

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2021



**NATION | 4**

**Disquiet in Maha alliance as Congress replaces state unit chief Balasaheb Thorat**



**SPORT | 8**

**England captain Joe Root scores double century in 100th Test**

**TABLOID | 16**

**Farmers' stir: Janhvi starrer *Good Luck Jerry* has to shift sets from Punjab to Mumbai**



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**WINDOWS**  
World's tiniest reptile



The picture taken in Munich shows a newly discovered species of chameleon. Scientists have identified it as Earth's smallest known reptile. It is tiny enough to perch comfortably on a fingertip.

— AP

■ Report on Page 6

## Military junta imposes Internet ban in Myanmar

**Yangon:** The largest city of Myanmar Yangon reported protests against the military government on Saturday. The protestors chanted slogans against the government and called for the victory of democracy. They also called for the release of the detained leaders including Aung San Suu Kyi and others. The government made attempts to stop mobilisation of people by shutting down the internet.

■ More on Page 6

## Odisha kids prepare 'Nasa space rover'

**Bhubaneswar:** Ten school students from Odisha are now giving final touches to a human rover to participate in the US' 27th annual National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC) scheduled to be held April 2021.

■ More on Page 3

## Warrant issued against Hafiz Saeed in Delhi

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court on Saturday issued non-bailable warrants (NBWs) against Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Muhammad Hafiz Saeed, Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, separatist Altaf Ahmad Shah alias Funtoosh and businessman from the UAE Naval Kishore Kapoor.

■ More on Page 2

**COUNTERPOINT**



**Price rise again? I am not aware... I always travel in government vehicles!**

**WEATHER**

Max: 22°C  
Min: 09°C  
RH: 61%  
Rain: 0%

Forecast: Sunny

**ASTROGUIDE**

**Sarvari:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Pushya Bahula Ekadasi till 4.47 am (Monday)  
**Star:** Jyeshtha till 4.15 pm  
**Varjyam:** Nil  
**Durmuhurtam:** 4.39 pm to 5.25 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 4.30 pm to 6 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.05 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.04 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.11 PM  
MOONSET TODAY 1.42 AM

■ Delhi put under heavy security; Internet suspended at 3 border protest sites

## 'Chakka jam' ends peacefully, Tikait gives govt Oct. 2 ultimatum on laws

SUNIL THAPLIYAL  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

On a day farmers protesting against the Centre's three contentious agricultural laws staged an incident-free three-hour "chakka jam" across the country, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait said that the farmer leaders have give the Central government time till October 2 to withdraw the legislations. Farmers, he added, will return home only after the government repeals the contentious legislation and makes a law ensuring legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP).

"There will be no compromise on this," Mr Tikait said and asserted that the agitation is for the whole country and not one state.

Farmers' "chakka jam" protest drew massive response in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and there were scattered demonstrations in other states.

"Today's nationwide 'chakka jam' once again proved that farmers across the country are united against these laws," Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of the farmers' union, said.

The three-hour long nationwide "chakka jam" (roadblock demonstrations) announced by around 40 protesting farmer unions ended peacefully.

No untoward incident was reported in any part of the country during Saturday's protests though scores of people were detained in several states, including Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and 50 at Shaheed Park in the national capital which was brought under a thick security blanket in light of the violence during the farmers' tractor parade on January 26.

Mr Tikait, 52, a former cop-turned-farmer leader, has emerged as the pre-eminent face of the protest that has laid siege to Delhi's key

entry points and garnered international attention. Though Delhi along with Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand was kept out of Saturday's road blockade from 12 noon till 3 PM, authorities suspended Internet at the protest sites of Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri as well as adjoining areas for 24 hours till Saturday night and closed entry and exit at 10 prominent Delhi Metro stations for few hours.

The Delhi Police also intensified security at all border points of the city as thousands of personnel, including paramilitary forces, were deployed to deal with any situation emerging out of the nationwide "chakka jam".

The "chakka jam" was held in several states including Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. Farmers in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan blocked highways with tractor-trolleys and squatted on key roads.

Raising slogans against the Centre, farmers parked their tractor-trolleys or squatted in the middle of roads with posters, flags and banners in Punjab and Haryana, blocking several highways, including the Chandigarh-Zirakpur, Amritsar-Pathankot, Tarn Taran-Kapurthala, Ferozepur-Fazilka, Muktsar-Kotkapura, Bathinda-Chandigarh, Ludhiana-Jalandhar, Panchkula-Pinjore and Ambala Chandigarh highway, leading to traffic snarls.

Women also took part in the stir in a sizable number at several places. Folk songs blared from speakers and people perched atop truck tractors hoisted the tricolour on the KMP Expressway. In Rajasthan, farmers at many places including Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Dhrolpur and Jhalawar stalled traffic on highways and main roads and held demonstrations, police said.



(From top clockwise) Security personnel stand near barricades as BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait gestures during the proposed 'chakka jam' by farmers at the Ghazipur border in New Delhi. Security personnel stand guard at the Red Fort. Farmers block Shambhu Highway in Patiala on Saturday.

— PTI

## UN human rights body calls for 'restraint' by govt and protesters

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

The United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner, Human Rights (UN-OHCHR), on Saturday called for "maximum restraint" by both, the agitating farmers and the government, during the ongoing farmers' protest in India against three new agriculture laws. It also called for an "equitable solution" in the matter and people's right to peaceful protest and Internet

freedoms must be respected.

"We call on the authorities and protesters to exercise maximum restraint in the ongoing farmers' protests. The right to peaceful assembly and expression should be protected both offline and online. It's crucial to find equitable solutions with due respect to human rights for all," the UN-OHCHR tweeted late on Friday night.

The UN Human Rights tweet comes days after

international celebrities like Rihanna, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and several others came out in support of the farmers' protest in the country. On Saturday, Oscar-winning Hollywood actress Susan Sarandon voiced her support for farmers protesting against the three farm laws.

"Standing in solidarity with the #FarmersProtest in India. Read about who they are and why they're protesting below," she

■ Turn to Page 4

### MP: 4 girls get 5-year jail for ragging junior in 2013

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, FEB. 6

A local court here sentenced four girls for ragging a junior in their college and driving her to commit suicide eight years ago.

The district and sessions court on Friday evening delivered the judgment in the case relating to the suicide of 18-year-old Anita Sharma, a second-year student of a pharmacy college here in 2013, convicting her four seniors of ragging her and driving her to take the extreme step, according additional district prosecution officer Rajendra Upadhyay.

The court, however, acquitted the faculty member of the college, Manish R, in the case. Those convicted in the case were Nidhi Magre, Dipti Solanki, Divyanshi Sharma and Kriti Gaur.

The deceased hanged herself in the bedroom of her residence in 2013. In the suicide note recovered from her room, she had blamed her four seniors and a faculty

■ Turn to Page 4

## Nadda kicks of BJP's 'rath yatra' in Bengal, slams 'Didi dynasty'



BJP president J.P. Nadda during his road show ahead of West Bengal Assembly polls in Malda district on Saturday.

— PTI

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, FEB. 6

Flagging off the Bharatiya Janata Party's first-ever rath yatra in West Bengal, BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday said that the people of the state have already decided to "bid adieu" to the dynastic rule of chief minister and Trinamul Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee and her MP nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, to welcome the saffron party in the ensuing Assembly elections.

The rath yatra, calling for "Parivartan" (Change) in poll-bound West Bengal, kicked off a day

**Mamatadi, only to satisfy her arrogance and ego, did not allow the implementation of the Central scheme, leaving more than 70 lakh farmers deprived here.**

— J.P. Nadda, BJP president

before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state.

Mr Nadda led the first of the five rath yatra from Chotir Math Ground at Nabadwip in Nadia after

he participated in a massive roadshow from Foara More to Rabindranath Tagore statue and also had lunch with farmers in Malda.

Mr Nadda told the farmers at Krishak Suraksha Saha-Bhoj at Sahapur, Malda, "I have an appeal... Now the polls will be held. Say 'TaTa' and 'Namaste' to Mamataji. Wherever I go on a visit nowadays, I find big cut-outs of only two: Pishi (Aunt) and Bhaipo (Nephew). Both are seen standing with folded hands. Mamatadi, people of Bengal have decided to bid adieu to you

■ Turn to Page 4



## SHORT TAKES

Cong names civic  
bypoll candidates

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee on Saturday announced its candidates in five wards for the upcoming municipal corporation by-elections scheduled to take place on February 28.

Anil Kumar, president of Delhi Congress released the list of candidates which include Bal Kisan from Trilokpuri East, Kalyanpuri, Dharampal Maurya, Chauhan Bangar, Chaudhary Zubair Ahamad, Rohini-C and Memwati Barwala, and Mamta from Shalimar Bagh (North), a party statement said. Two wards in North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) — Shalimar Bagh and Rohini-C — and three under the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) — Trilokpuri, Kalyanpuri and Chauhan Bangar — will go for the bypolls. Both Congress and the AAP have declared their candidates for the bypolls, while the list of BJP candidates is yet to be announced.

— PTI

Over 10K lives saved  
by good samaritans

**New Delhi:** More than 10,000 human lives have been saved by good samaritans under the government's "Farishtey Dilli Ke" scheme, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday. The scheme, launched in October 2019, encourages people to rescue those who have met with road accidents. "More than 10,000 lives have been saved under the 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme. People are coming forward to help each other and you should also help those who have met with any road accident. To save someone's life is a pious act," Kejriwal tweeted on Saturday. He tagged a tweet by Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain, who had shared a video clip of a case study of the scheme. Kejriwal while launching the scheme had said at least 3,000 lives were saved during the pilot project of the initiative which ran for 18 months. — PTI

Prasad donates  
₹11L for temple

**Patna:** Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad contributed ₹11 lakh for construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya. Mr Prasad handed over the cheque to Mohan Singh and Rajesh Pandey, representatives of Sri Rama Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust. Singh, who is RSS regional general secretary (kshetra karyawah) of Bihar and Jharkhand and Pandey, the prant Prachar Pramukh of South Bihar RSS, received the cheque at the organisation's state headquarters here. Mr Prasad said I am extremely happy that I am making an announcement of contributing ₹11 lakh for the construction of a grand Ram temple at Ayodhya. — PTI

AIR QUALITY  
'POOR' IN  
GHAZIABAD

**Noida:** The air quality in Ghaziabad worsened to reach the "poor" category while it was recorded in the "moderate" zone in Noida, Greater Noida, Faridabad and Gurgaon, according to data issued by a government agency on Saturday.

Pollutant PM 2.5 and PM 10 remained in the air of the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The average 24-hour AQI at 4 pm on Saturday was 218 in Ghaziabad, 167 in Noida, 180 in Greater Noida, 198 in Faridabad and 170 in Gurgaon, according to CPCB's Sameer app. On Friday it was 91 in Ghaziabad, 114 in Noida, 144 in Greater Noida, 105 in Faridabad and 160 in Gurgaon. The CPCB states that an AQI in the "moderate" zone may lead to breathing discomfort to the people with asthma, lung and heart diseases while the AQI in the "poor" category may cause breathing discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure, according to the CPCB. The AQI for each city is based on the average value of all monitoring stations there. — PTI

Business as usual  
at Singhu as action  
shifts to other NHs

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** It was business as usual at the Singhu border as national and state highways across the country barring Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand observed a three-hour 'chakka jam' on Saturday.

The protest site on the Delhi-Haryana highway, the epicentre of the ongoing farmers' agitation, saw routine everyday activities like preparation and distribution of langar food, farmers making motivational speeches from stages, and tractors blaring rustic songs as the action shifted to the other national highways, albeit for a brief period in the day.

"We are happy to share the spotlight with other highways. We have been holding the fort for over two months and will continue to do so. It is good that today farmers from across the country are demanding the repeal of three farm laws," said Manmeet Bajwa (34), who has been camping at Singhu for the past 20 days.

The Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the farmer unions protesting the three farm laws, on Friday called for roads and national highways to be blocked between 12 noon and 3 pm throughout the nation except in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Singhu border, which looked more crowded than before as more tractors and farmers made their way to the protest site, witnessed a heightened vigil by the security forces on the occasion.

Drone cameras, multi-layered barricades, nail-studded roads and barbed wires — now put atop the many heavy-metal barricades as well — were used as precautionary measures by the police to ensure that the kind of violence witnessed on Republic Day tractor parade is not repeated.



A farmer at Singhu border during the chakka jam protest on Saturday.

— PTI

The strength of security personnel, including the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Rapid Action Force (RAF), deployed at the site was also increased.

"I don't know why they have to beef up the security to this level when we have said we won't be observing the chakka-jam here. It only tells about the lack of trust between the administration and the farmers," said Navjot Heer from Punjab's Patiala district.

"And in case they are doing this to simply scare us down, then they can try as hard as they can but they just won't succeed," said the 25-year-old.

The "chakka jam" was observed to protest the internet ban in areas near their agitation sites, harassment allegedly meted out to them by authorities, and other issues.

Internet remains suspended at the three major protest sites of Singhu, Ghazipur, Tikri borders and surrounding areas.

— PTI

Cops warn of  
strict action if  
bullets found  
in IGI baggage

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** A day after 11 cartridges were found in the baggage of a passenger at the Indira Gandhi International airport here, the Delhi Police on Saturday urged travellers to recheck their belongings and warned of legal action against those found with ammunition.

A total of 13 cases, where ammunition has been found in the baggage of passengers during security check, have already been registered this year at the IGI Airport police station under sections of Arms Act, officials said.

The advisory comes a day after a passenger at IGI's Terminal-3, who was travelling from Delhi to Maldives by a private airlines, was found carrying 11 cartridges of .32 bore in his check-in baggage, police said. During questioning, the passenger had told the police that the recovered cartridges belonged to his licensed weapon and had also produced his valid arms license issued in his name with area validity for Haryana, a senior police officer said. In another instance, a woman travelling from Terminal-3 was also found in possession of one live ammunition during screening of her baggage and she could not produce valid documents for it, he said.

In both the instances, cases were registered under sections of the Arms Act at IGI Airport police station.

Deputy commissioner of police (IGI Airport) Rajeev Ranjan said as per legal provisions, an FIR is registered against such passenger for the possession of ammunition illegally without a valid license issued for Delhi or all India and the passenger has to face criminal proceedings before the court of law. — PTI

## Massive deployment on borders ■ Content on social media under scanner

## Dellhi put under heavy security cover

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

The Delhi police on Saturday intensified security at all the border points of the city as thousands of personnel including paramilitary forces were deployed to deal with any situation emerging out of the nationwide "chakka jam".

The police forces were also deployed at important junctions across the national capital, including Red Fort and ITO, which witnessed violence on January 26 during the tractor parade by the protesting farmers in which over 500 police personnel were injured and a protester died.

The police is also using drone cameras to keep a tight vigil at the protest sites. Multi-layered barricades, barbed wires, and nail-studded roads at the protest sites are also part of the precautionary measures taken by the police force.

