



AAP SWEEPS
DELHI CIVIC
BYPOLLS

P2



DIPLOMATIC
REALPOLITIK



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT. ALWAYS IN SESSION

P6

NEERA TANDEN
WITHDRAWS HER
NOMINATION

TIME FOR OUR
BATSMEN TO
SHOW THE WAY

P10



P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 32 and 14 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 80% Min: 39%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 30.8°C (+4) Min: 13.2°C (0)
SUN RISES SUN SETS
06:42 hrs 18:23 hrs
MOON RISES MOON SETS
23:54 hrs 10:50 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Visitors at a rose garden in Sector 16, Chandigarh on Wednesday. PARDEEP SAINI

Difference of opinion not sedition, says SC: Observing that expression of views that are different from the opinion of the government cannot be termed as seditious, the Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a PIL seeking action against National Conference president Farooq Abdullah over his comments on abrogation of Article 370 and imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on the petitioners.

Tax evasion: I-T dept raids premises linked to Taapsee, Anurag



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday raided premises linked to Bollywood actor Taapsee Pannu and filmmaker Anurag Kashyap as well as his partners who launched the now dissolved production house Phantom Films, officials said.

"This is too much," he said to the question. "Probe agencies undertake investigations based on credible information and the matter later goes to courts as well," he added.

In Maharashtra, the debate intensified with state minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik describing the searches as an attempt to suppress the voices of those who speak against the Narendra Modi government.

"Central agencies like ED, CBI, and Income Tax are being used to target those who take an anti-government stand and speak against the policies of the regime," the minister told reporters in Mumbai.

"The premises of Anurag Kashyap and Pannu have been raided. Both were raising their voices against the Modi government," he said.

Pannu's last tweet was on March 1, when she spoke on the Supreme Court asking a man accused of repeated rape whether he was willing to marry the woman. When the court was told he is already married, he was asked to seek regular bail from the concerned court. The 33-year-old actor, known for her films *Pink*, *Thappad* and *Badla*, put out a strong worded post on the matter.

Kashyap, who had visited JNU and Shaheen Bagh during the anti-CAA protests last year and is known to be equally outspoken on a range of issues, has been mostly quiet on Twitter in recent times.

'PM's photo on vaccine certificates violates MCC'

KOLKATA, 3 MARCH

A delegation of TMC leaders on Wednesday met Election Commission officials here and alleged that the use of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photo on advertisements of various Central schemes and the Covid vaccination certificates, distributed by the Union health ministry, violated the model code of conduct.

The ruling party in West Bengal termed it as "a blatant misuse of official machinery" and sought the intervention of the poll panel to remove hoardings advertising Central government schemes with images of Modi at petrol pumps, state minister Firhad Hakim said after meeting the EC officials.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi happens to be the star campaigner of the BJP in this assembly elections. As a politician, he is seeking support for his party during rallies. In this situation, using his photo in vaccination certificates is akin to influencing voters and violates the model code of conduct (MCC)," he said.

The minister called on the EC officials a day after TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien alleged that the PM's photos have been used even after the announcement of poll dates.

SNS & PTI

"The premises of Anurag Kashyap and Pannu have been raided. Both were raising their voices against the Modi government," he said.

Pannu's last tweet was on March 1, when she spoke on the Supreme Court asking a man accused of repeated rape whether he was willing to marry the woman. When the court was told he is already married, he was asked to seek regular bail from the concerned court. The 33-year-old actor, known for her films *Pink*, *Thappad* and *Badla*, put out a strong worded post on the matter.

Mr Oli was speaking during the inauguration of the Purbanchal Cancer Hospital at the neighbouring town of Biratnagar in Jhapa district in East Nepal yesterday.

The statements come amidst continued rumblings in Mr Oli's Nepal Communist Party (NCP) government and the recent political developments after Nepali President Bidhya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House of Representatives as per his advice in December last year and the Supreme Court reinstated it on 23 February.

Mr Dahal, aka Prachanda, who leads a splinter faction of the NCP had earlier said that it was time PM Oli was replaced by a new coalition of his NCP faction, Nepali Congress and Janata Samajwadi, which would be "comfortable for India."

"The road we have paved for ourselves, we should not let others damage it. We will keep cordial relations with our neighbours by keeping our national interests, our geography, our land, our sovereignty, our self-respect, intact. We do not need a government that others are comfortable with, but one that the Nepali people are comfortable with, one that is easy for the Nepali people, that can work for the

Nepali people," Mr Oli said. "We will maintain friendly relations with all countries, will take help from all, and cooperate with all, but our destination will be a prosperous Nepal, peaceful Nepal. Making others happy is not our job," he added.

Mr Oli also welcomed people from neighbouring countries, especially India, to reap benefits from his country's healthcare services, which, experts say, have now developed to such an extent that they can be compared to other top medical facilities in the entire South Asian region.

"People from Nepal and other countries can come here for medical treatment," Mr Oli said, also mentioning how the services in Nepal were "way cheaper" than other places in South Asia.

"I can vouch for the quality and low cost of medical services that we provide in Nepal now," he added.

The 100-bed Purbanchal Cancer Hospital, a separate wing of the existing B&C Teaching Hospital, and the brainchild of Nepali entrepreneur Durga Prasain, is already catering to around 20 cancer patients from areas in India near the Nepal border like Siliguri, Naxalbari and Matigara, and even from Sikkim.

Nepal PM Oli takes jibe at Prachanda's India remarks

ASHISH PRADHAN
BIRATNAGAR, 3 MARCH

As India's relations with Nepal hit another of their periodic lows, and in the wake of his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal's statement that the next coalition government would be "comfortable for India," embattled Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli has said that he was in favour of a government that the Nepali people were "comfortable" with.

Mr Oli was speaking during the inauguration of the Purbanchal Cancer Hospital at the neighbouring town of Biratnagar in Jhapa district in East Nepal yesterday.



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"People from Nepal and other countries can come



'Get vaccinated
24x7 at your
convenience'

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday said that citizens will now be able to get the Covid-19 vaccine round the clock as per their convenience.

"The government has ended the time constraint to increase the speed of vaccination," he wrote on Twitter.

The announcement comes a day after the Centre directed states and union territories to utilise private hospitals empaneled under government insurance schemes in full capacity to achieve optimum number of vaccinations.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan had also said on Tuesday that the timeline of vaccinating beneficiaries from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. has been done away with and it is up to hospitals to decide whether they want to continue administering the vaccines even beyond that period.

