which ends up as a force multiplier for the government. Force multiplier journalism sacrifices the citizens' right to know at the altar of executive diktat and contributes to the shrinking of democratic space.

Mr. White taught me to do the simple things right: promoting open debate, providing reliable information, exposing wrongdoing, and explaining the impact of events on the world in which we live. The bedrock of democratic pluralism is provided by open governments, political freedom, an effective judiciary and the imperatives of ethical journalism. In this context, it is very clear that there is no clientelist relationship between the management and the Readers' Editor. Hence, I have to decline Mr. Menon's generous offer.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Future force for future wars

Confluence technology and a whole-of-government approach need to drive new strategies and tactics

Anil Chait

While addressing the country's top military leadership in Gujarat's Kevadia recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the top commanders to develop the military into a future force while taking note of the rapidly changing technological landscape. He also called for an approach that focuses on breaking down civil-military silos and on expediting the speed of decision-making besides shedding the legacy system.

ed human operations, advanced manned-unmanned systems operations, network-enabled autonomous weapons, and high-speed projectiles. Technologies like these can be expected to cause unprecedented effects and disruption by impacting cognitive and perceptual domains through weapons, soldiers, robots, and cyborgs. Tactical actions undertaken through these can be expected to cause strategic effects.

Force employment

It will be the way the effects are directed for employment that will most significantly change warfare. Strategists reared in Western-Style liberal democracies, who are used to thinking in terms of an orderly Westphalian world, are slowly being forced to come to terms with anomalies in the existing paradigm. In India, the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, is preparing the future force. He admits that 'force on force' concepts are difficult to tide over but is positive about the future.

What do military developments mean for political and democratic decision-making? Democracies work slowly. To prepare for accelerated future wars, they need to master the 'hybridised effect' of warfare that our adversaries are increasingly adopting. Operating below the threshold of out-and-out hostilities, effects caused by anonymous threats bypass frontiers without challenging national sovereignty. Our understanding of war on the other hand has remained the same: organised campaigns, orchestrated by domain-led central staff against an enemy that conforms to preconceived notions of logical and rational actions. Confluence technology and a whole-of-government approach, which are absent, need to drive new strategies and tactics.

Perhaps the most important political trend affecting armed conflict in the 21st century will be in the relationship between civilians and those who fight on their behalf. This is what the Prime Minister said needs to change when he asked for breaking of civilian-military silos.

War, at its core, is organised violence, waged for political purposes. The real purpose is domination. If humans are naturally political animals, war will be the proverbial state of nature and peace, the aberration.

For peace to prevail or be enforced, development of future force capability based on a Third Offset Strategy was announced by the U.S. in 2014. It consists of cutting-edge technology, exploration of new operational concepts for utilising such technology, and retaining the best and brightest in human resource to achieve the objective of peace. Although still in its inchoate stages, it focuses on promising technology areas such as robotics and system autonomy, miniaturisation, Big Data, and advanced manufacturing. It provides for autonomous learning systems, collaborative decision-making between humans and machines, assist-

ive. Lt General Anil Chait is former Chief of Integrated Defence Staff and General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Central Army

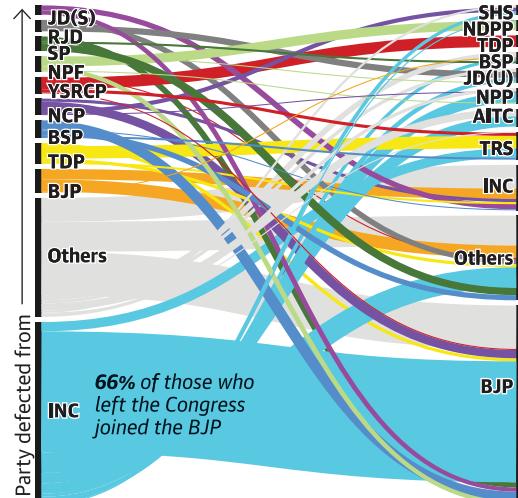


DATA POINT

Defections galore

As many as 177 Congress MLAs and MPs left the party and recontested as members of other parties between 2016 and 2020, data from Association for Democratic Reforms show. Also, out of all the 433 MLAs/MPs who quit and joined other parties in that period, nearly 45% joined the BJP. In the 2017 U.P. State election, 35 candidates quit their respective parties to recontest from other parties, the highest such figure from a single election in the considered period

SWITCHING SIDES | The chart shows the share of MLAs and MPs who quit a party, joined another, and recontested with ticket from the new party, since 2016. The waveforms are coloured according to the previous parties of MLAs/MPs. The highest share of defections (40%) were from the Congress, as indicated by the blue waveform originating from INC. Out of the 433 MLAs/MPs who defected, 177 were from the Congress



MOST DEFLECTIONS

As many as 35 candidates who contested for the 2017 U.P. Assembly were defectors, the highest such figure for any election in the period, followed by the 30 defectors who contested for the 2018 Telangana Assembly

A.P. Assembly 16

U.P. Assembly 35	M.P. Assembly byelection 25	Rajya Sabha 16	W.B. Assembly 16
Telangana Assembly 30	Nagaland Assembly 25	Bihar Assembly 15	Maharashtra Assembly 13
Arunachal Assembly 28	Jharkhand Assembly 17	Manipur Assembly 15	Lok Sabha 12
Konda Vishweshwar Reddy	Rajya Sabha	INC	366.39

RISE IN ASSETS |

The tables list the MLAs/MPs with the highest increase in assets between the previous election they contested as a candidate of one party and the latest election they contested as a candidate of the party they defected to

HIGHEST ABSOLUTE RISE IN ASSETS

Name	Assembly/House	Previous party	New party	Rise in assets (₹ cr.)
Diba Chandra Hrangkhlaw	Tripura	INC	BJP	61,165
Sona Devi	Rajasthan	NUJP	INC	11,010
M. Sathianathan	Tamil Nadu	AIADMK	DMK	1,715
Ugen Nedup Bhutia	Sikkim	SKM	SDF	1,232
Bheem Lal Arya	Uttarakhand	BJP	INC	1,219

Source: 'Analysis of re-contesting MLAs and MPAs who changed parties pan India since 2016', Association for Democratic Reforms

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 15, 1971

Rival claims for forming Govt. in WB

Both the Congress (R) and the marxist-led United Left Front in West Bengal to-day staked their claims to form a coalition Government in the State after the verdict of Wednesday's Assembly election showed that no single party or Front has secured an absolute majority in the 280-member House. With results for only four of the 277 seats still outstanding, the Congress (R) has captured 105 seats and the ULF 121. Election for three seats has been countermanded. The break-up of the ULF tally is: CPM: 109; RCP: 3; Biplabi Bangla Congress 1; Forward Bloc (Marxist) 2; ULF-supported Independents 4, and Workers Party 2. The ULF at an emergency meeting this evening decided to request the Governor, Mr. S.S. Dhavan, to invite it to form a Ministry by virtue of its being the largest single bloc in the new Assembly. The meeting elected Mr. Jyoti Basu as leader of the ULF and said in a statement that the ULF was prepared to form a Government on the basis of its programmes. The statement expressed the hope that the need for such a Government in West Bengal would receive the most serious attention of other parties, groups and individuals outside the Front which had adopted an "anti-Congress stand". Asked at a press conference whether the ULF was prepared to initiate discussions for a coalition with other parties, Mr. Basu said "we will definitely discuss with them if they came forward to find meeting points".

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 15, 1921

A plot of land.

(From an Editorial)

We cannot congratulate the Madras Corporation on its resolution passed yesterday to relinquish a good portion of land in Napier Park for the purpose of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha building a theatre on it. The plot is an extremely valuable one, and should be reserved for the benefit of the public in general and especially of the poorer classes of people in the city. The arguments against the motion were put forcibly before the meeting by Mr. Devadoss, Rev. Mr. Leith, Major Russell, Mr. Vyasa Rao, Dr. Kamath and others, and it is regrettable that they did not prevail. The resolution was carried by a narrow majority, 15 Councillors voting for and 14 against it. Among the former were, it is said, a number of members of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha. During the discussion Major Russell pointed out that the Councillors who were members of the Sabha would do well to refrain from voting on the resolution.

FROM PAGE ONE

Residents may be allowed to fill details online

According to the recently published report for the year 2019-20, there will be a three-pronged approach for updating the NPR database – self-updating, wherein it is proposed to allow residents to update their own data fields after following some authentication protocols on a web portal; updating of NPR data in the paper format; and the mobile mode.

The report said that a “pretest” on updating the NPR had been undertaken in select areas of the States and the Union Territories, except Assam, along with the pre-test of the Census. “The demographic and other particulars of each family and individual are to be collected/ updated during the updation exercise of NPR. No documents or biometrics would be collected during updation of NPR,” the report said.

As reported, the pretest for the first phase of the Census and the NPR, involving 30 lakh respondents, was conducted from August 12 to September 20, 2019.

The report said the government prepared the NPR of all the “usual residents” in the country in 2010 by collecting specific information of each resident. “The NPR is prepared under various provisions of the Citizenship Rules, 2003, framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955. In 2015, a few fields such as name, gender, date and place of birth, place of residence and father’s and mother’s name were updated and Aadhaar, mobile and ration card numbers were collected. To incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration, there is a need to update it again,” it said.

Additional queries
The questions for the fresh NPR have not been made public yet but the pre-test conducted in 2019 included additional questions, such as the date and the place of birth of the father and mother, the last place of residence and mother tongue, Aadhar (optional), Voter ID card, and mobile phone and Driver’s Licence numbers. States ruled by non-BJP parties have expressed apprehensions regarding the additional questions.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced on February 1 that ₹3,768 crore had been allocated for the Census in the financial year 2021-22. Though no separate budget for the NPR has been allocated in this fiscal, ₹3,941.35 crore was approved for updating the NPR in 2019-20.

Around 30 lakh enumerators – government officials and government school teachers – will each be as-

signed the responsibility of collecting details from about 650-800 people through both the online and offline modes.

The Registrar-General of India (RGI) is presently conducting field trials of the first phase of the Census and the NPR through the mobile application in a block, each comprising 50-60 households, in all the States and Union Territories.

Widespread dissent
The NPR’s link with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the yet to be implemented Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, has been opposed by many States and civil society groups.

The Citizenship Rules framed in the year 2003 say that the NPR is the first step towards the compilation of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), or the NRC. The CAA passed by the Parliament on December 11, 2019, allows citizenship on the basis of religion to six undocumented communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. Though the government has denied that the CAA and the NRC are linked, there are apprehensions that the CAA followed by a countrywide NRC, will benefit non-Muslims excluded from the proposed citizens’ register, while excluded Muslims will have to prove their citizenship.

The Union Home Ministry informed the Lok Sabha on February 4, 2020 that “till now, the government has not taken any decision to prepare the NRIC at the national level”.

However, in March 2020, the Ministry filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court that preparation of the NRC is a “necessary exercise for any sovereign country for mere identification of citizens from non-citizens”. It submitted that it is “the responsibility entrusted on the Central government “to identify/detect illegal migrants and thereafter, follow the due process of law”.

At the peak of anti-CAA/NRC/NPR protest in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told a public rally on December 22 in Delhi that “there had been no discussion, no talk on an NRC for India since his government had taken power in 2014”.

On December 9 the same year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah told Parliament that “there is no need to create a background for NRC, we are clear that NRC ought to be done in this country, our manifesto is the background”.

India logs 25,320 new virus cases

Close to 30 million vaccine doses have been administered since the beginning of the drive on January 16, with around 1.5 million of those given between Saturday and Sunday morning, according to the latest figures from the Union Health Ministry. About 1.4 million of those doses were administered in the past 24 hours.

In February, the Ministry, in response to a question in the Lok Sabha, said 41 million doses of vaccine – Covishield and Covaxin – had so far been procured for the vaccination drive. India is supposed to get 97 million doses of Covishield through its arrangement with the global vaccine facility, Covax, however a communiqué from that organisation in March did not spell out the timeline for when that lot would be available in India.

Vaccine has been supplied to the States based on the estimates provided by them to the Centre on how much they need, the num-

CM YK

ber of available institutions where inoculations can be administered and vaccine storage and distribution infrastructure.

Since February 16, there has been a gradual uptick in fresh infections, that for most part of the previous fortnight had declined to just 8,000.

A team deputed by the Centre to understand the surge in Maharashtra had reported on March 1 that among the possible reasons for the growing number of cases in the city were – COVID-19 inappropriate behaviour due to “lack of fear of disease”, pandemic fatigue, missed cases, super spreading events and crowds due to the gram panchayat elections, marriages, re-opening of schools, and crowded public transport.

However, the report stressed that the situation in Maharashtra was not unique and a similar combination of events was responsible for a surge in the other States too.