"In view of the violence that took place on January 26, adequate security arrangements have been put in place by the Delhi police at the borders so that miscreants are not able to enter the national capital. The police teams are monitoring the content on social media to make sure rumours are not spread against the police. The protestors are camping at the borders of Delhi. We are in touch with the police force of other states also," said Chinmoy Biswal, the public relation officer (PRO) of the Delhi police, on Friday.

Multilayered barricades, barbed wires and nail-studded roads at the protest sites were also part of the precautionary measures taken by the police force.

Meanwhile, thousands of farmers blocked the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway in Haryana. Those coming to the stretch with their vehicles were politely informed about the protest and requested to turn



Police personnel detain left-wing activists during a protest to support the ongoing farmers agitation against Centre's farm reform laws at Shaheed Park in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

back. Biscuits and fruits were distributed to the protesting farmers.

Tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors had broken barriers, clashed with police and entered the city from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort on Republic Day.

Thousands of farmers have been camping at several Delhi border points demanding a complete repeal of the three farm laws and legal guarantee of minimum support price for their crops.

Enacted in September 2020, the government has presented these laws as major farm reforms aimed at increasing farmers' income. However, the protesting farmers have raised concerns that these legislations would weaken the minimum support price and 'mandi' (wholesale market) systems and leave them at the mercy of the big corporations.

At all the three main protest sites, farmers camping there for over 70 days were busy with routine affairs and there was not much activity on Saturday.

## 60 held in city; Metro stations' entry, exit gates closed briefly

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

Around 60 people were detained near Shaheed Park in central Delhi on Saturday for allegedly holding a protest in support of the "chakka jam" call given by the farmers agitating against the Centre's new agri laws, the police said.

The Delhi police has intensified security at all border points of the city as thousands of personnel, including paramilitary forces, have been deployed to deal with any situation emerging out of the "chakka jam".

After the Republic Day violence, the Delhi police has deployed additional measures, including tightening security and intensifying vigil across the city and its border points.

Ten Delhi Metro stations, including Mandi

House and ITO, were closed on Saturday for the duration of the "chakka jam" called by farmers agitating against the new agri laws and reopened after the protest ended at 3 pm.

Farmer unions on Monday had announced a countrywide "chakka jam" on February 6 during which they would block national and state highways between 12 noon and 3 pm to protest the internet ban in areas near their agitation sites, harassment allegedly meted out to them by authorities, and other issues.

However, the Samyukt

Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the farmer unions, on Friday had said the protesters will not block roads in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the "chakka jam".

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) in a series of tweets in the morning informed commuters that multiple stations have been closed.

"Security Update Entry/exit gates of Mandi House, ITO and Delhi Gate are closed," it tweeted.

It later also tweeted that entry and exit gates of Vishwavidyalaya station were also closed.

"Entry/exit gates of Lal Quila, Jama Masjid, Janpath and Central Secretariat are closed. Interchange facility is available," the DMRC said.

"Entry/exit gates of Khan Market and Nehru Place are closed," it tweeted.

## 3 more held for violence at Red Fort

126 people have been arrested in connection with R-Day violence

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

The Delhi Police have arrested three more people in connection with the Red Fort incident on Republic Day, taking the total number of those in its custody for the violence that took place across the national capital during the farmers' tractor parade to 126, officials said on Saturday.

The three have been identified as Harpreet Singh (32), Harjeet Singh (48) and Dharmender Singh (55), all residents of Delhi, they said.

They were nabbed by the special investigating team (SIT) of the north district on Wednesday. The crime branch, which is also



Security personnel stand near barricades ahead of the chakka jam by farmers in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

investigating the cases, formally arrested them on Friday, police said.

Thousands of farmers protesting the Centre's new agri laws had clashed with

the police during the tractor parade on January 26.

Many of the protesters, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument. Some pro-

testers even hoisted religious flags on its domes and a flagstaff at the ramparts, where the national flag is unfurled on Independence Day.

The police said it has released pictures of over 70 people who were involved in the violence on January 26. Now their identification is underway, they said.

So far, a total of 126 people have been arrested in connection with the Republic Day violence.

"We are constantly examining the videos and footage which we have received to get a clear picture of the people involved in the violence. The process of identification is underway," Delhi police PRO Chinmoy Biswal said.

Over 1L get  
vaccinated  
in city so far

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** The number of people vaccinated against Covid-19 till date in Delhi has crossed the one lakh mark and the majority of them are healthcare workers, officials said on Saturday.

On Friday, over 9,200 healthcare workers had received Covid-19 vaccine shots in Delhi during the third week of the inoculation drive, registering a turnout of more than 50 per cent. "The total number of people vaccinated against Covid-19 so far has crossed 1,00,000-mark," a senior official said.

Vaccination of front-line workers has also started, he said.

District magistrate of several districts have come forward to get themselves vaccinated, and set an example, such as DMs of southwest, north, northwest, east and west districts, officials said. Several police personnel have also come forward to get vaccinated, they said. — PTI



Hafiz Saeed

ny M/s Trison Farms and Construction Pvt Ltd, which has also been named as accused in the matter.

Public Prosecutor Nitesh Rana, appearing for the ED, told the court that the accused hatched a criminal conspiracy to carry out subversive and secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

The ED had filed a case based on an NIA matter against Saeed, Hizbul Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin and others for "conspiring to wage war against the government" and fomenting trouble in the Kashmir Valley.

The separatist leaders have been accused of taking a cut before handing over the money to generate trouble.

— PTI

City court issues arrest  
warrant against Hafeez

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** A Delhi court on Saturday issued an arrest warrant against Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief and 26/11 Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed in a money laundering case related to terror funding in Jammu and Kashmir.

Besides issuing the non-bailable warrant (NBW) against Saeed, Special Judge Praveen Singh also issued warrants against three co-accused Kashmiri businessmen Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, separatist Altaf Ahmad Shah alias Funtoosh and businessman from the UAE Naval Kishore Kapoor who are currently lodged in the Tihar central jail here, seeking their production before the court.

The court passed the direction while taking cognisance of a chargesheet filed in the matter by the Enforcement Directorate for alleged money laundering.

The judge also issued summons to the representatives of Watali's compa-

Delhi govt launches social media  
handles to boost EV awareness

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** The Delhi government on Saturday launched social media handles of the Switch Delhi' campaign to connect directly with people even as chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that efforts are being made to turn the electric vehicle awareness drive into a mass movement.

According to an official statement, the Dialogue and Development Commission (DDC) of Delhi will lead the social media outreach for the campaign on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

The social media handles will be used for responding to queries and misconceptions about electric vehicles, addressing grievances, and for sensitising the public on the benefits of EVs, the statement said.

Meanwhile, actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan praised the "Switch Delhi" campaign on Twitter, saying it was a step towards controlling pollution.



Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and other AAP leaders wave to their supporters during a roadshow ahead of civic body elections in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

— PTI

Replying to Haasan, Mr Kejriwal tweeted "Thank you @ikamalhaasan ji, we are committed to develop Delhi as a world-class & pollution-free EV city. Our government is providing all possible facilities to the people to turn this EV campaign into a mass movement."

Earlier this week, Kejriwal launched the mass awareness campaign to sensitise Delhiites

about the benefits of switching to electric vehicles from pollution causing petrol and diesel ones.

Mr Social media outreach is one of the major components of the 8-week campaign.

The Delhi government's EV policy launched in August last year envisages that 1 out of every 4 vehicles sold in Delhi should be an electric vehicle by 2024.

— PTI



## IN BRIEF

### SACHIN SHOULD BE CAREFUL ON FARMERS: PAWAR

**Pune, Feb. 6:** NCP president Sharad Pawar on Saturday said cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar should be more careful while speaking on farmers' issues.

Many celebrities, including Tendulkar and legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, rallied around the government on social media using hashtags #IndiaTogether and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda following tweets by pop singer Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg backing farmers.

When asked about celebrities like Tendulkar and Mangeshkar reacting to the ongoing agitation by farmers against the three new farm laws at the borders of Delhi, the NCP chief said that people had responded strongly.

"I would suggest to Sachin (Tendulkar) that he should be careful while speaking on the issues related to other fields," Mr Pawar told reporters.

He alleged the Union government was defaming the ongoing agitation of farmers by calling them "Khalistanis" or terrorists. "These agitators are farmers who feed our country."

"Therefore, it is not right to call them Khalistanis or terrorists," the former Union agriculture minister said. — PTI

## BENGAL REPORTS ONE FATALITY, 197 FRESH CASES

**Kolkata, Feb. 6:** West Bengal on Saturday registered only one fresh Covid-19 fatality, the lowest since April last year, a health bulletin said.

The fresh fatality, reported in South 24 Parganas district, pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 10,202, it said.

The state's caseload rose to 5,71,178 as 197 more people tested positive for the infection, it said.

As many as 293 more people were cured of the disease, taking the recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state to 97.36 per cent, the bulletin said.

The state now has 4,895 active cases.

North 24 Parganas reported the highest number of new cases at 55, it said.

The state has tested over 81.28 lakh samples for Covid-19, including 24,011 in the last 24 hours, it said.

At least 9,773 frontline workers were administered the Covishield vaccine on the 17th day of the inoculation drive being conducted at 272 sites in the state, a health official said. — PTI

## AIADMK GOES TO POLICE AGAIN AGAINST SASIKALA

**Chennai, Feb. 6:** Ahead of expelled leader V.K. Sasikala's return on February 8, the ruling AIADMK on Saturday said it has lodged a complaint with police against the camp of the close aide of late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa alleging a 'conspiracy' to unleash 'violence' and sought action to protect Tamil Nadu and ensure peace.

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam chief and Sasikala's nephew Dhinakaran rubbished the conspiracy allegation as defamatory and lies.

The allegation by the AIADMK comes ahead of Sasikala's return to Tamil Nadu on Monday from Karnataka after her recovery from COVID-19 and following completion of her jail term in a corruption case.

A high-level AIADMK meet, chaired by chief minister K. Palaniswami and deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam was meanwhile held here.

Sources said the matters deliberated covered Assembly elections likely in April or May and the party organisation work. Party leaders however declined to comment if the "Sasikala factor" was discussed.

Law minister C. Ve Shanmugam said a complaint has been submitted with police seeking to "thwart a conspiracy to unleash violence and protect the lives of Tamil Nadu people and properties from Sasikala and Dhinakaran and ensure peace."

Flanked by his Cabinet colleagues and party veteran E M a d h u s u d h a n a n , Shanmugam alleged the conspiracy has been hatched to create 'violence' by using AIADMK's name and flag and then blame the ruling party for it. 'Intimidatory' remarks, tantamount to creating violence in the state have been made by Dhinakaran and his supporters, he alleged. — PTI

# Ready for talks, govt must come with new proposal, say farmers

*Reiterate they won't settle for anything less than repeal of 3 contentious laws*

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** Protesting farmer unions Saturday said they are ready to resume talks with the government, but asked it to come up with a fresh proposal as the existing offer to put the three farm laws on hold for 12-18 months is not acceptable to them. The unions, however, made it clear that they would not settle for anything less than the repeal of the three contentious laws.

Addressing a press conference at the Singhu border here, Samyukta Kisan Morcha's senior leader Darshan Pal said the ball is now in the government's court now.

"We are ready to talk. The ball is in the government's court. We clearly told them that their last proposal (of suspending the farm laws for 12-18 months) was not acceptable to us. Now, they should come up with a new proposal," he told reporters.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of farm unions leading the protests at the city border points, thanked all global personalities for their support to the protests. He said the farmers have been on the agitation for "many months and many farmers have been martyred".

"It is a shame that at the behest of the government, some people want to suppress this movement by calling it as an 'internal matter', but it is necessary to understand that in democracy, people are superior, not the government," it stated.

The assertion comes in the backdrop of support extended by some global celebrities such as singer Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg to the farmers' protests against the three laws.

— PTI



Youth Congress members scuffle with police personnel during their march towards BJP state headquarters in Kolkata on Saturday to protest the three farm laws. — PTI

Talking about the Saturday's 'chakka jam', the farmer leader claimed it got a huge nationwide support which once again "proved" that farmers across the country are united against these farm laws.

Mr Pal also condemned agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar's statement in Parliament on Friday. "He (Tomar) insulted the struggle of farmers of India by saying that only one state's farmers are opposing the agricultural laws," Mr Pal said.

Countering the Opposition's claim that farmers across the country are agitated over the three laws, Mr Tomar had on Friday said in Rajya Sabha that peasants of just one state are being misinformed and instigated.

— PTI

## Internet blackout at Delhi's protest sites

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** The ministry of home affairs has ordered the suspension of internet services at Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri borders of Delhi, where farmers have been protesting against the new farm laws, for 24 hours till Saturday night in the wake of their "chakka jam" call, officials said.

Apart from the three sites, Internet services remained suspended in their adjoining areas too till 23.59 hours on February 6.

The decision has been taken to 'maintain public safety and averting public emergency' under Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules 2017, a home ministry official said.

The Internet has been

Internet WAS suspended in view of the 'chakka jam' call given by the farmers' unions

suspended in view of the 'chakka jam' (road blockade) call given by the farmers' unions for Saturday, another official said.

Earlier, the suspension of internet services was ordered at Singhu, Ghazipur, and Tikri borders and their adjoining areas from 11 PM on January 29 and was effective till 11 PM on January 31, which was further extended till February 2.

On January 26, when large-scale violence was reported during the farmers' tractor rally, internet services were temporarily suspended in some parts of Delhi. — PTI

## 'Peaceful satyagraha in interest of nation'

**New Delhi, Feb. 6:** Ahead of the nationwide 'chakka jam' called by the farmer unions protesting the Centre's new agri laws, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the peaceful 'satyagraha' of the 'annadatas' is in national interest as the farm laws are "harmful" for the country.

Farmer unions had on Monday announced a countrywide 'chakka jam' on February 6 during which they would block national and state highways between 12 noon and 3 pm to protest the internet ban in areas near their agitation sites, harassment allegedly meted out to them by authorities, and other issues.

"The peaceful satyagraha of annadatas is in national interest — these three laws are not just harmful for farmers-labourers, but also for the people and the country. Full support!" Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also slammed the government over the farmers issue by posting on Twitter a picture of the multi-layered barricading at one of the farmer protest sites. "Why are you scaring us with the wall of fear?" she tweeted along with the picture.

The Congress had on Friday extended support to the countrywide 'chakka jam' called by the farmer unions. — PTI

■ Soumen Mitra returns as Kolkata police commissioner

## Major reshuffle in police ahead of polls in Bengal

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI**  
KOLKATA, FEB. 6

The Mamata Banerjee government on Saturday transferred Anuj Sharma from the post of the Kolkata police commissioner and replaced him with Soumen Mitra, a Bengali face having previous experience in handling polls with iron hands, in a list of major reshuffle of 24 senior IPS officers, for their completion of a term of three years at the same post or unit, ahead of the Assembly Election.

Incidentally, this is also the second stint for Mr Mitra, who was posted as the additional director general (ADG) for training in the state police in his last assignment, as the Kolkata Police Commissioner. He earlier served the post on the orders of the Election Commission after it removed Rajeev Kumar as the city police chief before the Assembly Election in 2016 following allegations by the BJP of partiality.

