



MARCH 14, 2021
on Sunday

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NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE INDIA

*AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020



766
NEIGHBOURHOOD
CUSTOMER SERVICE
CENTRES SPREAD
ACROSS INDIA*

Kalyan Customer

I belong to a small village called HOSHIARPUR, located 60 KMs away from Jalandhar district in the state of Punjab. A few years ago, Kalyan jewellers opened a 'My Kalyan' centre here. The staff constantly interacted with all of us in the village at their centre and also during the scheduled home visits. They educated us about the fair trade practices introduced by Kalyan and also explained to us about the necessary information we need to know before making a jewellery purchase. Our relationship flourished and we became more like neighbours. The fear and apprehension of visiting a branded showroom like Kalyan faded away due to this.

I am proud that I bought jewellery for my daughter's wedding from Kalyan Jewellers and I am also happy that I could gift her with a memorable shopping experience. Thank you 'My Kalyan'.



766

MY KALYAN
CENTERS ACROSS

URBAN, SEMI
URBAN & RURAL INDIA*

2699

MY KALYAN
EMPLOYEES

*AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020

20.82%

REVENUE
CONTRIBUTION
IN THE NINE
MONTHS ENDED
DECEMBER 31, 2020

ENDEAVOUR TO
TOUCH BASE

1 CRORE

POTENTIAL
CUSTOMERS
EVERY YEAR

MY KALYAN

KALYAN JEWELLERS CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER

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766 MY KALYAN CENTRES ACROSS URBAN, SEMI URBAN & RURAL INDIA*

WHAT IS MY KALYAN

MULTIPLE CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES THAT SERVE AS SATELLITE LOCATIONS IN A WIDE RADIUS AROUND MOST OF OUR SHOWROOMS.

APPROXIMATELY 7 MY KALYAN LOCATIONS PER SHOWROOM.

2699 MY KALYAN EMPLOYEES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020.

MY KALYAN EMPLOYEES COME WITH LOCAL LANGUAGE SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS.

OBJECTIVE

PROMOTE OUR BRAND AND SHOWCASE OUR PRODUCT CATALOGUE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

ENRICH OUR CUSTOMER DATABASE.

HELP DRIVE TRAFFIC TO OUR SHOWROOMS.

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

MY KALYAN EMPLOYEES BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH VARIOUS PLAYERS IN THE WEDDING ECO SYSTEM SUCH AS MARRIAGE HALLS, ASTROLOGERS, CATERERS AND OTHER WEDDING VENDORS IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL JEWELLERY CUSTOMERS.

TARGET THESE POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS WITH TAILORED OFFERING AND PROMOTIONS.

ENGAGE IN DOOR TO DOOR MARKETING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

RELEVANCE AND OUTCOME TO OUR BUSINESS

ENDEAVOUR TO CONNECT WITH 1 CRORE POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS EVERY YEAR.

MY KALYAN REVENUE CONTRIBUTION: **20.82%** IN THE NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020.

MY KALYAN SCHEME CONTRIBUTION: **36.02%** IN THE NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020.

ENTERED RURAL AND SEMI URBAN MARKETS IN INDIA THAT OFTEN HAVE LIMITED EXPOSURE TO ORGANIZED JEWELLERY COMPANIES.

ENHANCE CUSTOMER TRUST WITH FACE TO FACE INTERACTION AND HENCE SIGNIFICANTLY WIDEN OUR CUSTOMER BASE.



MY KALYAN OUTLETS - DELHI & PUNJAB

DELHI + NCR

ADARSH NAGAR	011-27672333	KAROL BAGH TOWN	011-47085567
BABARPUR	011-22322484	KASNA	01202341533
BHANGEL	01204575833	MAHAVIR ENCLAVE	9810794033
BIJWASAN	011-28061333	MANGOLPURI	011-27915177
CROSSINGS REPUBLIK	01204507333	MASURI	01202677633
DADRI	01202662233	MAYURVIHAR	011-22755120
DUNDAHERA	0124-2438333	MODI NAGAR	01232246333
DWARAKA TOWN MYK	011-28043533	MUNIRKA	011-26169260
FARIDABAD	0129-2427433	NAJAFGARH	9717706637
GHAZIABAD TOWN MYK	01202794333	NANGLOI	011-25947333
GOVINDPURI	011-29983633	NOIDA TOWN MY KALYAN	01202514833
GREATER NOIDA	01204218333	PASCHIMVIHAR	011-25251695
GURGAON TOWN	0124-2358333	PITAMPURA TOWN	011-27352433
HAPUR	01222311333	PREET VIHAR TOWN MYK	011-22549333
HARI NAGAR	011-25122433	PREMNAGAR	0124-232233
INDERPURI	011-25831266	RANIBAGH	011-40583833
INDIRAPURAM	01202605133	ROHINI	011-27943629
JANGPURA	011-24374950	SHAHBAD DAULATPUR	011-27291154
KAKROLA	9650708806	SHASTRI NAGAR	011-23657252

SOUTH EXTN. TOWN MYK

011-41675333
9810185033

WAZIRABAD

9311045533
011-22853033

YAMUNA VIHAR

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on Sunday



'Samajwadi Party won't ally with national parties in future polls'

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12 killed as Myanmar continues crackdown on protesters

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Draft e-com policy moots safeguards against data misuse

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Kohli's men look to bounce back in T20I series

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NEARBY



Srinagar back on militancy radar

SRINAGAR Within six months of Srinagar being declared a militant-free zone, the Jammu and Kashmir police on Saturday released a list of nine "wanted militants", with seven recruits identified from the city and operating from the Capital. The police have offered to reward "informers suitably".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

JNU reading rooms, food courts reopen

NEW DELHI As part of phased reopening, Jawaharlal Nehru University on Saturday said that reading rooms at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Central Library and in various centres and schools, and two of the eating joints on the campus will be permitted to reopen. The university administration has issued a notification in this regard.

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CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

Over 60% of active COVID-19 cases recorded in Maharashtra

Eight States are displaying an upward trajectory

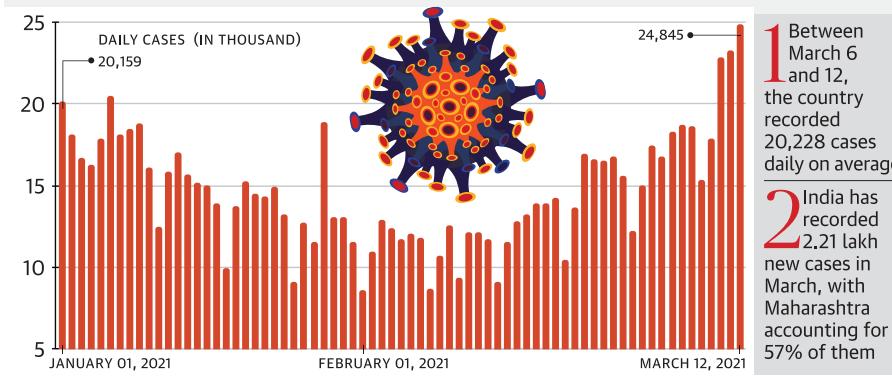
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India on Saturday recorded 24,882 fresh COVID-19 infections, the highest so far this year. This is also the highest daily rise in the last 83 days. As many as 26,624 new infections were recorded on December 20 last year.

Maharashtra continues to account for over 60% (63.57%) of the active COVID-19 cases with Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh constituting 87.72% of the new cases in the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Saturday, according to the Health Ministry. The active caseload stands at 2.02 lakh (2,02,022) on Saturday, which is 1.78% of the positive cases, while the country registered 24,882 new cases in the last 24 hours.

"Eight States – Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka and Haryana – are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases. On the other hand, 20 States/UTs, including Goa, Bihar, Sikkim and Tripura, have less than 1,000 active cases," the Health Ministry

Rising again | More than 20,000 new COVID-19 cases were recorded in India every day between March 10 and 12. Daily case load in the country has steadily increased since mid-February



1 Between March 6 and 12, the country recorded 20,228 cases daily on average
2 India has recorded 2.21 lakh new cases in March, with Maharashtra accounting for 57% of them

"No mask, no flight," say tough, new DGCA rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Passengers refusing to wear masks properly or follow social distancing norms during a flight despite repeated warnings could be put on a no-fly list for a period of three months to two years or more, according to an order issued by aviation safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The DGCA also said if a passenger refuses to comply with instructions before a flight takes off, he or she should be deboarded. The strict instructions follow a

(With inputs from PTI)

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MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9

Delhi High Court order after a judge noticed blatant disregard for COVID-19 safety protocols during a flight.

"In case any passenger on board refuses to wear a mask or violates the COVID-19 protocol even after repeated warnings, such passenger may be treated as 'unruly passenger' and the procedure in respect of handling such unruly passenger as provided in CAR (civil aviation requirements) shall be followed by the concerned airline," the DGCA said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 7

Moves and the movement



On song: A woman farmer from Haryana performing a traditional dance during the ongoing protest against the Central government's farm laws at the Singhu border in Delhi on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

UN rights panel slams detention of Zargar

The Jamia Millia Islamia student was pregnant at the time of her arrest in 2020

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Taking note of the detention of Jamia Millia Islamia student Safoora Zargar, who was pregnant when Delhi police arrested her in April 2020 over the Citizenship law protests and the Delhi riots, the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council's Working Group against Arbitrary Detentions (WGAD) has adopted an opinion critical of the government's workings, and referred the case to three Special Rapporteurs for action.

In the opinion, based on a complaint from a "source" who was not identified, Ms. Zargar had suffered a "deprivation of liberty" contravening "universally recognized human rights, in particular the right to freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly" and



several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It also called upon the government to ensure "a full and independent investigation" of the case and measures against those responsible for the "violation of her rights" including Ms. Zargar's allegedly irregular detention despite her pregnancy, where she said she was made to sign blank sheets of paper, the conditions of her

incarceration, alleged discrimination, and curbing her right to protest, the WGAD's 11-page opinion, adopted on November 27, 2020, that was released on Thursday, said in its analysis of Ms. Zargar's case (A/HRC/WGAD/2020/91).

In the disposition, the WGAD also said it was referring the case to Special Rapporteurs on "the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the situation of human rights defenders; and on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism," for appropriate action.

'Unfortunate trend'
In a statement, Ms. Zargar thanked the UN body for "taking cognizance" of the case, and called her case part

of an "unfortunate trend".

"I am lucky and thankful and at the same time hope that the situation for all human rights defenders will improve in future and that all political prisoners will be immediately released, unconditionally," Ms. Zargar's statement added.

The Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to the HRC body's decision. The WGAD report said it had written to the Indian government on July 22, 2020, with a request for a reply for information in the Zargar case within three months, but the government had not responded nor requested an extension of time.

International law experts say the WGAD's opinion is not actionable by the Human Rights Council, but could set India and the HRC on a further collision course.

Sri Lanka to ban burkha, shut 1,000 madrasas

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will soon ban the burkha or face veil, a Cabinet Minister said on Saturday, as he announced the Rajapaksa administration's latest policy decision impacting the minority Muslim community.

Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekara said the authorities would henceforth use the controversial Prevention of Terrorism (PTA) law – that human rights defenders have termed "draconian" – to deal with religious extremism, with wide-ranging powers to detain suspects for up to two years, to "deradicalise" them.

Security concerns
At a media conference, Mr. Weerasekara said, "The burkha is something that directly affects our national security... this [dress] came into Sri Lanka only recently. It is a symbol of their religious extremism."

While the Minister said he had signed documents outlawing the burkha, the move awaits Cabinet approval. Over 1,000 madrasas would be shut, he said.

The announcement on the burkha ban comes after a year-long controversy over the government's policy of mandatory cremation of COVID-19 victims, based on unsubstantiated claims that the bodies would contaminate ground water.

The government reversed its decision recently, amid persistent calls for burial rights from Muslims, who make up about 10% of the 21-million population, as well as international bodies including the U.N.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 7

DMK promises 75% jobs for Tamils in industries

Party also announces ₹1,000 crore for restoring temples

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Promising to create 5.5 lakh jobs in the government sector, the DMK's manifesto for the Assembly election released on Saturday said a law would be enacted to reserve 75% of jobs for Tamils in industries in the State. The private sector would be convinced to offer communal reservation in employment.

It also announced waiver of education loans borrowed by persons up to 30 years of age, who pursued school and higher education in Tamil Nadu.

- Maternity leave to be increased to 12 months; ₹24,000 in assistance to expectant mothers
- Education loan waiver for students aged below 30, who did schooling and higher education in Tamil Nadu
- ₹100 subsidy for each LPG cylinder
- Petrol price to be slashed by ₹5 a litre, diesel by ₹4
- Aavin milk price to be cut by ₹3 a litre
- Monthly billing cycle for electricity, instead of bi-monthly
- Waiver of short- and medium-term agriculture loans
- Fishermen to be brought under the Scheduled Tribes
- Sethusamudram Project will be implemented
- ₹5,000 crore for linking Kosasthalaiyar, Cooum and Adyar rivers, and for cleaning of canals in Chennai
- 5.5 lakh government jobs to be created

Promises galore | The opposition DMK on Saturday released its manifesto for the April 6 Assembly election, making a slew of promises



Poll ready: DMK president M.K. Stalin releasing the manifesto on Saturday. Party leaders Duraimurugan and T.R. Baalu look on. ■ S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

ro," he told reporters.

Mr. Stalin announced ₹100 in subsidy per cooking gas cylinder. The prices of petrol and diesel will also be reduced by ₹5 and ₹4 a litre respectively.

Yashwant Sinha joins Trinamool

Former BJP leader meets Mamata before joining party

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Former Union Finance Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Yashwant Sinha on Saturday joined the Trinamool Congress. Senior leaders of the Trinamool, including Sudip Banerjee, Derek O'Brien and Subrata Mukherjee welcomed Mr. Sinha into the party.

Before officially joining the party, Mr. Sinha met its chairperson and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for nearly 45 minutes at her Kalighat residence.

Mr. Sinha, once one of the tallest leaders of the BJP, is now a vocal critic of the



Trinamool Congress leaders Subrata Mukherjee and Derek O'Brien with Yashwant Sinha in Kolkata on Saturday. ■ PTI

notices at her Kalighat residence.

Mr. Sinha, once one of the tallest leaders of the BJP, is now a vocal critic of the

policies of the Narendra Modi-led government. He quit the BJP in April 2018.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 7

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PERSONALITY TEST PROGRAMME
23 February
• DAF Analysis Session with senior faculty members of Vision IAS
• Mock Interviews Sessions with Ex-Bureaucrats/Educators and bureaucrats
• Interactive Sessions with previous year toppers and bureaucrats

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

When Inspector Vijay Gahlawat joined the Delhi Police cyber cell in 2008, it comprised a small office in Malviya Nagar with two workstations and a team of around eight officers.

Three years later, the force's cyber unit is running full throttle from its very own National Cyber Forensic Laboratory (NCFL) and catering to technical investigation requirements of cases from across the country.

Mr. Gahlawat, now sitting in his swanky office at the Cyber Prevention Awareness Detection (CyPAD) Centre at the NCFL office in Dwarka, recalled how he was once the only officer available to do all the analysis.

"At that time, there was less capability and little requirement. The only things needed were tracing email IDs, IP addresses and analysing call detail records. The CDR analysis meant asking service providers for details and then analysing it manually," he recalled.

Increase in workstations

A major change came in 2011-12, when the number of workstations increased to around seven, and the office shifted to Mandir Marg, said Mr. Gahlawat.

In 2015, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Cell) Anyesh Roy joined the unit. Six years ago, there was no dedicated institutional mechanism to attend to cybercrimes or even a dedicated platform to report them. It was still under the Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi police, Mr. Roy said, adding: "Special units like Crime Branch and Special Cell had their own cyber cells but they only concentrated on their own needs. This cyber cell was taking care of headquarter-level requirements."

In 2019, CyPAD was inaugurated and was brought directly under the Special Cell while the Economic Offences Wing remained a separate unit.

Change in platforms

Mr. Roy, however, said the nature of complaints has mostly remained the same and only the platforms have changed. The



A far cry from the 'dark ages' of cyber investigation when the most that could be done was trace email IDs, Delhi Police now has the ability to enhance video quality, retrieve data from damaged phones and more



The Cyber Protection Awareness and Detection Centre (CyPAD) at the National Cyber Forensic Lab in south-west Delhi's Dwarka.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

and spyware-detection tools such as FireEye, which enables them to detect if a system is being attacked for spying.

"Previously, we did not have any technology to detect an infected or hacked system. This particular technology enables us to analyse the type of attack and where the information is being sent," Mr. Roy said.

Since 2020, a technology that is widely being used during investigations is video and photograph enhancement.

It has proved to be a boon in probes related to last year's communal riots. Currently, the force is using programmes called Amped Five and Kanesence for the purpose.