Even senior SIT officials said action had been taken to ensure protection to her family. “We assure the woman that she can contact the police and choose the time and place of her convenience to get her statement recorded,” sources in the SIT said.

Many social organisations and women’s rights groups have come out in support of the woman.

Hours after the woman released a video seeking protection, State Women’s Commission chairperson R. Pramila Naidu assured her of necessary help. “I have spoken to the city and State pol-

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Even senior SIT officials said action had been taken to ensure protection to her family. “We assure the woman that she can contact the police and choose the time and place of her convenience to get her statement recorded,” sources in the SIT said.

Many social organisations and women’s rights groups have come out in support of the woman.

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4 MPs, actors in BJP's Bengal list

It has also fielded economist Ashok Lahiri and dissident Trinamool leaders

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Eminent economist Ashok Lahiri and Rajya Sabha member and journalist Swapan Dasgupta were among the 63 candidates the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced on Sunday for the third and fourth phases of the West Bengal election on April 6 and 10.

Mr. Lahiri, member of the 15th Finance Commission, former Chief Economic Adviser to the government of India, and former Reader at the Delhi School of Economics, will be contesting from the Alipurdur constituency in north Bengal. He is the most surprising inclusion in the BJP's list.

Mr. Dasgupta will be contesting from the Tarakeswar Assembly seat in Hooghly district.

The list included four MPs, including Mr. Dasgupta. Union Minister and Asan-



Ashok Lahiri will contest from Alipurdur.

test from Domjur in Howrah. Four-time Trinamool MLA from Singur, Rabindranath Bhattacharya, 88, will contest the same seat. Trinamool MLA from Diamond Harbour, Dipak Halder, who quit the party a few weeks ago, has also been given ticket from the same seat.

Former CPI(M) leader Rinku Naskar will contest from Jadavpur on BJP ticket and Manoj Oraon, who contested from Kumargram in 2016 as a candidate of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, will contest the same seat.

The list includes a num-

buk of actors – Yash Dasgupta from Chanditala in Hooghly, Payel Sarkar from Behala Purba, Tanushree Chakraborty from Shyampukur in Howrah and Anjana Basu from Sonarpur Dakshin. Other well-known candidates are Indranil Khan, a medical practitioner, from Kasba, and Rantidev Sen-

gupta, a senior journalist, from Howrah Dakshin.

On March 6, the BJP an-

nounced its first list for 57 of the 60 seats for the first two phases on March 27 and April 1.

Some leaders upset

The BJP also faced some dis- content after the announce- ment of the list. Sovan Chatterjee, former Kolkatta Mayor and once a close aide of Ma- mata Banerjee, who was de- nied ticket from Behala Purba, is upset. Sources said he might quit the BJP.

The BJP district-level lead-

ership in Alipurdur also said they have not heard about Mr. Lahiri. Party lead- ers in Singur started protest- ing against the candidature of Rabindranath Bhattacharya, while Rantidev Sen-

gupta said he was not con-

sulted before his name was

announced and that he did

not want to contest the polls.

Mamata leads rally on a wheelchair

An injured tiger is more dangerous, says the West Bengal Chief Minister

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Four days after she suffered leg injuries while campaigning in Nandigram, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday resumed her election campaign here on a wheelchair and said that an "injured tiger" is more dangerous. She led a rally from the Gandhi Statue on Mayo Road to the Hazra Crossing.

Trinamool Congress leaders, including president of party youth wing, Abhishek Banerjee, along with thousands of supporters, joined the rally along the five-kilo- metre stretch in the heart of the city.

Ms. Banerjee set the tone of the *padyatra* (march) by saying "*Bhanga Khela hobe*" [Game will be played with a broken leg].

She was discharged from hospital on Friday and within 48 hours, she was back in the political campaign.

In pain'

Earlier in the day, she said on social media that she was "still in lot of pain" but would continue to fight boldly. "We will continue to fight boldly! I'm still in a lot of pain but I feel the pain of my people even more. In this fight to protect our revered land, we have suffered a lot



Strong return: Mamata Banerjee campaigning in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ ANI

and will suffer more but we will never bow down to cowardice."

Addressing her suppor-

ters at Hazra at the end of the rally, Ms. Banerjee said, "Have faith in me. I will go around the entire West Bengal on a wheelchair with a broken leg. *Khela hobe* [Game is on]. Please keep in mind that an injured tiger is more dangerous."

The Trinamool Congress chairperson said more than

the physical pain it is diffi-

cult to endure the pain of at-

tack on democracy. "The

evil forces should be defeat-

ed and conspiracy around

Bengal should be foiled."

Her decision to resume

campaigning also assumes

significance as the day is ob-

served as 'Nandigram Dibas'

(Nandigram day).

On March 14, 2007, 14 vil-

lagers were killed in police

firing while protesting

against forcible land acquisi-

tion in Nandigram, the seat

from which Ms. Banerjee is

contesting.

As a mark of respect and

encouraged by my brothers

and sisters of Nandigram, I

am contesting #BengalElec-

tions2021 as @AITOfficial

candidate from this historic

place. It is my great honour

to be here and work along

with members of *shaheed* fa-

milies against anti-Bengal

force," Ms. Banerjee said on

social media.

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hobe" [Game will be played

with a broken leg].

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the political campaign.

Modi faces flak for Borphukan reference

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Opposition parties in poll-bound Assam slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for referring to 17th century Ahom general La-chit Borphukan as a freedom fighter.

Mr. Modi mentioned Borphukan along with others who "contributed to the independence of the country" at a function to launch the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' on March 12. The programme commemorated 75 years of India's independence from British rule.

Borphukan had in 1671 led the Ahoms in the Battle of Saraighat, considered the greatest naval battle on a river, to victory over the Mughals. He died in April 1672, almost two centuries before the freedom movement began.

"The Prime Minister may either be ignorant or [it is] a ploy to get political mileage in Assam ahead of the Assembly election. We want to remind him that Assam was a sovereign country for more than 600 years from 1228-1826. The people of Assam revere La-chit Borphukan," said Assam Jatiya Parishad general secretary and former BJP leader Jagdish Bhuyan.

'Secular, pro-farmer votes should not split in Bengal'

Farm leaders hold protests in State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Secular and pro-farmer votes in West Bengal should not split, leaders of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and civil rights activists who have been campaigning in the State for the past three days said on Sunday. Rakesh Tikait of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) and social activi-

sts Medha Patkar during a protest rally in Kolkata on Friday. ■ PTI

kar, who was in Singur on Sunday and Nandigram on Saturday, said both these places have a glorious history of people's movement against corporates. "In Singur and Nandigram, people were resisting corporate interest and put up a fight for protecting their land. After that, all secular parties joined the movement against land acquisition," said Ms. Patkar, who addressed a kisan *mahanayakat* at Singur on Sunday.

Both Ms. Patkar and Mr. Tikait said the aim of their campaign is to dissuade people from voting for the BJP. Mr. Tikait said the Morcha does not mind if people vote for "Mamataji and Left or Congress". Interestingly, the Left parties, particularly those who are constituents of the Left Front, have distanced themselves from the movement.

Social activist Medha Pat-

Two more parties in Assam *Mahajot*

They claim to have influence in 50 seats, but are not contesting the Assembly poll

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI:

The size of the Congress-led *Mahajot* (grand alliance) in poll-bound Assam has increased to 10.

Two community-based parties – Jimochayan (Deori) People's Party, or JDPP, and Adivasi National Party (ANP) – together claim to have influence in some 50 of the State's 126 Assembly seats. They joined the *Mahajot* in

'Vote for those who uphold Constitution'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI:

The Assam Christian Forum, representing all denominations of the church in the State, appealed to people to vote for candidates who work for a secular society and uphold the Constitution.

ACF spokesperson Allen Brooks said the forum had restricted itself to canvassing for fair elections. "We are now speaking about an inclusive society because minorities are being increasingly intimidated. Father Stan Swamy's arrest ... is an example."

The surge of crude oil prices

As the skyrocketing fuel prices leave the common man baffled, here's a look at why prices have breached the ₹100 mark in India.

Why the high price

■ Saudi Arabia raised the pricing for its crude for shipment to Asia and the US. OPEC+ have also extended oil supply constraints, pointing to a tightening physical market.

■ India's oil imports reached a three year high in December 2020 at 5 million bpd, boosting prices and accelerating destocking of the floating storage globally.

■ Expectations of strong demand with the global roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine have raised a demand for oil in the local markets.

■ Oil price decontrol is a one-way practice. When the global prices of crude oil increases, the burden is passed on to the consumer who pays the extra price for oil. When the reverse happens, the government slaps fresh taxes and levies to ensure that it rakes in extra revenues. This results in the consumer paying the same rate for petrol and diesel.

Impact on India

■ The price rise impacted our import bill and put further pressure on the Current Account Deficit.

■ India recently came out of a technical recession but stagflation is still

persisting, this rise in price will create an inflationary pressure.

However, there can be a few positives. The value of Indian oil and gas companies could be positively impacted. Remittances from the Persian Gulf could increase. Creating a differentiated petrol supply according to the economic capacity and finding alternative energy resources to meet future demand could be a way forward for sustainable development.

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Scan to watch the free live class on 'Rising Prices of Crude Oil' on March 15 at 6 PM. Use code UPSCCE.

'Cong. can go to any lengths to win'

Shah flays alliance with minority-based parties in Assam, Kerala and West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Congress could go to any lengths to win elections, including aligning with minority-based parties in Assam, Kerala and West Bengal.

Campaigning in Assam on Sunday for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates in Margherita and Nazira Assembly constituencies, Mr. Shah slammed the Congress for "cosying up" to the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), headed by perfume baron and Lok Sabha member Maulana Badruddin Ajmal.

The Congress and the AIUDF are the main consti-



Campaign trail: Amit Shah being presented an 'Assamese Japi' during a rally at Margherita on Sunday. ■ PTI

tuents of the 10-party *Mahajot* (grand alliance) that wants to "save Assam" by uprooting the BJP.

"In Kerala, the Congress has aligned with the [Indian Union] Muslim League that

worked to divide the country. In Assam, it has aligned with the AIUDF. And in West Bengal, it has forged an alliance with a new party by a cleric of Furfura Sharif Daragah. The Congress can go to

any lengths to win elections," Mr. Shah said at a rally in Margherita.

"The elections are just days away and there are two options before one. One is the Modi and Sonowal-led combine of BJP-AGP [Asom Gana Parishad]. The other is the Rahul Gandhi-led Congress-Ajmal combine. Tell me who can do well for Assam," he said.

"If you vote for Congress, it will go to Ajmal," said Mr. Shah, promising to make "infiltration" a thing of the past if the BJP is re-elected. He also reminded the people of *satra* (Vaishnav monasteries) lands having been cleared of "infiltrators" during the BJP's rule.

Except Assam, BJP will lose all polls: Pawar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

With the exception of Assam, the BJP will lose the Assembly elections in three States and the Union Territory of Puducherry, including the fiercely contested polls in West Bengal, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar said on Sunday.

"While it is difficult to comment on the outcome at this juncture, the political trends nevertheless show that the BJP will retain power only in Assam and would be defeated in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry. And this trend will also prove to be the harbinger of changing political currents in the country," said Mr. Pawar in Baramati.

He accused the BJP-led Centre of abusing power by attacking Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

INTERVIEW | KAPIL SIBAL

'We need much more interaction with the Congress leadership'

There were only 23 signatories to that letter but the number of people supportive of our views are many, many more, says Congress leader

SANDEEP PHUKAN

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal says the party's group of 23 letter writers (G-23), who wrote a letter to party chief Sonia Gandhi for a revamp of the organisation, are not dissenters but protectors of the Congress legacy. Edited excerpts:

Do you think it was right to have a show strength in Jammu when the Congress is in the middle of Assembly elections?

■ Well, I think that this nomenclature of G-23 is something that has been coined by the press. There were only 23 signatories to that letter but the number of people supportive of our views are many, many more. We are not dissenters, we are protectors of the Congress legacy. We are not anti-anybody, we are pro-Congress. We believe that the Congress needs to be strengthened. And this is exactly what we said in Jammu, that we must all strengthen the Congress party together. Because that is the only national alternative that can stem the rot that has set in at the instance of

this government. The great legacy of this country, which is reflected in the Constitution of India, is being destroyed. The government is dismantling all Constitutional structures. In fact, in my speech at Jammu [on February 27], I attacked the BJP, saying that the assets of this country are in the hands of just a few people. We are not dissenters, we are protectors of the Congress party and that is what we displayed in Jammu in the course of our speeches.

Some of your colleagues said that statements by a few G-23 leaders only help the BJP. They also argue that the call for reforms is driven by personal considerations like, say, a Rajya Sabha seat or the role of the Leader of the Opposition.