While Mr Mitra earned a distinction for ensuring one of the most peaceful elections in the city with a strict police deployment, the Trinamul Congress supreme, after returning to power for the second consecutive time, however transferred him from the Kolkata police commissioner's post as ADG (training) and replaced him with Mr Kumar, also her favourite cop.

Mr Sharma, also an ADG rank officer, will now head the criminal investigation department, the state detective agency, in place of S.N. Gupta who has been made ADG of South Bengal.

Owaisi to hold rallies in Malda, Murshidabad

**PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI**  
BERHAMPORE, FEB. 6

AIMIM (All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen) chief Asaduddin Owaisi and his brother Akbaruddin Owaisi will kick-start their poll campaign from Murshidabad and Malda, planning at least 10 rallies in the two districts with thick Muslim population along the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal.

AIMIM Murshidabad convenor Asadul Sheikh said, "Mr Owaisi and his brother Akbaruddin will address at least 10 public meetings in Murshidabad and Malda after the poll schedule is declared. We hope that we will be able to open our account in Murshidabad like Bihar."

Sources said five AIMIM MLAs from Bihar and the party's youth wing president, in wake of a large-scale defection by the state leadership to the ruling Trinamul Congress, have been given responsibility for campaigning in Murshidabad, Malda, and North Dinajpur, another minority oriented district, before fielding candidates there.

Jawed Shamim, who was the special commissioner(I) just below Mr Sharma, has also been appointed as ADG (law and order), replacing Gyanwant Singh, who has been appointed as ADG (armed police).

## BMC polls: Rane rules out BJP's tieup with Sena

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

Senior BJP leader Narayan Rane has said that there will be no truce with the Shiv Sena in future by his party. The BJP will come to power on its own in Maharashtra, he said.

With the differences among the coalition partners of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government being in open over several issues, there are speculations that the former estranged allies - BJP and Shiv Sena - might bury their hatchet and join hands again to rule the state. The possibility has been fueled by the meetings of some of the Sena-BJP leaders of late.

However, Mr Rane, the former Sena man and now BJP Rajya Sabha MP, scoffed off the possibility. "Some BJP leaders earlier might have talked about coming together with the Shiv Sena. But those are things of the past. Nobody in the BJP now wants to go with the Sena.



Narayan Rane

Henceforth there will be no patch up with them," he said.

With the all-important Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections due next year, Mr Rane vowed that the next mayor will be from the BJP. "Mumbai needs the BJP for its development. We will provide infrastructure of international standard to the city," he said.

When asked whether the BJP will join hands with the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena for the BMC polls, he said the party will take a decision on this. But the BJP alone is capable of winning the election, he added.



Workers sanitise a classroom ahead of reopening of schools for 6 to 8 standard students in Prayagraj on Saturday. Schools were closed due to Covid-19 pandemic. — PTI

## Making dreams come true: Odisha kids near-ready with lunar rover for Nasa

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 6

Ten school students from Odisha are now giving final touches to a human rover to participate in the United States' 27th annual National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC) scheduled to be held April 2021.

The students, hailing from various schools and industrial training institutes (it is) — have designed and developed the human rover with the help of their mentors.

This is for the first time that a school team from Odisha and India has been selected for the Nasa Human Exploration Rover Challenge.

As many 58 teams from 22 states of America, district of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and 28 more international teams from eight different countries are competing in the



Young scientists with their model lunar rover

HERC.

The budding scientists are working on a human rover which can easily accommodate and handle the weight of two people and move on the terrains of Mars and Moon. As is being claimed, they have gone the Swadeshi-way to develop the rover as only the parts of bicycle, bike, auto-rickshaw and car have been used.

The team, all aged below 19, was formed by Bhubaneswar-based Navonmesh Prasad

Foundation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amongst the 10-odd masterminds is a bright girl student from Mayurbhanj district, whose father works in a cycle-mart. A life of penury forced Rina Bag to come to the capital city Bhubaneswar where she had been working at a welding workshop.

"My parents are extremely proud. I was working at a welding workshop on the roadside. I'm happy to be a

part of this team and recognised by NASA," said Rina.

Kailash Chandra Barik, another budding scientist said, "My job is to assemble the parts of the rover and see which parts fit in and where. I also look after the fitting works and the designs of welding."

After developing the rover, they will test the vehicle to see if it can traverse the simulated surface of another world.

Rover team leader Vaishalini Sharma said, "We have set a target to complete the rover project by February end. And then in March-end, we are sending our rover to Nasa. The work is still in progress."

Tanvi Mallick, a Class 9 student who is a part of the team says, "We are the first team from Odisha and first high school student team from India which has been selected for the Nasa Human Exploration Rover Challenge."

Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR (Tele-fax No: 019-2496089, e-mail id: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in) Gist of e-NIT NO: MHCHD/TS /2020-21 /268/e-tendering Dated:-02.02.2021.					
For and on behalf of the Governor, J&K State e-tenders are invited from registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-					
Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Time of completion (in days)	AAA/Positi on of Funds	TS.NO
1	2	3	4	5	6
Electrification for proposed Oxygen Plant at Govt. Kashmir Nursing Home Srinagar	1.50	200	10	47-MCS of 2020 Dt:- 28.08.2020	65 OF 01/ 2021
Electrification of newly Constructed Oxygen Plant (Ground Plus First Floor ) at Govt. LD Hospital	2.25	200	10	51 MCS of2020 Dt:- 28.08.2020	69 of 01/2021
1. The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 02.02.2021(18.00 hrs).					
2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 03.02.2021 (10:00hrs) to 22.02.2021 (15:00 hrs) in two (02) cover.					
3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on 23.02.2021 (15:00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.					
No: MHCHD/ TS /9321-25 Dated: 02-02-2021					
DIPK-12536/21 dated 05.02.2021				Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar	



## SHORT TAKES

## Wanted terrorist arrested in Jammu

**Jammu:** A most-wanted terrorist and self-styled commander of Lashkar-e-Mustafa, believed to be a frontal organisation of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit, was arrested on Saturday after police intercepted a car on the outskirts of Jammu city, officials said. A pistol and a grenade was seized from the possession of Hidayatullah Malik, an 'A' category terrorist from Shopian district, officials said, adding that he is being interrogated. Senior superintendent of police, Jammu, Shridhar Patil said a private vehicle was intercepted by police at Kunjwani bypass on a specific information leading to the arrest. He said the terrorist attacked the police officer leading the party in an attempt to escape but was overpowered. He is being questioned, the officer said, adding more details will be shared as the investigation progresses. — PTI

## 'India developing 7 more Covid jabs'

**Kolkata:** Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday said that the country is developing seven more Covid-19 vaccines and also working on further vaccine development to inoculate every citizen of India. He said the Centre does not have any immediate plan to make the vaccines available in the open market and a decision will be taken as the situation demands. The Covid-19 inoculation process for people aged above 50 will start in March, he told reporters. "We are not dependent only on the two vaccines as the country is working on seven more indigenous vaccines. Simultaneously, we are also working on the development of more vaccines because India is a huge country and we need more players and research to reach out to everyone," he said. — PTI

## TALK WITH CHINA WILL CONTINUE: JAISHANKAR

**Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh:** External affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Saturday said senior military commanders of India and China have held nine rounds of talks on the process of disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh and the parleys will continue in future also. Addressing reporters in Vijayawada, he said so far there was no "visible expression" of the talk on ground. "The disengagement talks, because it is a very complicated issue, because it depends on troops, you have to know the geography (like) which position and what is happening, this is being done by the military commanders," he said. The minister was replying to a query on whether there would be any ministerial level talks between both the countries on skirmishes between troops of the Asian giants. China and India are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last. The two countries have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the face-off, but no significant headway has been made so far. "So, military commanders have held nine rounds of meetings so far. We believe some progress has been made, but it is not, in a kind of situation where there is a visible expression of that on the ground," he said. Referring to the parleys he and defence minister Rajnath Singh held with their respective Chinese counterparts last year in Moscow, Mr Jaishankar said it was agreed that there should be disengagement in some points. "Right now the military commanders are talking and they will continue to talk," he said. On the recent union budget, he said there has been a significant additional outlay for the defence, both in the financial year as well as capital expenditure. — PTI

## 4 girls jailed

■ **Continued from Page 1** member of the college for driving her to commit suicide. According to the suicide note, she was subjected to ragging by them ever since she took admission in the college. She was forced to write their mid-semester copies. She had lodged a complaint against them with the faculty member who had advised her to tolerate them if she wanted to study in the college.

## Sena, NCP uneasy after Patole quit Speaker's post

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

After the resignation of Nana Patole as Maharashtra Assembly Speaker, the Congress party is contemplating on two names, Prithviraj Chavan and Sangram Thopte, for the post. Former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan is the top contender for the Speaker's post, in case the Congress keeps the post with them.

However, the possibility of former CM's appointment to the post has made the NCP nervous. Mr Chavan has a long history with the Sharad Pawar-led party, which accuses him of making every effort to undermine the NCP when he was the CM.

Therefore, Mr Pawar on Thursday had said that there would be afresh negotiations among all the constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) — Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress — to decide a new nominee for the vacant post of the speaker.

"Mr Pawar's statement is a pressure tactic to prevent

■ **THE POSSIBILITY** of former CM Prithviraj Chavan's appointment to the post has made the NCP nervous. Mr Chavan has a long history with the Sharad Pawar-led party, which accuses him of making every effort to undermine the NCP when he was the CM.

Mr Chavan from taking over the Speaker's post. But if there are fresh talks, that also gives an opportunity to the Congress to negotiate for deputy chief minister's post," a senior state Congress leader said.

"Once Mr Patole took charge of state Congress chief's office from Balasaheb Thorat on February 11, he would have a meeting with the Sena and NCP to hold a discussion whether the Speaker's post would be exchanged for DCM post or not. If that is accepted, the Congress will give up its claim on the Speaker's post," he added.

The Shiv Sena on Saturday appeared unhappy with ally Congress' deci-

sion to replace state Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat with Nana Patole and the latter's resignation as Maharashtra Assembly Speaker.

An editorial in the Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* also said there was substance in NCP chief Sharad Pawar's reported view that the three coalition partners will take a decision on the Speaker's post through negotiations now.

The *Saamana* editorial said the Congress had been given the post of Speaker for five years, and not for forcing an election for the post midway through which should have been avoided.

Though organisational changes were an internal matter of the Congress, extra caution is required to ensure the decision does not impact the government, it said. "Two years ago, the situation was such that no leader was ready to take the mantle of the state Congress chief. Thorat took up the responsibility and the party got more seats than expected in Assembly polls," the Sena said.

## Nirmala extends cash benefit to Assam's 7.47L tea workers

## State govt to increase minimum wage before Assembly polls

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, FEB. 6

In the run-up to the state Assembly elections due to take place in April-May this year, Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Saturday announced that his government has decided to increase the minimum wage of tea garden workers and notification in this regard would be issued in the next 10 days.

Mr Sarma made this announcement in a public meeting in the presence of union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

The Union finance minister was here to participate in the programme to offer financial assistance to tea workers under the third tranche of the Assam Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela Scheme. She on Saturday also distributed ₹3,000



Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses a public meeting at Khanapara veterinary ground in Guwahati on Saturday.

— PTI

each to 7.47 lakh tea garden workers in the state, totalling ₹224 crore.

Asserting that the proposal to raise the minimum wage of tea labourers will be approved in the next cabinet meeting, Mr Sarma said, "Wait for 10 more days. We will issue a notification to increase your wages. After the next cabinet meeting, you'll

hear good news."

The Opposition Congress had criticised union home minister Amit Shah after his recent visit to the state, accusing that the government did nothing to fulfil the electoral promise of granting ST status to tea garden workers.

The party also alleged the government has failed

to ensure that tea workers in the state get the minimum daily wage of ₹351. Responding to these charges, Mr Sarma slammed the Congress for not opening bank accounts of tea garden workers.

He claimed that the BJP-led government opened over 6.33 lakh bank accounts in three months after the announcement of demonetisation in 2016. Mr Sarma also mentioned that the state government has spent ₹1,400 crore for building roads inside gardens and opened high schools.

He pointed out that the Sarbananda Sonowal government also extended financial assistance of ₹12,000 each to 47,000 pregnant women in the estates.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Sonowal also accused the Congress of neglecting the development of tea belt in the state.

## PM Modi hails judiciary for safeguarding people's rights

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 6:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday praised the country's judiciary, saying that it has performed its duty well in safeguarding people's rights and upholding personal freedom, and added that it has also strengthened the Constitution.

He said the Supreme Court in India has conducted the highest number of hearings via video-conferencing from among the top courts of all the countries in the world during the coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Modi also said that in order to make the country's justice system future-ready, the possibility of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) was being explored.

He was speaking after virtually releasing a commemorative postage stamp on the Gujarat high court for sixty years of its establishment.

"Every citizen can say that our judiciary has worked with firmness to uphold our Constitution. Our judiciary has strengthened the Constitution by its positive interpretation," Mr Modi said.

"The Supreme Court has conducted the highest number of hearings through video-conferencing in the world during the pandemic," he said.

Through constructive

## SC judge hails PM as 'popular, vibrant and visionary leader'

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 6:** Supreme Court justice M.R. Shah on Saturday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "our most popular, loved, vibrant and visionary leader".

The praise for the Prime Minister by Justice Shah came during a function to celebrate diamond jubilee of the Gujarat high court.

"I am proud and privileged to participate in the function to celebrate diamond jubilee of Gujarat high court and that too in the presence of our most popular, loved, vibrant and visionary leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi," justice Shah said in his address.

and creative interpretation of the Constitution, our judiciary has strengthened the Constitution itself, he added.

"Whether it is to safeguard the rights of citizens, question of personal freedom, or a situation wherein the interest of the country is to be given top-most priority, the judiciary has both understood and fulfilled its responsibilities," he said.

He said the root of good governance is in law, as has been held in the ancient Indian scriptures,

"One of the essential features of the democratic republic established under the Indian Constitution is division of powers between Parliament, executive, and the judiciary," the judge went on to say.

He felt proud that the Gujarat HC has never crossed the "Lakshman rekha" (boundaries of power/code of conduct) and always delivered justice, he said.

Last year, Justice Arun Mishra's fulsome praise for Prime Minister Modi at an event had raised eyebrows. Justice Mishra, now a retired SC judge, had described Mr Modi as "internationally acclaimed visionary". — PTI

he said. "This idea has been a part of our 'sanskrit' since ancient times. This mantra gave moral strength to our freedom struggle, and the makers of our Constitution also gave it top priority," he said.

This trust towards the judiciary has given confidence to the common man, given him the strength to stand for truth, Mr Modi said.

He said that "the proud structure of justice stands on the pillar of Bar". — PTI



US Army soldiers arrive at the Indian Air Force office in Suratgarh, Rajasthan, on Saturday to participate in the 16th edition of the joint military exercise "Yudh Abhyas 20", which will be held from February 8 to 21. As part of their defence cooperation, soldiers from India and the United States will be participating in a joint military exercise Yudh Abhyas 20.