Solving cases

Giving an example, Mr. Gahlawat said that while investigating a kidnapping case, they managed to enhance a video grab from grainy CCTV footage to ascertain the number plate of a motorcycle. "This helped the police trace the accused and rescue the child," he said.

pose of investigation. Listing a few, Mr. Roy said that memory forensics has advanced manifold in the last three years as Delhi Police can now extract deleted information from a device by using advanced version of tools.

The police are currently using Encase, Forensic Tool Kit (FTK), Universal Forensic Extraction Device (UFED) among other tools that are able to copy, analyse, and extract deleted information from most devices.

Citing an example, Mr. Gahlawat shared how the unit had been given a burnt and a damaged phone from a spot where a man was found murdered.

"After deleted data from those phones were extracted, it turned out that the wife had killed the man," he said.

Phone data extraction

With the current technology available with the police, data from over 40,000 types of phone can be extracted, he said.

Earlier, there was no way to extract deleted information, Mr. Roy said. "The FTK existed in 2008 as well but in a very primitive form," Mr. Gahlawat said.

Another technology the department is proud of is malware

At the cutting edge of cyber forensics

two broad categories include: online harassment and online fraud. "In the last couple of years, the numbers of cases have increased under both heads, proportionally," he said.

Talking to *The Hindu* about how technology has grown over the years and is used in investigation, Mr. Roy explained that there are two aspects in a cyber-crime investigation: digital footprint and money trail.

The digital footprint, essentially involves investigating the platform used: the victim's device and the suspect's device.

"When it comes to platforms like Facebook, Google, Twitter, Instagram, we have to ask them for information. The difficulty for any law enforcement agency



is that most of these platforms are foreign-based private entities and it's a challenge to get information, but since 2018, the

government at the highest level is following up with these platforms to ensure that they respond to these agencies," he said.

Talking about major changes, Mr. Roy said the institutional mechanism to investigate and report cybercrime has now been firmly established. Over the years, every district of the Capital has set up a separate cyber cell, apart from the CyPAD unit which constantly interacts with the district cyber cells. "There's structure and manpower now. In 2015, we were only 53 officers and now we are over 450 officials, including CyPAD and district cyber cells," he said.

Mr. Roy said the online portal where complaints are lodged is tracked on an hourly basis and there is a dedicated team for it.

It was only from 2018 that newest technologies have been actively acquired for the pur-

+ Man held for shooting friend over playing DJ

Nine empty rounds found from spot

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man was arrested for allegedly shooting his friend during a birthday party in Najafgarh, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) S.K. Meena said that accused identified as Naveen Kumar was arrested on Friday.

Inebriated state

During interrogation, Naveen allegedly told the police that "he had a small altercation with victim, Anuj Sharma, over a petty issue

'12 DU colleges are suffering due to administrative lapses'

Governing bodies say govt. has been releasing funds regularly

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Governing body representatives of 12 Delhi University colleges, fully funded by the city government, on Saturday alleged irregularities in management of funds meant for clearing pending salaries of employees.

Their remarks come a day after Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia set up an enquiry committee to look into alleged irregularities of funds in the 12 colleges.

The representatives and chairpersons of the governing bodies said that teaching and non-teaching employees had not received salaries due to lapses on the part of the respective college administrations.



"The government has regularly released grants but teaching and non-teaching staff had to suffer due to the administrative lapses. Often it was found that utilisation certificates (UC) were missing without which the grants for the next quarter cannot be released," said Prabhanjan Jha, a member of the governing body at Bhagini Nivedita College.

Governing body chairman of Maharsi Valmiki College, Deepanshu Sharma, said that several colleges also sanctioned posts without the Delhi government's approval which is in violation of relevant guidelines.

JNU to reopen reading rooms, eating joints

Social distancing norms to be followed

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As part of phased reopening, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Saturday said that reading rooms at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Central Library and in various centres and schools, and two of the eating joints on the campus will be permitted to reopen.

A notification dated March 12 issued by the university administration read, "The reopening of ground floor reading rooms inside the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Central Library is allowed in a phased manner. Librarian may devise standard operating preventive (SOP) measures such as mandatory wearing of the face mask and maintaining

social distancing norms on library premises."

"NSS student volunteers may be engaged to create awareness in the campus, including library premises for maintaining social distancing and wearing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the university campus," the notice added.

The university further said, "The Deans of the Schools or Chairpersons of the Special Centres are allowed to look into the reopening of reading rooms in their respective schools or centres as per the COVID-19 guidelines issued from time to time by the government and the university."

The notice added that only takeaway facility will be permitted at the *dhabas*.

Two youth die after bike hits road divider

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 20-year-old youth and his friend died after their bike allegedly hit a road divider in Dwarka here on Saturday.

The police said that the deceased have been identified as Sumit and Vikas.

A PCR call was received around 6 a.m. about the accident. DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said that an information was received from DDU Hospital that Sumit, a resident of Najafgarh, was brought dead.

Vikas's brother Vinit said that Sumit had come to their house. Later, they went to drop Sumit at Dwarka junction. Vikas was riding the motorcycle.

Vikas died during treatment.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

Fond Remembrance
20th Anniversary



Deepa Krishnan

14.03.2001

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Who have discovered its splendor

As someone with a magnificent spirit

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- Sarala, Krishnan, Rajiv, Divya, Shyam



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Principal

Police make arrest in murder case

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly killing a property dealer in Mohan Garden last year. The accused took pictures on his phone after murdering the man.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Yadav said that the accused identified as Kamal Gehlot was arrested after a brief exchange of fire from Bakkarwala at 2 a.m. on Saturday.

He sustained a leg injury in the incident, the police said, adding that a raiding team was ready following a tip-off.

The police said that murderer of property dealer Vikas Mehta was an act of revenge and also outcome of gang rivalry.

Man held for pushing woman off building

They had an argument over payment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 35-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly killing a woman by pushing her from the fourth floor and then carrying her body before dumping it at a junction in north west Delhi's Shakarpur in the early hours of Saturday.

DCP (North-West) Usha Rangnani said the accused identified as Mukesh, a resident of Shakarpur, was arrested from Lucknow. An accomplice of Mukesh, identified as Jiten alias Kana, has also been arrested.

The victim, identified as Reshma (22), was a house help. It has been revealed that Mukesh was in the business of providing house helps. There was an argu-

ment between Mukesh and Reshma over payment which led to the murder, the police said.

They received a call at 1.16 a.m. on Saturday about the incident. The woman was declared brought dead at the hospital and a murder case was registered.

Ms. Rangnani said that CCTV footage was analysed and neighbours were interrogated after which it was revealed that Mukesh was seen leaving with his family in a white car.

She said that with the help of technical surveillance, it was found that Mukesh was on his way to Bihar via Lucknow after which Uttar Pradesh Police was informed and Mukesh was held near Lucknow.

Timings
DELHI

SUNDAY, MAR. 14	
RISE 06:32	SET 18:29
RISE 07:15	SET 19:22
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

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 31 15
Safdarjung 31 15
Palam 31 17

Delhi Palam Today
33°C A pleasant hazy morning and warm day with partly cloudy sky occasionally.

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

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THE HINDU

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IN BRIEF

Bidhuri launches PM Wani WiFi scheme

NEW DELHI
Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Saturday launched the PM Wani WiFi scheme from Hari Nagar ward in south Delhi, under which residents of the area would get free internet through hotspots. Mr. Bidhuri said around 10 lakh hotspots would be created in the country. Many will be inaugurated in the coming days in Delhi.

Clear skies to continue in the Capital today

NEW DELHI
It was a clear Saturday in Delhi and the maximum temperature settled at 31.2 degrees Celsius, two notches above the season's average, the Met office said. The sky is expected to remain clear on Sunday and the maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to settle around 32 and 15 degrees respectively. PTI

Police quiz Tehseen in Tihar jail

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police Special Cell on Saturday visited Tihar jail to question Tehseen Akhtar alias Monu, the head of Indian Mujahideen, in connection with a phone received from his barrack.

Sources said that the mobile phone was used for creating a Telegram channel used by Jaish-ul-Hind, a group which claimed responsibility for parking an SUV with gelatin sticks near business mogul Mukesh Ambanis house in Mumbai on February 25.

The group has also claimed responsibility for low-intensity attack near Israel Embassy in January.

Akhtar was arrested in 2014 and is currently in jail no. 8. Sources said that further questioning will depend on Akhtar's interrogation.

Sources said that four alleged terrorists, including those lodged in Mumbai prisons, are suspected to have been involved in the incident.



Ready for summer: Farmers building houses at the Singhu border protest site; people extracting juice from sugarcane at the Ghazipur border protest site on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT/R.V. MOORTHY

Tightrope walk: AAP trying to win Hindu votes, be inclusive

Experts say party attempting to challenge BJP by balancing nationalism, religion

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

Political experts said that the 'Deshbhakti budget' presented by the Aam Aadmi Party government earlier this week, and party chief Arvind Kejriwal's comment that they have been striving to build "Ram Rajya" in Delhi for the last six years, is an attempt to counter the challenges posed by the BJP.

They added that other parties have also been forced to adopt this stance.

"All of us worship Lord Ram. Personally, I worship Lord Hanuman who was a devotee of Lord Rama. Hence, I am a devotee of both. Lord Rama was the emperor of Ayodhya. During his rule, people were content as they had access to all basic facilities. This was called the 'Ram Rajya'... we have been constantly striving to establish this model of 'Ram Rajya' in Delhi for the past six years," Mr. Kejriwal said in the Delhi Assembly on March 10.

While experts said that renewed national hopes may be a reason why the AAP is going heavy on nationalism, they added that the government should have given priority to unemployment and education in the budget, rather than 'deshbhakti'.

Political analyst Neerja Chowdhury said AAP has taken a leaf out of the 'BJP's narrative', which is "underlining patriotism and nationalism". "The AAP is using these symbols to identify itself with the concerns and sentiments of Hindu voters who are conscious of their



CM Arvind Kejriwal's version of 'Ram Rajya' ensures a person's right to food and good education. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Hindu identity. Even the Congress is doing temple-hopping, but they have not been able to connect with the people," she said.

Ms. Chowdhury said that while winning over such Hindus, the AAP has to also send signals to Muslims that "we are not against you" and that is going to be a "tight-rope walk".

Opposition boxed-in

"The BJP narrative has boxed-in the Opposition. The BJP has made a narrative that secularism is equal to minority appeasement. The BJP can take a stronger stance as they do not want the Muslim vote, but other parties have to strike a balance," she added.

Praveen Rai, a political activist who works with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, said that all secular parties have been termed "anti-Hindu" by the BJP and the people are buying that narrative.

"Every party is trying to come out of that image. The AAP has been doing work and now they are weaving in

nationalistic and pro-Hindu narrative into their development story," he said.

Referring to Mr. Kejriwal's comments that Ram Rajya was based on 10 principles, including people's right to food and good education, Ms. Chowdhury said that the AAP is trying to "hijack" Lord Ram from the BJP and make the name more "inclusive" and redefine it.

"The BJP has used Lord Ram as a divisive tool. What the AAP is trying to say is that Ram Rajya does not mean demeaning or lynching a community," she said.

"But Muslims can ask, 'Why Ram Rajya and not our symbols?' There is no answer to it. So, it is not completely inclusive," she added.

Arun Kumar, former professor of economics at JNU, said the 2021-22 budget was "political" in terms of the language used, and the government is projecting it like that. "After the pandemic, the government should have given priority to unemployment and education in the budget, rather than 'deshbhakti'.

Political analyst Neerja Chowdhury said AAP has taken a leaf out of the 'BJP's narrative', which is "underlining patriotism and nationalism". "The AAP is using these symbols to identify itself with the concerns and sentiments of Hindu voters who are conscious of their

was not done and the commission has become non-functional from yesterday," K.J. Ramesh, a member of the commission, said.

Mr. Ramesh said that the matter is pending with the Cabinet and the commission can be functional once the procedural formalities are done.

The air quality of Delhi and Gurugram, meanwhile, continued in 'poor' category on Saturday and Noida's was in 'moderate' level, said CPCB data.

The Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Saturday said that the AAP government is in advance talks with several electric vehicle fleet operators to open up their captive charging stations - a move that will add 750 such facilities for public use in Delhi by June.

At present, there are 72 electric vehicle charging stations operational in the city.

All buildings, such as malls, shopping complexes,

National Flags should have been "low priority".

"The money could have been used to take care of the poor. But due to the BJP, all political parties are under pressure and the spectrum has shifted almost completely to the right," he said.

Mr. Rai said that during the last Delhi Assembly election, the AAP won with a huge majority because of their popular policies. But the BJP, by "raising communal issues", was able to increase their vote share "considerably" [by 6%], though it did not translate into seats.

Policies not enough

"The AAP understood after the election that schemes and policies might not be enough to win elections in the future. Mr. Kejriwal even went to a Hanuman Mandir after the victory," he added.

But Mr. Rai said that the AAP has been moving away from the Muslims.

"The AAP is certainly going to use more Hindu symbols. Till now they are not anti-Muslim. So far it is not dangerous, but they will have to engage with the Muslims and make them comfortable," Ms. Chowdhury said.

When asked whether the strategy will work for AAP, Mr. Rai said: "In all practical terms, it is going to work for them. The BJP is doing work and clubbing it with Hindutva, which is working for them. The AAP is trying to occupy the space of a weakening Congress. In 2029, the BJP may very well face a challenge from a new Hindu party – the AAP."

cinema halls, office spaces, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, will soon have to set aside at least 5% of their total parking capacity for EVs along with suitable slow EV chargers. This will also add an estimated 10,000 chargers in Delhi by December, the Minister said.

The government has already floated a tender to build 100 public charging stations with 500 charging points at prominent locations. These will be operational by December, he said.

Air quality panel folds 5 months after formation

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Commission on Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, under the Central government, has become "non-functional" within five months of its constitution, according to authorities.

The commission was formed through an Ordinance in October. A Bill has to be introduced in the Lok Sabha during the next session, within six weeks of its commencement. But this

was not done and the commission has become non-functional from yesterday," K.J. Ramesh, a member of the commission, said.

Mr. Ramesh said that the matter is pending with the Cabinet and the commission can be functional once the procedural formalities are done.

The air quality of Delhi and Gurugram, meanwhile, continued in 'poor' category on Saturday and Noida's was in 'moderate' level, said CPCB data.

All buildings, such as malls, shopping complexes,

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CM gives ₹1-crore compensation to family of deceased 'corona warrior'

Delhi govt. will provide job to his elder son, says Kejriwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday provided financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of COVID warrior Rakesh Jain, a lab technician at Hindu Rao Hospital.

Jain, who would have retired in 2022, contracted COVID-19 on June 17 last year and succumbed to it the next day. Mr. Kejriwal commended Jain for continuing to serve the people till his last breath.

"Mr. Jain got infected while on duty. He was shifted to Metro Hospital, but died later. He was a martyr



wife Sangeeta Jain and two children.

"The Delhi government salutes such front-line workers who have served people relentlessly. Today, on behalf of the Delhi government, I have handed over a cheque of ₹1 crore to his family members," he also said.

Mr. Jain's elder son is pursuing his graduation and looking for a job, which will be provided by the Delhi government, the Chief Minister assured the family. "I want to assure the family that the Delhi government will stand beside them in future as well," he also said.

Delhi reports over 400 new cases for third day in a row

39,853 beneficiaries receive vaccine in the city on Saturday

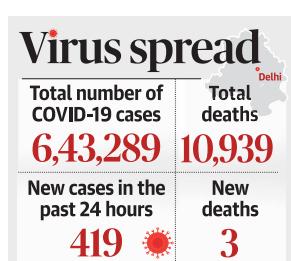
STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed 419 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,43,289, according to a health bulletin released by the State government on Saturday.

This was the third consecutive day where there were more than 400 cases.

Three deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,939. A total of 74,326 tests were done in a day.



Of the total cases, 6,30,143 people have recovered and there are 2,207 active cases. The number of active cases has shown an increase over the last two weeks.