In Kerala, we hope to win; in Assam, there is sufficient discontent with the Sonowal government. So that's where we are

that in times to come, all this will certainly be taken into account. I can assure you that there are many, many more who agree with us on these issues.

It's been a little over six months since that letter, asking for reforms, was given to Ms. Gandhi. There was a follow-up meeting as well in December. Have things changed in these six months?

■ Well, the good thing that happened was that there was a decision that there will be an election to the office of the president and the Working Committee. And tentatively that date has been fixed in June. So we are happy that, at least, some forward movement is taking place but we need much more of interaction with the party leadership. Everybody is busy strengthening the party and hoping for a pleasant outcome for the Congress party in these elections, and therefore, there is not much dialogue taking place at this point. And rightly so. I am sure when the elections are over, this whole process will gain its own momentum.

The Congress list of star campaigners came out for West Bengal and Assam but leaves out prominent names among the G-23.

■ We are not stars, we are Congress workers. And the worker will do whatever he

can do to ensure that the Congress party wins. Even if not assigned to us, we will play a positive, constructive role to ensure that the Congress gains in these States to the extent it can.

Do you think it's a reflection of the leadership's mood because the Jammu meet didn't go down well?

■ I don't want to attribute any motives to anybody. I think that the party has the discretion to decide who are stars and which are the stars who shine and which are the ones who have lost their lustre.

Will G-23 decide its future move depending on how the Congress fares in these elections?

■ We are not antithetical to what the party stands for. So there's no question of a future strategy. All that we say is that the State that we are in today, we should work hard and embrace what the Con-

gress stands for. Bring all the Opposition parties on one platform. Since the Congress is the only national party that can oppose the BJP, it should be at the centre of that platform, which is inclusive of all other Opposition leaders to fight the Modi government.

But the question is, who is going to lead the Congress?

Ms. Gandhi is functioning as an interim chief and Rahul Gandhi doesn't seem to be keen on taking over the reins again. What's your take?

■ I didn't say any of that. Whether Mr. Gandhi stands or he doesn't stand, that is not the issue. Anybody under the Congress constitution is entitled to stand.

Congressmen will decide whether or not to contest the election. It depends on who is standing.

So, you will not field a candidate if Mr. Gandhi contests?

■ I didn't say any of that. Whether Mr. Gandhi stands or he doesn't stand, that is not the issue. Anybody under the Congress constitution is entitled to stand.

How are you looking at these Assembly elections?

■ Unfortunately, in some of the States, we have not had a presence for many, many years. So, you can't expect a tsunami in favour of the Congress. But with the alliances that we have, we hope to gain. In Kerala, we hope to win; in Assam, there is sufficient discontent with the Sonowal government. So that's where we are. These are the big States where we can hope to form government on our own.

IN BRIEF



Uzbek troops train on Sig Sauer rifles

RANIKHET
At the ongoing India-Uzbek exercise Dostlik-II at Ranikhet, Uzbek troops learnt the handling of SIG-716 assault rifles, recently inducted into service by the Army and also got orientation in slithering from helicopters for heli-borne operations in a counter terrorist environment.

Bank operations may be affected for two days

NEW DELHI
Banking operations across the country could be impacted on Monday and Tuesday as the United Forum of Bank Unions has called for a nationwide strike to protest against the proposed privatisation of two state-owned lenders. Services such as deposits and withdrawals at branches would be affected. PTI

Cong. questions pace of vaccination as cases rise

NEW DELHI
With the number of COVID-19 infections crossing the 25,000-mark in the past 24 hours, the Congress on Sunday questioned the pace of vaccination and asked the government to prepare a strategy to complete the drive within 12 months.

Tigress found dead in M.P. wildlife sanctuary

RAISEN
A six-year-old tigress was found dead in a forest near Singhori Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district, an official said on Sunday. The death was reported on Saturday evening, following which forest officials rushed to the spot.

U.K. apprised of extremist groups

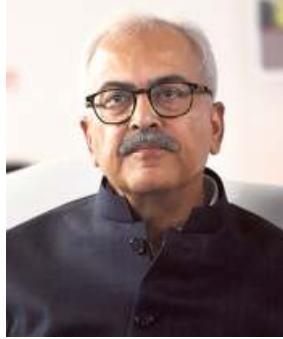
Home Secretaries of the two nations discussed activities of Khalistani outfits

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Secretary held a meeting in January with his U.K. counterpart to "discuss anti-India activities of U.K.-based pro-Khalistani extremist organisations" and the safety of the Indian High Commission in London, a senior government official said.

Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla held a video conference on January 15 with Matthew John Rycroft, Permanent Secretary, Home Office of the U.K., where issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Protest in London
The meeting came almost a month after a large number of people protested outside the Indian High Commission in London in support of



Ajay Kumar Bhalla

farmers in India who are opposing the three farm laws passed by Parliament in September 2020.

After the meeting with Mr. Bhalla, the U.K. Home Secretary posted on his Twitter page, "a very productive call today with my Indian counterpart, @BhallaAjay26. Many opportunities for even closer cooperation on home

affairs in the coming year." There was no official statement from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) after the meeting.

The *Press Trust of India* (PTI) in a report on December 7, 2020 said that the demonstration in London came after a group of 36 British MPs, led by British Sikh Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, wrote to the U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab regarding the impact on British Punjabis affected by the demonstrations by farmers in India.

A spokesperson in the High Commission had said that the "gathering was led by anti-India separatists who had taken the opportunity of the protests in India to ostensibly back the farmers in India but use the opportunity

to pursue their own anti-India agenda".

One of the persons who led the protest was identified as Paramjit Singh, who was designated a terrorist along with eight others under the amended Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), in July 2020.

MHA notification

The MHA notification said that the individuals were involved in various acts of terrorism from across the border and from foreign soil.

"They have been relentless in their nefarious efforts of destabilising the country, by trying to revive militancy in Punjab through their anti-national activities and through their support to and involvement in the Khalistan Movement," a statement issued by the MHA said.

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Explosives near Antilia: police officer Vaze in NIA custody

His pre-arrest bail in Munsukh Hiren's murder was rejected

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

A special court on Sunday remanded assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) till March 25 in connection with the recovery of an explosives-laden car found near Mukesh Ambani's residence on February 25.

NIA's spokesperson said Mr. Vaze was arrested at 11.50 p.m. on March 13 for his "role and involvement in placing explosives-laden vehicle near Carmichael Road". The SUV was found with 20 gelatin sticks on February 25 and the police said the car was stolen from the Airoli-Mulund bridge on February 18.



Sachin Vaze being taken to court. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Mr. Vaze has been arrested under Sections 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (punishment for forgery), 473 (making or possessing counterfeit seal, etc., with intent to commit forgery punishable otherwise), 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 120 B (pun-

ishment of criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code and the Explosive Substances Act.

The car's owner, Mansukh Hiren, who was an auto parts dealer, was found dead on March 5 in Kalwa creek. The case was transferred to the NIA on March 8. On March 12, a sessions court in Thane rejected Mr. Vaze's pre-arrest bail in Hiren's murder.

Mr. Vaze is known as an "encounter specialist" in the Mumbai police. He was suspended for 17 years after being arrested in the custodial death of a 27-year-old software engineer Khwaja Yunus, but was granted bail after 58 days of being in custody.

Centre reconstitutes panel on mythical Sarasvati river

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The Centre has reconstituted an advisory committee to chalk out a plan for studying the mythical Sarasvati river for the next two years, after the earlier panel's term ended in 2019.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on March 10 issued a notification for "reconstitution of the Advisory Committee for the Multidisciplinary Study of the River Sarasvati". The ASI had first set up the committee on December 28, 2017

for a period of two years. The committee would continue to be chaired by the Culture Minister and include officials from the Culture, Tourism, Water Resources, Environment and Forest, Housing and Urban Affairs Ministries; representatives of the Indian Space Research Organisation; officials from the governments of Gujarat, Haryana and Rajasthan; and an ASI official. Among the "non-official members" of the 27-member panel are archaeologists B.R. Mani, Vasant Shinde, K.N. Dixit and K.K. Muhammed, and historian Balram Panduk Pandit.

One of the officials in the panel said the committee would review the work done by the previous panel and then formulate a plan. The committee would advise the Government Departments conducting research.

Panel on air quality dissolved

The high-power body came into being in October on the back of an ordinance

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Members who were part of the Commission for Air Quality Management said they were taken aback by the sudden dissolution of the body – constituted last October and via an ordinance – on Friday. The dissolution happened despite, *The Hindu* has learnt, the nodal Union Environment Ministry submitting the paper work to the Union Cabinet Secretariat, required to give legal backing to the commission.

The body came into being

in October on the back of an ordinance – a temporary measure – and the law requires that a formal Bill be presented to Parliament within six weeks of its reconstitution – in this case – January 29 when the Budget Session began.

Before a Bill is tabled in Parliament it needs to be approved by the Union Cabinet.

However in spite of several Cabinet meetings since January, it wasn't taken up for discussion due to which, the tenure of the body expired, without ever making it to

Parliament. It is still technically possible to revive the body during the ongoing Parliament session.

The Hindu spoke to members of the commission who said "they were surprised" that they learnt of the dissolution of functional body via newspaper reports. "We were discharging the duties we were supposed to. There is office space that some of us work out of in Delhi and another office was being readied. Staff has been hired and we were coordinating with States – as our mandate

– in addressing pollution. That the body may be dissolved was nowhere near even the back of our minds," a commission member said.

Another person, aware of matters, said that the Bill – whose drafting was a "routine affair" – was even approved by Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar before perusal by the Union Cabinet.

The commission was headed by M.M. Kutty, a former Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Slow, steady crossing of educational milestones

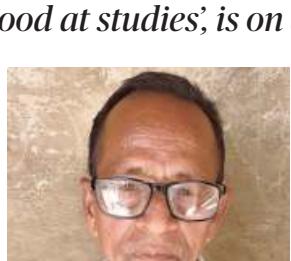
Odisha farmer, 'not good at studies', is on a never-ending pursuit of courses

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

For his entire life, 65-year-old Trilochan Naik of Odisha's Dhenkanal district has waited to achieve educational milestones.

Forty-one attempts over two decades to pass Class 10, 13 bids in 14 years to clear Class 12 and three years each for graduation and law degrees, the educational journey of this sexagenarian over six decades is remarkable in itself.

But Mr. Naik is not done yet. He is set to join the Master of Law course next year, and before that, he has enrolled himself as a member of the Odisha State Bar Council in March and begun practising law in the Dhenkanal court.



Trilochan Naik
"I was not good at studies, but I was a firm believer of 'never say die'. I also believe that society looks down upon a person who is not educated. And it prompts me to go for earning educational degrees," said Mr. Naik, who earns a living from farming. He first appeared for the matriculation examination from the Banasirh High

School in Dhenkanal district in 1972. He could not clear it and sat for the supplementary examination in the same year, but failed. As he failed over 15 attempts, teachers at the Banasirh High School refused to fill up his forms again. Not disheartened, he enrolled himself in a correspondence course to clear the matriculation exam. It took 14 years for Mr. Naik to clear Class XII examination in 2011. Subsequently, he took admission in the Dhenkanal Evening College. He cleared it in one attempt in 2014. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Mr. Naik successfully completed his law degree.

Right to dissent is central, says Sainath

Veteran journalist strikes a dissenting note in Index Monitoring Cell report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Pointing out that the right to dissent should be the central focus of press freedom, independent journalist P. Sainath struck a dissenting note in the report submitted by the Index Monitoring Cell (IMC), set up by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry with stakeholders to improve India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index and to evolve an objective yardstick to gauge media freedom.

"The right to dissent is very central... You know there are people filing FIRs and taking legal action against journalists (and other citizens) under the Epidemic Act, Disaster Act, sedition laws. We are shutting down the Internet for six months or more for whole regions," Mr. Sainath made this obser-

vation, in his 12-page dissent note, along with three indicies with a complete list of journalists and activists and stand up comedians who have been arrested and intimidated by the State in the last one year.

Mr. Sainath pointed out that the report failed in its objective to analyse the World Press Freedom Index (of Paris-based Reporters Without Borders or RSF),

and India's performance in it with a view to identify areas of strengths and concern related to press freedom in India.

To draw attention to the stranglehold of several laws on press freedom, Mr. Sainath pointed out 52-media related laws and their misuse by the State in intimidating journalists, adding that there was a complete lack of accountability of the state in

the misuse of laws. The 15-member committee, which had four meetings between May and December last year, has four journalists and government functionaries. Chaired by Kuldeep Singh Dhatwal, Principal Director General of the Press Information Bureau, the committee has 10 government employees.