## FB data theft: CBI to record statement of victims soon

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

The CBI, which recently registered a case against the United Kingdom-based Cambridge Analytica and Global Science Research for the alleged illegal harvesting of data of 5.62 lakh Indian Facebook users, is set to record the statements of several effected users as part of its investigation into the case.

"Investigation revealed that the UK-based consulting firm Cambridge Analytica in conspiracy with Global Science Research Ltd (GSRL), illegally harvested data of 335 Facebook users and their 5.62 lakh contacts in India through an app and used the same for commercial purposes. This data was collected without the knowledge and consent of the App users", sources said. The agency will soon approach these 335 users and record their statements, sources said.

The CBI recently registered a case against Cambridge Analytica, GSRL represented by Aleksandr Kogan, both based in the UK, under IPC SSection related to criminal conspiracy and IT Act violations. Based on news reports of illegal data harvesting to manipulate elections, the ministry of electronics and information technology had sent a complaint to the CBI on July 25, 2018, based on which the agency had registered a preliminary enquiry into the matter. It is alleged that Kogan of GSRL had created an application "Thisisyourdigitallife" having permission from Facebook to collect certain categories of its users' data for "research and academic purposes".

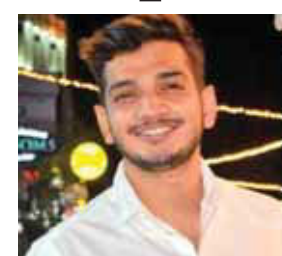
## Munawar not released from jail despite SC relief

**Indore, Feb. 6:** Stand-up comedian Munawar Faruqui failed to walk out of jail on Saturday despite the Supreme Court granting him bail as prison officials cited a warrant issued by a Prayagraj court against him.

Arrested for allegedly hurting religious sentiments, Mr Faruqui is in Indore jail since January 1.

On Friday, the Supreme Court granted him interim bail after the Madhya Pradesh high court had rejected his bail plea on January 28. The apex court also stayed the production warrant issued against Mr Faruqui by a court in Prayagraj in connection with an FIR lodged there.

Mr Faruqui's lawyers on Saturday submitted a copy of the SC order in the local court, which



Munawar Faruqui

then directed that he be released on a bond of ₹50,000 and same amount of security.

But he was not released. Asked for the reason, an official of the Indore Central Jail said a court in Prayagraj had ordered Faruqui's production in a similar case on February 18.

Citing the jail manual, he said an order from the Prayagraj court or a competent government officer

was needed to release him.

The comedian will be taken to Prayagraj on Sunday morning if they did not get the requisite order, he said.

Before that, he will undergo a Covid-19 test, the official said.

Mr Faruqui's cousin Zaid Pathan said they were disappointed by the jail administration's stand.

"Our belief in judiciary was strengthened after the Supreme Court order," he said.

Mr Faruqui and four others were arrested on January 1 following a complaint by a BJP MLA's son that objectionable remarks about Hindu deities and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were passed during a comedy show at a cafe in Indore on New Year's day. — PTI

## BJP leaders elected DDC chief in Jammu, Kathua

**Jammu, Feb. 6:** Four BJP leaders were on Saturday elected District Development Council (DDC) chairmen and vice chairmen in Jammu and Kathua districts respectively, marking the beginning of a new phase in the panchayati raj institutions in Jammu and Kashmir.

The maiden DDC elections to 280 seats -- 14 each in 20 districts of the UT -- were held in November-December last year with People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) sweeping the polls by winning 110 seats out of the 278 declared results. Results of two seats in north Kashmir are awaited as the issue of citizenship of two contestants prompted suspension

of the counting.

BJP emerged as the single largest party by winning 75 seats, mostly in the Jammu region, and enjoys a clear majority in five districts -- Kathua and Samba (13 seats each), Jammu and Udhampur (11 seats each) and Doda (eight seats). After an independent candidate extended his support to the party, it also has a majority in Reasi district where it had got seven seats on its own.

The election to elect the chairperson and vice chairperson for DDC Jammu and Kathua in the first phase saw BJP leaders -- Bharat Bhushan (chairman) and Suraj Singh (vice chairman) (Jammu) and Col (Retd) Mann Singh (chairman)

and Raghunandan Singh (vice chairman) (Kathua) -- getting elected unopposed.

We will live to the expectations of the people and will try our best to speed up the development of our district, Bhushan, who was elected chairman of the DDC Jammu, told reporters outside the BJP headquarters here after his supporters took out a victory march in the city.

He said his party has expressed faith in him and he will live to the expectations and would make all out efforts to address the issues of the public like strengthening the water supply network and road connectivity.

All round development is our priority, he said. — PTI

## 25 countries in line for vaccine

■ **Continued from Page 1**

Some countries have direct contracts with the Indian vaccine producing companies and have negotiated commercially, he said.

The Centre has already given the nod for two Covid-19 vaccines -- Covaxin of city-based Bharat Biotech and

Covishield of Oxford, being manufactured by Serum Institute of India in Pune, which are being administered to frontline workers from January 16, under Emergency Use Authorisation.

Drug maker Dr Reddys recently said it will approach the Drug Regulator for the EUA for

Russian vaccine Sputnik V in March.

Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's idea was to establish the country as the "Pharmacy of the World", taking advantage of the domestic capabilities and the way India emerged as IT leader during the Y2K issue. — PTI

## Naga gov orders action against 'seditious' posts

■ **Continued from Page 1**

Kumar Bhalla for necessary action and to check such seditious and subversive acts of state government employees.

Article 371 A (1) (b), which applies exclusively

to Nagaland, bestows upon the governor "special responsibility with respect to law and order".

For all practical purposes, the governor has the final say on all matters related to the state's law and

order and on what constitutes law and order.

State government sources told this newspaper that departmental proceedings have already been initiated against Dr Jimoni.

## Mamata didn't allow farmers' scheme...

■ **Continued from Page 1** and Bhaipao. You need to understand this."

Attacking the ruling TMC, he then sarcastically asked the crowd, "Tell me who is rice thief, who is the tarpaulin thief and who extorts money? You will bloom lotus here to usher development led by PM in Bengal."

Mr Nadda, silent on the nationwide farmers' protests against the three farm laws, also alleged, "Mamatadi meted out a very big injustice to farmers. PM, through his Kishan Samman Nidhi scheme, allotted ₹6,000 per year to each farmer for welfare. But Mamatadi, only to satisfy her arrogance and ego, did not

allow the implementation of the Central scheme, leaving more than 70 lakh farmers deprived here. However, when 25 lakhs among the affected farmers sent their applications for the scheme on their own, only then she talked of implementing it."

He argued, "Mamatadi, the election has come. So what is the point in trying to take advantage of what has already been lost! The way farmers and labourers have been deprived, Bengal, under her rule, has slipped to 24th position among the states in the list of 29."

Mocking Ms Banerjee for her allergy to the "Jai Shree Ram" slogan, the BJP chief wondered,

"When I talk, 'Jai Shree Ram' slogan is raised in front of me. Same happened on my way here from the helipad. As I waved my hands at the crowd, I was greeted with 'Jai Shree Ram.' But why does Mamatadi feel so angry about it? Why does she have so much hatred for 'Jai Shree Ram' slogan? What is the problem? Is it wrong to be associated with Indian culture? Is it wrong to remember the legend? If someone chants the slogan, her face turns red in so much anger. This reflects politics of these people is above the culture. They will not protect culture, rather bring it down to serve their political interests."



# THE ASIAN AGE

7 FEBRUARY 2021



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

## The WhatsApp riddle: What's the big secret?

When I first saw the notice saying that the terms of WhatsApp's privacy agreement were going to change, I panicked. In my mind, at least, there was some reason for that panic. I sometimes share my writings with friends and publishers on WhatsApp, and I was afraid that Mark Zuckerberg would simply claim copyright on whatever I shared thus. Then came TV interviews with technology experts and lawyers saying that WhatsApp was going to swallow up everything you put on it, and let Zuckerberg do with it whatever he likes, which they said was against Indian law. And then Elon Musk came up with something about Signal, an app that allows you to do much the same things that WhatsApp does without gobbling up your data.

This was towards the middle of January, a couple of weeks late, because I see these things only when people point them out to me. I was stewing in my panic, unable to decide whether to change from WhatsApp to some other app, and people were giving me conflicting bits of advice: stay with WhatsApp, switch to Signal, switch to Telegram, get off social media, wait a little and go with the herd, and so on.

So when my professor friend came visiting, I was genuinely glad to see him. "What do you make of this WhatsApp trouble?" I asked him when he was seated comfortably with a cup of tea in his hand and a plate of snacks on the table in front of him.

"Nothing," he replied, taking a large bite from a hot samosa. The insides of the samosa were much hotter than the outside, and it took him a few seconds to regain control of his scalded mouth.

"Nothing?" I asked.

"Nothing," he repeated.

"I don't understand," I said. "What about all those invasions of privacy and so on?"

"The invasions started when you began to enjoy what you thought were the free benefits of the Internet," he replied.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Take email, for instance," he said. "You've been using it for decades without paying a paisa for it. But did you ever read the details of your agreement with the service provider?"

"No," I said. "Everyone I knew agreed, and so did I. I never knew there was anything untoward about the agreement."

"Ah!" he said. "How do you think all the companies that provide the service pay all their employees, and for the software and the servers and everything?"

"Advertising," I said, hopefully.

"Of course," he replied. "Business is like politics, like most human activity. Everyone tries to take his work one step past the competition. No one wants to be remembered as the person who let something stagnate and die. Right?"

"Right," I said, a bit tentatively. I hadn't really thought about it but he being a professor must have.

"So they're always looking for opportunities to expand their reach," he said, "and, with social media the way they are, the simplest way they can expand is by getting to know you better. And do you know why they're spending so much on machine learning and artificial intelligence?"

"No," I said. "I was hoping you'd tell me."

"Well," he said, "they've always had trouble finding people to analyse the data they've grabbed. You know, when people go out for a meal, they post photos of what they eat before they eat it. If I post a photo of my samosa on Facebook before I eat it, do you know how much they get to know? From my GPS they know that this is your home, and in a corner of the photo they see a Brand X sofa or a Brand Y TV, so they know about your tastes. But then, can you imagine anything more boring than going through millions and million of photos of samosas or cakes? So, artificial intelligence and machine learning."

"But I thought machine learning and artificial intelligence were meant to relieve people of the drudgery of things like housework and taking care of old people and so on," I said.

"That's what they say," he replied. "The truth is that they've developed all these algorithms to recognise, say, the brand of a sofa in a corner of a photo of a black forest pastry. And they've been following you using the GPS chip in your phone. So now they can figure out what you'll eat next and where, and, besides, your taste in furniture and appliances. Business."

"Right," I said.

"And then there are selfies," he continued, a samosa later. "Social media sites use them to figure out where you're going for your next holiday, and what you'll do there, whether you're stupid enough to try to get yourself in a selfie with a crocodile or at the edge of a thousand-foot cliff."

"Then someone realised that the programs that could analyze all this could also do other things. So there were spinoffs. Those same programs, with small modifications, can also recognise dirt on a floor, or chart a path in a room that'll get a robot to sweep the floor with the minimum of effort, in the least possible time. That's dead easy. So is something like facial recognition, or thumbprint identification."

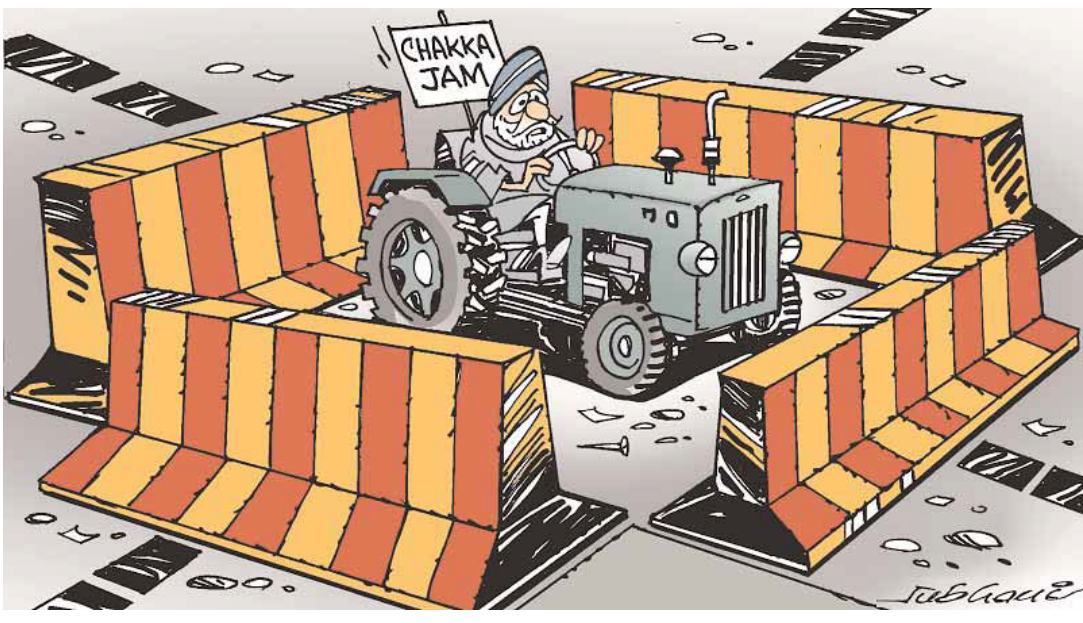
"So, you see, all the good things that they claim, all that wonderful security stuff about recognising faces and thumbprints and explosives and everything, it's all secondary. It's a sort of side effect of having to make programs to analyse the largest and most boring collections of photos and videos and GPS locations that people have taken in the entire history of the mankind."

"So what's all the protest about?" I asked.

"Umm," he said, picking up the last samosa. "That's just misdirection. You know, almost all of us lead such dreary, boring lives. The protesters, they're afraid people will figure out that their biggest secret is that they have no worthwhile secrets!"

*Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.*

Subhani



## Maligning the messenger pays diminishing returns



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

In the days leading to the infamous declaration of the Emergency in 1975, PM Indira Gandhi, flush from her victory over Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, was showing signs of becoming increasingly autocratic. She was impatient about dissent, convinced of her own invincibility, and adamant about pursuing what she thought was good for the country irrespective of what the Opposition was saying. It was then that the theory of the "foreign hand" gained currency. She resorted to the not-unfamiliar stratagem of conflating all internal dissent as the manifestation of a conspiracy against her regime from abroad; "CIA agents", began to proliferate, and Opposition leaders, and those who had the temerity to oppose her, were seen as puppets playing to a conspiracy orchestrated by international powers.

A similar stratagem seems to be at play today. Undoubtedly, the sovereignty of our country is paramount, and we must ceaselessly be vigilant against outside powers that seek to destabilise it. But do Rihaana and Greta Thunberg qualify to pose such a threat? Greta is a Swedish environmentalist activist not yet out of her teens; Rihaana is a celebrity singer-actor, who has sales of 250 million records worldwide, and is considered one of the most successful music artistes of all time. Both of them have been involved in social activism. Greta's environmental evangelism has won her global recognition. Rihaana is known for her involvement in humanitarian causes, and has been vocal against police brutality in America against the blacks.