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CONVENT EDUCATED 85, 55" Fair, Grad math comm., PG Dip direction FTII, M.Sc. Script writing UK, Freelancer, SC girl seeks matrimonial alliance from a well qualified and settled Partner Castle no bar. Contact: 9899514993, rjilohita@gmail.com

SOZIYA VELLALAR 25/B/E/PCDM Working/5'6"/Wealthy/ Poosam/ Kadagam/ Seeks from well qualified & settled same community . 760516769

ELITE MUDALIYAR 22 / M.B.A, Own Spinning Mills Textile Mills [Coimbatore] , Fair, Rich Family, Seeks Suitable Groom Ct:9940284235

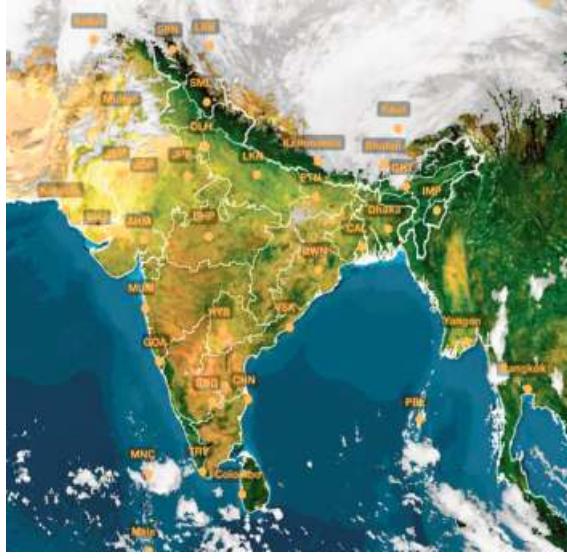
HINDU SC-AD BDS 25 yrs 162cm medium complexion seeks BDB/MBBS groom Chennai based contact 8072371402

SC AD 28/162 MS, CS, USA, working in reputed IT MNC, A.S. seeks suitable groom, good family, clean habits, preferably working in USA. Email: sishtha195@gmail.com

TAMIL HINDU 28/163, Fair, Rich Family, Seeks Suitable Groom from MBBS/ MBBS groom Chennai based contact 8072371402

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.30 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	33.1	20.0	Kozhikode	—	33.8...	24.9
Ahmedabad	—	37.5	17.5	Kurnool	—	37.7...	18.2
Aizawl	—	29.7	13.7	Lucknow	—	31.4...	18.0
Allahabad	—	31.2	18.0	Madurai	—	35.2...	23.2
Bengaluru	—	33.0	16.7	Mangaluru	—	36.2...	24.6
Bhopal	14.6	32.6	15.6	Mumbai	—	38.2...	22.2
Bhubaneswar	—	35.2	23.6	Mysuru	—	33.0...	16.6
Chandigarh	—	30.4	13.9	New Delhi	—	31.2...	15.2
Chennai	—	33.2	23.0	Patna	—	26.4...	21.0
Cochin	—	34.8	20.8	Pond Blair	—	32.1...	25.2
Dehradun	—	30.0	12.9	Puducherry	—	32.6...	21.8
Gangtok	2.1	17.7	10.4	Pune	—	35.6...	20.4
Goa	—	33.2	25.2	Raipur	6.2	33.0...	19.6
Guwahati	—	33.3	17.9	Ranchi	11.4	33.0...	16.5
Hubballi	—	34.0	19.0	Shillong	—	24.1...	11.4
Hyderabad	—	33.8	18.0	Shimla	—	22.5...	12.1
Impal	—	30.9	11.5	Srinagar	—	10.8...	3.8
Jaipur	—	32.2	17.2	Thiruvananthapuram	0.7	34.8...	24.0
Kochi	—	33.4	25.4	Tiruchi	—	34.9...	22.6
Kohima	—	24.2	12.6	Vijayawada	—	37.1...	20.6
Kolkata	—	31.1	23.8	Visakhapatnam	—	32.2...	24.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	40	.75	55	.82	.137	■■■■■
Bengaluru	.8	.48	20	.61	.70	■■■■■
Chennai	36	.6	35	.95	—	■■■■■
Delhi	44	.97	82	.250	.231	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.2	.68	19	.42	.86	■■■■■
Kolkata	20	.22	33	.261	.198	■■■■■
Lucknow	16	.51	.62	.117	.107	■■■■■
Mumbai	19	.81	.48	.274	.219	■■■■■
Pune	—	.84	.37	.145	.111	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	10	.45	.29	.36	.75	■■■■■

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

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

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

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

SP won't ally with national parties in future elections, says Akhilesh

We will work with the Rashtriya Lok Dal and the Mahan Dal: SP chief

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said on Saturday that it was the farmers who saved the economy during the pandemic. He was addressing a kisan panchayat organised by the SP and the Mahan Dal in Kasganj.

Announcing that the SP will not ally with national parties in future elections, he appealed to the audience to maintain a distance with other parties as well. "We will work with the Rashtriya Lok Dal and the Mahan Dal," he said.

'BJP dividing people'

Mr. Yadav said the region was the cradle of the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb (composite culture), but the BJP was trying to divide people in the name of religion. "Every time elections come close, they scheme to divide people. We can see the BJP is fighting Bengal elections in the name of Hindu-Muslim. They don't make development an election agenda because development unites people."

Earlier, Mr. Yadav reiterated, "During the pandemic, we followed the government's advice to cover our mouth and nose, but I want to ask what was the compulsion that forced the government to cover its eyes and ears that it is not being able to respond to the pain of farmers."



SP president Akhilesh Yadav participating in a cycle rally in Rampur. ■ FILE PHOTO

He said the government promised to double the income of the farmers, the PM promised that MSP would stay, but "I want to ask has anybody in the panchayat been able to sell his paddy at the MSP this season?"

The government, he said, tried to discredit the movement. "No government has insulted the farmers as much as this one." Raising the issue of unemployment and inflation, he urged the farmers and the youth to vote out the government. "This is the only way in a democracy. As soon as you dethrone them, the farm laws would be repealed," he said.

Mr. Yadav said his party's members were farmers first. Has our CM responded to your concerns...He practised the policy of 'thok do,' commented Mr. Yadav, taking it dig at CM Adityanath. "He is busy inaugurating projects

practise agriculture," he alleged.

Enumerating the achievements of the SP government in building roads, distributing laptops and making the police efficient, Mr. Yadav said, "It is true we are backward but our work is better than the so-called forward people."

He also took on the Centre and the State governments for demonetisation, the plight of migrants during the pandemic and the increase in corruption at the tehsil level. "I want to ask why the BJP government is not distributing laptops among the youth... A true Yogi is one who understands the pain of his people. Has our CM responded to your concerns...He practised the policy of 'thok do,'" commented Mr. Yadav, taking it dig at CM Adityanath. "He is busy inaugurating projects

that were started during the SP rule. His biggest achievement is changing names of cities and projects," he added.

The panchayat was also addressed by Keshav Dev Maurya, national president of the Mahan Dal, which claims support of Maurya, Shakya, and Kushwaha communities among the OBCs in the region.

Cross FIRs lodged

In a related development, two FIRs were registered by the Moradabad police on Saturday in connection with the alleged assault on journalists after the press conference of Mr. Yadav in a city hotel on Thursday.

Amit Anand, ASP Moradabad, said one FIR was registered by the Journalists' Association of Moradabad against Mr. Yadav and 20 unnamed SP workers for the alleged manhandling of some journalists.

Mr. Yadav, who was in Moradabad for a cycle rally in support of senior party leader Azam Khan, denied the charges and said it was an attempt to maligned the image of the party.

spurred interest in farming and its symbols," says Dheer Singh, a farmer with 15 bighas of land in Bhojpur, looking at a fleet of tractors on the road.

"We were swayed by the Ram temple politics and the nationalist agenda of the BJP but khali pet na hot bhajan gopala (even prayers cannot be sung on an empty stomach). The Modinagar sugar mill has just begun to pay the dues of last February," says Satyam Kaushik.

MSP an illusion

"Input costs are rising and MSP remains an illusion," he adds. "If we won't get the payment in time, how would we pay those who work for us in the fields?"

"If politics is not important for them, why are the top two in the BJP ignoring farmers' protests and putting in all their energy into Bengal polls?" chips in Vishal Malik. "Why don't they clarify farmers' doubts about the Bills?" Ajay Malik, who runs a fertilizer shop along with tilling his land in Bhojpur, is equally stressed. "If corporate farming becomes a reality, companies will provide seed and fertilizer. What would be my role?" he asks.

Infighting back in Rajasthan Cong.

State govt. suppressing voice of SC/ST legislators, allege three Pilot loyalists

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Eight months after the rebellion by former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, the discontent simmering in the ruling Congress in Rajasthan has come to the fore through three MLAs from the eastern parts of the state. The legislators of the 'Pilot camp' have alleged discrimination in the Assembly proceedings and their constituencies being ignored.

Sapota MLA Ramesh Meena, sacked as the Food and Civil Supplies Minister during the political crisis in July last year, Dausa MLA Murari Lal Meena and Chakru MLA Ved Prakash Solanki have alleged that the State government

was trying to suppress the voice of legislators representing the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minority communities.

Seating arrangement

Mr. Ramesh Meena, who had an argument with Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi earlier this week over the allotment of a seat without a microphone in the House, said here on Saturday that he would not hesitate to resign if things did not improve. He said he had sought an appointment with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to discuss certain issues with him. The three Congress MLAs, who along with 15 other legislators had extended support to Mr. Pilot during

the political turmoil, said their constituencies had received a "raw deal" in the three consecutive State budgets since 2019 and the Ministers were not responding to their requests for development works in their respective regions.

Mr. Meena said he was not seeking a Ministerial post but only wanted to be treated with dignity as a Congress worker. "If I am not allowed to speak in the House, a message goes across in Sapota that I am unable to raise the issues faced by the people in my constituency."

Mr. Solanki claimed that only a selected few were allowed to speak in the front row during the ongoing budget session.

Oppn. demands govt. assurance over paddy procurement



Naveen Patnaik. ■ FILE PHOTO

House shouting slogans in favour of their demands. "As long as all paddy stocks are not procured in mandis across the State, we will not let the House function normally. The government has betrayed farmers," charged senior Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati.

Mr. Bahinipati, however, took strong exceptions to the Ministers rushing to the well of the House saying it was against the convention of the Assembly.

BJD MLA Pratap Deb said the BJP member's bid to consume sanitiser had set a bad precedent.

ED attaches over 100 properties

Jharkhand-based company allegedly cheated investors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Odisha Assembly witnessed unruly scenes for the second consecutive day on Saturday with both the Opposition, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, and the ruling Biju Janata Dal members coming face to face with each other over the alleged non-procurement of paddy in the State. The House was adjourned till Monday.

While the BJP and the Congress wanted a concrete assurance from the government over paddy procurement from all farmers, the BJD

members demanded that Subash Panigrahi, the BJP MLA who tried to consume sanitiser over the issue on Friday, tender an apology.

Both the Opposition and Treasury Bench members rushed to the well of the

ED Prakash Prasad Lala, have also been attached. The probe is based on an FIR registered by the CBI, which has filed a chargesheet against Sanjeevani Buildcon Private Limited, its director Jayant Dayal Nandy and his wife Anita Dayal Nandy; another director Shyam Kishore Gupta; and Ranjana Shrivastav, wife of company director

PRESS NOTICE TO BE ISSUED FOR PUBLICATION IN NEWS PAPERS FOR E-TENDERING

The Executive Engineer IPH Division Hamirpur invites following tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following work(s) through e-tendering Process:-

Name of work:- Construction of IPH Colony and inspection Hut at Salasi in Tehsil and Distt.

Hamirpur (Sh:- Building portion, W.S. & S.I. Site development, boundary wall and gate, septic tank and soak pit, rain harvesting tank, and solar water heating system).

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website:

www.hptenders.gov.in

Executive Engineer, Dhamaripur Division, HPPWD Dhamaripur, Distt: Mandi (H.P.)

on behalf of Governor of H.P.

HP / 6464/20-21

Questions of identity simmer

ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2021

BIG BATTLE

Nandigram's own daughters face difficult choice

Women who faced the violent land acquisition protests are wary of choosing between Mamata and Suvendu

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
SUDIPTA DATTA
NANDIGRAM

Two women, victims of violence that rocked Nandigram during the land acquisition protests in 2007 and who live barely 50 m apart, now find themselves in opposing camps. When Nandigram votes on April 1 for the Assembly election, they have to choose between Mamata Banerjee, who became Chief Minister in 2011 on the back of the land movement, and Suvendu Adhikari, who nurtured the constituency as a Trinamool Congress MLA but defected to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in December 2020.

Krishna Pramanik of Gokulnagar village received a plaque from Ms. Banerjee and a medal from litterateur Mahasweta Devi. She holds on to the memorabilia, a symbol of her courage for the ordeal she endured. "We are with Didi [Ms. Banerjee] but the situation scares us," said Ms. Pramanik, around 48 years old. Her neighbour, Radharani Arre, who was tortured during the land violence, wishes she never had to see this day. "Suvendu has been looking after our needs, at the behest of Didi who has not been able to visit Nandigram often. Everyone cannot get *rajbhog* (a Bengali sweet delicacy). We will have to



Hand in hand: Mamata Banerjee with supporters in Nandigram on March 9. ■ PTI

support those who have stood by us all these years," said Ms. Arre, who looks older than her age.

In 2007, it was like fighting a war, recall Ms. Pramanik and other women. The Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh (Land Eviction Resistance) Committee (BUPC), backed by the Trinamool, was pitched against the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). The protests, which began over alleged land acquisition by the government for a chemical hub, came to a head on March 14 when 14 people were killed and scores injured in police firing. The Left Front, which was in power, had to withdraw the police under pressure. It clarified

that no land would be acquired by force. When the BUPC embarked on creating a "liberated zone" in the area, more violence followed. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) finally managed to enter Nandigram in November 2007.

Fear of violence

Ms. Pramanik, whose scars from the violence are yet to heal, is upset with Mr. Adhikari for "dividing a village on communal lines". She referred to him as Mir Jafar, the military commander of Siraj ud-Daulah, who betrayed him in the Battle of Plassey against the British in 1757. "The peace has been disturbed and we do not know

■ **Suvendu has been looking after our needs, at the behest of Didi**

RADHARANI ARRE
Nandigram voter

what lies ahead. We do not want to relive those violent days of 2007," she said, rooting for Didi, who has launched many women-centric schemes, notably the Kanyashree scheme, which gives a cash handout of ₹25,000 for a girl who studies till Class 12; the Rupashree scheme, which provides a one-time sum for marriage; and also Swastha Sathi, a family health card in the name of the eldest woman mem-

ber. In Bengal, 49% of the electorate of 7.2 crore voters are women.

Ms. Pramanik hoped that if the Trinamool returned to power, some of her aspirations would be fulfilled – help for a son studying to be a lawyer, and windows for a home yet to be painted and covered with newspapers.

Much has changed in Nandigram in Purba Medinipur since 2007. New huts have sprung up around the brick kilns that nobody dared enter during the violence. The bridge on Talpati khal (canal) that served as the no-go zone between pro- and anti-land acquisition groups can be easily crossed by foot. The narrow roads, which had been dug up at many places, have been neatly laid.

Hours before the Chief Minister began her campaign in Nandigram, about 130 km from Kolkata, on Tuesday, Ms. Pramanik was dressed in a crisp blue sari to attend her public rally. "Let us go and meet Mamata, Bengal's own daughter," she urged 95-year-old Narmada Sheeth.

Ms. Sheeth, another victim of violence, is unwilling to talk at first. Her story comes out in bits and pieces. "I have forgotten how many times my shop has been burnt down," she said. She runs a small *bidi* shop on one of the intersections of Sonachuda

Bazaar. A pension of ₹1,500 a month stopped coming six months ago "because I don't go to meetings any more".

The Adhikari family has "ruled" over the region for long, and issues like corruption, mismanagement of Amphan cyclone relief funds, and non-delivery of schemes are likely to stick.

Campaign trail

As Ms. Banerjee filed her nomination on March 10, posters of "Bangla nijer meye ke chay" (Bengal wants its own daughter) appeared on many walls. Launching her campaign, and armed with the slogan, "Bhulte pari nijer naam, bhulbo na go Nandigram (I may forget my name, but I will never forget Nandigram)," she said she chose the seat because it was a symbol of struggle.

At the rally, Ms. Pramanik and Ms. Arre could not meet Ms. Banerjee as they were too far away from the stage. They went home dejected, hoping to have an audience with the CM soon.

The Sanyukta Morcha has fielded CPI(M) candidate Minakshi Mukherjee in Nandigram. "It is a good thing to say that Bengal wants its own daughter but what about Bengal youth who are hungry and without jobs?" is the young leader's retort to the Trinamool campaign.

Our ideology, Modiji's popularity and the indomitable spirit of our workers are our strengths but we need many popular faces to take on the Trinamool

DILIP GHOSH, West Bengal BJP president

P6

POLL POURRI

Deer 'swamps' poll talk in rhino land

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Mandate 2021 has made the swamp deer steal the one-horned rhino's thunder in eastern Assam's Golaghat district. The swamp deer is the most unobtrusive of the Kaziranga National Park's big five animals, the others being the rhino, Bengal tiger, elephant and Asiatic water buffalo in that order of prominence. The headquarters of the park is in Golaghat district. On March 11, the district administration launched 'Tikhor', the swamp deer as the male mascot for the systematic voters' education and electoral participation (SVEEP) programme. 'Sutiba', the butterfly, has been made the female mascot.