Among the key recommendations is the decriminalisation of defamation. India is one of the few countries in the world to criminalise defamation. The panel has also recommended that consent of the Press Council of India is a prerequisite before filing an FIR against the media or a publication.

For a cause DBS
Uday Kumar with
donor Rakesh
Guntj, Rishita
Marripalli with
Shiva Kumar
and Priya
Marripalli
■ SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT



TO DONATE HAIR OR ASK
FOR A WIG, CONTACT:

Hyderabad: Shiva Kumar, at Hyderabad Hair Donations for Cancer Patients' Facebook page, or DBS Uday Kumar, at Hyderabad Hair Donation's Facebook page

Bengaluru: Harish Kannadhasan on Instagram, @Hair Donation Bengaluru

Chennai: The Cherian Foundation, visit cherianfoundation.org

COULD IT BE THAT...



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK

Share your HAIR

Grew your hair through the lockdown? Like these people, you too could donate it all to help make wigs for people with cancer

SB VIJAYA MARY

In the months before joining college, 17-year-old Rishita Marripalli shaved her head.

Her inspiration was her 21-year-old sister Priya, who was motivated after seeing her aunt go through the treatment for cancer. "Rishita watched me cut my hair to donate for a cause and decided, on the spur of the moment, to do it too. But she went a step ahead and shaved her head completely," says Priya, from Hyderabad.

While Rishita's was a spontaneous decision, 20-year-old Vinitha Madhav's was not. "Two of my cousins and I decided to donate our hair, so we grew it through the lockdown. The feeling is awesome," she shares, from Bengaluru.

These hair donations are helping NGOs produce wigs to be given free of cost to people with cancer. Hair loss is a common side effect of cancer treatment that includes chemotherapy and radiation.

Wearing a wig to conceal the loss may restore some sense of normalcy. However, wigs made with natural hair can cost up to ₹45,000 depending on the length, an added expense for pe-

ople who may already be burdened with the cost of treatment. A synthetic wig, though cheaper, can be uncomfortable.

Thanks to social media and word of mouth, there has been an increased awareness about hair donation, and this is helping NGOs scale up their production of wigs.

Lockdown experiments

Hairstylist Shiva Kumar who founded the Hyderabad Hair Donations for Cancer Patients in 2014, says, "I've been campaigning for hair donations for years, but there's been a four or five times rise in donations in the last few months."

While working at his salon in Chandanagar, Hyderabad, Shiva felt the hair that went into the bin could be put to better use.

That's when he started sending hair to an organisation in Mumbai that makes wigs for underprivileged people with cancer, free of cost.

However, during the lockdown when logistics came in the way of delivering the wigs, Shiva decided to do it himself in Hyderabad; he spends his own money to make them. He criss-crosses the city and the nearby districts to

THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT

Length of the hair should be at least 10 to 12 inches.

The hair should be washed, braided and secured with a rubber band. Cut an inch above the band.

The cut braid should be wrapped in a newspaper and placed in a polythene bag before being despatched.

Based on the thickness of the hair, it should be divided into different ponytails before cutting. Normally, one person's hair lends to two ponytails and it takes six to seven ponytails to make one wig. Often the split ends of the hair go waste, hence not all of your hair goes into the making of a wig.

Some organisations accept coloured and grey hair too.



Spaces that facilitate

'Gift Hair Gift Confidence' is an ongoing campaign by The Cherian Foundation, spearheaded by one of its trustees Sarah Benjamin Cherian. Started on February 4, 2014, to mark World Cancer Day, the Foundation's first donor was a student of the Women's Christian College, says Vijay Charles Wesley, senior project coordinator of the Foundation in T Nagar, Chennai.

"Our campaigns have been mostly in colleges, schools, corporates; till today we have donated 700 wigs to underprivileged cancer patients free of cost in collaboration with Adyar Cancer Institute," says Charles. The

visit donors at their homes, to cut their hair, give them a new look and come back with the donated locks. "I do not charge anything, but if the donors wish, they can pay towards the making of a wig, which costs ₹3,000," says Shiva, who has collected hair from 400 people and delivered 37 wigs to the needy.

When mechanical engineer Harish Kannadhasan, based in Bengaluru, was moved by a video of a child undergoing cancer treatment, he threw himself into researching chemo-caused hair loss. In 2018, he started a Facebook page called Hair Donation Bangalore (HDB) to take forward the campaign. The donations he generates are sent to The Cherian Foundation in Chennai.

"We guide donors on the rules of cutting and packing their hair for this purpose. We maintain a register of the donor details. Often, we pay for the courier charges," says Harish who receives at least two calls a week from Electronic City, Bengaluru, as well. "Not many courier companies function here, so most donors send their hair through Dunzo and we courier them to Chennai."

His services are free, but recently when the hospital said there were no funds to make wigs, Uday started collecting ₹200 from each donor towards courier charges and handing over that money to the hospital. He is happy that during the lockdown, many young boys came forward to donate their hair.

Twenty-three-year-old Rakesh Guntj learnt that his male colleagues at the workplace were growing their hair for a cause, and decided to join in. He's happy he could donate his hair in July 2020 after growing it to a length of 15 inches.

The longer the hair, the more wigs can be made, realised 32-year-old Rojee Devarapalli who didn't think twice before donating her 38-inch-long hair along with her school-going daughter Shreeja's. "When you think of the happiness it gives to those who are already suffering, sacrificing our hair is no big deal. Hair will grow back in no time," says Rojee, smiling.

we live. Showing off the deltoid symbolises both a culmination of a year of restriction and the end of fear.

For a change, we haven't bothered with toning our deltoids, or putting makeup on it, or even dressing it up with a pretty shirt. It's a fleshy or bony deltoid that the PR people just didn't have the time to get in on.



SUNALINI MATHEW

Until a season ago, vaccinations were associated with babies and their bottoms.

Then the COVID-19 vaccine was accelerated into development and everyone pulled up their sleeves to get a shot. Specifically, they thrust out the deltoid muscle for a jab and a snap: President Ram Nath Kovind, having folded up a staid long sleeve; Stephen Fry, who showed the shoulder not getting vaccinated; Arnold Schwarzenegger, who got his through the car window. And everybody's parents.

In a life starved of going out, and of selfies in front of waterfalls, there hasn't been much to report on after the initial frenzy of bread baking and online yoga class taking.

Now, there is the registration, the process of going to a hospital to get it, and the thrill of being a part of something important, something that changed the way

It's a choice people have made to avoid politicizing an act: on social media, people have pictures of taking the shot rather than of the provisional certificate with the Prime Minister's picture eyeballing you.

Mostly though, it is a symbol of belief in the healthcare system that despite all its glitches and corruption, still manages to draw people who hope for a healthier tomorrow. It's exactly what the doctor ordered.

WHAT IS IT?

Revenge bedtime procrastination



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK

SOMA BASU

During the lockdown many of us may have binge-watched TV shows, craving for entertainment. Or, we got so caught up with work during the day and found no free time that we delayed sleep just to unwind.

Sacrificing sleep hours when you are rushing against a deadline or partying is something we are all occasionally guilty of. But when we stay up later than intended without a valid reason, even when we know the next day begins early and the lack of sleep may affect our work or mood, it is called Revenge Bedtime Procrastination (RBP).

Doctors say COVID-19 stay-at-home orders ushered in lifestyle changes and many people engaged in RBP without realising how it slowly and silently turns into a habit, taking a toll on their health in the long run. Dr Pavan Yadav, Consultant (Interventional Pulmonology, Sleep Medicine and Lung transplantation) with Aster RV Hospital, Bengaluru, puts it simply: "Bedtime procrastination is viewed as getting 'revenge' on a daytime that gives us no leisure hours."

It is an emerging concept in sleep science and the debate on the psychology behind the voluntary sleep reduction is still on, he says and adds, "It is not an established clinical condition requiring treat-

ment unless it becomes really serious."

In fact, the word 'revenge' was added to the concept of 'bedtime procrastination' on social media when people from China expressed how frustrating their long stressful hours were with no time for personal enjoyment and it found resonance. Dr Yadav confirms an increase in the number of sleep disruption or deprivation cases, which could also be attributed to factors such as anxiety. While RBP can be tempting in the moment, when sleep debt leads to brain fog and poor emotional regulation, the issue needs to be addressed.

Behaviour associated with RBP is easy to identify: It's the conscious delaying of going to sleep; the absence of a valid reason for staying up late and remaining glued to electronic gadgets – all this while being aware of the consequences of insufficient sleep.

Future research may lead to a deeper understanding on the whys of RBP, but all docs are in agreement that sleep - both quality and quantity – should not be compromised upon. "Sleep hygiene is the key to happiness, better memory and concentration, reduced irritability and fatigue," says Dr Yadav.

In this column, we demystify the buzzwords in wellness

Weighted blanket

Weighted blankets look like regular ones, but are heavier as they are filled with glass beads or plastic pellets instead of light-weight feathers or slightly heavier cotton. The weight creates even pressure on the body. "Most of the blankets available in our market weigh 16 kilograms and can create a snug feeling. But some people can find it uncomfortable because of its weight too," says Dr M S Kanwar, senior consultant and advisor in sleep medicine and critical care at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi.

House of Charu Weighted blanket is available for ₹5,499.00 from Amazon.in



Blue light glasses

Blue light waves boost attention through the day and suppress the production of melatonin that helps you get to sleep at night. The lenses of these glasses filter out certain light waves emitted by the sun and digital devices like phones, laptops and tablets. "Even though it sounds like a perfect solution, recent studies have shown that it is not as effective as it claims to be. I suggest switching off digital devices at least two hours before one goes to sleep," explains Dr Nileena. *Aferelle Zero Power Blue Light Blocking Eye Protection Glasses, ₹649; at amazon.in*



ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES AND AMAZON.COM



Sleep aids that may help you get some much-needed zzzzz

Lullaby gadgets

SUSAN JOE PHILIP

The pandemic and the lifestyle changes made our sleep deficit worse. Enter sleep aids that claim to help us with the process. A study done by the market research company P&S Intelligence shows the global sleeping aids market worth USD 79 billion in 2019 is predicted to reach USD 163 billion by 2030.

"These sleeping aids can be used along with maintaining good sleep hygiene. While aids have been found useful, their effects can vary from person to person," says Dr Nileena NKM, psychiatrist and fellow in sleep medicine at Nithra Institute Of Sleep Sciences, Chennai. If you are looking for options, here are a few that you can check out, without a doctor's prescription.



Noise-cancelling earplugs

The technology blocks out any sound, be it car horns or loud sound from the TV. "It is best to sleep in a calm environment and this device will help people who do not have that luxury," says Dr Kanwar. The earplugs come in a variety of price ranges and with multiple features including apps to produce sleep sounds if needed and a battery life long enough to last through the night. *Bose Wireless Noise-Masking Sleepbuds, ₹8,494; croma.com*

Smart pillow

A smart pillow detects snoring. While some vibrate to nudge you to change your sleeping position, others inflate or deflate to adjust the head's elevation to keep the airways open. "Snoring can be loud when a person sleeps on the back. The best sleeping position is to lie on the sides," explains Dr Kanwar. *Smart Nora pillow, USD 359; at smartnora.com*



Wake up lights

Light plays an important role in the sleep cycle, helping with circadian rhythm: matching our body clock to that of the rising and setting of the sun. "While sunlight helps our body to be alert, darkness gives it a signal to be sluggish," says Dr Nileena. Wake up lights are designed to mimic natural light and their intensity slowly increases with time. Most come with the option of customizing its intensity and duration of glow.

"This will help people who live in cold climates, where it gets late for the sun to appear.

Similarly, people who work during night shifts and sleep during the day should use blinding curtains to keep their room dark," she adds. They can use the light to wake them up when dark outside.

Philips Smart Sleep Wake-Up Light, ₹27,573; at amazon.in

The American actor who quotes the Gita

How actor Alexx O'Neill forged a relationship with Indian cinema by taking up supporting characters in films and webseries

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

Alexx O'Neill is not a big fan of horror films. "The Ring was terrifying and *The Blairwitch Project* bothered me," he says. "They stuck in my head so much that it disturbed me."

That is the reason he loves the twist Indian cinema gives to the horror genre, by adding a dose of humour and making it a horror-comedy. "Isn't it wonderful," he says, over a phone call from Mumbai, "It is a lovely mixture because it opens up the frightening moments of the horror genre while diluting the terrifying plotlines, and opening it up to people like me who aren't fans of the genre."

Alexx is most excited that he has bagged a project in the horror-comedy genre, in the recently-released Hindi flick *Roohi*, starring Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor. In the film, he plays an American documentary filmmaker who visits a small village to document an ancient custom. "He is confused and lost, but what is happening in the village is gold for him since he is a photojournalist. So, he clings on to his camera all the time."