Since the "foreign hand" of Indira Gandhi's days, the world has changed. Social media, and the global footprint of media and especially television, has inter-connected people in a way never seen before. News in any part of the world becomes instantaneously news everywhere. Our government appears to be making the cardinal mistake of using the paranoia of the "foreign hand" in today's world when so much has irrevocably changed. Social media celebrities, with hundreds of millions of followers on Twitter and Instagram, post comments on anything and everything as a matter of routine. Social media platforms are full of posts against the arrest of Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny by Vladimir Putin's dictatorial regime; against the attack on Capitol Hill by Donald Trump's hooligans; against China's undemocratic clampdown on dissidents; and against Saudi Arabia's intolerant Wahabi state — to name but a few subjects.

We are proud of India's democratic credentials, but if a farmers' protest on the borders of the capital of our country continues for over two months, with some 150

**In a democracy there will be protests. Such protests, if they are allowed to linger on for so long, will attract global attention. Filing FIRs against those who comment is a highly immature and insecure way of responding.**

**First, the protesting farmers were called by over-zealous supporters of the government as Khalistanis, Maoists, Urban Naxals and Pakistanis. Then the Opposition parties supporting the farmers were called anti-national.**

farmers dying in the bitter cold, it is bound to attract media attention worldwide. The government may be right in believing in agrarian reforms, but there is little doubt that the manner in which the bills were passed was undemocratic, and was unprecedented by the mandatory process of consultations with stakeholders. Equally, the manner in which the protests were handled leaves much to be desired. A certain arrogance informed the government's approach from the very beginning. What prevented the agricultural minister, if not the PM himself, in going to the protest site, and talking to the farm leaders over a glass of lassi? The offer to keep the laws in abeyance for some time could have been made much earlier, with the government assuring the farmers that there would be full discussions with them before the laws are implemented.

Reforms are desirable, but in a democracy, opposition to them — some of it very valid — must be taken on board. Besides, a large number of the protesters are from the sensitive border state of Punjab, which has seen radicalisation in the past, with the fullest support of Pakistan. It serves nobody's purpose to see Punjab radicalised again. Such factors should have weighed in with the government. After the condemnable violence on January 26, the protest movement was demoralised, and farmers were leaving for home on their own volition. But Yogi Adityanath's police gratuitously rekindled the

protest again. The visual footage of a government using nails and ditches to barricade itself from its own people made for dramatic watching, and it is futile to believe that its audience was restricted only to India.

Now, the government has made a laughing stock of the nation by filing an FIR against unnamed "foreign" conspirators, citing Greta's tool-kit tweet as evidence. Earlier, the government thought it fit to respond to Rihaana's tweet. The correct response would have been to ignore such tweets. If, however, the government felt that such "global influencers" should be replied to, the appropriate way would have been for a letter from a bureaucrat to be delivered to these commentators through the agency of our embassies explaining the government's point of view and saying that India as a democratic nation is well equipped to resolve such disputes. As the PM never tires of saying, we are a nation of "sawa karod" — 1.25 billion people. We are the world's largest democracy, an emerging global super power. In a democracy there will be protests. Such protests, if they are allowed to linger on for so long, will attract global attention. Filing FIRs against those who comment is a highly immature and insecure way of responding.

The game of tarnishing the messenger has diminishing returns. First, the protesting farmers were called by some over-zealous supporters of the government as Khalistanis, Maoists, Urban Naxals and Pakistanis. Then the Opposition parties supporting the farmers were called anti-national. Now, foreign commentators are being accused of being part of an international conspiracy against India. All of this, when the real priority is to sensibly resolve the impasse with the farmers.

*The writer, an author and a diplomat, is in politics*

LETTERS

OLIVIER'S BIRDIE

They have a wingspan of almost two metres. They have golden crests and they are exquisitely beautiful. They are known to mate for life. Once a common sight in Rwanda, there are only 500 great crowned cranes left in the wild. But thanks to the efforts of young Rwandan veterinarian Olivier Nsengimana, this endangered bird now has a future. He began his project in 2014 with the help of the Rwandan Development Fund. Thank you, Olivier, for saving this beautiful bird.

**Priyanka Mathur**  
Noida

GILT GAMECHANGER

**THE RBI'S** move to allow retail investors to buy government bonds directly from it could prove to be a game-changer. Currently, retail investors can only buy gilt or government-issued bonds through intermediaries, which is not popular. The move could help the government meet its market borrowing target of ₹12 lakh crore. With this, India now joins countries such as Japan and Brazil, which allow direct retail participation in their gilt market.

**N.J. Ravi Chander**  
Bengaluru

UNWELCOME AGENDA

**THE FARM LAWS** should be sufficient and simple, sufficient so as to cover all aspects of reform and simple so that the farmer as well as any other citizen can understand them. However, it has flummoxed even experts. This betrays the government's motive in framing them. Today, corruption is so widespread at all levels of the administration that the fundamental value of empathy and public service is non-existent. The poorest and the weak regularly fall prey to it. But now we know the reason behind the malaise: It is the government that encourages the habit.

**Manoj Haryanvi**  
Chandigarh

BARRINGTON REDUX

**THE STERLING** performances with the willow by the captain of the visiting English team, Joe Root, are reminiscent of similar feats by Ken Barrington during the 1961-62 Test series for the Ted Dexter-led England XI in India and Pakistan. The solid middle order batsman, now no more, was nicknamed Rock of Gibraltar for his superb batting performances, in which he scored a number of centuries; many of them unbeaten, in Tests as well as in regional fixtures.

**Arun Malankar**  
Mumbai

'CAPTAIN' NO MORE

**THE DEMISE OF** distinguished Canadian actor Christopher Plummer is truly heart-breaking. Plummer, an accomplished Shakespearean actor honoured for his varied state, television and film work in a career that spanned more than six decades, was best known for his role in *The Sound of Music*, which at the time eclipsed *Gone With the Wind* (1939) as the top-earning movie ever. The world lost a fearless, energetic, courageous, knowledgeable, professional and a monument to what an actor can be. Rest in Peace, Plummer.

**Sankar Paul**  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins `500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup



## Farm stir: Snap ties, says JJP to chief; Yogi gags his ministers

Haryana deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala of the Jannayak Janata Party is under immense pressure from his colleagues to walk out of the BJP-led ruling coalition in solidarity with the protesting farmers. The JJP's Karnal district president Inderjit Singh Goraya recently resigned from the party to support the farmers demand for the repeal of the three contentious farm laws. In addition, two JJP legislators have spoken in favour of the agitating farmers and have warned Mr Chautala that the party will pay a heavy price if he does not come out openly against the farm laws. Though JJP cadres are undoubtedly agitated about their party's wishy-washy stand on the farmers' agitation, Dushyant Chautala's unwillingness to share power with his colleagues has also contributed to the rumblings in the JJP. Mr Chautala is heading as many as 10 ministries, which include high-profile portfolios like excise and taxation, industry and commerce and food and civil supplies. There is only one more JJP minister in the Haryana Cabinet,

Anoop Dhanak who holds the inconsequential archeology and museums portfolio. Given the power he wields, it is not surprising that Mr Chautala is in no hurry to snap ties with the BJP.

Faced with a revolt by farmers in western Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government has ordered a virtual gag order on its ministers and MLAs. It has been informally conveyed to them that no one other than those authorised by the government should make any public statements or give interviews to the media regarding the farmers' protests. Any MLA or minister violating this "code of conduct" immediately receives a phone call seeking an explanation for his or her transgression. These instructions were issued after several legislators from western Uttar Pradesh failed to come out strongly against the ongoing farmers' agitation, especially BKU leader Rakesh Tikait, and have instead sounded apologetic and conciliatory when questioned by the media about their views on the stir. In fact, an MLA from this region even sidestepped ques-

tions on Mr Tikait's aggressive stand, saying the agitating farmers were like members of his extended family.

Though Congress members have become accustomed to Rahul Gandhi's habit of disappearing for long breaks abroad, there was panic in the party recently when word went round that the Nehru-Gandhi scion had left for Germany. After all, this was in the midst of the Budget Session of Parliament and at the peak of the farmers' protests. Party MPs and other leaders made frantic calls to ascertain the veracity of these reports. Many called up Rahul Gandhi's close aides and one leader even tapped into his contacts at the airport to find out if he had boarded an international flight. There was all-round relief when Rahul Gandhi's office confirmed that he was very much in town and that he would be attending Parliament. It is, however, difficult to understand the panic over the Congress leader's disappearance during a Parliament session given the fact that his contributions in the Lok Sabha have been minimal. On the plus side,

Rahul Gandhi has addressed the media several times in recent weeks both in Delhi and outside.

The security arrangements inside the Parliament House building have been beefed up to such an extent that it is being compared to barricading at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders. In an unprecedented and unusual move, Delhi police personnel have been deployed inside the building along with the Parliament's watch and ward staff. The presence of the police personnel, who have been stationed all along the corridors, is inescapable. As it is, the number of media persons allowed inside has been restricted and even those who have been issued passes are finding it difficult to move around freely. Reporters, who could earlier linger outside the offices of ministers in the hope of getting a tiny bit of news, are now shooed away if they dawdle in the corridors for longer than five minutes. The police personnel randomly stop reporters and demand to see their passes when it is

known that only passholders can enter the building. Several media-persons have lodged a protest but apologetic security officers maintain they have instructions "from the top" to keep a vigil on them.

It is close to a year since he brought down the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh but former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, now with the BJP, is out to take revenge against his former colleagues for humiliating him. When ministers were given duties in different constituencies for the Republic Day celebrations, Mr Scindia made sure that his loyalist Govind Rajput was sent to Chhindwara, Kamal Nath's fiefdom. According to the buzz in Bhopal, this was meant to be a message for the veteran Congress leader and his son, who represents the constituency now, that they are on Mr Scindia's radar and that his next target is to uproot them from their stronghold.

*Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist*



## SHORT TAKES

## TWO SUMATRAN TIGERS ESCAPE INDONESIAN ZOO

**Pontianak, Indonesia, Feb. 6:** A critically endangered Sumatran tiger was shot dead on Saturday while another is still on the loose after they escaped from a zoo on Borneo island, leaving a zookeeper dead, an official said.

The tigers, both female and about 18 months old, escaped from Sinka Zoo in the town of Singkawang, West Kalimantan late Friday after days of torrential rain caused a landslide and opened a tunnel allowing their exit. A 47-year-old zookeeper was found dead with scratches and bite wounds on his body. Authorities also found dead a cassowary, ostrich and monkey near the tiger cage. Police and conservation officials were immediately dispatched to search for the tigers. Nearby tourism attractions were ordered to close and locals were told to stay at home while police searched for the animals.

## CHINA PROBE SENDS FIRST IMAGE OF MARS

**Beijing, Feb. 6:** China's Tianwen-1 probe has sent back its first image of Mars, the national space agency said, as the mission prepares to touch down on the Red Planet later this year. The spacecraft, launched in July around the same time as a rival US mission, is expected to enter Mars orbit around February 10.

The black-and-white photo released late Friday by the China National Space Administration showed geological features including the Schiaparelli crater and the Valles Marineris, a vast stretch of canyons on the Martian surface.

The photo was taken about 2.2 million kilometres from Mars, according to CNSA, which said the spacecraft was now 1.1 million kilometres from the planet.

The robotic craft ignited one of its engines to "make an orbital correction".

## THREE CLIMBERS MISSING ON K2 MOUNTAIN

**Islamabad, Feb. 6:** Three climbers have gone missing attempting to summit the world's second-highest mountain, K2, their expedition manager and the Alpine Club of Pakistan said Saturday.

Climbers John Snorri from Iceland, Juan Pablo Mohr from Chile and Muhammad Ali Sadpara from Pakistan reportedly lost contact with base camp on Friday.

"It's already been more than 30 hours, we (at base camp) have received no news of John Snorri, Ali Sadpara, and Juan Pablo Mohr, since none of the GPS trackers seem to be working", Chhang Dawa Sherpa, expedition manager, said.

An army helicopter has conducted a search flight for the missing climbers, Sherpa said in a separate statement.

"Unfortunately, they cannot trace anything and the condition up in the mountain and even at the base camp is getting poor", he said. News of the missing men comes a day after a Bulgarian mountaineer was confirmed to have died on K2.

## WORLD'S TINIEST REPTILE FOUND IN MADAGASCAR

**Paris, Feb. 6:** Scientists have identified Earth's smallest known reptile, warning at the same time that sustained destruction of forests in northern Madagascar threatens its survival. Tiny enough to perch comfortably on a fingertip, the ultra-compact chameleon — dubbed *Brookesia nana* — has the same proportions and world-weary expression as its larger cousins around the world.

"We discovered it in the mountains of northern of Madagascar," Frank Glaw, curator of herpetology at the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology, said in an interview.

A joint expedition in 2012 of German and Malagasy scientists did not know whether the two specimens collected — one female and one male — were adults until much later, he explained.

"We found out that the female had eggs in her body, and that the male had large genitals, so it was clear that they were adults."

Exceptionally large genitals, it turned out, accounting for nearly 20 percent of its body size, Glaw and colleagues reported in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

## Rana attorney: No hint India let go Headley extradition

**Washington, Feb. 6:** There is no indication that India has given up on the extradition of David Coleman Headley, the Mumbai terror attack accused, attorney of his co-accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana has told a US court. Rana, 59, a childhood friend of Headley, is facing extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India, is opposing his extradition. In a submission early this week before the US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chelomian, opposing his extradition, the attorney of Rana claimed that as of now there is no indication in the record that India has agreed to forgo Headley's extradition to India. "India presumably could have agreed to forgo Headley's extradition in return for his assistance to the US, but there is no indication in the record that it did so," the court submission said.

"In fact, the opinion of the Indian prosecutor serving as the government's expert states: 'The present opinion is specific to the extradition request in respect of fugitive Tahawwur Hussain Rana. This opinion may not be construed in any manner to indicate that the various extradition requests pending with different sovereign nations in respect of the above-mentioned case which includes the case in respect of Accused No. 1, David Coleman Headley, is either being given up or not being pursued vigorously,'" said the motion filed by his attorneys.

Pakistani-American Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Headley was in-

● **PAKISTANI-AMERICAN** Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist Headley was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

volved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. He was made an approver in the case, and is currently serving a 35-year prison term in the US for his role in the attack.

Rana's attorneys said that the Court should not lightly assume (as the government appears to suggest) that the government circumvented its treaty obligation to India through "a sham interpretation" of Article 6 of the India-US Extradition Treaty as part of its deal with Headley.

The government's conclusion in Headley's plea agreement that Article 6 defines offences in terms of conduct rather than elements and thus bars Headley's extradition must be taken as its good-faith interpretation of the Treaty's terms, it said. Rana, in the court filing, described his childhood friend Headley as a liar. Headley lied to federal agents, judges, and presumably prosecutors in relation to these cases.

After his first heroin sentence (reduced because of his cooperation), he went back to dealing heroin despite promising that he would not. "He disregarded the agents' instructions regarding his dealings with targets and travelled to Pakistan without permission.