Active Covid caseload back above 1.7 lakh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

With 14,989 new infections in the last 24 hours, India's total tally of Covid cases mounted to 1,11,39,516 even as the number of active cases rose above 1.7 lakh after a month, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The number of deaths increased to 1,57,346 with 98 fatalities in a day, the data updated at 8 a.m. showed.

The active caseload has increased to 1,70,126 which comprises 1.53 per cent of the total infections.

Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka continue to report a surge in fresh cases, accounting for 85.95 per cent of the cases reported in the previous 24 hours.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 7,863. It is followed by Kerala with 2,938, while Punjab reported 729 new cases.

Delhi logs 240 cases, 3 deaths: Delhi today recorded

ed 240 fresh Covid cases and 3 coronavirus-linked fatalities, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin.

The city's active cases tally rose to 1,584 while its recovery rate dipped to 98.04 per cent, the bulletin said.

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M. WEDNESDAY
3 MARCH 2021

TOTAL CASES
1,11,39,516

ACTIVE CASES
1,70,126

NEW CASES
14,989

NEW RECOVERIES
13,123

DEATHS
1,57,346

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M. WEDNESDAY
3 MARCH 2021

HEALTHIER WORLD



A worker sanitises the premises of the National Zoological Park, amid the coronavirus pandemic, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Govt okays 12 new SSB battalions to fortify Nepal, Bhutan borders, tri-junction area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The government has sanctioned a dozen fresh SSB battalions, comprising over 13,000 personnel for the Nepal and Bhutan borders guarding force, to "fortify" defences along these fronts including the tri-junction area in Sikkim that adjoins Bhutan and Tibet, officials said.

Previously, in 2016, Congress minister HY Meti was forced to resign from the K Sidaramaiah cabinet after a sex tape went public. In the past three BJP ministers also had to resign after allegedly watching porn in the Assembly.

Though the Union Home Ministry has denied creation of a new field frontier for the

border force, it has allowed the SSB to create one out of three new sector, responsible for the operations of about 5-6 battalions, and it is expected to come up in the Delhi-NCR region.

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is the designated force to guard the open Indian frontiers with Nepal (1,751 km) and Bhutan (699 km).

SSB Director General Kumar Rajesh Chandra said the 12 new battalions will be raised in phases, three units

each over the next four years. "It is very supportive of the government to have given the sanction to raise new battalions and establishments for the SSB. The new manpower will ensure that border security is strengthened," the DG said. The SSB chief added that the government has also sanctioned a total of 548 posts to the force for deployment at four ICPs (integrated check posts) along the Nepal border out of which two are already operational.

"We will maintain friendly relations with all countries, will take help from all, and cooperate with all, but our destination will be a prosperous Nepal, peaceful Nepal. Making others happy is not our job," he added.

Mr Oli also welcomed people from neighbouring countries, especially India, to reap benefits from his country's healthcare services, which, experts say, have now developed to such an extent that they can be compared to other top medical facilities in the entire South Asian region.

"People from Nepal and other countries can come



Elections should be held in a festive mood in a democracy

GAUTAM DEB, TOURISM MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

ON THE MOVE TO DEPLOY CENTRAL FORCES FOR THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Civicbypolls: AAP wins 4 wards, Cong 1, BJPO

CM Kejriwal says AAP's sweep in the bypolls indicates that people of Delhi are 'desperate' to oust the 'corrupt, incompetent' BJP from MCDs and bring AAP to power in 2022 MCDs elections

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) swept the Delhi municipal corporation bypolls whose outcome was declared today, winning four out of five wards with the Opposition Congress bagging the remaining one ward.

The BJP which has been ruling the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCDs) for many years, failed to open its account in the bypolls - dubbed as "semi-finals" ahead of the MCDs elections due in 2022 - and even lost its Shalimar Bagh seat to the AAP.

More than 50 percent voters had cast their votes in these bypolls to MCDs' five wards on

28 February.

The AAP retained Trilokpuri, Kalyanpuri and Rohini-C wards that it had won in 2017 municipal polls and wrested Shalimar Bagh North from the BJP. It however lost Chauhan Bangar ward to the Congress, where the latter's Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad defeated its candidate Mohammad Ishraq Khan by a huge margin of 10,642 votes.



From left - Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, CM Arvind Kejriwal, senior leader Gopal Rai and others after AAP candidates won 4 wards in MCDs bypolls. (Right) AAP candidate Sunita Mishra celebrates after winning Shalimar Bagh ward on Wednesday.



SUBRATA DUTTA

According to the Delhi Election Commission, the AAP polled the highest 46.10 per cent votes in the bypolls, followed by 27.29 per cent by the BJP and 21.84 per cent by the Congress.

The AAP's Dhirender Kumar won the Kalyanpuri ward by 7,043 votes. The party candidate Vijay Kumar from Trilokpuri defeated BJP's Om Prakash by a margin of 4,986 votes.

The AAP's Sunita Mishra defeated Surbhi Jaju of the BJP in Shalimar Bagh ward by 2,705 votes while its candidate Ram Chander defeated BJP candidate Rakesh Goyal by 2,985 votes in Rohini C ward.

Buoyed by the AAP's triumph in Delhi civic bypolls, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said it showed the faith of the people in his government's work ensuring improvement in schools, hospitals, power and water supply in the city.

The AAP supremo asserted that people of Delhi were "desperate" to bring the party to power in the MCDs as well.

Taking a dig at the BJP, he said: "The zero obtained by BJP showed people rejected corruption and theft at MCD ruled by it and the politics of

violence they practiced by vandalism at deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's residence and DJB office."

"The results are an indication of what kind of outcome are expected next year in civic body polls. We are waiting for it and would make the city neat and clean," Kejriwal said in an address to party activists at the AAP headquarters on DDU Marg here, where he celebrated the victory with them.

The CM said the people of Delhi have rejected and defeated the BJP due to its "incompetence" in the MCDs and wanted a change. "In 2015 Assembly elections, we got 67 out of 70 seats, and in 2020, we got 62 out of 70 seats. After six years, the people of Haryana have again shown their faith in us and they want us to continue the way we are working," he said.

"The full form of the MCD is the Most Corrupt Department, and people do not want this corruption. They want the MCD to function as effectively as the Delhi government," Kejriwal said.

"If someone asks about the achievements of AAP, people from across the country will tell you how we have improved schools, hospitals, electricity, water, and roads.

The people of Delhi have again shown their faith in us and they want us to continue the way we are working," Kejriwal said.

Referring to the recent BJP campaign of putting up hoardings and banners across the city to demand Rs 13,000 crore for municipal corporations, Kejriwal said people did not like it.