Farmers' body says don't vote for BJP



SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Members of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha on Saturday held a public meeting at Nandigram and urged the people of the constituency not to vote for the BJP. Along with Rakesh Tikait of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), social activist Medha Patkar was present at the meeting at Nandigram. "If you want to save the country, then you will have to remove this government. You can ask, there are elections in West Bengal and what are we non-political people saying. We are saying, do not vote for BJP and vote for anyone else you want to," Mr. Tikait said.

Tightrope walk for the Congress



SARATH BABU GEORGE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Candidate selection for key seats in the capital district of Kerala is proving to be a tightrope walk for the Congress. Despite witnessing much wrangling for seats, the party leadership is yet to zero in on candidates likely to win in the Nemom, Vattiyarkavu and Kazhakuttom segments. The predicament has forced the party to consider relaxing its supposed ban on permitting MPs from contesting in the Assembly polls. With Nemom, the BJP's lone seat in Kerala, fast emerging a focal point of the election, the Congress leadership has been toying with the possibility of fielding an MP who could satisfy the caste arithmetic and wrest the United Democratic Front (UDF) vote-base that has eroded in the recent past.

Celebrities ready to take the plunge



S.R. PRAVEEN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Popularity on the screen has only rarely translated into electoral success for celebrity candidates in Kerala, unlike in neighbouring Tamil Nadu. Yet, in recent years, more film celebrities than in the past are ready to take the plunge. Actor Innocent won as a Left independent in the Lok Sabha election of 2019, while K.B. Ganesh Kumar, MLA of LDF ally Kerala Congress(B), has since 2001 had multiple successes in elections and is contesting this time too. Actor Mukesh of the CPI(M) is also contesting for a second term. Suresh Gopi, who lost as the BJP candidate from Thrissur in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, is rumoured to be in the fray this time as well.

DATA BYTE

Report card

A look at the party-wise criminal cases and assets of sitting MLAs in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly

Party	% of MLAs with criminal cases	% of MLAs with serious criminal cases
INC	51	39
BJP	50	50
CPI(M)	46	42
AITC	33	30
Party	% of crorepati MLAs	Average assets (₹ crore)
AITC	38	1.79 crore
BJP	33	1.32 crore
INC	33	78.3 lakh
CPI(M)	8	43.4 lakh

MLAs with highest assets

Name	Party	Total assets (₹ crore)
Samir Chakrabarty	AITC	40.59
Jakir Hossain	AITC	20.04
Javed Ahmed Khan	AITC	17.3

NOTE: MLAS ANALYSED: ALL INDIA TRINAMOOL CONGRESS (AITC): 205; INC: 39; CPI(M): 24; BJP: 6

SOURCE: ADR

INTERVIEW | KAMAL HAASAN

'We are first front by virtue of people, capacity to deliver'

Makkal Needhi Maiam founder underlines party's vantage position of 'centrism', allowing it to place people before ideologies

RAMYA KANNAN
UDHAV NAIG

Politics seems to sit very well on Kamal Haasan. A 'newbie' in politics, this veteran of cinema seems to be comfortable with the new skin he wears. He says he hit the ground running with the launch of the party in 2018, and he's been running since. Things are hectic, possibly more than ever, but his demeanour says "relaxed" and "confident". Having skimmed off a double digit polling percentage in Coimbatore and South Chennai constituencies in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, he believes his party has grown in strength with love from the people. Here, he discusses a range of issues relevant to this election, but also beyond that. Excerpts:

What is your ideology? Do you believe in a left-right ideological spectrum?

■ We do believe that the left and right exist and they have their virtues. We have criticisms also. But, we have this vantage position of 'centrism', which allows us to place people before even ideologies. This is the virtue and strength of centrism, which is fast gaining momentum in world politics.

At the same time, let me tell you that all 'isms' are a work in progress. They do not offer complete resolution for all problems. So we also use yet another approach and an ideology towards addressing the maladies of people. Many governments are successfully trying it.

Is your manifesto a completion of schemes for social development?

I qualified to be Dravidians. I think Dravidianism cannot be limited to two or three parties or Tamil Nadu alone. I think the word Dravidian – as an anthropological word – applies to the whole nation and is pan-national.

Do you believe that the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) front is a third front of sorts?

■ It's the very first front. It is only by virtue of calculations and data that you call it the third front. But by virtue of people and capacity to deliver, we are the first front. The other party has 33% criminality in candidates. That is the crowd that you're voting for?

Are you taking on two Dravidian parties in Dravidian land. Do you find both the All Indian Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) problematic?

■ The word Dravidian is just rhetoric first used by the Justice Party. It's an anthropological description. Everyone who speaks Tamil and is dark-skinned and has thick lips, like we are in this room, are

... and that angle had to be changed. The DMK sprang out of the DK (Dravidar Kazhagam). And from that another branch broke out – AIADMK. The first difference of opinion was not ideological but it was about corruption. The dissent of MGR (late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran) was due to rampant corruption. It has been questioned again by many other parties, including us now.

What went into MNM's candidate selection process?

■ First, we saw if they have an inclination to do something for the people. If we had placed their affluence before anything else, then most of them would not have been selected. Some of them are still working to make ends meet. Their track record shows that they have already done what politicians usually promise to do after they are elected. Within their limited powers, they've already served the people, and want to do more. And these are people who are going to enhance our manifesto, merely

by participation. They are not going to bring in finance, but their tenacity of purpose will energise our engine to go forward. When we come to power, they will present a critical analysis of our service to the people. And that is what is going to keep us awake. And not sleeping in our chair.

Why did you pick the Coimbatore South constituency?

■ The reason why I chose Coimbatore South, out of the 234 constituencies, is that it is the constituency affected worst by corruption by very notorious politicians... So I thought that needs to be directly challenged, if not attacked. Another reason is that Coimbatore has been bearing the brunt of communal disharmony clearly engineered by national parties, and they are also contesting there. It's a direct challenge.

What would have been safe and silly would have been to go to Mylapore, where I have my relatives and people of the same caste. I had to prove the point that I am beyond caste, beyond community and beyond religious divides, and that's why I chose Coimbatore.

(Full interview on bit.ly/KamalSpeaks)



■ K. PICHUMANI

Yes, I am a man of the moment and this is the party of the moment

Modi, Gotabaya speak ahead of Geneva vote

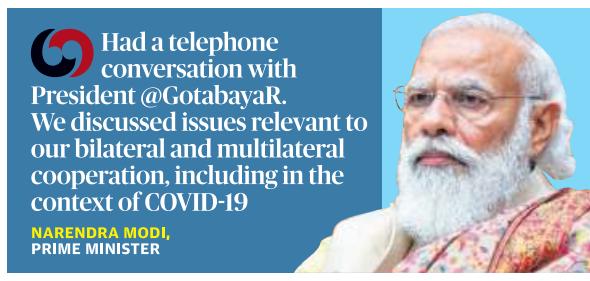
Sri Lanka's administration counting on friends and neighbours to support it; leaders reviewed topical developments

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa reviewed "topical developments" during telephone call on Saturday, an official press release said, just over a week before a crucial vote on Sri Lanka at the U.N. Human Rights Council, where Colombo has sought New Delhi's support.

The call, initiated by the Sri Lankan side according to officials sources, assumes significance amid strained bilateral ties, following Colombo's recent policy choices on key infrastructure projects, including a decision to boot India out of a Colombo Port terminal project and an approval for a Chinese energy project on the northern islands, close to the Tamil Nadu coast.

New Delhi conveyed its displeasure on both moves. Colombo has subsequently



Had a telephone conversation with President @GotabayaR. We discussed issues relevant to our bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including in the context of COVID-19

**NARENDRA MODI,
PRIME MINISTER**

offered an alternative terminal project and is negotiating with the Adani Group.

"Had a telephone conversation with President @GotabayaR. We discussed issues relevant to our bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including in the context of COVID-19," Mr. Modi said in a tweet.

A media release issued by the Indian government said: "The leaders reviewed topical developments and the ongoing cooperation between both countries in bilateral and multilateral forums. They agreed to maintain regular contact between relevant

officials, including in the context of the continuing COVID-19 challenges," and added that Mr. Modi "reiterated the importance of Sri Lanka" to India's "Neighbourhood First" policy.

As the Human Rights Council prepares to vote on a resolution on Sri Lanka's rights record later this month, the Rajapaksa administration is counting on friends and neighbours, who are currently members of the Council, to back it.

President Rajapaksa earlier wrote to Mr. Modi, among other leaders, seeking a favourable vote. Reiter-

ating Colombo's expectation, Foreign Secretary Jayanthi Colomage told *The Hindu* in a recent interview that "India cannot abandon us."

Crucial role

It is widely predicted that India might abstain, given its own principle against country-specific resolutions and growing geopolitical concerns in the strategic island nation. All the same, those familiar with the Geneva process observe that India could still play a crucial role in last-minute negotiations among members of the council, and potentially tip the scales.

Intervening in an interactive dialogue in February on the report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noting that Sri Lanka is "on alarming path towards recurrence of grave human rights violations", India's

Permanent Representative in Geneva made an unambiguous call to respect the rights of the Tamil community. "We believe that respecting the rights of the Tamil community, including through meaningful devolution, contributes directly to the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka," Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey said.

China, which is also currently a member of the 47-member council, has assured Sri Lanka of its support.

Economic assistance

Irrespective of how the Geneva vote goes, Colombo is faced with a major economic challenge, as it prepares to repay over \$4 billion of its outstanding debt by next year. While Thursday's media release said Mr. Modi and Mr. Rajapaksa discussed COVID-19 challenges – Sri Lanka's first consignment of vaccines was a gift from India –

it made no specific mention of economic assistance from India.

During his last call with Mr. Modi in May 2020, President Rajapaksa sought an additional \$1-billion currency swap facility – the RBI extended \$400 million – to boost the foreign reserves that are under enormous strain since the pandemic struck. India is yet to respond.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's debt freeze request made over a year ago, too, awaits New Delhi's response.

Earlier this week, Sri Lanka said China approved a 10 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion) currency swap. In March last year, China granted an 'urgent' \$500 million loan to Sri Lanka to cope with the economic stress of the novel coronavirus.

Colombo has sought a further \$700 million loan from Beijing.

'Reaffirm 1991 Act on places of worship'

CPI(M) voices concern over SC notice

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau called the Supreme Court notice to the government seeking a response on the PIL petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay challenging the Places of Worship (Special Provision) Act, 1991, "unfortunate".

The Act mandates that the character of all religious places of worship should be maintained as it was on August 15, 1947, and no suit or proceedings shall lie in a court of law with respect to the character of places of worship.

This effectively barred courts from entertaining cases which raise disputes over places of worship that existed as of August 15, 1947. While invoking this exemption, the Supreme Court in the 2019 Ayodhya verdict

reaffirmed that similar such cases cannot be entertained with respect to other sites in view of this Act.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) reaffirms that the grounds on which this law was enacted need not be re-examined. The Central government must respond to the Supreme Court, seeking its views, in a firm affirmation of the Places of Worship Act, 1991," the party said in a statement here.

While there was no official response from the Congress, Raja Sabha member and senior Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi in a tweet said the notice by the Supreme Court to the government was merely a "prima facie view".

Adding a note of caution, he said this notice should not lead to "reopening of closed issues" and "scrapping of old wounds".

Mizoram group demands sanctions on Myanmar

It requests Delhi not to send back people crossing over

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A Mizoram-based group representing the Zo indigenous people of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar has petitioned President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose sanctions on military-ruled Myanmar.

The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) comprising the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group of people has also asked the Centre not to turn away the Myanmar nationals who crossed over to escape the military regime and provide them shelter on humanitarian grounds.

Their letters to the President and Prime Minister were submitted through Mizoram Governor P.S. Sreedharan Pillai on March 12, two days after the Minister of Home Affairs asked the paramilitary Assam Rifles and four north-eastern States bordering Myanmar to check "illegal influx" into India.

Ethnically related

These four States – Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram – share a 1,643 km border with Myanmar and people on either side are ethnically related. The Mizo people of Mizoram and the Kuki-Zomi communities in Manipur have a strong kinship with the Chins across the border.

The ZORO sought Delhi's help for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar and immediate release of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, President U. Win Myint and other leaders of the National League for Democracy, who have been detained after the military junta seized control of an elected Myanmar government on February 1.

The organisation said India should take the lead in solving the current political



Zoramthanga. FILE PHOTO

crisis in Myanmar by imposing sanctions on the military junta for human rights violations. "We request you to take up the matter on a war footing to save innocent lives and in the best interest of supporting democracy in line with the international community," it said in the letters.

Porous border

Six Mizoram districts – Champhai, Lawngtlai, Siaha, Saitul, Hmawthi and Serchhip – share a 404-km-long porous border with Myanmar's Chin State. At least 100 people, including deserters of the Myanmar police and fire service department, have taken shelter in the border areas of Mizoram.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga had earlier announced that his government would provide shelter and other relief to the Myanmar refugees on humanitarian grounds. While some refugees are being provided with food and shelter by the district administration, several others have reportedly accommodated by the locals in border villages.

Punjab shuts all anganwadi centres due to rising cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Minister Aruna Chaudhary on Saturday instructed to close all anganwadi centres till further orders in view of the spike in COVID-19 cases in the State.

The social security, women and child development minister said ration and other material will be distributed door to door through anganwadi workers and helpers, so that nutritional support to beneficiaries is not affected.

34 more deaths

Thirty-four more fatalities due to COVID-19 were reported in Punjab on Friday, taking the death toll to 6,030, while the infection count climbed to 1,94,753 with 1,414 new coronavirus cases in the state.

In January, the Punjab government had announced that all anganwadi centres for children and other beneficiaries across the state would reopen from February 1.

The centres were closed earlier due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CPI leader defends tie-ups in Bengal, T.N.

'It is critical to stall BJP in both States'

SOBHA N. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Political compulsions were behind the limited share of seats for the Left parties in Tamil Nadu, said CPI general secretary D. Raja, ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.

He also defended the Left Front's alliance with Muslim cleric Abbas Siddiqui's party Indian Secular Front (ISF) in Bengal.

The DMK has conceded only six seats each to the CPI and the CPI(M) in Tamil Nadu, when the latter had demanded a number that touched at least double digits.

The Left Front in Bengal has come under severe criticism for its alliance with greenhorn party ISF, which is headed by chief patron of Furfura Sharif Abbas Siddiqui.

Defending the decision, Mr. Raja said, "There is no evidence that the ISF or Mr. Siddiqui has stoked communal violence."



D. Raja

The CPI leader, however, conceded that the Left's seat share in alliances often did not correspond to the political and ideological influence that it wielded.

The Left Front in Bengal has come under severe criticism for its alliance with greenhorn party ISF, which is headed by chief patron of Furfura Sharif Abbas Siddiqui.

Defending the decision, Mr. Raja said, "There is no evidence that the ISF or Mr. Siddiqui has stoked communal violence."

Polls in new Himachal civic bodies in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHIMLA

Elections for four municipal corporations and six nagar panchayats in Himachal Pradesh will be held on April 7, the State Election Commission announced on Saturday. The Commission notified the schedule for the elections of Dharamshala, Palampur, Mandi and Solan municipal corporations and Chirgaon, Nerwa, Ani, Nirmand, Kangrahat and Amb Nagar panchayats.

The four municipal corporations except Dharamshala and the six nagar panchayats are newly created and will go to the polls for the first time.

क्रांतिकारी प्रधानमान्यर, स्वशासी राज्य विकास महाविद्यालय सोसाइटी, एटा, उत्तर प्रदेश
ई-मेल: deansame@yahoo.in, gmctah@gmail.com, वेबसाइट: http://www.smcgara.ac.in
प्रेसरिपोर्ट: www.updgm.ein

दिनांक: 05/03/2021

संख्या: भैकामपुरा / 2021 / 599

—विषयपूर्ण—

स्वशासी राज्य विकास महाविद्यालय सोसाइटी, एटा के विषयपूर्ण दस्तावेज से संबंधित आवाद या अन्य विषय के लिए रजिस्ट्रेशन को 22/03/2021 के दिन 10:00 बजे से तक तक रजिस्ट्रेशन को लिया जाया एवं वही सोसाइटी विवरण है। इसके दस्तावेज को लिया जाया एवं वही सोसाइटी विवरण है।

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संस्थान की विवरणों की

IN BRIEF



Delkar told House panel of ill-treatment: Congress

MUMBAI
The Congress party in Maharashtra alleged on Saturday that Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar, who was found dead in a hotel in Mumbai in February, had spoken of ill-treatment meted out to him and how he was on the verge of suicide, to the privilege committee of Parliament two weeks before his death.