After his second heroin conviction, he used his status as a DEA cooperator to deflect government scrutiny of his activities with Lashkar and his statements supporting jihad," his lawyers alleged. —PTI

## Turkish Prez pulls up varsity

**Istanbul, Feb. 6:** Turkey's president has ordered the establishment of two new departments in the country's most prestigious university, which has been rocked by weeks of demonstrations protesting his appointment of a new rector with government links.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision, published in the Official Gazette Saturday, says law and communications faculties are to be launched in Bogazici University. Critics say the establishment of new departments would allow the presidentially appointed rector to staff them with government loyalists. For over a month, students and faculty have led mostly peaceful protests against the new rector, Melih Bulu, who has links to Erdogan's ruling party.

They are calling for Bulu's resignation and for the university to be allowed to elect its own president. In an open letter to Erdogan, protesting Bogazici students called the decision to open new departments intimidation and "petty tricks."

"Your attempts to pack our university with your own political militants is the symptom of the political crisis you have fallen into," the letter said.

Police have detained

hundreds of demonstrators at the university and in solidarity protests elsewhere, some taken away following raids of their homes. Most were later released.

Top government officials have said terrorist groups are provoking the protests, and Erdogan has called the protesting students terrorists.

Istanbul governor's office press statements have listed detention numbers with alleged links to outlawed leftist and Kurdish militant groups.

Officials from the United States, the United Nations and the European Union have criticized Turkey's handling of the protests as well as a series of homophobic comments that were made by Erdogan and other officials while denouncing the demonstrations. With the same order, the president opened new faculties in several universities, closed down some others and appointed 11 rectors elsewhere.

The students in their letter said they knew its publication would likely result in criminal complaints, including for insulting the president, but they vowed to continue speaking out and protesting. —AP

## PRIME | PROPERTY

**Peshawar, Feb. 6:** The owner of legendary actor Dilip Kumar's ancestral house in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has refused to sell it at a rate fixed by the government, saying he would demand Rs 25 crore for the prime location property which is severely undervalued by the authorities.

The provincial government last month fixed the price of the four marla (101 square metre) house, declared as a national heritage, in Peshawar at Rs 80.56 lakh. Marla, a tradi-

tional unit of area used in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is considered as equal to 272.25 square feet or 25.2929 square metres.

However, the owner, Haji Lal Muhammad, said he would demand Rs 25 crore from the provincial government for the property as and when approached by the Peshawar administration.

Muhammad said he had purchased the property in 2005 for Rs 51 lakh after completing all formalities required for transfer of the land and possesses all

## UN: Reverse Myanmar coup

‘Essential’ to carry out UNSC’s calls for return to democracy: Guterres

**United Nations, Feb. 6:** Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pledged Friday that the United Nations will do everything it can to unite the international community and create conditions for the military coup in Myanmar to be reversed.

The UN chief told a news conference it is "absolutely essential" to carry out the Security Council's calls for a return to democracy, respect for the results of the November parliamentary elections, and release of all people detained by the military, "which means the reversal of the coup that took place." "It is absolutely essential that that moves forward, and for that, I believe, we need to have all possible areas of pressure to make it happen," Guterres said.

Myanmar's military announced Monday on the eve of the meeting of new Parliament that it will take power for one year, accusing leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government of not investigating allegations of voter fraud in the November elections, where its party did poorly. It detained Suu Kyi, whose party swept that vote, and other lawmakers, activists, journalists and members of civil society.

The election commission had relected the military's allegations. In its first statement following the military's takeover on Thursday, the Security Council "stressed the need to uphold old democratic institutions and processes, refrain from violence, and fully respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

It also "emphasised the need for the continued support of the democratic transition in Myanmar." Guterres said Christine Schraner Burgener, the UN special envoy for Myanmar, had a first contact Friday with the military since the coup and expressed the UN's strong opposition to the takeover.

According to UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric, she reiterated to Deputy Commander-in-Chief Vice Gen. Soe Win "the secretary-general's strong condemnation of the military's action that disrupted



A protester gives bouquets of flowers to a line of riot police during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon on Saturday. — AFP

the democratic reforms that were taking place in the country."

Schraner Burgener also reiterated her call for the immediate release of all detainees and emphasised the need for progress on the safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya refugees, Dujarric said, calling it "an important conversation." More than 700,000 Rohingyas have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh since August 2017, when the military launched a clearance operation in response to attacks by a rebel group. The security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of homes.

A year ago, the UN's top court, the International Court of Justice, ordered Myanmar to do all it can to prevent genocide against the Rohingyas, a Muslim minority. Guterres said Schraner Burgener is also in contact with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Brunei, which chairs the 10-nation regional group, including Myanmar. —AP

## Myanmar junta blocks net access

**Yangon, Feb. 6:** Myanmar's new military authorities appeared to have cut most access to the Internet on Saturday as they faced a rising tide of protest over their coup that toppled Aung San Suu Kyi's elected civilian government. Numerous internet users noted a slow disappearance of services, especially from mobile service providers, that accelerated sharply late Saturday morning. Broadband connection also later failed, while there were mixed reports on whether land-line telephone service was still working.

Netblocks, a London-based service that tracks internet disruptions and shutdowns, said Saturday afternoon that "a near-total internet shutdown is now in effect" in Myanmar, with connectivity fal-

ling to just 16% of normal levels. The broad outage followed Friday's government order to block Twitter and Instagram that said some people were trying to use the platforms to spread what it deemed fake news. Facebook had already been blocked earlier in the week — though not completely effectively.

The communication blockages are a stark reminder of the progress Myanmar is in danger of losing after Monday's coup plunged the nation back under direct military rule after a nearly decade-long move toward greater openness and democracy. During Myanmar's previous five decades of military rule, the country was internationally isolated and communication with the outside world strictly controlled. —AP

## POLITICIANS DEFY COUP, SAY ARE TRUE GOVT

**Yangon, Feb. 6:** Hundreds of members of Myanmar's deposed ruling party declared themselves Friday to be the sole legitimate representatives of the people and asked for international recognition as the country's government, as protests against the military takeover swelled.

Nearly 300 politicians from ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party announced they had named a committee to carry out the functions of Parliament, according to a National League for Democracy party Facebook page.

In a letter to the United Nations and the international community posted on social media, the party also asked for targeted sanctions and for businesses to cut ties with the military, which has vast lucrative holdings. —AP

## Blinken presses China on Uighurs, HK

Biden revokes terrorist designation for Houthis

**Washington, Feb. 6:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pressed Beijing on its treatment of Uighurs, Tibetans and Hong Kong while China defended its policies in the first conversation between top officials of the two powers since President Joe Biden took office.

"I made clear the US will defend our national interests, stand up for our democratic values, and hold Beijing accountable for its abuses of the international system," Blinken said on Twitter of his call with senior Chinese official Yang Jiechi.

Blinken told Yang that the United States "will continue to stand up for human rights and democratic values, including in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong," a State Department statement said of the call, which took place on Friday Washington time.

Blinken also "pressed China to join the international community in condemning the military coup in Burma," it said, using the former name of Myanmar.

The top US diplomat said the United States would hold Beijing "accountable

for its efforts to threaten stability in the Indo-Pacific, including across the Taiwan Strait, and its undermining of the rules-based international system." The tough tone comes after Blinken in his

Congress were notified of the administration's plans. The official, who wasn't authorised to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the removal changed nothing about the Biden administration's views of the Houthis, who have targeted civilians and kidnapped Americans.

"Our action is due entirely to the humanitarian consequences of this last-minute designation from the prior administration, which the United Nations and humanitarian organisations have since made clear would accelerate the world's worst humanitarian crisis," the official said. The move comes a day after Biden announced an end to offensive support to Saudi Arabia's campaign against the Houthis. The Obama administration in 2015 gave its approval to Saudi Arabia leading a cross-border air campaign targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, who were seizing ever more territory, including Sanaa.

The Houthis have launched multiple drone and missile strikes deep into Saudi Arabia. The US says the Saudi-led campaign has entrenched Iran's role in the conflict, on the side of the Houthis. —AP

confirmation hearing said he would continue former president Donald Trump's approach to China in a rare point of agreement between the two administrations.

Yang however warned on

the call that Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet were "China's internal affairs" and "no external forces are allowed to interfere," urging the US to "correct mistakes" made in recent years. —AFP

**New York, Feb. 6:** US President Joe Biden's son Hunter will come out with his memoir of addiction, loss and survival on April 6.

"Beautiful Things" will be published by Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster. "I come from a family forged by tragedies and bound by a remarkable, unbreakable love," Hunter, a lawyer, writes. The book details his descent into substance abuse and his tortuous path to sobriety. Holly Harris, publishing director (non-fiction) at Simon & Schuster UK, acquired UK and Commonwealth rights from Caspian Dennis at Abner Stein on behalf of Laura Nolan and David Granger at Aevitas Creative.

"This book is an extraordinary accomplishment — as gripping as it is courageous. I cannot wait to publish it," says Harris. —PTI

Haji Lal Muhammad said he would demand Rs 25 crore from the provincial government

## Dilip Kumar's Pak house owner won't sell at govt rate

● **MUHAMMAD SAID** he had purchased the property in 2005 for Rs 51 lakh after completing all formalities required for transfer of the land and possesses all the documents of the house. He said it is unjust on part of the government to fix the rate at Rs 80.56 lakh for the property after 16 years.

The property is very expensive in Mohallah Khudadad qissa Khwani bazar where the rate of one Marla land is above Rs 5 crore, he said, adding that he would demand Rs 25 crore through his lawyer from the authorities for the house.

"How can a four marla property be sold in the said area for Rs 80 lakh?"

Kapoor demanded Rs 200 crore for the six marla (151.75 square metre) property in Peshawar. The government had fixed the rate of the property at Rs 1.50 crore.

Raj Kapoor's ancestral home, known as Kapoor Haveli, is situated in the fabled Qissa Khwani Bazar. It was built between 1918 and 1922 by the legendary actor's grandfather Dewan Basheswarnath Kapoor.

Raj Kapoor and his uncle Trilok Kapoor were born here. The building, which

is in shambles, has been declared a national heritage by the provincial government.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister's special assistant on information Kamran Bangash said last month that he is hopeful that the provincial government would reach an amicable settlement with the owners of both the buildings for their purchase to convert them into archaeological museums as both structures have already been declared as national heritage buildings.

In January, the provincial government approved the release of Rs 2.35 crore to purchase the ancestral houses of the two legendary actors located in the heart of this city.

The owners of the two buildings have made several attempts in the past to demolish them for constructing commercial plazas in view of their prime location but all such moves were stopped as the archaeology department wanted to preserve them, keeping in view their historic importance. —PTI



INDIAN TOP 10  
BESTSELLERS

## NON-FICTION

1 **GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**  
Mehr Afshan Farooqi  
Allen Lane, ₹799

2 **THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**  
Shashi Tharoor  
Aleph, ₹799

3 **A PROMISED LAND**  
Barack Obama  
Penguin Viking, ₹1,999

4 **BY MANY A HAPPY ACCIDENT: RECOLLECTIONS OF A LIFE**  
M. Hamid Ansari  
Rupa, ₹795

5 **THE PRESIDENTIAL YEARS 2012-2017**  
Pranab Mukherjee  
Rupa, ₹695

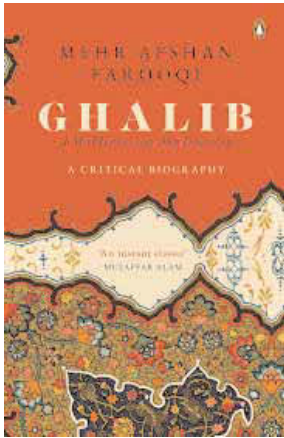
6 **THE TALE OF THE HORSE: A HISTORY OF INDIA ON HORSEBACK**  
Yashaswini Chandra  
Pan Macmillan, ₹699

7 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**  
Aanchal Malhotra  
HarperCollins  
₹599

8 **THE LANGUAGE OF HISTORY: SANSKRIT NARRATIVES OF MUSLIM POETS**  
Audrey Truschke  
Penguin Allen Lane, ₹699

9 **JUGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**  
Vinay Sitapati  
Penguin Viking, ₹799

10 **VAJPAYEE: THE YEARS THAT CHANGED INDIA**  
Shakti Sinha  
Penguin Vintage, ₹599



## FICTION

1 **SHUGGIE BAIN**  
Douglas Stuart  
Picador, ₹499

2 **THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**  
Marieke Lucas Rijneveld  
Faber & Faber, ₹499

3 **THE LAST QUEEN**  
Chitra Banerjee  
Divakaruni  
HarperCollins, ₹599

4 **A TIME FOR MERCY**  
John Grisham  
Hodder & Stoughton  
₹699

5 **WRITERS & LOVERS**  
Lily King  
Picador, ₹699

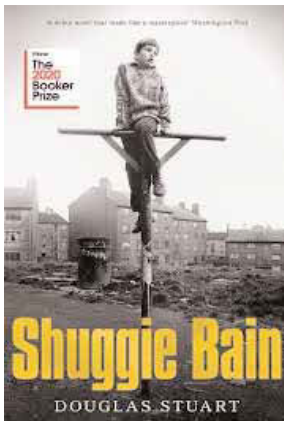
6 **HOMELAND ELEGIES**  
Ayad Akhtar  
Tinder Press, ₹1,050

7 **THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY**  
Matt Haig  
Canongate UK, ₹699

8 **HAMNET**  
Maggie O' Farrell  
Tinder Press, ₹599

9 **WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**  
Shauna Singh Baldwin  
Tara- India Research Press, ₹599

10 **DAYLIGHT**  
David Baldacci  
Pan Macmillan  
₹650



Bahrison, New Delhi

# 'India's diversity fact of life that can't be wished away'

Career diplomat **HAMID ANSARI**, who rose to become Vice-President of India, in which capacity he served from 2007 to 2017, in a conversation with **ASHHAR KHAN** over his just-released book *By Many A Happy Accident*, and the many controversies surrounding it

**What was the idea or inspiration behind writing your autobiography?**

Well, it was nothing, actually. I was not too keen but my children and my friends said that I should write as I had a diverse life. So, one fine day, I started writing and kept on writing. I had sent it to the publisher in last March but due to Covid-19 it will be formally launched only now. The book is a recollection from memory.

**You have had run-ins with the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi? Could you explain?**

There was no run-in. Everybody has got it wrong. I had met Mr Modi for the first time when he was the Gujarat chief minister in 2007 and he came to congratulate me on my election. I asked him a question about the post-Godhra issue. I recorded his reply. As PM he came to my room unannounced. Though meetings between the PM and the VP are not abnormal, they are rarely unannounced. He spoke about bills getting stuck and I replied that Mr Jaitley had been a witness to that during UPA times. I did not agree to pass the bills in the din. Even the UPA was



not happy with that. Then Mr Modi asked about Rajya Sabha TV. I said I have no role in it and there is a committee that takes care of it. On my retirement, he said something in the morning and I replied to him, and in the evening he spoke differently. Now, why he changed his tone I do not know, but neither did I try and find out. I have normal relations with him. He has his own views and I have my own; that's all.