"The Delhi government has given all the funds as mentioned in the Constitution. The public has realised that the BJP needs more money to do more corruption," he said.

The CM charged that his government did not receive any

"help" from the Centre, yet it paid salaries to its employees while the BJP-ruled MCDs demanded more funds even without paying salaries to their employees.

"If someone asks what the BJP has done in the MCD in the last 15 years, they cannot count even a single task that has been fulfilled. They have only done corruption, made Delhi dirtier with garbage," he alleged.

Kejriwal congratulated the four winners of the bypolls and advised them to work honestly, maintain the trust of the people and ensure cleanliness in their wards. "If you do that, we

will win the MCD elections again in 2022. It pains to see the dirt and garbage on roads and lanes in Delhi. This is the only thing left for us to do since we have worked on everything else," he said.

In his Twitter post, the CM stated: "The people of Delhi once again voted in the name of work. Congratulations to all. The public has been per-

turbed by the 15-year BJP's misrule in the MCD. People are now desperate to form the Aam Aadmi Party government in the MCD as well."

In his reaction to the civic bypolls results, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said, "We honour the mandate given by people. Losing Shalimar Bagh North is a matter of introspection.

TENDER

NORTHERN RAILWAY (Construction Organization) TENDER NOTICE	
The Deputy Chief Engineer /Const./ Northern Railway Shivaji Bridge, New Delhi, for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender under One-Packet system for the following work:	
1. Name of work and location	[Design and drawing of test piles, foundation (open/piles), substructure & super structure (PSC/Steel) in connection with construction of 07 nos. Road over Bridges on Jind-Parwan, Jind-Sonepat, Rohtak-Panipat and Delhi-Ambala section of Northern Railway".
2. Completion period of the work	12 (Twelve) Months
3. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 33.21 Lakhs
4. Earnest Money to be deposited	NIL (However Bid Security Declaration is Mandatory as per Annexure-T)
5. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender	Tenders may be uploaded upto 11.30 hrs on 26.03.2021 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in . The bidders can participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs on 26.03.2021
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	Tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in from 04.03.2021 to 26.03.2021. Above tenders document will be available for submission of offer on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 12.03.2021 to 26.03.2021 All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender notice. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office

No 484-Acs-Design & Drawing-ROBs/RUBs-CSB Dated : 03.03.2021. 476/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT (Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

In the Court of Rajneesh Kumar Gupta
District Judge
(Commercial) Court-02
(Central), Room No.120
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
CS Commn. No. 200/2019
Punjab National Bank
Versus

Raj Kumar
Raj Kumar, s/o Sh. Matadin, C-223, Phase-2, Mayapuri, Delhi-110064.

Also at : Raj Kumar, s/o Sh. Matadin, MU-67, Block-MU, Pitampura, Delhi-110034.

Also at : Raj Kumar, s/o Sh. Matadin, Sector-12, Dwarika Puri, Pocket-7, Rohini Apartment, Sector-12, Dwarika Puri, New Delhi-110075.

Also at : Raj Kumar, s/o Sh. Matadin, 1683, Panam Marg, Narela, Delhi-110040.

— Defendant

The Defendant above-named.

Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you do not attend the case on the 22-03-2021, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 03-02-2021.

District Judge
(Commercial) Court-02
(Central), Room No. 120
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
CS Commn. No. 199/2019
Punjab National Bank
Versus

Rajneesh Kumar

Rajneesh Kumar, s/o Sh. Ramesh Chandra, B-928, Main Road, Shastri Nagar, Delhi-110052.

Also at : Rajneesh Kumar, s/o Sh. Ramesh Chandra, House No. 5-H, Sisian House, Shahpur Jat, Delhi-110049.

Also at : Rajneesh Kumar, s/o Sh. Ramesh Chandra, 102, First Floor, Sector-22, Rohini, Delhi-110085.

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Also at : Rajneesh Kumar, s/o Sh. Ramesh Chandra, House No. 5-H, Sisian House, Shahpur Jat, Delhi-110049.

Whereas the abovenamed applicant(s) has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 58,37,194/- (Rupees Fifty Eight Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand

One Hundred and Ninety Four only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 20-04-2021 at 10-30 a.m.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By Order of the Tribunal For Registrar

Debt Recovery Tribunal-I
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001
OA No. 892/2019
Union Bank of India
— Applicant

Sh. Chandrik Dixit & Ors.
— Defendants

To,
1. Sh. Chandrik Dixit, s/o Sh. Rei Kamal Dixit, r/o 1-188/F DDA Flats, Kalkaji, Delhi-110019.

Also at : V.P.O. Averi The Bajinath, Kangra-176081, Himachal Pradesh.

Also at : House No. 179-180, Upper Ground Floor, Vishwas Park, T-Excellence, Delhi-110059.

Whereas the abovenamed applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 58,37,194/- (Rupees Fifty Eight Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand

One Hundred and Ninety Four only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 20-04-2021 at 10-30 a.m. (for further details kindly visit DRIT website www.tribunal.gov.in Phone Number : 011-23748473).

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the abovementioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:

(i) All the Advocate/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/Software.

(ii) Meeting ID and Password for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken care for under Section 17 of RAFAESI Act, 2003 against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before DRIT Portal i.e. Drt.gov.in

Plot No. 11/2, Sect.-Zeta-1, New Delhi-110001.

Also at : 40/7, IIInd Floor, Ashok Nagar, New Delhi-110018.

Also at : 41A/6, Ashok Vihar, New Delhi.

(Defendants No. 02)

2. Sh. Anil Kumar, r/o D-90, T.F. Ajay Enclave, Tilak Nagar, Delhi.

Also at : 520, 1st Floor, Pkt-1, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi.

Whereas the abovenamed applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 58,37,194/- (Rupees Fifty Eight Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand

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Previously the local MP had protested publicly, but perhaps after being reprimanded by his higher-ups he will be mum this time.



REFERRING TO BABUL SUPRIYO VOICING RESERVATIONS ABOUT PLANS OF INDUCTING JITENDRA TIWARI INTO BJP

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 04 MARCH 2021

03

Delhi's seismic stability plan prepared, HC told

Delhi govt tells court its action plan includes structural safety audit of buildings; PIL says seismic stability of city buildings is 'poor' and in case of a major quake there could be huge casualties

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The Delhi government Wednesday informed the Delhi High Court that an action plan has been prepared to ensure seismic stability of buildings in the national capital in which structural safety audit of government and private buildings will be conducted in a phased manner.