Roohi is the latest addition to Alexx's colourful filmography, which not only includes films from other Indian languages but also include webseries. "I see more amazing roles for someone like me," says the actor, who was also part of the critically-acclaimed Hindi web-series, *Aarya*. "Earlier, it was very difficult for people from outside India to

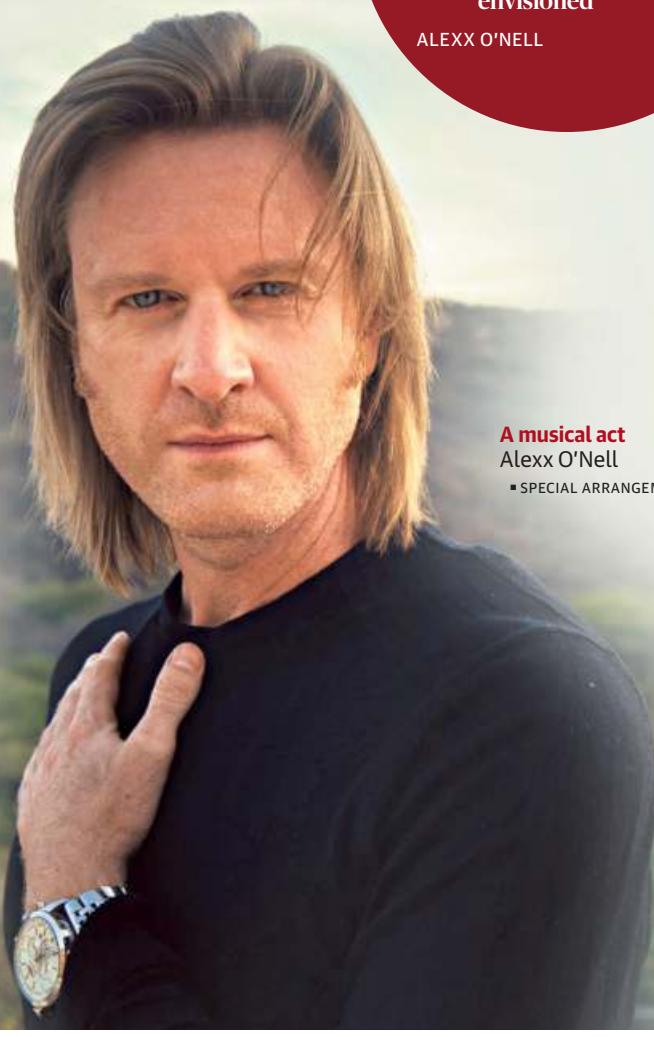
catch my work. Slowly, thanks to OTT platforms, that is changing. It is wonderful for actors like me that OTT is making our work accessible to people across the world."

Tryst with cinema

Alexx hails from Connecticut in the US and has been part of regional theatre and musicals

My association with South Indian projects made me realise how filmmakers assemble a cast not based on where they live but based on the characters they have envisioned

ALEXX O'NEILL



A musical act

Alexx O'Neill
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

there, but it was a chance visit to India that changed his life. "I was an actor-musician and did regional theatre in the US. I was travelling in India for something totally unrelated, and I was called for a modelling act," he recalls.

Modelling led to ads and that later led to films. Though he debuted with Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Cheeni Kum*, his first big production was in the 2010 Tamil film, *Madraspatinam*, starring Arya and Amy Jackson. "South Indian cinema has gained a massive foothold on the world stage...you need to look no further from *Baahubali* for proof. I am as proud of *Madraspatinam* and *Urumi* as I am of any of my Bollywood films. My association with these projects made me realise how South Indian filmmakers assemble a cast not based on where they live but based on the characters they have envisioned," says Alexx, who recently filmed a cameo with Alia Bhatt in director SS Rajamouli's upcoming biggie *RRR*.

The Sanskrit connection

Alexx hopes to continue his twin passion: action and music. He recently launched his music career with the single, 'Still On My Mind', the video of which featured actress Shama Sikander. Subsequently, based on his work in *Aarya*, Alexx released his version of 'A Bhagavad Gita Song', a track he composed and sang entirely in Sanskrit! "I had to study and memorise *slokas* from the [Bhagavad] Gita for my role in *Aarya*. These verses kept dancing around in my head, and I had to compose something with it."

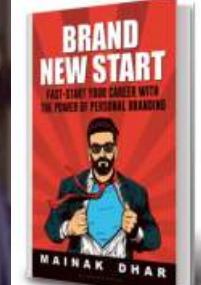
He chose the folk-rock style for the composition, for which he roped in singer-songwriter Delraaz Bunshah. "Everytime I was tired or travelling, these verses were always inside me that I felt compelled to set it to music in my own style. I really connected with all the messages in the Gita. Krishna essentially tells Arjuna that there is no shame in defeat, but there is shame in giving up. Failure may come and go, but giving up is not an option. That really appealed to me," says the actor, whose upcoming projects include *Bhoot Police* and Bengali film *Golandaaj*.



A surprising shift

Author Mainak Dhar and book

COVER ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



A different thrill

Author Mainak Dhar takes a break from zombies and snipers to look at effective personal brand building

MINI ANTHIKAD CHHIBBER

In the early days of lockdown, when Mainak Dhar heard of people losing their jobs and facing career uncertainty, he thought he could help out with his experience in the corporate sector. The 46-year-old author who is CEO for India & South Asia at Kimberly-Clark put out an offer on LinkedIn.

"Within a couple of weeks, more than two dozen people had reached out and I began chatting with them, helping with résumés and preparing for interviews," Mainak says.

He adds, "I found myself repeating common themes – the importance of doing something because it is a good fit with who you are versus chasing someone else's definition of success; self-actualisation versus depending on degrees and designations; and how to be more intentional and show up at key 'moments of truth'. I wondered if it would not be more helpful if I could put these thoughts together in the form of a book and that is how *Brand New Start* (Bloomsbury, ₹399) was born."

The Mumbai-based author has written the *Alice in Deadland* series which looks at a zombie apocalypse through the lens of the Lewis Carroll classic and also thrillers such as *Sniper's Eye* and *O3.02*.

"I had been working on a thriller but I asked myself whether another thriller would be useful at this time, or if I could create a more positive impact by sharing some of the ideas I was discussing with the people I was mentoring. I believe that brands and people make the most impact when they are driven by a sense of purpose. So, I put the thriller aside and began

working on *Brand New Start*," he says. Admitting there is no formula for success, Mainak says one will be more fulfilled if one is true to oneself. "People of net spend their energy trying to be someone else or trying to live up to someone else's definition of success."

Not a big fan of self-help books, Mainak says he hopes readers will ask themselves crucial questions. "Everyone can be successful, the challenge is to discover what you can be uniquely successful at and pursue it. As a society, we drum it into our children's heads that being successful means picking up labels that others have, instead of understanding what plays to their unique strengths and where they can make the most impact," he adds.

Speaking of the truth in personal branding Mainak says, "People think of it in superficial terms – the way we talk, dress, or network. The most important part of creating a strong personal brand is to be rooted in a clear sense of purpose; to use one's passions and talents to serve others."

The role of social media in personal brand building cannot be underestimated, as we all know now.

"The first touchpoint where people encounter one's brand is on social media – whether it is a recruiter looking up your LinkedIn profile or a date looking you up on Instagram. It is a critical part of building our personal brands. The important thing is to be thoughtful about the kind of brand you want to create. Many people see social media as an outlet for narcissism. It is best if we harness its power not just to post selfies but to form genuine connections," he adds.

Now showing

A documentary throws light on the continuing legacy of Assembly Rooms, the oldest cinema hall in Udhagamandalam that occupies a pride of place in The Nilgiris

K JESHI

Room's beginnings as a ballroom built for British soldiers in 1886. "It used to be called Misquith's Rooms. In 1922, Lady Willingdon (wife of Lord Willingdon who served as the Viceroy of India from 1931-36) bought it for ₹50,000, and donated it to the people of Ooty to promote art, entertainment and culture. Not many know that [actor and theatre artiste Vivien Leigh has performed here. From day one, the ground rules were set that no politics should come in the way of running the institution. That



Ticket tales Assembly Rooms in Udhagamandalam

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



holds good even today," explains Radhakrishnan, a retired journalist of *The Hindu*.

Assembly Rooms is the only cinema hall in the country to have a State's Governor as its patron and a District Collector as its president.

Radhakrishnan became its

honorary secretary in 1984. "It's a way of life from my childhood days. My family lived near the Ooty Botanical Garden which is a stone's throw away from the Assembly Hall. Tickets were priced at a meagre 42 paise then. Catching a movie became a routine," he says and recalls watching movies

like *Sound of Music*, *Ben-Hur*, *10 Commandments*, *Battle of the Bulge*, Clint Eastwood's *A Fistful of Dollars*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and the hugely popular *Cleopatra* featuring Elizabeth Taylor at the theatre.

The Assembly Rooms began screening English movies in 1924, a practice that continues to this day. In 1974, the theatre underwent a major structural change. A facade came up and the wooden flooring that served as dance floor

was removed, and modern seats were installed.

"Now, we show other languages too. I remember once when we screened Kamal Hassan's movie *Salangai Oli*, some of the audience members sought permission to whistle during two scenes. Discipline is foremost while watching a movie here. There are people who wouldn't come for a show if their regular seats were not there," says Radhakrishnan.

In the documentary, Radhakrishnan also talks about the museum within the theatre's premises and which has an enviable collection, including a vintage 1954 Bauer movie projector that is in working condition, old film rolls, cinemascope lens, and photographic records.

Assembly Rooms has also hosted Amitabh Bachchan once. In the early '90s, Bachchan watched the rushes of his film *Hum* whilst filming for it in Udhagamandalam, recalls Radhakrishnan.

Bachchan and Kimi Katkar were watching the shot that featured Rajinikanth (who also acted in the movie) running down a slope. They commented on his performance, and how it can be bettered in a healthy way," he adds.

The theatre stands on 1.15 acres of prime real estate. It was shut in 2011, and was reopened in November 2015 following its renovation; 340 push back seats, digital and 3D technology were introduced to give the audience a better viewing experience. Though the lowest ticket prices remained at ₹4 – and the maximum at ₹30 – for a long time, the prices have now been revised. A second class ticket costs ₹60, first class costs ₹80 while the box seat costs ₹100.

"As a public institution, Assembly Rooms is still vulnerable. It is a landmark that is truly owned and safeguarded by the people of Udhagamandalam. It is a part of their life," Radhakrishnan concludes.

POOCH CAFE

I'VE COME BACK TO IMPLORE YOU TO CHERISH THE MOMENTS OF YOUR YOUTH BEFORE THE DAYS PASS YOU BY. PLEASE HEED MY WORDS.

YEESH.

WHAT?

WHEN DID I START USING THE WORD "IMPORE"?

PEANUTS

SIR, LET'S NOT MISS ANY MORE SCHOOL...

FORGET IT!

SCHOOL ISN'T IMPORTANT MARCIE...I'M JUST GONNA SIT HERE WITH MY OL' FRIEND SNOOPY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!

HE NEVER HAD ANY EDUCATION, AND HE'S DONE ALL RIGHT!

ACTUALLY, I'VE ALWAYS REGRETTED THAT I NEVER WENT TO MEDICAL SCHOOL!

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

WAHAAWAH!
OH, GREAT! A CRYING BABY ON BOARD!
I'M HOMESICK!

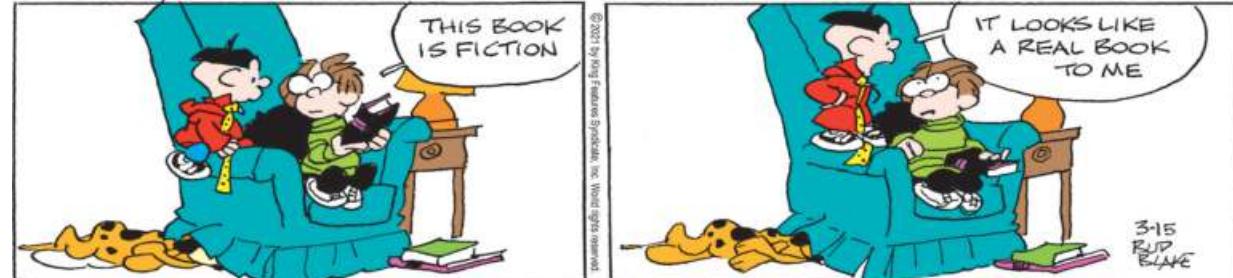
CALVIN AND HOBBES

WE, LOOK AT YOU! DON'T YOU LOOK NICE AND NEAT!

YES, I BELIEVE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GROOMING.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, I'D BETTER GET IN THE VAN IF I WANT TO BE IN BED ON TIME...

JUST WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

TIGER

THIS BOOK IS FICTION

IT LOOKS LIKE A REAL BOOK TO ME

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

Things I've learned in life:

Failure is not an option.