**You have been a diplomat in important places like Australia, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan. Would it be correct to say that the prestige of India has increased post 2014?**

No. That is actually not correct. I have been around in the 1980s and the 1990s, mostly as an ambassador of India. The image of India was always high in political terms. India was an important country as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and it also played an important role in the councils of the world. Post economic reforms in 1992, India's economic capacities were being looked at afresh. When I was Ambassador in Saudi Arabia around 1996, I noticed that India was being looked upon

as a market where investments can be made. One day, two senior officers of the oil company, Aramco, came to me for seeking visas. They wanted to establish a product experimental centre in India. The other centre was in Houston. Finally, they set up the centre in Vadodara. This hugely changed the perception of political relations. Since 2000, perceptions have changed and India is viewed as a political, economical and military force.

**Do you feel that, diplomatically, we have handled China well, considering all the action at the LAC?**

A structure was put in place in 1993-94 and during the UPA government's tenure, which had a two-pronged

approach. One that we have to keep talking to find a solution to the boundary problem, as there existed different perceptions. This made sure that there was no active conflict or blow-up. That worked very well. We exchanged visits. A great deal of trade was taking place. The full story of Doklam or Galwan will not be known. Probably, someone will write it someday. But there was a skirmish and, in Galwan, it went out of hand. In spite of that the perception on both sides is to keep talking. Talking will yield results. I don't think both are interested in starting a war. But, yes, something did go wrong in Galwan. Both states realise that we are big neighbours, and that cannot be wished away.

**In the last couple of years, do you think that there is a concerted effort to attack minorities under the garb of legal sanction, like love jihad, anti-conversion law, etc.?**

It's all there. It is true, but my thing is that you cannot travel on that path in this country. That is my firm belief. The diversity of this country is a fact of life that you just cannot undo. Identity is a very important factor in any society. And it's multiple identities in this case. Yes, all that you asked in your question is true as a political agenda that is being spread in a crass manner. It may trouble people for the time being, but it just cannot go on.

**One of the predominant themes in your book is equality before law, justice. Do you think this is happening in present-day India?**

Yes, I see everything. The simple thing is, one should read the copy of the preamble. One should read it. It says equality, justice and fraternity. I have hinted in my book that we should take lessons from the experiences of other diverse societies in our own times. Accommodation and fraternity is very important for the well-being of the country, and the foundation of this country is based on this.

**Do you think governments that have brute majorities use Parliament as a post office?**

That is very unfortunate thing because the system of government of a parliamentary democracy rests on four pillars, and the Parliament or legislature is one of them. The Parliament has to do its work. Thirty years ago, the House would meet for 100 days, and now it is barely 60 days. This means, the Parliament is not doing enough work. The question is why this should be allowed. It is within the rights of members to say that they want more sittings. But they just want to sign on the attendance register and leave. State legislatures are even worse. The Standing Committee is a very good system as all parties are represented. The money bill technique of passing laws is also an aberration, which has been tried in the recent past.

## Privilege-bound but absorbing portrait of rural Sri Lanka

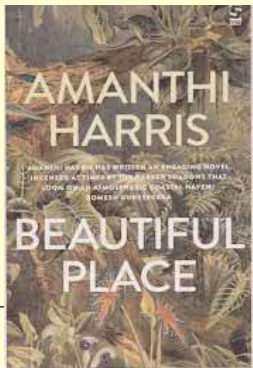


Devapriya Roy

review

**N**ilwatte Beach, somewhere off the coast of southern Sri Lanka, is a beautiful place. The sea, "with its yearning rising green-blue swell and the deep-blue simmering stillness of horizon" crashes upon a languorous beach that is dotted with shacks selling beer and fish, peopled with a few foreign (mostly white) tourists or posh Sri Lankans — the sort who favour scrappy holidays over five-star comfort that they can certainly afford — lounging on beach chairs, gazing at the sunset. Around them hover a smattering of local villagers, selling "marijuana, magic mushrooms, lottery tickets, trips to turtle conservation beaches". The economy — and as a consequence, the culture — of the village has been permanently disrupted by the rise of tourism, and the villagers cannot decide if their longing for the outsiders' money outstrips their loathing of the same people, who bring their peculiar morals, tastes, and the stench of their unimaginable wealth to the area.

Barely a few minutes from the beach and close enough to the village stands Hibiscus Villa, the site of most of the action. The beating heart of *Amanthi Harris*'s debut novel *Beautiful Place*, Hibiscus Villa is reminiscent of the regal mansions in coconut estates of yore. With its white pillars, clay-tiled roofs and profusion of trees, it is now an upper crust guest house run by Padma, the beguiling protagonist.



**BEAUTIFUL PLACE**  
By AMANTHI HARRIS  
Salt, £12.99

A daughter of that very village, Padma had been brought to the villa by her greedy father, Sunny, a hustler with criminal tendencies, when she was still a child, as an offering to Gerhardt, the brilliant Austrian architect who had designed it. Sunny had no compunctions about what the foreigner might demand of the child as long as he made a quick buck off it, but horrified at the future that awaited a child with such a parent, Gerhardt adopted Padma, and subsequently brought her up in the villa as a single parent. Content with regular pay outs, Sunny and his family did not bother them further. However, now that Padma has returned to Nilwatte again, to run this business — she hated her time at university in Colombo and failed the exams — Sunny, now the henchman of a powerful politician, tries his best to reclaim her.

A deeply absorbing novel of the old school, *Beautiful Place* is strongest when it portrays the worlds that the author is familiar with: the people who come to the guest house (handsome Rohan, who has emerged from the wreckage of a messy divorce; sassy Ria, looking to reclaim a childhood home she was nostalgic about; runaway lovers Anjali and Dan; and later, in pursuit, Anjali's conservative parents), the architect and single parent Gerhardt, the dancer-turned-yoga guru-turned-controversial-writer Jarryd — both expats who have made Sri Lanka their home — and Ruth, Gerhardt's old flame and doyenne of Colombo high society. They are all competently crafted characters, interesting, alive, their lives and worlds rich with detail. As Padma's story intersects with that of her guests, the point of view shifts from one character to the other, introducing a delicious sense of variety as we see people from different perspectives.

Where the novel enters a somewhat sinister space is when it steps out of the villa, as it naturally must. Around the idyll of Villa Hibiscus — helping the guests heal and come to terms with their own burdens — is the shadowy space of the village, now firmly overshadowed by a vicious strain of politics. Like in other parts of the world, the tide of chauvinistic identity politics is on the rise in Sri Lanka too, and as Jarryd falls into the sinister crosshairs of right-wing Sinhalese extremists, the lives of Padma and Gerhardt are set to change forever too.

However, the author's depiction of the slippery world of the village, where nothing as it at seems and no one speaks the truth, standing in the darkening twilight of the sea, leaves us with a sense of complex unease. Part of it must be deliberate on the author's part, given that her main characters all — except for the cook, Soma — occupy a liberal upper-class ecosystem that is invariably a rift or three apart from the world of the village, and would be exhausted by the seeing servility and hostility of the people. But as Sunny's web darkens, he assumes almost comic book villain proportions. While we understand the author's deeper critique of rural Sri Lanka, we also feel our inability to truly access the inner life of the village as we do the Villa, as a failure of sorts, not of imagination but of the proclivities that tie us so deeply to the world of the Villa.

*Devapriya Roy is the author of five books, most recently Friends from College*

## 'Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam is the story of our lives'



Yasser Usman

excerpt

**1** January 1961, the shooting of *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* began with an auspicious *muhurat* ceremony. The first shot was being canned. Writer Bimal Mitra was invited again from Calcutta to grace the momentous occasion. Guru Dutt had shaved his trademark moustache to play Bhootnath. He appeared super excited. Then there was Waheeda Rehman who was playing the character of the Bengali girl, Jaba. Waheeda was wearing a traditional Bengali sari. But there was another big surprise in store for everyone during the lunch. The crew at the Guru Dutt studios saw Guru Dutt, Geeta Dutt and Waheeda Rehman eating together.

A curious Bimal Mitra asked Geeta, 'Hello! Good to see you. Never seen you in the studio before?'

'The film was being launched today, so I came,' replied Geeta.

Guru Dutt interrupted, 'No, I have called Geeta.'

Waheeda didn't know how to tie a Bengali style sari, so I asked Geeta to tell her.

'How am I looking?' asked Waheeda.

'Very good.'

'Am I looking like a Bengali girl?'

'Hundred per cent!' replied Bimal Mitra.

The women were referring to each other as Geeta Ji and Waheeda Ji. Post lunch, Guru and Waheeda left for the shot. Bimal Mitra and Geeta were left alone at the table.

Mitra asked Geeta, 'How did you like the shooting?'

Geeta replied, 'It was good! There was a time when I had asked him not to make this film.'

'Why?'

'Because, *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* is the story of our lives.'

**T**he accounts of most of Guru Dutt's close friends suggest that during the making of *Sahib, Bibi aur Ghulam*, Guru Dutt and Geeta had grown further apart. They had realised that their marriage was not working. Geeta Dutt too had taken to alcohol and sleeping pills majorly and left the Pali Hill bungalow to live in his mother's house.

Johnny Walker used to say, 'Studio ke darwaaze aur ghar ke darwaaze mein jitna faasla rakhoge, sukhi rahoge. Nahi to ghar mein kaam ki baatein hongii aur studio mein ghar ki baatein hongii. Tum confuse ho jaaoge ki tum aa rahe ho ya ja rahe ho. And you'll pay a price for it and it's very very costly. Nobody can afford it.'

Then one night, Guru Dutt swallowed thirty-eight sleeping pills. It was his second attempt at suicide.

**I**t was an overdose of sleeping pills. We rushed him to Nanavati Hospital but his condition was very serious. His body had gone completely cold. He was unconscious for three days. Then on the fourth day we heard his scream. My brother was shouting. The first person he asked for was Geeta. It was strange because their relationship was going through hell. They were thinking of separation but in those moments, he wanted Geeta to be near him. I think they deeply loved each other despite their major differences,' Lalitha Lajmi told this author.

But she says Guru Dutt never talked about the reason why he tried to end his life. 'Sometimes if there was an altercation with Geeta he used to call me. I would rush to him even in the middle of the night. But he would sit quietly, not say anything. I felt he wanted to say something. But he never did. Never.'

A person who attempted suicide twice yet never talked about it with his family. It was as if through these suicide attempts, Guru Dutt was crying for help. On the doctor's suggestion, the family called a psychiatrist for counselling. 'I was much younger than him and in those days no one really talked about such things. We also called a psychiatrist but he charged Rs 500 for a visit. My brother Atma laughed

that he was just talking with Guru and he is so expensive. We never called him again,' said Lalitha, adding that sometimes she blames herself for not doing enough for her brother.

But apparently there were numerous other times that Guru Dutt experimented with sleeping pills. Screenwriter Nabendu Ghosh recounts, 'Let me tell you about a doctor whose name was A.J. Ribero, a very stubborn man. He was an MBBS, and a sweet-spoken doctor, who had [his] clinic in Santa Cruz. Ribero was a general physician. Because of Ribero's goodwill, all affluent people of Santa Cruz, Khar and Bandra would visit him. Especially all those who were associated with films. Famous film personalities like Filmistaan's Shashadhar Mukherjee, director Aurobindo Sen, Shakti Samanta, etc. Guru Dutt was



**GURU DUTT: AN UNFINISHED STORY**  
By YASSER USMAN  
S&S India, ₹599

no exception. I have already said how I often visited Guru Dutt's Pali Hill home for discussions. One morning, I reached his house and found out that the situation was tense. I saw Dr Ribero, going inside the bedroom and coming out every two or three minutes with a tense look on his face. I asked, 'What's up, doctor?'

Dr Ribero said, 'Guru took sleeping pills, he's still not coming back to his senses, I have been trying for half an hour; Geeta is crying.' But about five minutes later, Dr Ribero came out of the room, sat down on the chair and said, 'Thank god, he's now conscious.'

Then again one day, about three months later, I saw a similar situation at their house. I asked Dr Ribero, 'Now what has happened?'

Ribero said, 'Today Debi [Geeta] is unconscious. She took a lot of sleeping pills. Guru is sitting quietly. I will wait for another ten minutes. If she doesn't recover, I'll be forced to call the police.' But five minutes later, Geeta came back to her senses.'

Lalitha Lajmi says, 'Later he went into depression then slowly his entire personality went down. He kept to himself and became very lonely.'

Guru Dutt just wanted to run away from Bombay. An escape from the city, studio, family life. To anywhere. He couldn't sleep in Bombay. His constant refrain was: 'I think I will go crazy.'

*Excerpted from Guru Dutt: An Unfinished Story (2020, Simon & Schuster India) with permission from the author*



**FAST FACT:** The later Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle (the last one published in 1927) remain under copyright in the US. When Netflix's *Enola Holmes* based on the YA series written by Nancy Springer was released last year, the estate

argued that the film had infringed copyright by depicting a warmer and more emotional version of Holmes. The case was eventually dismissed.



## SHORT TAKES

## Russia, Italy in ATP Cup final

**Melbourne:** Alexander Zverev tweaked his back in the second set of his must-win ATP Cup match against Daniil Medvedev here on Saturday.

He left the court for treatment and returned, taking the match to three sets before Medvedev finally converted to secure Russia's win over Germany and a spot in the final.

No.4-ranked Medvedev lifted when Zverev started to struggle but he got tight in the end, twice double-faulting on match point before serving out for 3-6, 6-3, 7-5. Andrey Rublev had earlier beaten Jan-Lennard Struff 3-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Russia will meet Italy in the final after Fabio Fognini beat Pablo Carreno 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 and Matteo Berrettini swept Roberto Bautista 6-3, 7-5 to account for 2020 runners-up Spain. — AP

## Osaka, Azarenka out of warm-ups

**Melbourne:** World number three Naomi Osaka and two-time major winner Victoria Azarenka pulled out of Australian Open warm-up tournaments Saturday, joining Serena Williams and Simona Halep with injury concerns.

Japan's Osaka, the 2019 Australian Open winner, was set to play Elise Mertens in the Gipsland Trophy semifinal but withdrew. "Sorry to Tennis Australia and the fans to have to withdraw today," she said on the WTA's Twitter account.

"I have a niggling injury and in light of the AO on the horizon I need to be cautious. I look forward to competing next week." Two-time Australian Open champion Azarenka was also a casualty, opting not to play her quarter-final clash with Anett Kontaveit at the Grampians Trophy due to a lower-back injury. — AFP

## Barella, Perisic send Inter atop

**Milan:** Nicolò Barella and Ivan Perisic scored in either half as Inter Milan moved top of Serie A on Friday with a 2-0 win at Fiorentina. Antonio Conte's side pulled one point clear of AC Milan to keep the pressure on their city rivals who host lowly Crotone on Sunday.

Inter bounced back after their midweek Italian Cup semi-final, first leg defeat to Juventus in the San Siro.