The AAP government said top priority will be accorded to the buildings, including hospitals, institutional buildings, schools and colleges, which have been found unsafe for habitation during the annual pre-monsoon survey and action will be taken on it.

It said the structural safety audit of private buildings falling in high risk matrix with maximum public use will be accorded as top priority.

"Accordingly, all private hospitals, shopping complexes, malls, school/colleges and cinema halls, etc, where public congregation is maximum, shall be taken up in the first instance," it said.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh granted time to peti-



tioner lawyer Arpit Bhargava to respond to the government's affidavit and listed the matter for further hearing on April 13.

The government's affidavit was filed in a pending PIL by Bhargava claiming that the seismic stability of buildings in Delhi was poor and in case of a major earthquake there could be a large number of casualties.

Being private buildings, the owners shall be asked to get the structural safety audit done themselves and submit the report to the concerned local body, the affidavit filed through additional standing counsel Santosh Kumar Tripathi said. It added that in case, the building is found deficient in the structural evaluation

tural health, compulsory structural audit of private buildings more than 30 years old by the qualified empanelled structural engineers and submission of structural fitness certificate from them by the owners/occupiers; on the lines of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai be made mandatory, it said.

The municipal authorities also informed that a number of structural engineers have been empanelled on behalf of corporations for carrying out structural audit of the buildings and giving suggestions for retrofitting.

The petition was filed in 2015 in which the high court, from time to time, has directed the Delhi government and civic authorities to develop an action plan.

In 2020, Bhargava filed a contempt petition claiming that the court's earlier orders on making the national capital ready to face any major earthquake have not been complied with yet.

In December 2020, the high court had sought responses of the AAP government, the DDA and the three municipal corporations on the plea seeking contempt

action against them for allegedly not complying with judicial orders on ensuring seismic stability of buildings in Delhi.

In June 2020, after 11 minor tremors struck Delhi in a matter of days from April 12 last year onwards, Bhargava moved an application seeking setting up of a monitoring committee to ensure timely implementation of the action plan for strengthening buildings in Delhi. The court had, thereafter, issued several directions to the authorities to survey whether buildings in Delhi were compliant with the norms of seismic stability.

Identify non-compliant ones, take necessary action and also develop an action plan. In his plea seeking contempt action against the authorities, Bhargava has said that "despite serious intervention by the high court over a period of five years", the authorities "have shown little concern for larger public interest and did not move an inch" to formulate and implement an action plan. He has contended that there has been a "deliberate and willful non-compliance/ violation of various orders" passed by the court.

Cong members again walk out from HP House against party MLAs' suspension

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

The Opposition Congress MLAs staged a walkout from the House again on Wednesday over the issue of suspension of five party MLAs, including Leader of Opposition, Mukesh Agnihotri, on 26 February, the first day of the budget session of Himachal Pradesh Assembly.

As soon as the House assembled for the day, former Deputy Speaker and senior Congress member, Jagat Singh Negi got up to raise the issue. He said after adjournment of the House at 11.16 AM on the first day of session on 26 February after the Governor's brief address, the House was recalled in the afternoon for which the Congress members were not timely intimated. "We got the message

at 12.46 PM that the House has been recalled at 12.50 PM. How can we reach back at such a short notice?" Negi said.

Hesaid the decision on suspension was taken in one-sided manner.

Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar asked the Congress member to sit down and said he will give ruling on the issue after the Question Hour. The Congress members, however, insisted to address the issue immediately and started raising slogans against the government. They later walked out of the House.

After the Question Hour, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur condemned the behaviour of Opposition members on the first day of the budget session and the following days. He said what Congress did on the first day (involving Governor) warranted strict action.

The five Congress MLAs were suspended on the first day of budget session for the entire session till 20 March for blocking the passage of Governor, manhandling his staff outside the Speaker's gate and banging his official vehicle when he was going back to Raj Bhawan after his address in Assembly. They are also facing a FIR for alleged assault on the Governor.

While the suspended Congress MLAs sat on dharna outside the Assembly gate even on Wednesday, the other Congress MLAs have been walking out from the House everyday protesting against the suspension of five members, raising different aspects. The Congress members have not participated in any proceedings of the House after the first day, except for obituary references.



'HP to follow U'khand for commercial production of medicinal plants'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

The Himachal Pradesh Government will emulate the Uttarakhand model to promote commercial production of medicinal plants and a team is studying the Ayush Policy of the state for diversification of agriculture.

HP Health Minister Rajiv Saizal informed the state assembly about this while replying to a query of Jwalamukhi MLA Ramesh Dhwala during the Question Hour today.

Saizal said a team of officials was already studying the Ayush Policy of Uttarakhand to promote production of medicinal herbs which were already in high demand in the country.

"The medicinal herbs as 'Gutki', 'Shatavari' and 'Ashwagandha' are being promoted in the state owing to high demand while encouraging farmers for diversification of crops besides production of traditional crops," he added.

He further stated that

farmers should focus on production of medicinal herbs besides producing fruits and vegetables as there was high demand for these in the pharma sector. The varied climate conditions of the state as tropical, sub-temperate, temperate and alpine in Himachal are suitable for production of large numbers of rare flora and fauna and medicinal herbs.

Apart from supplying these crops to the pharma sector, farmers could sell these herbs in open markets and fetch good prices," he said.

He added that Union Ayush ministry had also opened Joginder Nagar Regional Facilitation centre in Mandi district to promote commercial production of such herbs.

The farmers in the state were also collecting various species of wild medicinal plants from forests, besides growing it in their farms, he said, adding self help groups of farmers were also being encouraged by the nodal Ayush Officer for the same.

The issue had arisen as two pharma companies which were once producing 900 to 1000 types of Ayurvedic medicines, had stopped the manufacturing activities, he added.

He added huge quantities of 'Giloya', 'Tulsi' and other herbs were being produced in the state but lack of proper marketing was depriving the farmers of opportunities to earn livelihood.

Jai Ram calls for nurturing women leadership in BJP from grassroots

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday urged state party women wing office bearers to identify potential competent leadership from among newly-elected women panchayat representatives so that the party could benefit from it.

Addressing the meeting of working committee of State Bharatiya Mahila Morcha held at Bhrarwain in Una district, he said the role of the organization was important in the upliftment of the party and the Morcha had helped to empower the BJP in the state by making its role meaningful.

"Mahila Morcha has carved out a distinct identity not only in the state but also in the country due to its dedication, service spirit and devotion to duty.