It's a lifestyle.

I'VE DECIDED TO REALLY COMMIT.

ASK US

VIDYA BALA

Q. I am 26 and a soldier. I earn ₹35,000 per month. I wish to begin investing. How should I start?

KAHINUR DAS

A. First, thank you for your service. If you are a fresher to investment, you can start with simple products such as Public Provident Fund (PPF) and recurring deposits in banks. A PPF account can be opened in all major banks and post offices. Since bank rates are low, keep the tenure at 1 year and lock for the longer term when interest rates go up.

Once you get familiar with this, you can choose small sums (viz. 20% of your savings) in index equity funds – choose a Nifty 100 index fund – where you need not track the stock market nor try to check which fund manager is good. You can do a regular systematic investment plan (SIP) in this. This should be a good start.

Q. I am 22 and have recently joined an IT firm. I earn ₹25,000 and plan to give ₹5,000 to my family. Could you please guide me on short-term investments (less than 5 years), mid-term investments (5-10 years) and long-term investments (greater than 10 years)?

VAIDEESH

A. It is heartening to know that you have different time frames in mind for your goals. If these goals are quantifiable try to put a number to them so that you know how much to save. We are not sure what you can save post your expenses.

However, as it may not exceed ₹20,000, you can focus on the immediate goal (less than 5 years away) and put away 15-20% in equity index funds such as the Nifty 50 using the SIP route.

For the remaining sum, use a combination of recurring deposits, ultra-short debt funds and short-duration funds. Get the help of a financial adviser to ensure you do not choose funds with high credit risk.

For the 5-10-year goal, you can invest 40% in equities using a combination of Nifty 50 index fund, Nifty 500



index fund and an international fund that mimics the U.S. index – S&P 500. For debt, use the above said categories of funds along with corporate bond funds. For your goal targeting 10 years, consider putting about 50-70% in equity depending on how well you can handle the losses in equity when it falls (and it will fall). If you have the right guidance, use some actively-managed funds across flexi-, mid- and small-cap categories in addition to index funds. For the debt portion, if your goal is for retirement, you can consider opening an NPS account (if your tax-saving need goes up with a rise in income in a few years) and use the government (G) and corporate bond (C) option alone. Otherwise, choose the same combination of debt options suggested for the 5-10-year goal.

Q. I am 25 and a government employee. My salary is ₹30,000. I spend about ₹10,000-₹12,000. Please provide suggestions to invest systematically. I wish to focus on high growth for over 10 years. Also, I'm interested in the stock market but don't know enough. Please suggest the best mutual fund company.

A. As a government employee, you will likely

already have an NPS contribution. In addition, consider the SIP route to investing in the Nifty 500 index fund and Midcap 150 index fund, given that you want high growth.

Since you are new to investing, it is easier to use index funds than look for the 'best managed' active equity fund. You will also not be mis-sold any products in the index fund space. Please note that there will be short-term losses in these funds too as that is the way equity operates. Use the SIP route to invest steadily.

As for stocks, please study and read up regularly about the market and after a few years, consider setting aside a small sum to invest. Let mutual funds be your primary route to investing. You can also use simple products such as PPF to protect your wealth from the ups and downs of equity.

(The author is Co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

What ELSS, if not fixed deposits?

Both equity-linked savings schemes and long-term FDs help save tax. But what's your risk appetite?

NAVEEN KUKREJA

Equity-linked savings schemes (ELSS) help you save tax. But, so do tax-saver fixed deposits (FDs). What should you opt for?

The answer depends on your risk profile. But, before that, let's take a look at what each offers, and entails. Investments in both ELSS and tax-saving FDs of up to ₹1.5 lakh per financial year qualify for tax deduction under Section 80C.

ELSS primarily invests in equities. On the other hand, tax-saving FDs are fixed income instruments offered by the post office and banks. Apart from being different asset classes, ELSS and tax-saving FDs also differ widely in terms of product features and taxation of returns.

Hence, a comparison of product features would help investors in making an informed choice between these two tax-saving options.

Capital protection

Tax-saving FDs from the post office and banks score high in terms of capital protection, especially when compared with market-linked investment products such as ELSS. Post-office term deposits come with a sovereign guarantee from the Government of India, and deposits in banks that are listed as scheduled banks by the RBI, are insured up to ₹5 lakh under the DICGC, an RBI subsidiary. This covers cumulative deposits of each

depositor in fixed, recurring, current and savings accounts of up to ₹5 lakh with each scheduled bank in case of bank failure. If you are a low-risk investor, you must know that ELSS funds primarily invest in equities and that such investments are prone to volatility

If you are a low-risk investor, you must know that ELSS funds primarily invest in equities and are prone to volatility

periods, respectively. Tax-saving FDs of banks and post office come with a lock-in period of 5 years. Depositors can either opt for reinvestment option – wherein the interest component is reinvested till the end of the FD tenure – or for quarterly or monthly interest payouts, if available, to generate regular income.

In the case of ELSS funds, the lock-in period of 3 years is one of the shortest among all Section 80C tax-saving investment instruments.

Although it is always advisable to stay invested in ELSS schemes for the long term, the option to redeem just after three years offers much greater financial flexibility to investors.

ELSS investors can also choose to stop or pause their SIPs any time without incurring any penalty.

Higher returns?

However,

being an equity-oriented scheme, ELSS beats fixed income instruments in the long term by a wide margin. In fact, ELSS, as a category, generated average annualised returns of about 9%, 16% and 13% p.a. over the last 3-year, 5-year and 10-year periods.

minimum investment

The minimum investment amount for opening FDs in most banks and in the post office schemes is ₹1,000. However, they do not charge consumers

for opening or maintaining an FD. In the case of ELSS funds, the minimum investment amount for most fund houses is ₹500.

Tax treatment

The interest income generated by FDs is taxed as per the applicable tax slab of the depositor. For an ELSS, the long-term capital gains (LTCG) exceeding ₹1 lakh in a financial year realised from equity and equity-related instruments such as ELSS and equity mutual funds, attract LTCG tax of 10%. ELSS funds offer greater tax efficiency, especially for those in the higher tax brackets.

Moreover, the higher upside potential of equities over the long term allows ELSS funds that are performing well to generate much higher post-tax returns than FDs.

Capital protection and income certainty offered by tax-saving FDs would appeal to those having a conservative risk appetite. ELSS funds would suit those with a higher risk appetite seeking higher returns, greater liquidity, tax efficiency and long-term wealth creation.

While picking an ELSS scheme, make sure you compare the performances of various ELSS funds over the last 3-year and 5-year periods with their benchmark indices. Although past performances do not guarantee future ones, comparing funds will help you understand how they dealt with various economic conditions and market cycles in the past.

(The author is CEO & Co-founder, Paisabazaar.com)



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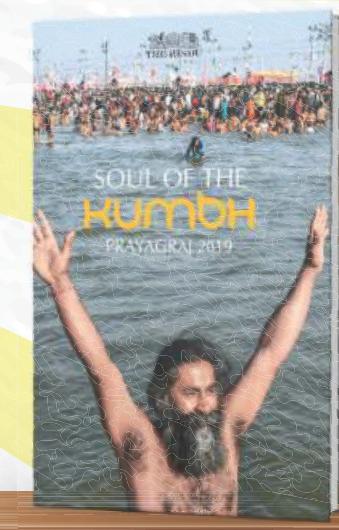
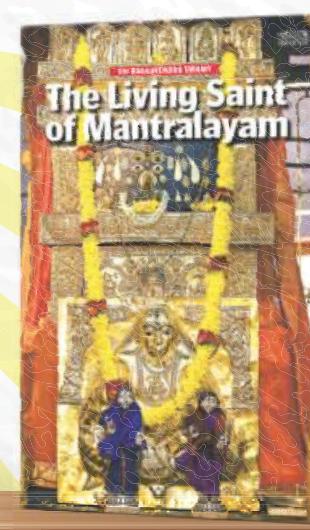
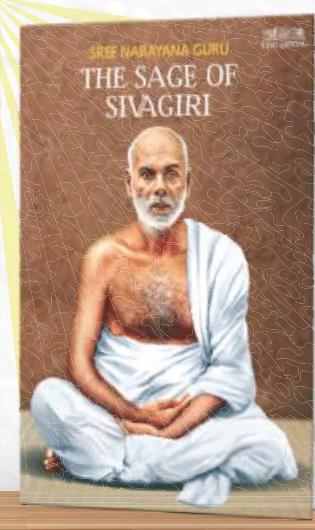
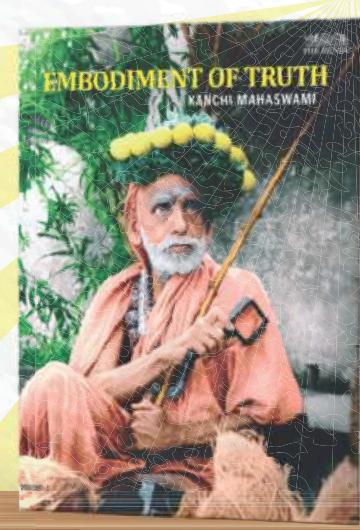
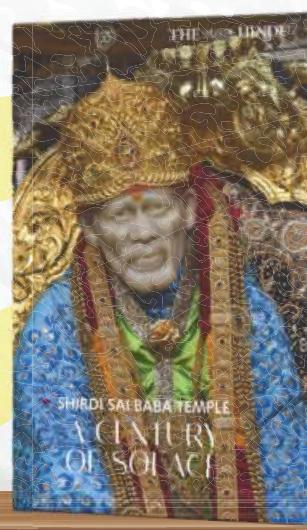
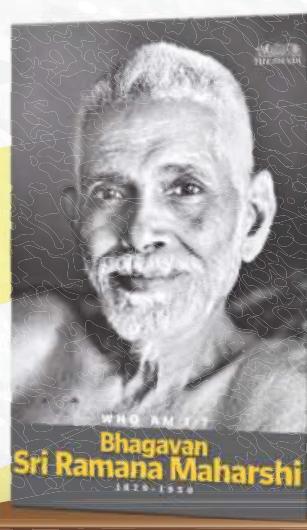
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China, N. Korea threats loom as Blinken, Austin head to Asia

U.S. officials tried reaching out to Pyongyang but received no response: official

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Threats from China and North Korea will loom large over the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, part of a larger effort to bolster U.S. influence and calm concerns about America's role in Asia.

A senior administration official said on Saturday that U.S. officials have tried to reach out to North Korea through multiple channels since last month, but have yet to receive a response. That makes consultations with the reclusive country's neighbours, Japan, South Korea and China, all the more critical.

Alaska meet

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin are heading to Japan and South Korea for four days of talks starting on Monday as the new administration tries to shore up partnerships with the two key regional allies. Mr. Blinken and Mr. Biden's National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, will meet with Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska, on Thursday.

The trip is intended to restore what Mr. Biden hopes



Greater role: A file photo of U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington. • AP

will be a calming and even-keeled approach to ties with Tokyo and Seoul after four years of transactional and often temperamental relations under Donald Trump. He had upended diplomatic norms by meeting not once, but three times, with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin also plan virtual meetings with journalists, civil-society members and others. After reassuring their counterparts of U.S. commitments to Japanese and South Korean security, they plan to focus on an increasingly assertive China, the nuclear challenge from North Korea and the pandemic.

In his first months in office, Mr. Biden has signalled his desire to return the Asia-

Pacific to the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda. In keeping with his broader "America is back" diplomatic theme, Mr. Biden has pledged to keep stability in the region at the core of his international initiatives.

On Friday, Mr. Biden participated in a virtual summit with the leaders of India, Japan and Australia. "A free and open Indo-Pacific is essential," Mr. Biden said. "The U.S. is committed to working with you, our partners and all of our allies in the region to achieve stability."

As part of that effort and "to reduce the risks of escalation," the senior official said efforts had been made to connect with the North Koreans since mid-February, including through what is

known as the "New York channel." To date, the official said, "we have not received any response from Pyongyang." The official was not authorised to publicly discuss the diplomatic outreach and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Payment for troops stay

Meanwhile, U.S. and South Korean negotiators have overcome years of contentious discussions under Mr. Trump to reach a tentative deal on paying for the American troop presence in South Korea.

As he had done with allies in Europe, Mr. Trump threatened to reduce security cooperation unless host countries paid more. That led to fears of troop withdrawals at a time of particular uncertainty as China boosts efforts to dominate the region and North Korea's nuclear weapons remain a major source of angst.

"Diplomacy is back at the center of our foreign policy, and we are working to strengthen America's relationships with our allies as well as the relationships among them," said Sung Kim, who is the top U.S. diplomat for Asia.