Italy midfielder Barella curled in the opener from a distance after half an hour with Achraf Hakimi setting up Perisic for the second seven minutes after the break to give Inter a first league win in Florence in seven years. Conte sat out a touchline ban but Inter controlled the game against 12th-placed Fiorentina who were without injured French midfielder Franck Ribery. — AFP

## Manvir, Krishna win it for Bagan

**Goa:** ATK Mohun Bagan dished out a ruthless performance and closed down the gap on leaders Mumbai City FC, with a thumping 4-1 victory over Odisha FC in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, Bambolim, on Saturday.

The result meant the Mariners closed the gap with Mumbai to three points. Odisha's top-four chances are all but over.

Cole Alexander's equaliser for Odisha (45+1') was sandwiched between two goals from Manvir Singh (11', 54') before a quick-fire brace from Roy Krishna (83', 86') led Bagan to their ninth win of the season.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**India vs England:** First Test, Day 3 from 9.20 am on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Tottenham Hotspur vs West Brom from 5.30 pm; Wolverhampton vs Leicester City from 7.30 pm; **Liverpool vs Manchester City from 10 pm;** Sheffield vs Chelsea from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, Star Sports Select 1 HD

**Indian Super League:** Jamshedpur vs East Bengal FC from 4.50 pm; Hyderabad FC vs North East United from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**Italian League:** Udinese vs Verona from 7.30 pm; Parma vs Bologna from 10.30 pm; Lazio vs Cagliari from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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## DOUBLE ROOT

## Joe slams double ton as England make India toil

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR  
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Joe Root has an insatiable appetite for scoring runs. And it goes up a notch when the England skipper takes guard in India and Sri Lanka where he averages in the mid 60s. Close on the heels of notching up a double hundred and a 186 in Sri Lanka, on Saturday, Root feasted on Indian bowlers for another big knock.

His stroke-filled 218 that steered England to 555/8 (180 overs) in the first innings of the opening Test here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium has put him on a high pedestal. Of the many firsts he achieved on Saturday, he would definitely cherish the feat of becoming the highest individual scorer in a 100th Test.

Continuing from where he left off on the opening day, Root found another able ally in Ben Stokes (82) and forged a century stand to give impetus to a huge total. England have made it clear that they will bat, at least, for one more hour on day three.

Having made a quiet start, Stokes pulled off a surprise when he popped his 16th ball back over R. Ashwin's head for a six. That shot sparked the day's play into life. Stokes also enjoyed some luck. He was dropped twice in the next two overs — once by Ashwin, off his own bowling, and then by Cheteshwar Pujara, off Shahbaz Nadeem. The dangerous Stokes eventually fell to left-arm spinner Nadeem after mistiming a slog sweep. This time, Pujara, stationed at deep backward square leg, held on to the ball after a fumble.

Exhibiting great technique and temperament, Root brought up his double ton in style by charging down and launching Ashwin over long on for a six. He became the first England player to do it with a big hit.

India heaved a huge sigh of relief when Nadeem's quicker delivery crashed into Root's pads. The England skipper reviewed instantly, but the third umpire upheld the on-field decision, ending Root's marathon 377-ball vigil.

## STOKES REVEALS ENGLAND HAD NO INTENTION OF DECLARING

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

England all-rounder Ben Stokes said in-form skipper Joe Root made him "feel rubbish" during their stand of 124 runs against India on Saturday. "That's pretty much where he is at the moment. He makes everyone around him not look very good. He is an amazing player and I am not sure we have ever had an England player play spin so well, with such control, such ease," said Stokes.

Stokes said Root makes it look easy against spinners. "He is so consistent. He has a game plan for all types of spin," he added.



England's Joe Root celebrates after scoring 200 runs against India on the second day of their first Test at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Saturday. — PTI

As he walked back, drenched in sweat, Kohli was the first to applaud his effort with a pat on his back.

Playing a long innings in Chennai's humid conditions is not easy. Root has left a lasting impression by making the highest individual score for a visiting batsman at Chepauk, surpassing

Aussie Dean Jones' 210.

Indian bowlers who slogged through the day found some solace in the final session by taking four wickets. Ishant Sharma bowled his heart out.

The pacer's persistent line and length finally earned him rewards. He castled Jos Buttler (30) and Jofra Archer (0) off

consecutive balls.

The fact that Washington Sundar and Nadeem, who shared 70 overs between them, could manage only six maidens highlighted their lack of control. As many as 19 no-balls and a few dropped catches — Rohit Sharma dropped a dolly — didn't help India's cause either.

## Ishant's double strike lifted team morale, says Nadeem

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Shahbaz Nadeem is no stranger to conditions in Chennai. He has played Tamil Nadu Cricket Association's first division league here and taken plenty of wickets. The left-arm spinner, however, had to toil against England before picking two wickets — both big fish, Ben Stokes and Joe Root.

"I felt really happy to pick those wickets, especially on such a track. Root was sweeping well, you really have to plan well for him," he said.

Nadeem had a different plan for Stokes. "I was trying to bowl in the rough outside the off-stump. But he (Stokes) was trying to counter attack me by playing reverse sweep and different attacking shots. I tried to change my line and length and was thinking to bowl from around the wicket and maybe try and get him out," said Nadeem.

Nadeem said India's bowling plan was simple as the pitch didn't have to offer. "Basically, the plan was to bowl in the right areas. If you go for wickets, you will end up

## SCORECARD

**England 1st innings (overnight 128/3):** Rory Burns c Pant b Ashwin 33, Dominic Sibley lbw b Bumrah 87, Daniel Lawrence lbw b Bumrah 0, Joe Root lbw b Nadeem 218, Ben Stokes c Pujara b Nadeem 82, Ollie Pope lbw b Ashwin 34, Jos Buttler b Ishant 30, Dominic Bess batting 28, Jofra Archer b Ishant 0, Jack Leach batting 6. Extras (b-2, lb-16, nb-19) 37. **Total (for 8 wkts, in 180 overs) 555.**  
**FoW:** 63-1, 63-2, 263-3, 387-4, 473-5, 477-6, 525-7, 525-8.  
**Bowling:** Ishant Sharma 27-7-52-2, Jasprit Bumrah 31-4-81-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 50-5-132-2, Shahbaz Nadeem 44-4-167-2, Washington Sundar 26-2-98-0, Rohit Sharma 2-0-7-0.

## NUMBERS GAME

**JOE ROOT FIRST TO SCORE DOUBLE TON IN 100TH TEST**  
● Joe Root became the first batsman to score a double century in his 100th Test match. He achieved this feat by making 218 on the second day of the first Test against India in Chennai on Saturday.

● Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq, who had posted 184 against India at Bangalore in 2004-05 in his 100th Test match, held the previous record.

● Root's 218 was his fifth double century in 182 innings of 100 Test matches. With this double hundreds he became England's third and 16th batsman overall to score five or more double hundreds in Tests.

● Root also became the first captain after 84 years to register a hat-trick of 150-plus scores in Test cricket. The England captain became only second skipper after legendary Don Bradman to achieve the feat. Australia's Bradman was the first captain to notch up three successive 150-plus scores in Test away back in 1937.

● Root had scored 228 and 186 in his previous two Tests in Sri Lanka. He is the 7th player to make 150-plus runs in three consecutive Tests as he joins an elite list including New Zealand's Tom Latham, Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (4 consecutive Tests), Pakistan's Mudassar Nazar and Zaheer Abbas, Bradman, and England's Wally Hammond.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

## Pak increase lead against Proteas

**Rawalpindi, Feb. 6:** The lower order increased Pakistan's lead to 200 runs against South Africa on the third day of the second and final Test on Saturday. Allrounder Faheem Ashraf and Mohammad Rizwan were dropped off successive deliveries before featuring in a 52-run sixth-wicket stand which guided the home team to 129-6 in the second innings at stumps.

Rizwan was unbeaten on 28 but Ashraf fell late in the second session for 29 when he sliced a catch at point to give George Linde (3/12) his third wicket. Earlier, fast bowler Hasan Ali's (5/54) five-wicket haul earned Pakistan a vital 71-run first innings lead as the visitors were bowled out for 201, half an hour after lunch.

Hasan, returning to the five-day format after a two-year absence due to injuries, picked up three wickets on Saturday, but poor running cost South Africa with two batsmen getting run-outs.

Temba Bavuma, who resumed on 15, fought a lone battle to remain unbeaten on 44 off 138 balls before Hasan wrapped up the innings by claiming the last two wickets of successive deliveries.

The diminutive Bavuma successfully overturned a

● **Allrounder Faheem Ashraf and Mohammad Rizwan were dropped off successive deliveries before featuring in a 52-run sixth-wicket stand which guided the home team to 129-6 in the second innings at stumps.**

leg before decision against him in the fourth over of the day, but could not get enough support from the lower order.

Bavuma and Wiaan Mulder (33) dug in for 90 minutes and raised a half century stand before Pakistan struck with two quick wickets.

Mulder was shaping up well against the spinners as he lofted Yasir Shah for a six over long off and also swept well against left-arm spinner Nauman Ali before he was run-out while going for a needless second run.

George Linde scored a run-a-ball 21 with three fours and a six before he was deceived by Hasan with a slower delivery and was clean bowled. — AP

**Brief scores (Day 3): Pakistan 272 & 129/6** (Rizwan 28 batting, Hasan 0 batting; Linde 3/12) **vs South Africa 201** (Bavuma 44 not out, Hasan 5/54).

## Haque's hundred puts WI in trouble

**Chattogram (Bangladesh), Feb. 6:** Captain Mominul Haque hit his 10th Test century and off-spinner Mehidy Hasan continued his good form for Bangladesh on the fourth day of the first Test against West Indies on Saturday.

Mominul's 115 reaching the 3,000 runs milestone in the process helped Bangladesh set a fearsome 395 runs target for West Indies. At the end of the day, the visitors reached 110-3, with two debutants Kyle Mayers (37) and Nkrumah Bonner (15) batting. Mehidy Hasan (3-52) took all the three wickets.

Resuming the day on 47/3, Bangladesh declared their second innings on 223/8 with Liton Das playing an important role alongside the captain. Das struck 69 and shared 133 for the fifth wicket with Mominul to keep the

visitors frustrated. West Indies got a glimmer of hope when off-spinner Rakheem Cornwall struck early, dismissing Mushfiqur Rahim for 18. Mushfiqur reviewed the decision in vain.

With the ball keeping low, Mominul and Liton had to be watchful. Mominul completed his 10th century off 173 balls, pushing the ball toward cover for a quick single.

This made him the highest centurion for Bangladesh, eclipsing opener Tamim Iqbal's nine tons. The century is also his seventh in Chattogram venue. — AP

**Brief scores (Day 4): Bangladesh 430 & 223/8 decl.** (Haque 115, Das 69, Warrican 3-57, Cornwall 3-81) **vs West Indies 259 & 110/3** (Mayers 37 batting, Bonner 15 batting, Miraz 3-52).

## THIRD ALLAN BORDER MEDAL FOR SMITH

**Melbourne, Feb. 6:** Former captain Steve Smith claimed his third Allan Border Medal while Beth Mooney bagged her maiden Belinda Clarke Award, the top two honours of the Australian Cricket Awards.

Smith was honoured for his performances in all three formats of the game, while Mooney bagged the recognition in the Australian women's game for the first time. The awards were decided by a voting process for the period 2020-21.

Smith was surprised to receive the honour, insisting that he felt his poor outing in the Test series against India had ruined his chances of winning the award.

"It's a great thrill, plenty of hard work has gone into it (but) I didn't expect it; I thought Marnus (Labuschagne) or Pat Cummins were the front runners because they both had exceptional years," Smith said.

"I didn't feel I had the biggest Test summer, which normally holds the most votes. I think my one-day cricket was pretty good last summer. I'm honoured to have won my third AB Medal and hopefully I can keep producing results for Australia," he added. — AFP

## Confronting 550 score will be a tall task for India



Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

The first couple of days of the opening Test have been rather deflating for India. While the bowlers stuck to their task quite admirably on a heart-break pitch, the fact that only eight wickets were taken and 555 runs conceded reveals which team has performed better.

Starting as underdogs, England have unexpectedly roared their way to a mammoth score, showing ambition, application and not a little flair, riding the

luck that came their way. Cricket's uncertainties are unlimited, but England have done almost everything to insured themselves against defeat.

The scenario is contrary to that envisaged before the match began. The dice looked heavily loaded against Joe Root's team. Some experts spoke of a sweep by India, others of 2-0 win, the kindest ones saying 2-1 in favour of the home team. It's early days yet in this series, but such prognosis may not stand

scrutiny if England play the way they have done so far.

The flat track was a big factor no doubt in their success. The Chepauk pitch traditionally favours batsmen on the first couple of days, but this one played truer than normal. In fact, it was as securely even as a runway, offering little assistance to bowlers — pace or spin — barring the occasional vagary in bounce, seam or turn.

But this does not take away anything from the masterly, majestic double century by Root. With significant contributions from Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Rory Burns and Jos Butler, England were able to swell the score beyond 500, making the script go awry for India.

Root passed a few milestones in his monumental knock and now stands as the third highest run-getter for his country. This was his second double century in three consecutive Tests, apart from which he also has another 150-plus score. In his last five innings, Root has scored an astonishing 644 runs, incidentally the same as New Zealand captain Kane Williamson.

These are riveting statistics, and also reveal how Root has reinvigorated his quest to be recognized as the world's best Test batsman. In the past couple of years, it had appeared he had fallen behind Steve Smith, Kohli and Williamson.

In the last two months, he's come storming back,

and the race for top honours between these four has reached an even more fascinating stage.

Could India have done anything to prevent England from running up such a huge score on a featherbed pitch?

As mentioned earlier, the bowlers strived hard, but some questions have arisen about the playing XI? Mohamed Siraj, highest wicket taker for India in Australia, was benched in favour of Ishan's greater experience.

Harsh on young Siraj, but not entirely unwarranted. Moreover, Ishant has been the pick of the attack.

Kuldeep Yadav being ignored has more pertinence. As a like for like bowler to Jadeja, Axar

Patel was first choice to play, but unfortunately got injured on the morning of the match. Instead of Kuldeep, however, Shahbaz Nadeem was drafted in at the last minute to play.

Nadeem's vast experience in domestic cricket, and his ability to bowl a flat, restrictive line were perhaps the reasons for his inclusion. It has worked only inconsistently so far in this match. Moot question, however, is if Kuldeep is not first or second choice, why is he in the squad?

In the context of what's transpired so far in this match, however, these arguments are academic. The bigger cause for India's agony so far in this match is poor fielding. On such a true surface, half

chances are a boon to the bowling side. India dropped a few of these, which allowed the Root-Stokes partnership to flourish.

Late in the day, Rohit dropped a sitter of Bess to make it worse.

I would have thought that Root would declare after Jos Butler was dismissed and have a few overs to attack the Indian openers. He chose to bat the day out, perhaps to wear down the Indian players psychologically.

A defensive decision in my opinion, but England hold all the aces from here. Even if the pitch continues to be flat, confronting a 550 score creates anxieties and hardships. The pressure is on India to emerge from this match unscathed.