In addition to the activities of the general party, the Morcha has created a special identity among the people during the Covid-19 and they not only distributed masks free of cost to the people but also provided ration and



HP CM Jai Ram Thakur during a working committee meeting of the state BJP Mahila Morcha in Una.

financial support in addition to serving food to the needy," he added.

Thakur said women play an important role not only in the upliftment of their family but also society and the power of women in the BJP was also reflected in the assembly elections held in 2017 and the same scenario would be repeated. "The literacy rate of women in the state is very high which results in our participation in social activities.

The enthusiasm and dedication of women can be gauged from the fact that the participation of women in the Panchayati Raj elections

this time was 62 per cent," he said while urging the Morcha to identify potential leaders for future. He lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vigorous and dynamic leadership and said it is a result of his charismatic leadership that today India was making its own identity in the world.

Apart from this, the country had been successful in resolving many decades-old controversial issues like Ram Janma Boomi, Triple Talaq, Articles 370 and 35A etc.

Today, no country could raise its eyes towards India because the country had now learnt to respond to the

Kejriwal to get Covid vaccine today

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal will receive his first dose of coronavirus vaccine Thursday morning at the city's LNJP hospital, a Delhi government statement said.

The Chief Minister will receive the shot at around 9.30 am, the government statement said.

Kejriwal, 52 years, has been receiving treatment for diabetes, officials said.

In the ongoing vaccination drive, people aged 60 years and above and those in age group 45-59 years having comorbidities are being administered the vaccines at 192 hospitals across Delhi.

Meanwhile, Delhi today recorded 240 fresh Covid cases and 3 coronavirus-linked fatalities, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The national capital's active cases tally rose to 1,584 while its recovery rate dipped to 98.04 per cent, the health bulletin said.

National roadmap for seabuckthorn devp gets Centre's nod

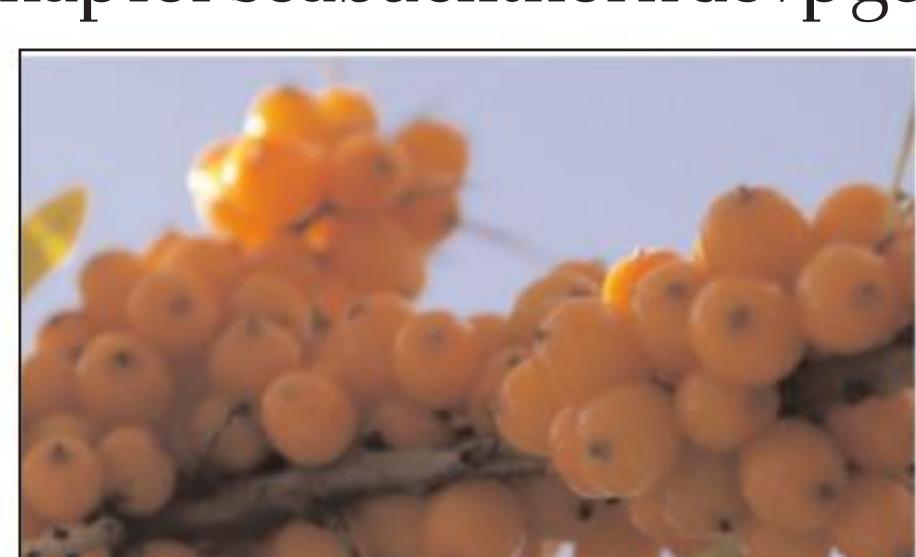
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has approved a national roadmap on seabuckthorn development in high altitude areas for Rs 1260 crore for cultivation on marginal lands in 30,000 hectares in four Himalayan states, including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim and one Union Territory of Ladakh, said secretary of the Seabuckthorn Association of India, Dr Virendra Singh.

The Association, based at CSKHP Agriculture University, Palampur, had submitted the proposal to the Union ministry in February 2020.

Dr Singh said on the recommendation of the Ministry of Finance, Anand Kumar Prabhakar, Deputy Inspector General of Forest, MoEFCC had asked the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest in the states/UTs concerned on 17 September 2020 to prepare the project proposal on seabuckthorn involving local stakeholders and private sector to submit the project proposal timely under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Scheme.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given direction to harness the poten-



tial of seabuckthorn for ecological and economic transformation of border areas of the Himalayan states during his speech on 18 May, 2018 at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Jammu.

The secretariat of the Association said the road map calls upon all developmental agencies like the Department of Forest to carry out commercial cultivation at least in 2500 hectares marginal lands involving stakeholders particularly farmers, Research and Development institutions and industries in each of four Himalayan states and one UT in ten years time," he said.

He said the road map also calls upon the Forest department to declare Seabuckthorn a priority species for

Karnal CFC a 'big push' to Ayurveda industry: Khattar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 3 MARCH

Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, on Wednesday said that Haryana will contribute significantly in promoting Ayurveda in the country.

Seabuckthorn is locally known as 'Chharma' in Himachal Pradesh, "Isatalu" in Ladakh and "Badripah" in Uttarakhand and grows at 2500-4500 metres. It is a multipurpose nitrogen fixing bush, has high potential in controlling soil erosion and siltation of rivers and conservation of soil, biodiversity and wildlife, besides being a useful fuel wood and fodder plant of the region.

"Submission of the project proposal on Seabuckthorn is already late by Forest department of various states. Hope good sense will prevail especially keeping in mind the national interests of developing border areas of the country and fulfil the vision of Prime Minister and the department will submit the Detail Project Proposal (DPRs) to MoEF&CC without further delays," said Ex-Director, DRDO and President of Seabuckthorn Association of India, Dr RC Sawhney.

He said the road map also calls upon the Forest department to declare Seabuckthorn a priority species for

processing and marketing developed by a team of over 30 scientists led by Dr Virendra Singh from HP Agriculture University Palampur and using inputs provided by a team of Dr T Stobdan at Defence Research and Development Organisation and Ashok Jain, a Delhi based consultant and other experts.

He said the Central government has accorded approval to an ambitious project to set up a 'common facility centre' (CFC) in Karnal which will give a major infrastructural push to traditional Ayurveda industry in the state.

The CFC will be the first cluster project of its kind approved by the Central government under the MSME flagship scheme. He said the establishment of this CFC will help in the production of quality Ayurveda products like immunity booster tablets, syrups, ointments, creams, oils, personal hygiene products.

Micro and small units related to export of these quality products will be strengthened, he added. The CFC will also generate employment for more than 500 persons.