Resume political process in J&K: ex-legislators

Srinagar
A group of 10 former legislators belonging to different political parties, who served in the Upper House of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, on Saturday demanded "early resumption of democratic political process in the erstwhile State". The legislators said the current impasse on the restoration of the political process had only added to the miseries of the masses.

Bomb shells found in riverbed near Ambala

AMBALA
Six old bomb shells were found on Saturday in the Markanda riverbed near Tangail village, around 20 km from Ambala Cantonment. Some people noticed them, following which police were informed. Police said the shells were old and rusted and did not pose any danger. One villager told reporters that nearly three decades ago the Army had conducted an exercise in the area. PTI

One held for murder of Assam BJP leader

GUWAHATI
The police in eastern Assam's Tinsukia district has arrested one person for stabbing a 48-year-old BJP leader on Thursday evening. Debananda Gogoi, the BJP's booth president of Buridihing Gain Panchayat, succumbed to his injuries at a government-run hospital in adjoining Arunachal Pradesh.

Pollution linked to virus spread: Vardhan

PM2.5 and NO₂ contributing to the spread and virulence of SARS-CoV-2 infections, says Health Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There is emerging evidence to suggest that exposure to ambient air pollutants, especially PM2.5 and NO₂, contribute to the spread and virulence of SARS-CoV-2 infections, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Saturday.

He was inaugurating the new green campus of the Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute for Research in Environmental Health (NIREH), in Bhopal.

"Furthermore, ambient air pollution is a known risk factor for multiple adverse health outcomes, including chronic cardio-respiratory morbidities, and the presence of the said morbidities renders the affected population more vulnerable to CO-



Virus alarm: A health worker collecting throat swabs for COVID-19 testing at Dharavi, Mumbai. ■ AFP

VID-19," the Health Minister said.

To worsen matters, he added, closed indoor spaces provide ideal environments for viral transmission due to the lack of ventilation pre-

venting the dilution of viral particles, and the absence of ultraviolet rays which can potentially inactivate the virus.

Speaking about the challenges before NIREH, Dr.

Vardhan said the World Health Organization (WHO) had reported in 2018 that over 91% of the global population reside in areas where ambient air pollution levels exceed the normal limits prescribed by the WHO, resulting in around 4.2 million annual deaths.

Water pollution

He added that the Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health estimated that 1.8 million deaths worldwide are related to "water" (mainly microbiological contamination) and 0.5 million deaths occur due to chemical pollution of water and soil by heavy metals and other man-made chemicals.

"Another major source of water pollution that is yet to be appropriately quantified is plastic debris. It has been

come an important environmental problem because of its ubiquitous prevalence, persistence, accumulation in aquatic food chains, and adverse effects on aquatic organisms and potentially to human health," Dr. Vardhan said.

He added that the emission of huge quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is the main cause of climate change.

"Thus, research, especially targeted at estimating the burden of pollution/climate change and consequent health effects, is essential to design and implement suitable intervention strategies that will enable the achievement of the sustainable development goals of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)," the Minister said.

Night curfew likely in Bhopal, Indore: Chouhan

M.P. CM points to rise in COVID-19 cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHOJPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that night curfew might be imposed in Bhopal and Indore from Sunday or Monday in view of a spurt in coronavirus cases in these two districts.

He said this during a meeting held on Friday evening to review the coronavirus situation in the State. "Look at the rise in infection cases... Tough measures will be taken to flatten the curve. Night curfew might be clamped in Bhopal and Indore from Sunday or Monday," Mr. Chouhan was quoted as saying in an official statement.

The Chief Minister said that people coming to the State by air, trains or roads

from Maharashtra, where there is a spike in cases, should be thermally scanned.

Ways to restrict the influx of people from Maharashtra were also discussed during the meeting, the statement said.

Mr. Chouhan also instructed the officials to ensure that COVID-19 rules were strictly followed by people.

On Friday, 603 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Madhya Pradesh.

Indore, the worst-hit district in the State, saw 219 new cases, taking the case-load there to 61,642. Bhopal witnessed 138 fresh cases, which pushed its total count to 45,079. Indore has so far reported 940 deaths and Bhopal 621.

Uproar in Bihar Assembly over illicit liquor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

The Bihar Assembly on Saturday witnessed pandemonium after Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav urged Speaker Vijay Sinha to enable an adjournment motion for discussing Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Ram Surat Rai's alleged "involvement" in illicit liquor business in dry Bihar.

Mr. Rai, a BJP MLA from Aurai, challenged Mr. Yadav to prove his charges in two days or apologise.

When the Speaker turned down Mr. Yadav's demand, the Opposition *mahagathbandhan* leaders staged a walkout amid slogan shouting.

They demanded that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar sack the Minister immediately. It was observed that members of the Janata Dal (U) did not come out in support of the BJP members.

Later, Mr. Yadav, who heads the Rashtriya Janata Dal, along with other *mahagathbandhan* leaders, marched to the Raj Bhavan and demanded that Governor Phagu Chauhan dismiss the government for "muzzling the Opposition's voice".

Earlier in the day, Mr. Yadav held a press conference and displayed pictures before mediapersons, alleging that Mr. Rai was present at a function held in a school from where illegal liquor bottles were seized in November 2020. "How can the Minister wash his hands of a matter that involves a property and an institution with which he is involved?" Mr. Yadav said.

Ayushman Bharat campaign picks up pace

More than 4.7 lakh beneficiary records created in a day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The "Aap Ke Dwar Ayushman" campaign of the National Health Authority (NHA) recorded more than 4.7 lakh beneficiary verifications in a single day on March 10 for free healthcare services under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme, a release issued by the group said on Saturday.



The government is trying to create awareness about the health insurance scheme, especially in rural areas. ■ REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

"On Wednesday, at least 4,77,105 beneficiary records were created in the ongoing "Aap Ke Dwar Ayushman" campaign which was launched on February 1. Bi-

har was the first State to activate the verification process in the mission mode," the release said.

The aim is to create large-scale awareness about the AB PM-JAY health insurance scheme, especially in rural and interior parts, which provides cashless healthcare benefit of up to ₹5 lakh per family per year.

The drive is being implemented in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Haryana and J&K, among other States.

So far, about 1,16,83,808

Ayushman cards have been issued in this calendar year.

Ram Sewak Sharma, CEO, AB-PMJAY, said: "The aim of the campaign is to verify beneficiaries residing in the remote areas."

Law student files affidavit in contempt case against Kamra

Comedian had refused to apologise or retract his tweets

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra is a haughty man "puffed up with conceit" who wants to justify his "scandalous tweets" about the Supreme Court as "jokes", law student Shrirang Katneshwarkar told the Supreme Court in an affidavit.

Mr. Kamra is facing criminal contempt proceedings in

the top court on a plea filed by the student.

In his response to the contempt petition, Mr. Kamra had said the Supreme Court should trust the public not to form opinions on the basis of a few jokes cracked by him on Twitter. Mr. Kamra said "taking offence" to comedy or satire had become a much-loved indoor sport in a growing culture of intolerance. He had refused to

apologise or retract his tweets.

Countering in his rejoinder affidavit, Mr. Katneshwarkar said, "...he (Kamra) says the tweets were funny. An ordinary prudent man can gather they are obnoxious." The law student said Mr. Kamra had forgotten in his "hubris" as an "alleged/so-called" comedian that jokes are meant to cause amusement or laughter.

Framework for testing water launched

Centre caps tariffs to ensure that they remain within reach of common man



Safety first: Detailed testing protocols and standards have been laid out to check for chemical and biological contaminants.

turday mandate a network of NABL accredited labs to be set up in every State, district and block over the next year. At the panchayat level, teams of women in the village water and sanitation committees will be given field testing kits. Of the ₹3.6 lakh crore Jal Jeevan budget, 2% has been earmarked for quality monitoring.

Detailed testing protocols and standards have been laid out to check for chemical and biological contaminants, which are present in

more than half of all blocks, according to a 2018 assessment by the Central Groundwater Board. State governments can include private players as part of the network, but the Centre has capped tariffs to ensure that they remain within the reach of the common man.

The suggested tariffs would allow one to test a water sample's pH level, turbidity, alkalinity and hardness for a package rate of ₹50. Testing the water for the presence of chloride, sulphate

Move to phase out older govt. vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Government departments will not be able to renew registration of their vehicles older than 15 years from April 1, 2022, if a proposal issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is finalised.

The Ministry has sought stakeholders' comments to amend related rules in this regard by issuing a notification.

Once approved, this will be applicable to all government vehicles.

"From April 1, 2022, government departments will not be able to renew the certificate of registration of their vehicles after 15 years," the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways said in a tweet.

The development comes close on heels of the voluntary vehicle scrapping policy announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22 on February 1.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

BJP condemns Rizvi's remarks about Koran

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The BJP on Saturday joined several Valley-based Muslim organisations in condemnation of Shia leader Waseem Rizvi's move to approach the Supreme Court seeking removal of 26 verses of the Koran.

"We have filed a complaint (before the police) and want the accused to be dealt with strictly. Nobody will be allowed to speak against any community or their holy book," BJP leader Manzoor Bhat said.

Another BJP leader Altaf Thakur termed the remarks of the former chairman of the Shia Waqf Board "unacceptable". National Conference president and Member of Parliament Farooq Abdullah said the act of Mr. Rizvi was abominable. "The holy Koran is the incorruptible and unchangeable word of Allah. The petition should not be entertained..."

Citizens can now get the water quality in their taps tested at reasonable rates, as part of a monitoring framework rolled out by the Centre's flagship Jal Jeevan Mission on Saturday.

Using an information management system modelled on the COVID-19 testing framework, the samples tested by members of the public, as well as government officials, will create a nationwide database of water quality, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told presspersons after the launch.

However, a major hurdle remains as only 66 of the 2,033 water testing laboratories have been certified by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).

The "drinking water quality testing, monitoring and surveillance framework and guidelines" released on Sa-

China defying Hong Kong joint treaty: U.K.

It is imposing radical changes to the city's electoral system, clearly breaching 1997 declaration: Raab

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

London
China is no longer compliant with Hong Kong's joint declaration after Beijing announced sweeping changes to the region's electoral system, Britain said on Saturday.

"The U.K. now considers Beijing to be in a state of ongoing non-compliance with the Sino-British Joint Declaration," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The treaty was signed before Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997 and was designed to allay fears about its future under Beijing's rule.

It guarantees the financial hub special status, including a high degree of autonomy to manage its own affairs and the right to freedom of speech.

Stifling criticism
But British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said that Beijing's decision "to impose radical changes to restrict



Tightening grip: Pro-democracy activists being escorted by officials to a prison van in Hong Kong on March 4, 2021. ■AP

participation in Hong Kong's electoral system" was a "further clear breach" of the agreement.

"This is part of a pattern designed to harass and stifle all voices critical of China's policies and is the third breach of the Joint Declaration between the two nations.

Britain has been a strong critic of China's crackdown on pro-democracy campaigners in Hong Kong, and angered Beijing by announcing a visa scheme offering millions of its residents a pathway to U.K.'s citizenship.

The system went live in January as the city's former co-

lonial master opened its doors to those wanting to escape China's crackdown on dissent.

Growing gulf'

Beijing has acted decisively to dismantle Hong Kong's democratic pillars after massive protests there in 2019.

China's rubber-stamp Parliament on Thursday voted to give Beijing the power to veto candidates as it moves to ensure that only "patriots" run the city.

Mr. Raab said the latest move was a "demonstration of the growing gulf between Beijing's promises and its actions". "The U.K. will continue to stand up for the people of Hong Kong," he added.

"China must act in accordance with its legal obligations and respect fundamental rights and freedoms in Hong Kong," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

The new election rules sparked international condemnation.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called it "a di-

rect attack on autonomy promised to people in Hong Kong under the Sino-British Joint Declaration".

Meanwhile, the G7's top diplomats said they "call on China and the Hong Kong authorities to restore confidence in Hong Kong's political institutions and end the unwarranted oppression of those who promote democratic values".

The European Union warned China it could take "additional steps" as it condemned the vote. "The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China adopted a decision that will have a significant impact on democratic accountability and political pluralism in Hong Kong," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

Brussels has previously decided to limit exports of equipment that could be used for surveillance in Hong Kong and EU Foreign Ministers have discussed the possibility of broader sanctions if the situation worsens.

I inform the Bolivian pe-

ople that Mrs. Jeanine Anez has already been apprehended and is currently in the hands of the police," Minister Carlos Eduardo del Castillo wrote on Twitter and Facebook.

The arrests came months after Mr. Morales returned to Bolivia from exile on the back of a fresh election victory in October 2020 for the leftist Movement for Socialism (MAS) party he founded. Both the presidency and congress are now under the control of MAS.

Police were also rounding up former Ministers who backed the conservative politician's caretaker government, which was in place for a year after Mr. Morales fled the country in November 2019 amid disputed elections, media reports said.

In briefs released to the press, she denounced her arrest as "illegal".

It was not immediately known where she was taken.

Ms. Anez's former Energy Minister Rodrigo Guzman and his justice counterpart Alvaro Coimbra were detained on Friday.

Bolivia's former President Anez arrested in 'coup' probe

Former Ministers who backed her are also being detained

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LA PAZ
Bolivia's former interim President Jeanine Anez was arrested on Saturday on terrorism, sedition and conspiracy.



Jeanine Anez being taken away after her arrest in La Paz on Saturday. ■AFP

on Friday for the conservative politician and others on charges of terrorism, sedition and conspiracy.

Ms. Anez tweeted a copy of the warrant with the response: "The political persecution has begun."

She added that the government was accusing her "of having participated in a coup d'état that never happened".

In the early hours of Saturday, Bolivian television showed images of Ms. Anez, not handcuffed, arriving at La Paz's El Alto airport, accompanied by Mr. Castillo and several police officers.

In briefs released to the press, she denounced her arrest as "illegal".

Mr. Castillo congratulated the police for their "great work" in the "historic task of giving justice" to the Bolivian people.

Bolivia's public prosecutor issued an arrest warrant

Nigeria steps up search for 39 students

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KANO
Nigerian security forces stepped up efforts on Saturday to rescue dozens of students who were abducted from their hostels in Kaduna state, police said.

Gunmen stormed the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation in Mando on Thursday and took 39 students away while the military rescued 180 after a fierce battle.

A combined team of police, Army and other security forces are in a frantic search for the kidnapped students,

Soldiers have been occupying hospitals and universities across Myanmar to quash a civil disobedience movement that started with government employees, such as doctors and teachers.

South Korea said it would suspend defence exchanges and reconsider development aid to Myanmar because of the violence.

Poland's Foreign Ministry said a Polish journalist was arrested this week.

U.S. court removes Xiaomi from blacklist

It ends a ban on investment in the firm

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON
A U.S. judge on Friday ordered Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi to be temporarily removed from a government blacklist that barred American investment in the company.

Six days before Donald Trump left office last year, his administration cemented its trade war legacy against Beijing with a series of announcements targeting Chinese firms, including Xiaomi, state oil giant CNOOC, and social media darling TikTok.

Xiaomi was one of nine firms classified by the Pentagon as "Communist Chinese military companies". But U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras in Washington ruled on Friday that the De-

partments of Defense and Treasury "have not made the case that the national security interests at stake here are compelling".

In an appeal filed in January against the blacklisting, Xiaomi – which overtook Apple last year to become the world's third-largest smartphone manufacturer – said Washington's moves were "incorrect" and had "deprived the company of legal due process."

Judge Contreras's decision came the same day U.S. regulators listed Huawei and ZTE among Chinese telecom gear firms deemed a threat to national security, signalling that a hoped-for softening of relations is not on the cards.

At least 12 killed in Myanmar protests

Amid mounting violence, Britain urges citizens to leave; Polish journalist detained

REUTERS

NAYPYITAW

At least 12 protesters were killed by security forces in Myanmar, witnesses and media reported, as activists marked the death anniversary of a student whose killing in 1988 sparked an uprising against the military government.

Five people were shot dead and several injured when police opened fire on a sit-in protest in Mandalay, witnesses said.

Another person was killed in Pyay and two died in police firing in the commercial capital Yangon, where three were also killed overnight, domestic media reported.

In Pyay, a witness said security forces initially stopped an ambulance from reaching those who were injured, leading to one death.



In solidarity: People holding up their mobile phones as they take part in a vigil in Yangon on Saturday. ■AFP

social media urging people to mark the death anniversary of Phone Maw, who was killed by security forces in 1988 inside what was then known as the Rangoon Institute of Technology campus.

His death and that of another student sparked widespread protests against the junta, known as the 8-8-88 campaign.

Britain on Friday warned its citizens in Myanmar to leave, saying, "Political tension and unrest are widespread since the military take-over and levels of violence are rising."