At least 38 killed in Myanmar protests, says advocacy group

Military declares martial law in two Yangon townships

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
YANGON

Myanmar security forces killed at least 38 people on Sunday, 22 of them in the Hlaing Tharyar district of Yangon, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners advocacy group said. The toll would equal that of March 3, which had previously recorded more deaths than any other day.

Myanmar's junta late on Sunday imposed martial law in two densely populated Yangon townships.

More than 80 people have been killed since in mass protests since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi – a toll expected to rise dramatically after Sunday's violence.

The junta has repeatedly justified its power grab by alleging widespread electoral fraud in November's elections, which Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won by a landslide.

State-run media announced on Sunday that Yangon's massive Hlaing Tharyar township and the neighbouring Shwepyitha township will be placed under martial law. The vast and impoverished townships are



Call for unity: People flashing a three-finger salute during an anti-coup protest at Hledan junction in Yangon. • REUTERS

known as factory hubs and home to garment factories.

The junta "gives administrative and judicial martial law power to the Yangon regional commander... to perform security, maintain the rule of law and tranquility more effectively," said an announcer on state-run TV.

Soldiers and police have

in recent weeks been staging near-daily crackdowns against demonstrators calling for a return to democracy – deploying tear gas and firing rubber bullets and live rounds to quell anti-coup protests.

In

Hlaing Tharyar township, police and soldiers clashed violently with protesters wielding sticks and knives who hid behind makeshift barricades.

Protesters using cut-out trash cans as shields man-

Pak. Hindus forgive temple vandals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PESHAWAR

The Hindu community in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to pardon the mob that vandalised and burned down a century-old temple in the province.

The local clerics and members of the Hindu community held a meeting on Saturday to resolve the dispute.

As per the dialogue, informally called 'jirga', the accused have tendered an apology over the attack and a similar incident in 1997. The Muslim clerics have assured full protection to the Hindus and their rights as per the country's Constitution.

A reconciliation statement from the meeting would be presented to the Supreme Court, in a bid to secure the release of the accused from detention.

On December 30 last year, a mob led by some local clerics, vandalised the temple and an adjoining 'samadhi' and set it on fire in Terri village of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The attack had drawn strong condemnation from activists and the minority Hindu community leaders, prompting the Supreme Court to order its reconstruction.

Sri Lanka asks Amazon to not sell flag-themed items

Row over lion-printed bikinis, doormats

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Lanka flag," the Sri Lankan Embassy in China said.

Sri Lanka's Embassy in Washington said it had also complained to the U.S. government over what it called a "violation of intellectual property rights" of the South Asian nation.

However, two days after Sri Lanka's intervention, dozens of retailers were still selling the flag-themed items.

Several Chinese vendors on Amazon were offering the doormat at prices ranging from \$10 to \$24, and the lion-printed briefs and bikini from \$9.20 to \$17.30.

"This is how the Chinese see Sri Lanka," said one Facebook user.

Another suggested the doormat was a forewarning of how future relations might play out in light of Sri Lanka's huge debt to China.

The company which marketed the product on Amazon was requested by letter from the embassy to immediately cease selling the doormats and any such products, misusing the Sri

Uproar over U.K. police action on vigil

Police allegedly manhandled women at a memorial ceremony for Sarah Everard

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Police in London drew widespread criticism on Sunday after handcuffing mourners at a vigil for a woman who was murdered after setting out to walk home, in a case that has sparked national fury about violence against women.

Officers scuffled with some members of the hundreds-strong crowd that gathered despite coronavirus restrictions for a candlelit tribute late on Saturday, close to the spot where 33-year-old marketing executive Sarah Everard disappeared on March 3.

Mourners shouted "shame on you" at police, with tensions running high as a man arrested in connection with the murder is an officer.

Social media footage showed police restraining



In shock: People mourning at a memorial for Sarah Everard in London on Sunday. • REUTERS

and handcuffing some mourners, leading to an outpouring of criticism from across the political spectrum.

Both Home Secretary Priti Patel and London mayor Sadiq Khan said they had asked

for explanations from the Metropolitan police over how the vigil was handled.

Wayne Couzens, a police officer, appeared in court on Saturday on charges of kidnapping and murdering her.

The murder of Everard, who vanished after setting out to walk home from a friend's flat, has shocked the country and brought discussion around women's safety to the fore once again.

ELSEWHERE



Zaghari-Ratcliffe faces new charges in Iran court

TEHRAN

British-Iranian dual national Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe appeared in a Tehran court on Sunday to face new charges of "propaganda against the system", a week after she finished serving a five-year sentence, her lawyer said. The hearing has dashed hopes for a swift release of the 42-year-old, in a case that has heightened tensions between London and Tehran. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said it was "unacceptable that Iran has chosen to continue a second wholly arbitrary case". AFP



Rare sale: A portion of the digital collage titled *Everydays: The First 5,000 Days*, by an artist named Beeple. • AP

Crypto investor buys \$70 mn digital artwork

Beeple made the collage in over 13 years

REUTERS
LONDON

The buyer of a \$70 million digital-only artwork was named on Friday by auction house Christie's as a crypto asset investor who goes by the pseudonym "Metakovan."

The auction to buy the work by digital artist Beeple was the first ever sale by a major auction house of a piece of digital art that does not exist in physical form.

The work is in the form of a new kind of digital asset: a Non-Fungible Token (NFT). This means that it is authenticated by blockchain, which certifies its originality and ownership.

Metakovan, whose real name was not disclosed, is the founder of Metapurse,

the world's largest NFT fund, Christie's said in a statement.

The work, called *Everydays: The First 5000 Days* is a collage of 5,000 individual images, which were made one-per-day over more than thirteen years.

It sold for \$69,346,250, which Metakovan paid in the form of cryptocurrency Ether.

The sale put Beeple into the top three most valuable living artists, Christie's said, trailing only David Hockney and Jeff Koons.

"When you think of high-valued NFTs, this one is going to be pretty hard to beat. And here's why – it represents 13 years of everyday work," Metakovan said in a statement.

U.S. orders emergency agency to help with child migration surge

Efforts on to temporarily house thousands of children at border

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The Biden administration ordered the government's disaster emergency agency on Saturday to help with a surge in migrant children crossing the southern border that has overwhelmed processing facilities.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas called upon the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support an effort to temporarily house thousands of children who crossed the US-Mexico border alone amid criticisms that authorities were holding them for long periods in overcrowded facilities.

The Health and Human Services (HHS) department is currently holding about 8,800 migrant children and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection has hundreds more in their charge, with many arriving every day.

In February alone CBP detained 9,457 unaccompanied migrant children at the southern border.

"Since April 2020, the number of encounters at the border has been rising due to ongoing violence, natural disasters, food insecurity, and poverty in the Northern Triangle countries of Central America."

The Department of Homeland Security said in a



In limbo: Asylum seeking migrant families with children at a makeshift camp in Granjeno, Texas. • REUTERS

statement that FEMA would be part of a 90-day effort to ensure the children are safely sheltered and transferred to people who will take care of them, usually relatives already living in the United States.

"The federal government is responding to the arrival of record numbers of individuals, including unaccompanied children, at the southwest border," the department said.

While migrant adults and families continue to be sent back to Mexico when they are caught, unaccompanied children are being processed and get help resetting with U.S. relatives.

"Our goal is to ensure that unaccompanied children are transferred to HHS as quickly as possible, consistent with legal requirements and in the best interest of the children," Mr. Mayorkas said in a statement.

old government of President Joe Biden faces growing pressure from migrants, apparently encouraged to try to enter the United States by his rejection of previous president Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" policy toward undocumented immigrants.

While migrant adults and families continue to be sent back to Mexico when they are caught, unaccompanied children are being processed and get help resetting with U.S. relatives.

"Our goal is to ensure that unaccompanied children are transferred to HHS as quickly as possible, consistent with legal requirements and in the best interest of the children," Mr. Mayorkas said in a statement.

Ireland, Italian region halt AstraZeneca shots

Concerns over blood clot incidents

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBLIN

Ireland on Sunday became the latest country to suspend the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine over concerns about patients developing post-jab blood clots, as nations across the world sought to step up their COVID-19 immunisation drives.

Several countries including Denmark, Norway and Bulgaria last week paused the rollout of vaccines from the Anglo/Swedish pharmaceutical giant over fears of blood clots.

The World Health Organization has said no causal link had been established between the vaccine and blood clotting.

The manufacturer and Europe's medicines watchdog have also insisted that the vaccine is safe.

An AstraZeneca spokesman said "an analysis of our safety data that covers reported cases from more than 17 million doses of vaccine administered has shown no evidence of an increased risk" in blood clot conditions.

"In fact, the reported numbers of these types of events for COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca are lower than the number that would have occurred naturally in the unvaccinated population."

Meanwhile, Italy's northern region of Piedmont said on Sunday it would stop using a batch of AstraZeneca coronavirus shots after a teacher died following his vaccination on Saturday.



A medical worker holding a vial of AstraZeneca vaccine in Melun, France. • AFP

bution of vaccines.

A spokesman for Ireland's health ministry told AFP that "the administration of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca is temporarily deferred from this morning, Sunday 14th March".

The move came after Ireland's National Immunisation Advisory Committee recommended suspending the rollout as a precaution after "a report from the Norwegian Medicines Agency of four new reports of serious blood clotting events in adults after vaccination".

"It has not been concluded that there is any link" between the AstraZeneca vaccine and the blood clot cases and action has been taken "pending receipt of further information", Ireland's deputy chief medical officer Ronan Glynn said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Italy's northern region of Piedmont said on Sunday it would stop using a batch of AstraZeneca coronavirus shots after a teacher died following his vaccination on Saturday.

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Ishan and Kohli help India pull level

After Washington and Shardul's wily spells restrict England to 164, the hosts cruise to victory

ENGLAND IN INDIA

ASHWIN ACHAL
AHMEDABAD

Virat Kohli (73 n.o., 49b, 5x4, 3x6) pulled himself out of a mini-slump, while Ishan Kishan (56, 32b, 5x4, 4x6) made it a debut to remember in India's seven-wicket win over England in the second T20I here on Sunday.

Stylish self

Kohli, who had three ducks in his last four international visits to the crease, was back to his stylish self, guiding India past a tricky 165-run target. The captain brought up his 26th T20I fifty with a lovely straight six, walking down the track to pacer Tom Curran.

Kishan, who opened the batting in place of Shikhar Dhawan, was fearless in his strokeplay. He brought the big crowd to its feet with four huge sixes. Two of them came off successive deliveries from Adil Rashid, but the leg-spinner had the last laugh when he trapped Kishan leg-before in the same over.

The southpaw did receive a reprieve on 40, when Ben Stokes dropped the simplest of chances at long-on. Kishan cashed in, bringing the required rate down to a manageable 7.1 at the time of his dismissal. Next man Rishabh Pant was keen to keep the momentum going, tonking Rashid into the midwicket stands off just the fourth ball he faced.

Pant struck another maximum off Chris Jordan, before a helicopter shot landed in the hands of Jonny Bairstow at deep mid-wicket. Kohli, who completed 3000 T20I runs with this knock, and Shreyas Iyer (8 n.o.) took In-



Master of the chase: Kohli's steady hand took India past the finish line. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

Innings scan

ENGLAND	INDIA
44	Dots 32
15	Fours 12
3	Sixes 9
44/1	PP 50/1
8.20	RR 9.30

dia home with 13 balls to spare. After being put in, England pushed hard on a slow surface to make a respectable score. Opener Jason Roy (46, 35b, 4x4, 2x6) led the way, followed by useful contributions from Dawid Malan (24), Eoin Morgan (28) and Ben Stokes (24).

Roy relied heavily on the reverse-sweep to counter the spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar. With

third-man and point inside the circle, Roy fancied his chances. He got mixed results, often missing, and sometimes making good contact.

Washington fired it in, while Chahal used flight to make it difficult for the batsmen. The Indian pacers, Shardul Thakur in particular, made good use of the slower deliveries. With the ball stopping and keeping low, the visitors found it tough to play the big shots.

The best example of clever bowling came from Shardul, who got Morgan to completely mistime a shot. Morgan committed much too early to a slower length ball outside off, and chipped it high to wicketkeeper Pant. Shardul,

Washington and Shardul – both finished with figures of two for 29 – were the most successful bowlers.

The Indian fielding, however, was error-prone. Debutant Suryakumar Yadav dropped a catch to give Bairstow a life on 13, while Bhuvneshwar, Shreyas and Hardik conceded runs with clumsy misfields.

We don't play well on slow wickets: Morgan

S. DIPAK RAGAV

Eoin Morgan felt that his team's weakness got exposed on a wicket that lacked pace compared to the one that was used in the first match.