The secretariat of micro, small and medium enterprises, BB Swain hoped the establishment of CFC in Haryana is an important step towards promoting Ayurveda across the country. Khattar said that the CFC project will be constructed at a cost of Rs 15 Crore. The pro-

Amarinder Singh a 'U-turn' CM: BJP

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

BJP general secretary Dushyant Gautam has dubbed Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh a "U-turn CM", alleging that after forgetting his poll promises he is now even going back on his own words.

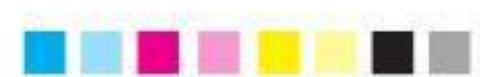
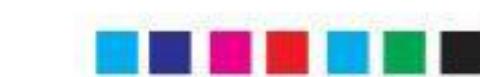
Gautam, who is in-charge of BJP affairs in Punjab, said Singh had promised to end the VIP culture in the state but has now taken a U-turn on that too. "After taking a complete U-turn on the electoral promises made by Amarinder Singh before coming to power in Punjab, now the chief minister has 'barefacedly' taken a U-turn on the decisions taken as the CM of the state," he said in a statement. Gautam recalled how the chief minister through a Punjab government order of April 14, 2017, had said, "Taking another major step towards the elimination of VIP culture from the state, Punjab CM Amarinder Singh has prohibited the inclusion of names of any government functionaries, including ministers and MLAs, on foundation stones and inaugural plaques.

The CM himself is not excluded from these orders, which are aimed at building a stronger connect between the government and the people by removing the VIP culture barriers."

Gautam expressed dismay that cabinet ministers, MPs, MLAs and even IAS and IPS officers had blatantly flouted the decision of the chief minister numerous times.

"Today, we will quote three instances from Punjab government's official press releases, which clearly show that the CM himself is violating his own orders," he said. As per a state government release, on October 25, 2020, on the occasion of Dussehra, Amarinder Singh laid the foundation stone for many important development projects, including the first sports university of Punjab, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Punjab Sports University and new bus stand in Patiala. Gautam said the photographs of this event clearly show that the name of the chief minister is inscribed on the foundation stone. Similarly on May 30, 2019, claiming to further propel industrial growth and to catalyse employment generation in the state, Singh laid the foundation stone of a vegetable processing plant, wherein again the foundation stone clearly mentions the name of chief minister, the BJP leader said.

afforestation in cold deserts and give full rights to tribal cultivation for cultivation, management and collection of fruits, leaves and branches for self uses as well as commercial utilization to supply raw material to industries. The road map on seabuckthorn was prepared by over 100 seabuckthorn experts and stakeholders on the direction of Acharya Devrat, then Governor of Himachal Pradesh and present Governor of Gujarat, during the national conference on seabuckthorn held on October 23-24, 2018 at Shimla. The Seabuckthorn Association of India used the model entitled 'A value chain on Seabuckthorn' with appropriate technologies from propagation, to cultivation, harvesting, value addition,





Whether to accommodate or not Sasikala and Dhinakaran would be decided by Tamil Nadu's ruling party

TAMIL NADU INCHARGE AND NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY C T RAVI

ON ACCOMMODATING V K SASIKALA IN THE AIADMK-LED ALLIANCE FOR TAMIL NADU ASSEMBLY POLLS



'Closure of 1.5 million schools in lockdown hit 247 million children'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Closure of 1.5 million schools due to coronavirus pandemic and the resultant lockdowns in 2020 impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary

schools in India, a UNICEF report has found. Globally, schools for more than 168 million children have been completely closed for almost a full year, it said.

The report stated that online education is not an option for all as only one in four children has access to dig-

ital devices and internet connectivity. Pre-Covid, only a quarter of households (24 per cent) in India had access to the internet and there is a large rural-urban and gender divide. "In India, closure of 1.5 million schools due to the pandemic and lockdowns in 2020 has impacted 247 million chil-

dren enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. In addition, there are over six million girls and boys who were already out of school even before the Covid-19 crisis began," a statement from the UN agency said Wednesday.

It also said that till date in India only eight states/UTs

have opened all classes from class 1 to class 12; 11 states have reopened classes 6-12 and 15 states have only opened classes 9-12. Three states have reopened anganwadi centers, with younger children losing out greatly on crucial foundational learning. "It has been nearly a year since the

pandemic caused schools to close and disrupt the normal routine of children throughout India. We know that the longer children stay out of school, the more vulnerable they become, with less chances of returning to school."

"Any decision to reopen schools is made with the best

interests of children in mind and as schools re-open in a staggered manner with children returning to their classrooms, we must strive to support them in catching up on the learning they have missed," said Dr Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF India Representative.

This is especially true for those who were not able to access digital or remote learning opportunities, Haque said, adding that the mental health and well-being of children is a crucial concern, while psycho-social support from teachers, parents and caregivers is a priority.

TENDER

Annexure- B

The Executive Engineer JSV Division Thural Invites tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible Contractors for the following work (s) through offline process:-

Work No.1 Providing LWSS to SC habitation Sanghole, Haled, Dalu, Netru, Tikku, Dahanri and Harsi in Tehsil Jaisinghpur Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- L/J & testing of GI Pipe in D/System of various dia at site) Estimated Cost Rs:- 182692/- ,Earnest Money Rs:- 3654/-Time limits, 03 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250.

Work No.2 Providing LIS Gharthoon & LIS Thural under PMKSY in Tehsil Palampur Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- Providing & Supplying of CI Sluice valve, PVC control valve of various dia) Estimated Cost Rs:- 44739/-,Earnest Money Rs:- 8948/-Time limits, 03 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250.

Work No.3 Imp. of D/System of LIS Thural in Tehsil Palampur Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- C/O RCC Kuhal from RD 1307 to 1424 meters & 1958 to 1991 metres) Estimated Cost Rs:- 49645/- ,Earnest Money Rs:- 9929/-Time limits, 01 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250.

Work No.4 Providing LWSS to PC habitation (Under JJM) in GP Bhaura Thandol and Malhoo in Tehsil Palampur Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- L/J & Testing of GI pipe at Node no 6-54) Estimated Cost Rs:- 23045/- ,Earnest Money Rs:- 4609/-Time limits, 06 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250.

Work No.5 Imp. of D/System of LWSS Phiri Galoti Kona Charhont Umri Dagera Lahru Saddha Dukhan Dihaniya (Covered under LWSS Lahu Bachwai) Dali Bhallunder Kuhan Dot & Harsi Sanghole Jaisinghpur Harot Karanghat Uttrapur & Sakoh Liunda in Tehsil Palampur & Khundan Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- Providing & Supplying of chain pully & Air valve) Estimated Cost Rs:- 219550/- ,Earnest Money Rs:- 4391/-Time limits, 03 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250.