Riot police and soldiers entered the general hospital in Hakha, in the western Chin state, forcing all 30 patients to leave and evicting staff from on-site housing,

said activist Salai Lian.

Soldiers have been occupying hospitals and universities across Myanmar to quash a civil disobedience movement that started with government employees, such as doctors and teachers.

Saturday's protests erupted after posters spread on

ANDREW CUOMO

From zenith to nadir

The NY Governor, who was hailed a hero a year ago, now faces many allegations

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

Nowhere has a public fall from grace been steeper in recent times than that of Andrew Cuomo, the embattled Governor of New York State.

In the spring of 2020, Mr. Cuomo was hailed as a hero, who had waged an uncompromising battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, which ravaged his State.

His breakout leadership qualities propelled him onto the national stage of Democratic Party heavyweights, and whispers abounded regarding his potential as a future presidential candidate.

Yet hardly could even the man at the centre of this unparalleled public administration victory through a lethal pandemic imagined how sharply his prospects would have slumped into a morass of disrepute.

His problems began to mount on questions related to the pandemic itself, when research by an Albany think tank revealed that the Cuomo administration had downplayed and deflected questions on fatalities within New York's nursing-home system. One of his aides, Melissa DeRosa, admitted to State Democrats last month that the Cuomo administration "froze" as the tragedy of thousands of senior citizens dying of COVID-19 mounted across New York, and in part that was driven by the fear that President Donald Trump would turn their perceived failure into "political



a toxic and chauvinist environment for women colleagues.

Anger against Mr. Cuomo has mounted since more women came forward with accounts of alleged harassment since last month, and the Governor would only acknowledge that some of his behaviour toward his staff may have been "insensitive" but that his comments to the women concerned had "been misinterpreted as an unwanted flirtation".

The seriousness of the situation facing Mr. Cuomo is measured by the fact that it is not Republicans who have jumped into the fray and started calling for his resignation – rather it is his own Democratic colleagues who appear to have lost faith in his ability to carry on as a viable leader bearing their collective mantle.

Over the weekend, Mr. Cuomo lost the support of two of the two Senators from his State who are arguably the

so the country's most powerful Democrats – Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand.

Under pressure

Embattled and now entirely isolated in clinging on to power, Mr. Cuomo will have to cooperate with the ongoing inquiry opened into the allegations against him – a process that his office agreed to only under immense pressure from outside. Even worse for him, on March 11, the New York State Assembly announced it would open an impeachment investigation against him, bringing together multiple allegations of wrongdoing that he faces.

Mr. Cuomo's descent from pandemic hero to public embarrassment is more startling given his antecedents and broader political credentials. His father, Mario Cuomo, was a three-term Governor of New York, who attained a measure of fame for taking on the Reagan administration in 1984 in a rousing speech at the Democratic National Convention. Mr. Cuomo's younger brother, Christ Cuomo, is an award-winning television journalist with CNN. If there is one thing that the political crisis surrounding Mr. Cuomo relieves, it is that no one, not even the most exalted in the pantheon of Democratic Party leaders, is beyond the pale when it comes to the standards of governance that the people of the nation expect.

PROFILES

TIRATH SINGH RAWAT

The surprise successor

A low-profile leader with RSS roots has been chosen to lead Uttarakhand govt.

NISTULA HEBBAR

For Tirath Singh Rawat, his election to the top job by the BJP Legislature Party in the hill State was a bittersweet moment. Four years ago, he was on the other side of the aisle. In 2017, when candidates were being selected for the Assembly polls in the State, Mr. Rawat found himself out in the cold, despite being a senior leader and a former State unit chief between 2013 and 2016.

Being overlooked for ticket was a slight to Mr. Rawat, but he held his peace, didn't speak out against the party

and accepted the decision.

His return as Chief Minister is a sweet victory for him.

Those who know Mr. Rawat swear by his low profile, his lack of an entourage and his habit (rare among even local-level politicians) of picking his own calls. On the face of it, his election looks like the typical Narendra Modi-Amit Shah move of rewarding loyalty, but a close examination of Mr. Rawat's rise reveals that his quiet demeanour and community identity as a Thakur from Pauri district, a traditional talent pool for the Chief Ministers of the State, may also have played a role.

Born on April 9, 1964 at Sirohi village in Pauri, Mr. Rawat did his early education in Pauri. He entered active student politics through the Legislative Council of the un-

divided Uttar Pradesh in 1997.

When the new State of Uttarakhand was formed in 2000, Mr. Rawat was appointed Education Minister in the Niyamand Swami government.

Then began his win-some, lose-some streak in the Uttarakhand Assembly. In the 2002 election, the BJP came a cropper and Mr. Rawat failed to win the seat of Chauhatta Khal in Pauri, but in 2007, he was back in the State Assembly, only to lose again in the 2012 election.

Till then, Mr. Rawat was like any other mid-level State leader of the BJP, but in 2013, he fought for the position of State party chief with the encouragement of Mr. Khanduri, against Trivendra Singh Rawat, the man he replaced as Chief Minister on Tuesday. He won the race and took the reins of the State unit of the BJP. But Mr. Trivendra Singh was backed by another party heavyweight,

His Master's degree in Sociology and diploma in journalism were geared to a future career in public life. Nobody quite knows when Mr. Rawat came into the orbit of the other big BJP leader from the Pauri area, former Union Minister and Chief Minister B.C. Khanduri, but he was quickly elected to the Legislative Council of the un-

B.S. Koshiyari. The face-off created powerful rivals for Mr. Rawat within the party. The payback was the denial of ticket in the 2017 Assembly election which, some say, was engineered by Mr. Trivendra Singh.

Mr. Rawat retreated quietly to Delhi, and was appointed Himachal Pradesh in-charge and a national secretary of the BJP. He also fought and won the Lok Sabha seat of Pauri in 2019, once held by his mentor Mr. Khanduri, as a consolation for the loss of space in State politics.

In Delhi, he built bridges with then party chief Amit Shah, being his constant companion when he launched tours in areas where the BJP was organisationally weak as part of what was called the "vistarik (expansion) programme" in 2016-17.

Party loyalty
That close proximity, and unquestioned party loyalty may have come handy when the BJP leadership sought a replacement for Mr. Trivendra Singh, who faced corruption allegations and protests from within the party and the Parivar.

When Mr. Trivendra Singh resigned, as asked by party bosses in Delhi, the only thing certain was that his successor would be a fellow Thakur leader from Pauri. Mr. Tirath Singh Rawat trumped all big names in the fray and was chosen as Uttarakhand's ninth Chief Minister.

M ND-NDE

SNAPSHOTS



Black hole on the move

Cosmologists have hypothesised that supermassive black holes wander in space. A new study published in *The Astrophysical Journal* identifies a case of a moving black hole located 230 million light years away and about three million times the Sun's mass.



Size of egg cells

Egg cells are the largest cells in the body. A new study on fruit flies by biologists and mathematicians at MIT reveals how they grow so big. In a phenomenon analogous to exchange of gas between two balloons of different sizes, 'nurse' cells, connected to the oocyte, dump their contents into the latter, thereby causing it to expand.

Will adenovirus antibodies reduce vector vaccine efficacy?

Using the same adenovirus subtypes for repeated vaccination might result in reduced efficacy, but not in the case of inactivated vaccines

R. PRASAD

Unlike the mRNA vaccine platform used by Pfizer and Moderna, where vaccine efficacy reached 94% and 95%, respectively, the vector-based vaccine platform technology used by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson have shown lower efficacy.

While vaccine efficacy is 66% for Johnson & Johnson vaccine, AstraZeneca vaccine showed 55.1% efficacy when the second dose is administered less than six weeks after the first but 81.3% when the gap between the two doses is over 12 weeks. In contrast, Sputnik V has 91.6% efficacy.

Pre-existing antibodies

Is the relatively low efficacy of adenovirus-based vaccine in some people because of pre-existing antibodies? "Adenovirus-based vaccine platforms have been in development for decades. All through that time, the issue of whether pre-existing antibodies to the adenovirus vector will affect the development of antibodies against the new target the adenovirus is carrying as antigen has remained unclear. There are studies showing that there is a loss of potency if there are pre-existing antibodies, but there are also some other

studies showing that there is no major potency loss," immunologist Dr. Satyajit Rath, formerly with the National Institute of Immunology, Delhi says in an email to *The Hindu*.

Dr. Rath adds: "Pre-existing antibodies against adenoviruses will stop the adenovirus particles from getting into cells and making the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein." The presence of pre-existing antibodies against adenoviruses and those developed after first and second dose of the vaccine becomes particularly important when repeat vaccinations are needed, as in the case of boosters against variants or yearly vaccination.

"There is always a group with fair levels of pre-existing antibodies. Sooner or later, anti-adenoviral antibodies will inevitably form, complicating the situation for subsequent vaccinations. But nobody has planned and tested a continuously variable panel of adenoviruses as vaccine vectors for long-term boosting, I am afraid!" says Dr. Rath. Virologist Dr. V. Raviv, formerly with NIMHANS also says there is no data available on how the antibodies against adenovirus subtypes will affect the efficacy of vaccines, especially with

Dr. Rath agrees with Dr.

John says: "It is plausible that unless the anti-adenovirus antibodies are very efficient and are present at high levels, enough virus particles will get in to make the vaccine work well enough; 10-50 billion virus particles are injected into the muscle."

Clever design

While Johnson & Johnson uses a single dose of Ad26 subtype, the Sputnik V vaccine uses a combination of Ad26 and Ad5 for the first and second dose, respectively. "That is a clever design," says Dr. John about the use of two different subtypes for the first and second doses of Sputnik V. "Immunity against the first vector will not interfere with the second

dose as it contains a different subtype," says Dr. John.

The AstraZeneca vaccine uses chimpanzee adenovirus. Antibodies against the chimpanzee adenovirus are not prominent in people anywhere in the world. What then is the reason for the low efficacy of the Oxford vaccine?

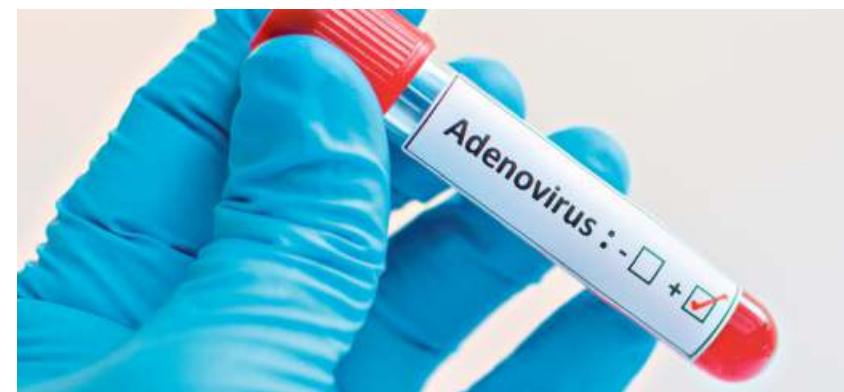
"My guess is the antigen mass (potency) may be relatively low, perhaps adjusted for relatively low cost of production. That is perhaps the reason for a two-dose regimen," says Dr. John.

"Many issues are involved in determining how well a vaccine design will work. Exactly how the engineered virus was constructed is one factor, the actual number of virus particles given is another," says Dr. John.

against adenovirus vector that would make repeat vaccination ineffective? "Dr. Ella might have been referring to a future third dose - which is unlikely to be useful as a booster dose because of immunity to the vector that will render the vector virus non-infectious, hence unable to deliver the cargo (spike protein) inside human cells. However, third or repeated periodic doses will be very effective using inactivated virus vaccine (Covaxin) or mRNA vaccine, which use non-immunogenic lipid vesicles," says Dr. John.

While using the same adenovirus subtypes for repeat vaccinations might result in reduced efficacy in the case of vector-based vaccines, the inactivated vaccines do not face this problem, as seen in the case of rabies and inactivated polio vaccine.

"Theoretically, repeat doses with inactivated vaccines will raise the height of immune response with no chance of any reduction of efficacy. If three doses are taken, especially with at least four months interval between second and third doses, there may not be any need for annual boosting. We will have to obtain data to confirm if the theoretical conclusion is correct in real life," says Dr. John.



Surmounting barriers: If pre-existing immunity to a vector is high, you will expect low response to the cargo antigen. With a heavy dose of the vector, that dampening effect can be overcome, says Dr. Jacob John. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Martian 'blueberries' find a parallel on Earth

Similar haematite concretions have been found in Kutch, Gujarat

ASWATHI PACHA

In 2004, NASA's Mars exploration rover 'Opportunity' found several small spheres on the planet, informally named Martian blueberries. Opportunity's spectrometers studied the mineralogy and noted they were made of iron oxide compounds called haematises. This caused excitement as the presence of haematises suggests that there was water present on Mars.

"The widely accepted formation mechanism of haematite concretion [hard solid mass] is precipitation from aqueous fluids. Haematite is known to form in oxidising environments, and based on our experience on Earth, we infer that water must have also played a crucial role in the formation of grey haematite on Mars," explains Dwijesh Ray from the Planetary Sciences Division of Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad in an email to *The Hindu*.



Geochemistry: Investigations of the haematite concretions in the Jhuran formation (left) revealed the resemblance to the ones on Mars (right). ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in Planetary and Space Science.

"The haematises on Mars not just show the presence of water, they also indicate that the planet had an atmosphere with oxygen as haematises need oxygen to stabilise. We do not know if the concentration was high enough to permit lifeforms, but there was indeed more oxygen than the present day scenario," explains Saibal Gupta from the Department of Geology and Geophysics at IIT Kharagpur, one of the authors of the paper.

About the age of the 'blueberries' on Mars, he explains: "The exact time correlation is not possible. Water is believed to have dis-

appeared from Mars rocks about three billion years ago. Studies from the newly landed Perseverance rover may help find new clues and signs of life and other organic compounds, thus helping us paint a detailed picture of the history of Mars."

Martian analogue

Several researchers have shown that the Kutch area is a potential Martian analogue locality. A 2016 paper argued that the occurrences of hydrous sulphate in the Matanumadh area of Kutch, resemble Martian surficial processes. It has been also argued that the transformation from the wet and humid to dry and arid environment on Mars is mimicked by the history of Kutch. Dr. Ray explains that there may be several other localities in Kutch that share a geologic history of the surface to near-surface processes that appear to be similar to ancient Mars.

"The concretions in the Jhuran Formation of Kutch represent another data point that reinforces the need to use the Kutch area for further analogue studies of the Martian surface," he says.

The results were published

Optical monitoring of power line health

Raman thermometry is used on fibre optic cables included with power lines

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

Researchers at IIT Madras have demonstrated that by using Raman thermometry on fibre optic cables, they can achieve monitoring of power transmission cables. Interestingly, they achieve this by using the optical fibres that are already embedded in the power cables for establishing optical communication. The work is part of a larger ongoing project on distributed fibre sensors and has been published recently in *IEEE Sensors Journal*.

Serendipity

The seeds of the idea were sown about ten years back when Balaji Srinivasan of the Department of Electrical Engineering at IIT Madras was approached by a company that planned to implement overhead power lines across the country. The company wanted Prof. Srinivasan to certify that the glass fibre they were planning to include for communication purposes along with their power cables was indeed an optical fibre. Such optical



Smart monitoring: The method devised by the team is economical and provides real-time information. ■ GETTY IMAGES

fibres are traditionally incorporated in cables and buried underground. This could cost up to 80% of the total expense in setting up the communication system. The company had figured that they would save this cost by incorporating the optical fibres in a hollow tube intertwined with power lines and thereby save the cost of digging tunnels to accommodate them.

It was during this certification process that Prof. Srinivasan got the idea that one or two of the unused fibres could be used to keep tabs on the health of the power cables.

This is based on the principle that any current flowing through a conductor would cause a temperature rise due to the Joule heating effect.

Raman effect

In the Raman effect, when light is scattered off an object, say a molecule, two bands are observed, with higher and lower frequency than the original light, called the Stokes and anti-Stokes bands, respectively. By stu-

optical fibre and the back-scattered radiation is observed. "The time of flight of the backscattered radiation provides an estimate of the distance from which the light is backscattered," he says. This can go up to tens of kilometre. This technique is married to Raman thermometry to get the results for actual measurements over tens of kilometres.

Cost-effective solution Alternative methods of measuring the temperature of the two bands, it is possible to estimate the temperature of the object.

"The anti-Stokes component of Raman scattering is strongly dependent on the temperature that the material is subjected to. Thus, by measuring the intensity of the anti-Stokes scattered light we can estimate the temperature. This is Raman thermometry," says Prof. Srinivasan.