"We don't play well on slow, low wickets. We were right in the game, we did a lot of the structure of our innings really well. But when we tried to accelerate, we managed to lose wickets at different stag-

es," Morgan said after the heavy loss on Sunday.

"Have to give India some credit there. I thought they bowled particularly well, having adapted and recognised what worked well on that wicket."

"Debutant Ishan Kishan played pretty well and managed to take the game away from us," Morgan said.

"We could have been a bit more accurate with the lines and lengths that we bowled."



Punam Raut. ■ BCCI

Balance tilts

What tilted the balance in favour of South Africa was the manner in which left-hander Lara Goodall and 'player-of-the-match' Mignon du Preez hammered the bowlers around while forging a cen-

trury partnership. More than the personal award, du Preez was thrilled that her team beat India in India in a series for the first time since 2014. This was the third series win for South Africa against India.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA		SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING	
Priya Punia c Khaka b Shangase 32 (51b, 5x4), Smriti Mandhana c Lee b Shabnim 10 (16b, 2x4), Punam Raut (not out) 104 (123b, 10x4), Mithali Raj c Shabnim b Sekhukhune 45 (71b, 4x4), Harmanpreet Kaur b Sekhukhune 54 (35b, 7x4, 1x6), Deepi Sharma (not out) 8 (4b, 1x4); Extras (lb-1, w-12): 13; Total (for four wkts. in 50 overs): 266.		Shabnim 10-0-50-1, Kapp 10-0-58-0, Khaka 7-0-26-0, Sekhukhune 8-0-63-2, Shangase 10-1-41-1, Bosch 5-0-27-0.	
		SOUTH AFRICA	
		Lizelle Lee lbw b Harmanpreet 69 (75b, 10x4), Laura Wolvaardt c Sushma b Mansi 53 (78b, 6x4), Lara Goodall (not out) 59 (66b, 5x4), Mignon du Preez c Harmanpreet b Rajeshwari 61 (55b, 8x4, 1x6), Marianne Kapp (not out) 22 (18b, 3x4); Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-3): 5; Total (for three wkts. in 48.4 overs): 269.	
		FALL OF WICKETS	
		1-116 (Lee, 22.6), 2-133 (Wolvaardt, 28.4), 3-236 (du Preez, 44.2).	

FALL OF WICKETS

1-17 (Smriti, 4.6 overs), 2-61 (Priya, 15.1), 3-164 (Mithali, 37.1), 4-252 (Harmanpreet, 47.6). 1-17 (Smriti, 4.6 overs), 2-61 (Priya, 15.1), 3-164 (Mithali, 37.1), 4-252 (Harmanpreet, 47.6).

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TV PICKS

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

IN BRIEF

Antetokounmpo props Bucks

LOS ANGELES Giannis Antetokounmpo's triple-double of 33 points propelled the Milwaukee Bucks to a 125-119 NBA victory over Washington on Saturday.

The results: Phoenix 111 lost to Indiana 122, Denver 103 lost to Dallas 116, Atlanta 121 bt Sacramento 106, Minnesota 121 lost to Portland 125, Brooklyn 100 bt Detroit 95, Charlotte 114 bt Toronto 104, Washington 119 lost to Milwaukee 125, Oklahoma City 97 lost to New York 119.

Fencer Bhavani books Tokyo berth

CHENNAI C.A. Bhavani Devi became the first Indian fencer to qualify for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. The sabre fencer secured a spot in the World Cup in Hungary after the host lost in the quarterfinals of the team event, allowing Korea to progress to the last four.

Bhavani qualified through the Adjusted Official Ranking (AOR) Method.

Amit and Lalita triumph

NEW DELHI Amit Sharma of Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, and Lalita Dahiya of Ministry of Finance won the men's and women's titles respectively in the inter-ministry badminton.

The results (finals): Men:

Amit Sharma bt Siddharth Nandal 25-23, 21-16.

Doubles: Saurabh Sharma & Himanshu Saroha bt Amit & Nandal 21-14, 19-21, 21-10.

Women: Lalita Dahiya bt Sheetal Kargeti 21-13, 21-12.

Doubles: Sheetal & Ruchika Patwal bt Lalita & Priya Nalgundwan 21-18, 21-19.

Mixed doubles: Saurabh & Lalita bt Amit & Swati Sharma 21-15, 21-17.

Veteran: Men: Rajeev Sharma bt Vijay Sharma 21-19, 16-7 (retired).

Women: Sarita Kumari bt Priya Nalgundwan 21-18, 21-19.

Tare, Shaw power Mumbai to fourth title

Uttar Pradesh falters despite opener Madhav Kaushik's unbeaten 158 and a challenging total

HAZARE TROPHY

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

When needed the most, the mighty Mumbai's batting came good and blew away Uttar Pradesh by chasing down the target of 313 runs with six wickets and 51 deliveries to spare.

The reward for this power-hitting display was a fourth Vijay Hazare (50-over) title, at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground on Sunday.

Having reached the final by riding mainly on the shoulders of skipper Prithvi Shaw's belligerent form, Mumbai covered the distance against UP by smashing 37 boundaries and eight sixes in 41.3 overs, once the young skipper set the pace.



Great feeling: The Mumbai team members are overjoyed after emerging victorious. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shaw ensured that UP's joy of setting a challenging target was short lived. Dropped by rival skipper Karan Sharma when on five, Shaw raced away to a 39-ball 73 (10x4, 4x6) and ended the competition with a record aggregate of 827 runs.

He perished after top-edging an attempted-pull into the waiting hands of deep square-leg. The whirlwind opening stand of 89 off 9.1 overs put Mumbai ahead of the required run-rate and the side was never again seriously challenged by UP.

Consigliori should make amends

HYDERABAD: Trainer L V R Deshmukh's ward Consigliori, who ran third in his last start, should make amends in the Sultan Phiroze Plate, the main event of Monday's (Mar. 15) races.

Rails will be announced one hour before the first race.

1. BABY BELLE PLATE (Div. I) (1,400m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 1.45 p.m.: 1. Arrownbow (10) Ajeeth Kumar 56.2, City of Blessing (1) Chouhan 56.3, Dream Station (8) Mukesh 56.4, My Master (6) Nakhat Singh 56.5, Paladino (2) Afroz Khan 56.6, Pedro Planet (7) Kiran Naidu 56.7, Angelita (3) P. Sai Kumar 54.5, 8. Goldrun (5) Koushik 54.5, 9. Hot Seat (9) Akshay Kumar 54.5 and 10. Siri (4) B.R. Kumar 54.5.

1. HOT SEAT, 2. CITY OF BLESSING, 3. DREAM STATION

2. DILAWAR PLATE (1,400m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.20: 1. Aintree (2) N.B. Kuldeep 62, 2. Gusty Look (10) Rohit Kumar 61, 3. Green Turf (9) Mukesh Kumar 57.5, 4. Coastal Cruise (6) B.R. Kumar 55.5, 5. Always Success (5) Santosh Raj N R 55.6, Ellira (4) Afroz Khan 55.7, Tiger Of The Sea (8) Surya Prakash 55.8, Mt. Davidson (3) P. Sai Kumar 54.9, Team Player (1) Nakhat Singh 54.10, Thrill Of Power (7) Akshay Kumar 54 and 11. That's My Speed (II) Md. Ismail 50.

1. AINTREE, 2. THRILL OF POWER, 3. ELMIRA

3. BABY BELLE PLATE (Div. II) (1,400m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 2.55: 1. Campania (5) Chouhan 56.2, Dream Jewel (3) Koushik 56.3, Gurbaaz (7) Kiran Naidu 56.4, Sorrento (4) Kuldeep Singh 56.5, Space Walk (1) B.R. Kumar 56.6, Aarya (6) Afroz Khan 54.5, 7. Georgia Peach (8) Akshay Kumar 54.5, 8. Golden Amaris (2) P. Sai Kumar 54.5, 9. Golden Lady (10) A.A. Vikrant 54.5 and 10. Good Tidings (1) Ajeeth Kumar 54.5.

1. CAMPANIA, 2. GEORGIA PEACH, 3. AARYA

4. ABBOTS ROYAL PLATE (Div. I) (1,600m), 5-y-o & upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 4.40: 1. Call Of The Blue (3) B.R. Kumar 62.5, 2. Rhythm Selection (1) Surya Prakash 62.5, 3. Ulysses (5) Mukesh Kumar 61.5, 4. Ashwa Arjun (10) Gaurav Singh 60.5, 5. Explosive (2) Ajeeth Kumar 60.6, 6. Super Act (6) P. Gaddam 52.5 and 13. Minnelli (11) Surya Prakash 50.

1. DANCING DOLL, 2. NOVA SCOTIA, 3. MINNELLI

5. JAIDEV PLATE (Div. I) (1,400m), rated upto 25 (Cat. III), 4.05: 1. Alluri's Pride (Ex: Shivalik Meadow) (3) Gaurav Singh 62, 2. Belle Springs (6) N.B. Kuldeep 62, 3. Shivalik Bright (8)

Thereafter, it was former captain Aditya Tare all the way. He hit an unbeaten 118 (107b, 18x4) and stitched two 88-run innings-building partnerships. For the third-wicket, Shams Mulaani (36, 43b, 2x6) kept Tare company before being replaced by Shivam Dube (42, 28b, 6x4, 1x6) during the fourth-wicket partnership.

Earlier, opting to bat, UP managed to reach 312 for four – in spite of scoring just seven runs off the bat in the first seven overs – after opener Madhav Kaushik changed gears to score an unbeaten 156-ball 15x4, 4x3.

Century stand

For the opening wicket, Kaushik and Samarth

Singh (55, 73b, 4x4, 2x3) raised 122 in 26 overs after seeing off disciplined opening spells of Dhawal Kulkarni and Tushar Deshpande. Kaushik put on another 128 runs with the more experienced Akshdeep Nath (55, 40b, 4x4, 3x6) for the fourth wicket.

The absence of an injured Kulkarni during the death-overs played its part in UP getting past the 300-run mark.

But once Shaw and Tare held centrestage, by turns, the target appeared increasingly small.

The scores:

UP 312/4 in 50 overs (Madhav Kaushik 158 not out, Akshdeep Nath 55, Samarth 55) lost to Mumbai 315/4 in 41.3 overs (Aditya Tare 118 not out, Prithvi Shaw 73, Shivam Dube 42).

Federation Cup athletics from today

Neeraj remains the biggest draw

UTHRA GANESAN
PATIALA

The trend of big names skipping action despite a year-long absence of competition continues at the Federation Cup starting here on Monday with Neeraj Chopra remaining the biggest draw.

While he will have a slew of youngsters for competition – Abhishek Drall, Rohit Yadav, Sahil Silwal – the other Olympic-qualified thrower Shivpal Singh will skip the Fed Cup with an ankle niggle.

Among the women, the big showdown is expected in the 100m with both Hima Das and Dutee Chand entering the fray. Hima, who has shifted to sprints from 400m in the last two years – for injury reasons – will also run the 200m.

REGIONAL ROUND-UP

Bhambri in Dubai main draw

NEW DELHI: Yuki Bhambri beat compatriot Ramkumar Ramanathan 7-5, 5-7, 6-2 in the second and final qualifying round to enter the main draw of the \$2,048,855 ATP tennis tournament in Dubai on Sunday.

Other results: Qualifying: Singles (second and final round): Yuki Bhambri bt Ramkumar Ramanathan 7-5, 5-7, 6-2. **Doubles (first round):** Lorenzo Sonego & Andrea Cavallari (Ita) bt Yuki Bhambri & Divij Sharan 7-6(7), 7-5.

Sporting Club in quarters

Rohan Rathi's 80 and three

wickets each by Mayank

Dagar and Prince Yadav

helped Sporting Club beat

Delhi Challenger by 63 runs

to enter the quarterfinals of the RM Singh memorial tournament.

The scores: Anand Sports

268/3 in 40 overs (Ashish Kumar 113, Subhav Kumar 74,

Naman Taneja 34) lost to Cricfine Academy 269/8 in 34.1 overs (Nitish Rana 105, Amit Rana 59, Prabhat Chandra 45, Vishesh Kumar 3/23).

Pigossi claims title

PUNE: Third seed Laura Pigossi of Brazil recovered from 1-5 down in the decider to beat fifth-seeded Marianna Zekalyuk of Ukraine 6-0, 3-6, 7-6(5) in the KPT \$25,000 ITF women's tennis final.

The results (final): Laura Pigossi (Bra) bt Marianna Zekalyuk (Ukr) 6-0, 3-6, 7-6(5).

Zane prevails

INDORE: USA's Zane Khan survived a match point before winning a thriller 6-7(8), 7-6(6), 7-6(4) in the final against third seed Aidan McHugh of Britain in the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the Indore Tennis Club on Sunday.

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- Endeavour to touch base **1 Crore** potential customers every year.

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*AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020

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