Work No.6 C/O LIS Jagroop Nagar in Tehsil Jaisinghpur Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- Providing, Laying Rising main 250 mm dia 4.80 mm thick balance work (RD 1690 to RD 2035) Estimated Cost Rs:- 479825/- ,Earnest Money Rs:- 9597/-Time limits, 03 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250

Work No.7 A/R & M/O to various LWSS/WSS under IPH Sub Division Dheera in Tehsil Palampur Distt. Kangra HP (SH:- Supply of various material under Sub Division Dheera) Estimated Cost Rs:- 374300/- ,Earnest Money Rs:- 7486/-Time limits, 03 Months. Cost of tender form Rs. 250

1. Last date of filling Offline tendering :- 09.03.2021 upto 4.30 P.M.
The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be downloaded from the website www.hiph.org or from office of above Executive Engineer upto date specified above.

Executive Engineer,
JSV Division,
Thural

6225/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

HIMACHAL PRADESH IRRIGATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

FOR E-TENDERING

The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Anni District Kulu (H.P.) invites tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following work through e-tendering process:-

Sr. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time Limit	Cost of tender
1	Providing House hold connection for the various left out habitations in G.P. Poshna, Tunan, Kushwa & Sarga in Nirmand Dist. Kulu (SH:- C/O Intake 6 Nos. C/O Sector Storage Tank 10000 ltrs cap., Laying, jointing and testing of GI pipe 20 mm dia=700 Rmt, 25mm dia=5400 Rmt, under Jal Jeevan Mission.)	1494107.00	29882.00	6 Months	400/-
2	PWSS TO L/O Habitation in G.P. Nirmand, Bawha and Gadej in Nirmand Block - Dist. Kulu (H.P) (SH:- C/O Intake 1 Chamber, C/O Sector Storage Tank 10000 Ltr Cap. at Node 10, C/O Sector Storage Tank 18000 Ltr capacity at Node 11&Sector Storage Tank 15000 Ltr capacity at Node 2, Laying, jointing and testing of GI pipe 15mm dia at Point 5-5a & 5-5b=1900 Rmt, 20mm dia at Phase-II at Point 4-4' = 750 Rmt, 25mm dia at Point 3-3a & 3-4in ph-II =2150 (under Jal Jeevan Mission.)	1105815.00	22116.00	6 Months	400/-
3	Retrofitting of WSS Beel Jharata in Nirmand Block - Dist. Kulu (H.P) (SH:- C/O Sector Storage Tank 22000 Ltr Cap. at point 2, C/O Sector Storage Tank 12000 Ltr. capacity at point 5 , Sector Storage Tank 10000 Ltr. capacity at point 5-5a & 5-5b=1900 Rmt, 20mm dia at Point 3-3a & 3-4in ph-II =2150 (under Jal Jeevan Mission.)	1945158.00	38903.00	4 Months	400/-
4	Augmentation of WSS Parkot Kamand in Ann Block - Dist. Kulu (H.P) (SH:- C/O 5 Nos Intake Chamber, C/O Sector Storage Tanks at Node A= 13000 Ltr. Cap. 2NOS at node B&D 10000 Lts ,at Node C 14500 Lts cap. at node E 20000 Lts cap. Laying, jointing and testing of GI pipe 32mm dia=900mts, 40mm dia=1300 mts and Providing & Installation of functional water tap connection for 208 households under (Jal Jeevan Mission.)	1454862.00	29097.00	6 Months	400/-
5	Retrofitting of WSS Sardham Tandi Lahrai in G.P Gamog & Ghatoj Nirmand Block - Dist. Kulu (H.P) (SH:- C/O Intake Chamber, C/O Sector Storage Tank 21000 Ltr Cap. at point A-1, C/O Sector Storage Tank 15000 Ltr. capacity at point 3 & 5 , Sector Storage Tank 20000 Ltr. capacity at point 4 & C/O 30000 Its cap Sector Storage Tank at point 6 and Laying, jointing and testing of GI pipe 40 mm dia=1700 Rmt , 20mm dia = 3500 Rmt Providing & Installation of functional water tap connection for 502 households (under Jal Jeevan Mission.)	1787438.00	35749.00	2 Months	400/-

Last date of filling/ uploading the tender through e-tendering:-09-03-2021 up to 05:00 P.M.

The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be downloaded from the website www.hptenders.gov.in or from office of above Executive Engineer, up to date specified above.

6269/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

Office of

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAISINGHPUR DIVISION H.P. Public Works Department, JAISINGHPUR 176095

Fax: 01894-228031, e-mail: ee-jaipwd-hp@gov.in

Tender Notice

Sealed item rate tenders on form 6 & 8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Jaisinghpur Division, H.P. PWD, Jaisinghpur for following works on behalf of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh from the approved and eligible contractors/firms enlisted in HP PWD, (B&R) so as to reach in this office as per time schedule given below:-

1. Date of receipt of Application for tender forms:-	19.03.2021 at 4:00PM
2. Date of issued /sale of tender form:-	20.03.2021 upto 4:00PM
3. Date of receipt of tender	23.03.2021 at 11:00AM
4. Date of opening of tender :-	23.03.2021 at 11:30 AM