He explains that the temperature measurement is performed in a distributed manner using an optical fibre. To achieve this, a pulse of light is launched into the

COVID-19 vaccine rollout: course correction in the face of resurgence

Health management, administration arms should have independent goals

T. JACOB JOHN
M.S. SESHA DRI

The recent rise in COVID-19 cases in six states, accounting for 85% of reported new cases, is disturbing. The concerned State Governments and the Union Ministry of Health need to seriously soul search and quickly arrive at a plan of action to quell the resurgence by vaccination. The resurgence is most likely due to: the general public throwing caution to the wind - discarding the disciplined use of masks, hand hygiene and physical distancing; and engaging in activities leading to mass gatherings - including weddings and funerals - that are conducive to spreading the virus. Opening up of transport services in general and suburban train services in Mumbai in particular, would have contributed to the resurgence.

Regulatory agency authorised emergency use of two COVID-19 vaccines on January 3. On January 16, both were made available to healthcare professionals, the first priority, followed by those in essential services. From March 1, the second phase has begun when se-



Goal orientation: Even now it is not too late to define goals for public health, healthcare and the administrative segments and plan appropriate strategy. ■ GETTY IMAGES

ought to be vaccinated systematically.

The attempt to meet this demand by having vaccination centres working 24/7 is a step in the right direction, but more innovative steps need to be taken in order to reach the people in rural India. Countries like the U.S. have started using mobile vaccination centres and have established vaccination centres in supermarkets to rapidly cover the entire population. In India a similar approach, especially mobile vaccination units, can rapidly cover many villages.

Even now it is not too late to define goals for public health, healthcare and the administrative segment and plan appropriate strategy and tactics to achieve their respective goals. The three should function in a well-oiled, co-ordinated and seamless manner to achieve their targets.

The public, including healthcare professionals, apparently misunderstood that the vaccine roll-out was premature without stating its purpose or it was for political reasons - to showcase one of the world's largest vaccination programmes by making it a well-orchestrated drill. But when unaccompanied by sharing of authentic and

authoritative information, it led to wide-spread vaccine hesitancy. Public health programmes rely heavily on information-education-communication - after all if people understand that vaccination is for their own good and for the benefit of the entire nation, they will willingly cooperate.

Education

So, concurrently with planning the revised strategy, there should be a health education blitzkrieg about the benefits of the vaccination for the individual and for the community - so that people may knowingly and willingly participate in it. It can easily be accomplished since we are well-versed in vigorous campaigns for various purposes.

If India demonstrates its ability to set-up this model, and execute the world's second largest vaccination programme to perfection, it will be worthy of emulation in all countries of the world.

T. Jacob John is retired professor of clinical virology, Christian Medical College, Vellore. M.S. Seshadri is retired professor of medicine (endocrinology), CMC and medical director of Thirumalai Medical Mission Hospital, Ranipet.)



Question Corner

Genetics of eye colour

Do genes determine our eye colour?

Human eye colour ranges from black, brown to blue, green, and even red. Eye colour is primarily determined by melanin abundance within the iris pigment epithelium, which is greater in brown than in blue eyes. There are two forms of melanin - eumelanin and pheomelanin - and the ratio of the two within the iris as well as light absorption and scattering by extracellular components are additional factors that give irises their colour. Absolute melanin quantity and the eumelanin-pheomelanin ratio are higher in brown irises, while blue or green irises have very little of both pigments and relatively more

pheomelanin. The researchers from King's College London also found that eye colour in Asians with different shades of brown is genetically similar to eye colour in Europeans ranging from dark brown to light blue. Previously a dozen genes (mainly HERC2 and OCA2) were found to influence eye colour.

The researchers have now identified 50 new genes for eye colour (*Science Advances*). Genetic analysis of nearly 0.2 million people across Europe and Asia helped the researchers to identify the new genes. The findings collectively explain over 53% of eye colour variation using common single-nucleotide polymorphisms. Overall, the study outcomes demonstrate that the genetic complexity of human eye colour considerably exceeds previous knowledge and expectations, highlighting eye colour as a genetically highly complex human trait, says a release.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

- hence vaccination should be prioritised for oldest down to 65 years; all below 65 with co-morbidity - obesity, hypertension, chronic heart, lung, kidney or liver disease, people with malignancies whether or not on treatment, etc.

The public health goal is to reduce the speed of coronavirus transmission, thereby reducing the community burden. For this vaccination drive should be targeted to the six states in which the speed of transmission is highest - Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. In these States, vaccination ought to be undertaken on war footing, even taking the help of the army. While vaccination coverage has to begin on the basis of vulnerability to these outcomes



Protesters chanting slogans in Hong Kong in July 2020 against the national security law. ■ AFP

The electoral overhaul in Hong Kong

What does China's new election law mean and how will it impact the territory's autonomy?

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The story so far: The National People's Congress (NPC) of China, the ceremonial legislature in Beijing, on March 11 approved what it called "a decision on improving Hong Kong's electoral system". This paves the way for sweeping changes in how Hong Kong, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) that has been ruled under the "one country, two systems" model since its return to China in 1997, chooses its leaders. Wang Chen, Vice-Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said the change was being passed to plug "clear loopholes and deficiencies which the anti-China, destabilising elements jumped on to take into their hands the power to administer the HKSAR", in a reference to the 2019 pro-democracy protests that roiled the city. Hong Kong's pro-democracy opposition groups have seen the change as another move that diminishes the space for dissent and erodes freedoms guaranteed previously under the terms of the 1997 handover.

How does the new NPC amendment change Hong Kong's political system?

The NPC amendment essentially gives Beijing-appointed politicians greater power in running the HKSAR's politics. Currently, 35 of the 70 members of Hong Kong's Legislative Council are directly elected through "geographical constituencies", while 35 are nominated from "functional constituencies" (referring to a range of special interest groups that are broadly pro-establishment). Now, the size of the Legislative Council will be expanded to 90, with the additional 20 members joining the 35 others who are nominated, thus reducing the share of directly elected representatives.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, said on March 11 that ensuring political offices were filled by "patriots" was required to safeguard "national security and sovereignty".

The committee, which has in the past been responsible for choosing Hong Kong's Chief Executive, will now also choose the additional Legislative Council members.

Perhaps the most controversial change is the setting up of a new "candidate qualification review committee", which, the NPC said, "shall be responsible for reviewing and confirming" the qualifications of candidates for Election Committee members, the Chief Executive, and Legislative Council members. This committee can vet any candidate and disqualify them if it deems they are not "patriots", as part of a new push by Beijing to ensure "the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body", an evolution of the post-1997 "administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people" idea.

How will the "one country, two systems" model be impacted?

Under the Basic Law – the Constitution that has governed Hong Kong since 1997 – the SAR is a part of China but enjoys "a high degree of autonomy" and "executive, legislative and independent judicial power", except in foreign policy and defence. It also says "the socialist system and policies shall not be practised" in Hong Kong for 50 years.

The amendment is the second major recent legislative change that has been seen by the opposition in Hong Kong as undermining this autonomy. In 2020, as a response to the 2019 protests, China passed a new national security law that lists penalties for "subversion". Earlier this year, as many as 47 pro-democracy leaders were arrested under the new law after organising an informal primary election among pro-democracy parties. If Hong Kong's pro-democracy parties are concerned about the "two systems" part of the formula, Beijing is now emphasising the importance of "one country". Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, said on March 11 that ensuring political offices were filled by "patriots" was required to safeguard "national security and sovereignty" and to "solve the problem of the LegCo [Legislative Council] making everything political in recent years" and "internal rifts that have torn Hong Kong apart".

What lies ahead?

With the national security law and the new electoral changes, the space for the pro-democracy opposition in Hong Kong has been drastically reduced. Hong Kong without a noisy opposition will mean a very different Hong Kong from what the past 24 years have seen. The city became a key gateway for foreign companies particularly because of its independent judicial system that distinguished it from the mainland. It still remains a key gateway for investment, even though in 2018 its GDP was surpassed by Shenzhen.

Beijing's bet is that China's market may remain a big enough draw to allay broader concerns about the changes sweeping through the SAR. If the direction of its politics seems clear, its economic future appears less so.

Relooking the Mandal verdict and quota cap

Why does the Supreme Court think that the Indra Sawhney judgment should be referred to a larger Bench?

K. VENKATARAMAN

The story so far: The Supreme Court, while considering the validity of the reservation for the Maratha community in Maharashtra on Monday, decided that it will hear all the States on the 50% limit on total reservation imposed by the court in the *Indra Sawhney* case (1992). This is because the 16% quota for Marathas would take the total reservation in Maharashtra beyond the limit of 50%. Over the years, several other States, including Tamil Nadu, have passed laws that allow reservation going beyond 60%. The court is also keen on hearing the views of the States on the 102nd Amendment of the Constitution, by which the National Commission for Backward Classes was given constitutional status.

What are the quota-related issues on which the SC wants States' views?

The five-member Constitution Bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan wants to decide whether the judgment in *Indra Sawhney vs Union of India*, known as the Mandal verdict, needs to be referred to a larger Bench or "requires a relook in the light of subsequent Constitutional amendments, judgments and changed social dynamics of society, etc." This is because the earlier judgment had declared that reservation cannot exceed 50% in total. As *Indra Sawhney* was a decision by a nine-member Bench, a Bench of at least 11 judges will be needed to reconsider the question.

Also, the court wants to consider whether the reservation for Marathas effected through a 2018 Act (the Socially Economically Backward Class Act), and amended in 2019, is covered by the "exceptional circumstances" mentioned in the *Indra Sawhney* judgment, which had said the 50% limit can be exceeded in "certain extraordinary situations" as a special case. This relaxation, it said, was meant for people inhabiting remote and far-flung areas who are away from the mainstream of national life and who may have "conditions peculiar to and characteristic to them".

The Bench will also examine whether the State government had made out a case warranting such an exception for Marathas based on the report of the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission headed by former Justice M.G. Gaikwad.

Last September, the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the 2018 Maharashtra law granting reservation to Marathas in education and jobs.

Is there any other issue on the rights of States?

One of the issues that cropped up in the debate over the Maratha reservation is the effect of the 102nd Constitution Amendment introduced in 2018. This amendment grants constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes and says the President would notify the lists of backward classes for all States in consultation with the Governors. This has raised apprehensions about whether the power of State governments to make inclusions and exclusions from the list of backward classes has been taken away.

Therefore, the court has framed important questions: whether the 102nd Amendment deprives States of the power to make laws for socially and educationally backward classes and confer benefits on them, whether the newly introduced Article 342A of the Constitution abridges the State legislatures' power to enact laws under Articles 15(4) and 16(4), which respectively deal with special provisions for other backward classes and reservation in employment, and whether all this affects the federal structure of the Constitution.

Any judgment on the Maratha reservation issue would inevitably have to deal with three issues – the 50% ceiling on total reservation, the power of States to determine who its backward classes are and confer benefits on



People taking out a rally over the Maratha reservation issue in Mumbai on November 7 last year. ■ AADESH CHODHARI

The Supreme Court is also keen on hearing the views of the States on the 102nd Amendment of the Constitution, by which the National Commission for Backward Classes was given constitutional status

them, and the legislative competence of State legislatures regarding backward classes after the introduction of the 102nd Amendment.

The court has decided that all States have a stake in the outcome, and therefore, it wants to hear their views.

What do past judgments say on a ceiling for quotas?

It was in *M.R. Balaji vs State of Mysore* (1962) that the Supreme Court first ruled that reservation, being a special provision for backward classes, should not normally exceed 50%. It held that the order earmarking 68% of seats in engineering, medical and other technical courses was a "fraud" on the Constitution. However, it added that it would not attempt to lay down in an inflexible manner what the proper percentage of reservation should be. "Speaking generally and in a broad way, a special provision should be less than 50%. The actual percentage must depend upon the relevant prevailing circumstances in each case," it said.

The presumption behind the 50% rule was that equality of opportunity was the norm, and any special provision for socially and educationally backward classes or reservation for backward classes in public employment was an exception. However, in *State of Kerala vs. N.M. Thomas* (1975), the majority of the Bench disagreed with the proposition. It said the special measures in favour of backward classes in Articles 15 and 16 were not exceptions to the rule. On the contrary, these were an emphatic way of ensuring equality of opportunity – to the point of even making reservations. Justice S.M. Fazal Ali wrote that in his opinion, the 50% norm in *Balaji* was only a rule of caution and does not exhaust all categories.

In *Indra Sawhney*, even though most judges agreed that reservation was not an exception to the equality norm, the court ultimately laid down the 50% limit. "Just as every power must be exercised reasonably and fairly, the power conferred by Clause (4) of Article 16 should also be exercised in a fair manner and within reasonable limit – and what is more reasonable than to say that reservation ... shall not exceed 50% of the appointments or posts..." Citing Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's opinion in the

Constituent Assembly that reservation should be "confined to a minority of seats", the Bench fixed the maximum permissible quota at 50%. At the same time, it said the strict rule could be relaxed in extraordinary situations given the country's great diversity.

How will a judgment in this case impact reservation?

If the court, through a larger Bench, comes to the conclusion that the 50% ceiling is not a hard-and-fast rule and that it may be breached if a State's backward class population is considered high, it would be a big boost for the affirmative action policies of various State governments. Not only would it enable the Maharashtra government to implement its quotas for Marathas to the extent of 16% reservation in education and jobs, but other States, such as Tamil Nadu, would also be able to preserve their present levels of reservations. For instance, Tamil Nadu has enacted a law to protect its 69% total reservation. As the Tamil Nadu law, which was subsequently included in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution (by which the Act would be beyond judicial review on the ground of violation of anyone's fundamental rights) has been separately challenged before the Supreme Court, the removal of the ceiling would be a major victory for the State.

The decisions would also have relevance to the legal challenge to the introduction of the 10% quota for the economically weaker sections among those who do not fall under any reservation category. By this move, the Centre has already exceeded the 50% limit, and at present, only 41% of seats or posts are meant for open competition in central employment and educational institutions.

Further, the Bench is also likely to decide on the question of whether backward classes should also be classified and determined only by the Centre, just as the list of Scheduled Castes is made by the Union government. As of now, only the President, or the Central government, can make modifications in the list of Scheduled Castes in respect of any State or Union Territory in the country. And this can be done only through a Parliamentary law. Article 342A, introduced through the 102nd Amendment, is similarly worded – it says that the President notifies the Backward Classes for each State or Union Territory in consultation with the Governor in the case of a State. It also says State governments must consult the National Commission for Backward Classes on all matters of policy concerning socially and educationally backward classes.

Retrospective laws and the Cairn tax dispute

What did the Permanent Court of Arbitration rule and how is the Indian government planning to respond?

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

The story so far: In December last year, a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands ruled against India in its long-running tax dispute with the U.K.-based oil and gas company Cairn Energy Plc and a subsidiary, Cairn UK Holdings Ltd. The tribunal ordered India to pay about \$1.4 billion to the company. Following this, Cairn Energy has successfully moved courts in five countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, to recognise its claim as per the arbitration award, according to PTI. The Netherlands, France, and Canada are the other three countries. Such a recognition by courts opens the door for Cairn Energy to seize assets of the Indian government in these jurisdictions by way of enforcing its claim, in case the latter doesn't pay its dues.

What is the dispute about?

The dispute started in early 2014 when Indian tax authorities started questioning Cairn Energy requesting information on the group's reorganisation in the financial year 2006-07. This escalated, and by 2015, the authorities had sent the company a draft assessment order, assessing in the process that there was a principal tax amount of \$1.6 billion that was due.

The year in reference, 2006-07, was one in which big corporate changes and developments took place in Cairn Energy. It was the year in which it not only undertook a corporate reorganisation, but also floated an Indian subsidiary, Cairn India, which in early 2007 got listed on the Indian bourses. Through the corporate reorganisation process, Cairn Energy had transferred all of its India assets, which were until then held by nine subsidiaries in various countries, to the newly-formed Cairn India.

But the tax authorities claimed that in the process of this reorganisation, Cairn Energy had made capital gains worth ₹24,500 crore. Thus, the department asserted, was the basis of the tax demand.

In 2011, the U.K.-based Vedanta Resources bought a nearly 60% stake in Cairn India. In fact, four years after this, Cairn India received a tax notice for not withholding tax for the gains ascribed to its former parent company.

Is this case similar to Vodafone's battle with the government of India?

The Vodafone case in 2007 was triggered by Hong Kong's Hutchinson Telecommunications' sale of its stake in



According to media reports, the tribunal said India 'failed to accord Cairn Energy's investments fair and equitable treatment' under the bilateral protection pact it had with the U.K., and that India will appeal against the order

India's Hutchinson Essar to Vodafone International Holdings, based out of the Netherlands. The Hong Kong firm made a capital gain on this, which the Indian tax authorities deemed fit to tax. They held that Vodafone should have withheld the tax, and therefore imposed a liability on it. The Supreme Court quashed the taxman's demand, concluding that it did not agree that the sale of shares in this case "would amount to transfer of a capital asset within the meaning of Section 2(14) of the Indian Income Tax Act".

In the Union Budget of 2012, the Income Tax Act, 1961 was amended to make sure that even if a transfer of shares takes place outside India, such a transfer can be taxed if the value of those shares is based on assets in India. And this was applied retrospectively. The action against Cairn Energy was based on this move. India lost its arbitration case against Vodafone as well, with the government being asked to fork out around ₹80 crore.

What happened after the tax claims in the Cairn Energy dispute?

After receiving a draft assessment order from the tax authorities, Cairn UK Holdings Ltd. appealed before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. The tribunal, while providing the company relief from back-dated interest demands, however, upheld the main tax demand.

The company had initiated proceedings of arbitration under the U.K.-India bilateral investment treaty. But during this time, according to a PTI report, "the government sold Cairn's almost 5% holding in Vedanta Ltd" (the residual stake the firm owned after selling Cairn

India), "seized dividends totalling ₹1,140 crore due to it from those shareholdings", and "set off a ₹1,590-crore tax refund against the demand".

What was the main argument of Cairn Energy during the arbitration?

The claimants, Cairn Energy and Cairn UK Holdings, argued that till the amendment was made to tax retrospectively in 2012, there was no tax on

indirect transfers (transfer by a non-resident of shares in non-Indian companies which indirectly held assets in India). They also said the government had approved the 2006 reorganisation. The application of the 2012 amendments, they alleged, constituted "manifest breaches" of the U.K.-India bilateral investment treaty.

What was India's defence during the arbitration?

India's counter to the main charge of Cairn Energy was that its 2006 transactions were taxable irrespective of the 2012 amendments.

It argued that "Indian law has long permitted taxation where a transaction has a strong economic nexus with India". It said even if it is retrospective, it is "valid and binding applying the longstanding constitutional, legislative and legal framework in which the claimants have invested".

What did the arbitration tribunal rule?

The tribunal said the tax demand violated the U.K.-India bilateral investment treaty. The tribunal said India "failed to accord Cairn Energy's investments fair and equitable treatment" under the bilateral protection pact it had with the United Kingdom.

It also ordered India to compensate Cairn Energy and its subsidiary for "the total harm suffered" as a result of the breaches of the treaty.

What next?

It has been reported in the media that India will appeal against the tribunal's decision.



Bitcoin hits \$60,000 in record high

REUTERS

Bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, on Saturday crossed a record high of \$60,000.

Bitcoin has risen sharply this year, broadly outperforming conventional asset classes, partly due to broader acceptance as a form of payment.

Raising money

In recent weeks, companies have taken advantage of its strength to raise hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, capitalising on improved market sentiment.

A \$1.5-billion bitcoin bet last month by Tesla saw Elon Musk's electric car company join business software firm MicroStrategy and Twitter boss Jack Dorsey's payments company Square in swapping some traditional cash reserves for the digital coin.

Coinbase, the biggest U.S. cryptocurrency exchange, filed last month for a Nasdaq listing. Regulatory approval would represent a landmark victory for cryptocurrency advocates seeking mainstream endorsement.

Amid rising customer demand to own and invest in bitcoin, Goldman Sachs Group said it is exploring how to serve those clients while remaining on the right side of regulation. It recently restarted a cryptocurrency trading desk and this month it started dealing bitcoin futures and non-deliverable forwards.

Focus on growth than inflation'

CEA's comment on economic priorities comes ahead of policy framework review

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian said on Saturday that the country requires growth at this juncture, even with economic trade-offs, as it aspires to increase its dominance and self-reliance in the global economy.

Dr. Subramanian's comment comes ahead of the revision of policy framework and inflation targets for the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by the RBI Governor by March 31.

Inflation target review
It would be the first review for the Reserve Bank of India since it was tasked with a mandated inflation target of 4% with a 2% deviation in



Give, don't seek: The CEA sought a change in mindset so as to help raise the tax pie and not seek a cut across sectors. ■ PTI

either direction in June 2016, when it adopted a flexible inflation targeting model.

"At this juncture we must focus on growth and when it comes to pressures for trade-offs, we must be leaning on growth," Dr. Subramanian said at a virtual annual re-

gional meeting of the CII, Eastern Region.

'Shun profiteering'
Speaking about realising 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', the CEA said the private sector had to get back to "Shubh Labh" (ethical profit) and refrain

from profiteering.

He gave examples from healthcare studies for Aayushman Bharat where it was found that the rates of the private sector hospitals were 6-7 times higher than those run by the government and that readmission rates in them were also higher.

Dr. Subramanian also called for a change in the mindset on how to increase the pie of government taxes instead of seeking its reduction across sectors.

He said the cycle of private sector investment would begin though there was a lag and to support it, government spending in capex was necessary. The government had already begun it and it would trigger private investment, the CEA added.

Draft e-com policy moots safeguards against data misuse

Algorithms shall avoid bias, digitally-induced discrimination'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government plans to lay down principles for usage of data for the development of any industry, where such norms do not already exist, and put in place adequate safeguards to prevent misuse and access of data by unauthorised persons, according to a draft national e-commerce policy.

The government is in the process of developing regulations for personal and non-personal data, the policy, which is under discussion, said.

The draft stated that sharing of data for industrial development would be encouraged and regulations for



data would be provided for the sharing mechanism.

According to the draft, the government acknowledges the importance of data as an asset and needs to use data emanating from India for 'Indian entities first.'

An inter-ministerial meeting, under the chairmanship of a top official of the depart-

ment for promotion of industry and internal trade, was held on Saturday to deliberate upon this draft.

For free and informed choice, it said that e-commerce operators would have to ensure that algorithms used by them were not biased and that no discrimination due to digitally induced biases was prevalent.

"Consumers have a right to be made aware of all relevant details about the goods and services offered for sale including country of origin, value addition in India, and any other such information which may be necessary for making an informed decision at the pre-purchase stage," it said.

India fintech valuation may reach \$160 billion'

'Expect threefold jump in five years'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's financial technology firms are poised to become three times as valuable in the next five years, reaching a valuation of \$150-160 billion by 2025, according to a report.

The report unveiled on Saturday details the findings from the study that Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and FICCI undertook to size the value-creation potential and identify imperatives for India's fintech growth.

"India is strongly poised to realise a fintech sector valuation of \$150-160 billion by 2025, translating to an incremental value-creation potential of approximately \$100 billion. It is estimated that to meet this ambition, India's fintech sector will need investments of \$20-25



billion over the next five years," said the report.

India has more than 2,100 fintech firms, of which 67% have been set up over the last 5 years alone. The valuation of the industry is estimated at \$50-60 billion.

The industry's growth has been undeterred by the pandemic, as it has seen the emergence of three new unicorns and five new soonicorns (\$500 million+ valuation) since January 2020.

Africa to see rebound, may grow 3.4%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAIROBI

African economies are expected to grow by an average of 3.4% this year, the African Development Bank said, as the continent recovers from its worst contraction in half a century.

The 54 economies shrank by 2.1% last year, the AfDB said in its 2021 economic outlook report, as the coronavirus crisis disrupted economic activity across the continent.

"The continent-wide projected recovery... does not remove the threat of increasing poverty," the Abidjan-based AfDB said in the report. An estimated 39 million Africans are likely to slip into extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic, the bank said, after 30 million were pushed into that bracket last year.

This comes following reports of markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issuing show-cause notices to the fund house and its officials with regard to the fund house's practices around risk management, inter-scheme transfers and personal transactions by employees and management, among others.

"We have submitted detailed responses to show-cause notices issued by SEBI," Sanjay Sapre, President, Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) Pvt. Ltd., said in a letter to investors.

"We cannot go into details of our responses, but we believe that we acted in compliance with applicable regulations and rules and that we have strong defences to the allegation," he added.

With respect to the accusations regarding personal transactions of employees and management, the fund house said it took such matters seriously. Personal redemptions by certain individuals before the winding-up decision are under review and those individuals have cooperated fully with that process and submitted detailed responses to SEBI, which are under consideration, Mr. Sapre said in the letter on Friday.

He further said "the schemes under winding-up continue to have significant investment from employees and management of Franklin Templeton".

He said these issues remained under regulatory review, and "we are constrained from commenting on specific details at this juncture, but can confirm that to date, there have been no adverse findings against Franklin Templeton, its employees or management."

Shaw-led Mumbai faces spirited UP

Marauding skipper could break the 800-run mark

HAZARE TROPHY

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

If Mumbai begins as an overwhelming favourite to beat Uttar Pradesh and claim its fourth Vijay Hazare (50-over) title, skipper Prithvi Shaw's irrepressible form is a big reason.

Shaw, with a record aggregate of 154 runs so far, could break the 800-run mark in Sunday's final at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground. In fact, looking at his run of four centuries – including three in excess of 150 – he could even be expected to go past the 900-run mark.



Prithvi Shaw. ■ FILE PHOTO

Yashavali Jaiswal (179 runs) and former captain Aditya Tare (181). In addition, experienced medium-pacer Dhanawal Kulkarni and leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (14 wickets

each) have caused maximum damage this season.

Under a young captain in Karan Sharma, UP is a fairly inexperienced side. But its journey to the final has been inspiring. The way the side rallied from 66 for four to outplay host Delhi was commendable.

Though its top-order has disappointed in the knockout phase, Karan, Akshdeep Nath and Upendra Yadav have rescued the team by displaying fine temperament.

Left-arm spinner Shivam Sharma (20 wickets) could still hold the key for UP but it will be interesting to see how the medium-pacers Yash Dayal, Shivam Mavi and Aaqib Khan deal with Shaw early in the innings.

Windies ease to series win

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NORTH POINT (ANTIGUA)

A 192-run opening stand between Evin Lewis and Shai Hope and cool finishing by Nicholas Pooran steered the West Indies to a five-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the second ODI on Friday.

The West Indies also earned a winning 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Lewis made 103 and Hope 84 as the West Indies overtook Sri Lanka's 273 for eight with two balls to spare.

The scores:
Sri Lanka 273/8 in 50 overs (D. Gunathilaka 96, D. Chandimal 71, W. Hasaranga 47, J. Mohammed three for 47) lost to West Indies 274/5 in 49.4 overs (E. Lewis 103, S. Hope 84, N. Pooran 35 n.o.).

RACING

Scintillating Lass claims Governor's Trophy

BENGALURU: S. Attaollahi-trained Scintillating Lass (Srinath up) won the Governor's Trophy, the chief event of the races held here on Saturday (Mar 13).

The winner is owned by Daulat Chhabria & Sarainaga Racing Pvt. Ltd.

1. GOOD-BYE PLATE (1,400m), rated 00 to 20: AZEMEIK PRINCESS (H.M. Akshay) 1, Song And Dance (Rayan) 2, Sizzler (Dasaran) 3 and Ne Saies Quoi (B. Nayak) 4. Lnk. 3 and Nk. Im, 28.58s. 882 (w), 26, 18 and 31 (p), SHP: 45, THP: 78, FP: 425, Q: 226, Trinella: 2,480 and 1,240, Exacta: 182 and 79, Exacta: 254 and 85. Favourite: Own Legacy. Owner: Mr. A.C. Muthiah. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

2. CHAMPION JOCKEY TROPHY (DIV. I, 200m), rated 15 to 35, 4yo only: ROYAL BLOSSOM (Antony) 1, Almanach (Trevor) 2, Southerner, Iceman (Kiran) 3 and Dream Chaser (Kiran Rai) 4. Not run: Imperial Blue, 4/3/4, Nk and 1, Im, 26.77s. 316 (w), 13, 16 and 13 (p), SHP: 39, THP: 21, FP: 207, Q: 207, Trinella: 147 and 92, Exacta: 1,553 and 341, Exacta: 207 and 135. Favourite: Scintillating Lass. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

3. PREMIUM SPIRIT PLATE (1,400m), maiden 3yo only: OWL LEGACY (Trevor) 1, Mitsuro (Darshan) 2, Ohanna (R. Marshall) 3 and War Chieftain (Akash) 4. Not run: Imperial Blue, 4/3/4, Nk and 1, Im, 26.77s. 316 (w), 13, 16 and 13 (p), SHP: 41, THP: 45, FP: 207, Q: 207, Trinella: 147 and 92, Exacta: 1,553 and 341, Exacta: 207 and 135. Favourite: Scintillating Lass. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

4. CHAMPION TRAINER TROPHY (1,600m), rated 15 to 35, 4yo only: ROYAL BLOSSOM (Antony) 1, Almanach (Trevor) 2, Southerner, Iceman (Kiran) 3 and Dream Chaser (Kiran Rai) 4. Not run: Imperial Blue, 4/3/4, Nk and 1, Im, 26.77s. 316 (w), 13, 16 and 13 (p), SHP: 41, THP: 45, FP: 207, Q: 207, Trinella: 147 and 92, Exacta: 1,553 and 341, Exacta: 207 and 135. Favourite: Scintillating Lass. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

5. LEADING STUD TROPHY (1,400m), rated 30 to 50: GRIFFIN (Salman Khan) 1, Katana (Trevor) 2, Soloist (Akash) 3 and Silvana (Antony) 4. Not run: Tereza, 3/4, 5/4 and 3/4, Lnk and 1, Im, 27.56s. 335 (w), 17, 40 and 20 (p), SHP: 407, THP: 52, FP: 207, Q: 207, Trinella: 4,218 and 205, Exacta: 47,863 and 20,513. Favourite: Marco Polo. Owner: Mr. H.K. Lakshman Gowda. Trainer: V. Lokanath.

6. LEADING OWNER TROPHY (1,400m), rated 60 & above: MALWA (Akash) 1, Alexandre Duman (Sai Kiran) 2, Velocidad (Trevor) 3 and Set To Win (Sai Kumar) 4. 3/3/4, 1 and Nk, Im, 25.35s. 350 (w), 18, 29 and 13 (p), SHP: 92, THP: 52, FP: 61, Q: 207, Trinella: 965 and 341, Exacta: 1,553 and 341, Exacta: 207 and 135. Favourite: Velocidad. Owners: Mr. Marthand Singh Mahindra, Mrs. Rina Mahindra & M/S. Deciding Factor LLP. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

7. GOVERNOR'S TROPHY (1,600m), 3yo only: SCINTILLATING LASS (Srinath) 1, Chashni (Trevor) 2, Soloist (Akash) 3 and Silvana (Antony) 4. Not run: Tereza, 3/4, 5/4 and 3/4, Lnk and 1, Im, 27.56s. 335 (w), 17, 40 and 20 (p), SHP: 138, THP: 56, FP: 557, Q: 407, Trinella: 4,218 and 205, Exacta: 47,863 and 20,513. Favourite: Marco Polo. Owner: Mr. H.K. Lakshman Gowda. Trainer: V. Lokanath.

Jackpot: ₹70,310 (seven tkt.); Runner-up: ₹2,727 (29 tkt.); Treble: ₹1,162, (28 tkt.); (ii): ₹7,091 (one tkt.); (iii): ₹353 (51 tkt.).

INTERVIEW

ANANT MAHESHWARI

'India can become global AI, data hub, enabling jobs'

Creating suitable talent pool vital: Microsoft India president

MINI TEJASWI

There's a huge opportunity to position India as a global hub for data and artificial intelligence (AI), enabling investment, jobs and innovation,

says Anant Maheshwari, president, Microsoft India. Excerpts:

How prepared are enterprises today in a pandemic-stricken marketplace?

■ Across every industry and sector, we've seen years' worth of digital transformation happen over the last few months. Technology is helping organisations to innovate and stay open in the most constrained and the most difficult of circumstances.

The pandemic has accelerated two mega trends that will likely continue well into the future. The first is clouded data and AI innovation.

Data and AI are helping transform core areas like healthcare, citizen services, MSME, agriculture and manufacturing, with speed and scale.

The second is the absolute need to create a trusted and secure ecosystem to drive this innovation.

A strong partnership between the government and industry will be vital to build a responsible tech ecosystem grounded in trust and strong ethical principles.

Why are enterprises increasingly talking about investing in trust

Tribute to the power of sport: Nita

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) chairperson Nita Ambani on Saturday expressed her delight on delivering an "uninterrupted" and "successful" ISL despite the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Season 7 has been a tribute to the real power of sport, the true glory of football," said Nita in a video message.

"In spite of the global pandemic, despite the odds against us, the fear and uncertainty, this season of ISL has brought immense joy."

TV PICKS

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Final, Mumbai v UP, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.

India Women v South Africa Women: 4th ODI, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m. onwards; Star Sports 3, 10 p.m.

India v England: 2nd T20I, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.

Serie A: Sory Ten 2 (SD & HD) 5 p.m. & 10.30 p.m.; Sory Ten 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

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