S.No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time
1	A/R&M/O Various road under Panchrukhi Sub-division (Panchrukhi Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Saliana Chathmandi Padharukhi Road Km. 0/0 to 4/000. 2) Jandpur Nagta Bharwanा Battaan Road Km. 1/100 to 4/600)	4,88,383.00	9800.00	One Month
2	A/R&M/O Various road under Panchrukhi Sub-division (Panchrukhi Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Datal Tikkar Khungnun road Km. 0/0 to 4/590. 2) Biara Battaan road Km. 0/0 to 5/200. 3) Saliana Vedwahata Chudhree road Km. 0/0 to 7/50	4,91,838.00	9900.00	One Month
3	A/R&M/O Various road under Panchrukhi Sub-division (Jalag Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Ropri Nahana via Masand Basti road Km. 0/0 to 3/105. 2) Jalag to Arth curve to patti Tatrol Nahana road Km. 0/0 to 6/01. 3) Kosri Dhupkiara road Km. 0/0 to 6/00).	4,92,651.00	9900.00	One Month
4	A/R&M/O Various road under Panchrukhi Sub-division (Jalag Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work Jalag Dall Nahana Dhupkara Jhunga Devi road Km. 0/0 to 10/735)	4,96,918.00	10000.00	One Month
5	A/R&M/O Various road under Balakrupi Sub-Division (Balakrupi Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Link road Bheri to Paprola Km. 0/0 to 3/000 Link road to Oach Kallan to Kuanh Khass Km. 0/0 to 4/00)	2,52,837.00	5100.00	One Month
6	A/R&M/O Various road under Balakrupi Sub-Division (Alampur Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Alampur Harispatan road Km. 4/100 to 4/140 and 7/745 to 7/800. 2) Link road to Village Malodhan Km. 0/0 to 5/10. 3) Gander Bardan Kangain road Km. 0/0 to 5/00)	2,00,031.00	4100.00	One Month
7	A/R&M/O Various road under Balakrupi Sub-Division (Gander Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work on Bhawaran Khera road Km. 15/00 to 32/150)	4,96,918.00	10000.00	One Month
8	A/R&M/O Various road under Balakrupi Sub-Division (Gander Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Tiker Ridkal road Km. 0/0 to 1/00 and 1/00 to 2/00. 2) Bhawaran Khera Alampur road Km. 15/855 to 32/150)	3,52,775.00	7100.00	One Month
9	A/R&M/O Various road under Jaisinghpur Sub-Division (Lambagaon Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads. 1) Panchrukhi to Lambagaon road. 2) Jalag to Jhunga Devi road. 3) Lambagaon to Tiki via Dabal Ghummar road. 4) Haroti bridge to Tiki via Dabal road. 5) Lambagaon to Lower Lambagaon road . 6) Link road to Village Chamba Lahar. 7) Ritt to Bawaria via Jhameter Badhal Kohla Kast Bodla Banjar road)	4,45,708.00	9000.00	One Month
10	A/R&M/O Various road under Jaisinghpur Sub-Division (Jaisinghpur Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work Lambagaon via Sugri ka Bag road Km. 0/0 to 6/0)	1,89,658.00	3800.00	One Month
11	A/R&M/O Various road under Jaisinghpur Sub-Division (Jaisinghpur Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work Lambagaon via Sugri ka Bag road Km. 0/0 to 6/0)	4,14,219.00	8300.00	One Month
12	A/R&M/O Various road under Jaisinghpur Sub-Division (Sari Section) (SH:- Repair of pot hole/ patch work various roads 1) Chadhar Mangal Haler road Km.7/00 to 10/30. 2) Haler Chambi road Km. 0/0 to 1/800. 3) Jaisinghpur to Vijapur via Sita ram Bridge Km. 0/0 to 1/0)	4,93,123.00	9900.00	One Month
13	Missing CD on Sari Halon road Km. 0/0 to 2/500 (SH:- C/o 2.00mtr span slab culvert at RD 1/330 with both side approaches)	4,91,651.00	9900.00	Two Month
14	C/o link road from Patwar Ghar to Sh. Ajad House in Village Maharaj Nagar at Km. 0/00 to 0/120 (Under MMGSY)	2,29,904.00	4600.00	Two Month
15	C/o Mahara Nagar Patti Chambha Laha Dhupkiara road Km. 0/0 to 9/00 (SH:- C/o 900mm dia hume pipe culvert at RD 8/100 and 1.00 m span RCC slab culvert at RD 8/100) MNP	2,25,171.00	4500.00	Two Month
16	Missing Culvert Ropri to Umar road Km. 0/0 to 6/500 (SH:- C/o 4.00 mtr. Span Culvert at RD 2/530)	4,82,154.00	9700.00	Two Month

Terms and conditions:- The tender documents shall be issued only to those contractors / firms who fulfill the following criteria and submit the following documents with the application:-

1. The tender of only those contractor/ Firms will be processed who will produce the proof of valid registration and submit the copy of renewal/enlistment in appropriate category, EPF No., Pan No. and GST No. with the application.
2. Earnest money in the shape of National saving

...The insensitive and negligence of government is unfortunate...

BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF MAYAWATI

SLAMMING UTTAR PRADESH GOVT OVER LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN STATE

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 04 MARCH 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



Lt-Governor Manoj Sinha felicitates cadets of Forest Guards in Jammu on Wednesday.

AGENCY

Dalai Lama's vaccination: The Kangra district administration on Wednesday said special provisions will be made to vaccinate the Dalai Lama against Covid-19 after the Dharamsala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) wrote to the Indian government about this. The CTA, also known as the Tibetan government-in-exile, wanted the Dalai Lama and those working around him to get vaccinated at the earliest, its secretary of health Palden said.

PTI

Gujarat Budget: Gujarat deputy chief minister Nitin Patel on Wednesday presented a Rs 2,27,029-crore budget for 2021-22 in the Assembly with 59 per cent allocation for development work, saying the state's economy is recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

PTI

Nitish Kataria case: Delhi Police on Wednesday informed the Delhi High Court that it would provide round-the-clock security to Nilam Kataria, mother of murdered business executive Nitish Kataria, whenever she visits the Capital from Dehradun as she fears for her life.

PTI

BSF jawan killed: A BSF jawan was killed and four were injured in an incident during firing practice at the Lathi firing range in Rajasthan's Jaisalmir, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday night. A "premature blast" in the muzzle of a gun resulted in splinter injuries to five BSF personnel taking part in firing practice.

PTI

BJP MP's son shot at in UP, cops say attack staged

LUCKNOW, 3 MARCH

BJP MP Kaushal Kishore's son was shot at in Lucknow in the early hours of Wednesday, with the police claiming that he staged the attack on himself by his brother-in-law to falsely implicate some people in the case.

Ayush (30), son of the BJP MP from Mohanlalganj, was shot at in the Madaia area here around 2 am. He was rushed to a hospital, from where he was discharged after being administered first aid.

An FIR has been lodged against Ayush and his brother-in-law (wife's brother) Adarsh and the latter has been arrested, Lucknow Police Commissioner D K Thakur said. Efforts are on to trace Ayush, he said.

Earlier in the day, Thakur had said: "The probe so far has indicated that he (Ayush) staged the firing at him by his brother-in-law. The weapon used in the act has been recovered."

Manoj Kumar Singh, Station House Officer (SHO), Madaia police station, said the incident took place around 2 am.

RSS biggest school of patriotism: BJP

Slams Rahul for likening RSS to radical Islamist outfits in Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The BJP on Wednesday lauded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as the world's biggest school of patriotism as it slammed Rahul Gandhi for likening the Hindu organisation to radical Islamist outfits in Pakistan.

Union minister Prakash Javadekar told a press conference that it will take the Congress leader a long time to understand the RSS, the ideological fountainhead of the ruling BJP.

The RSS' role is to effect good changes in people and inspire patriotism in them, he told reporters after he was asked about Gandhi's comments. In a conversation with Kaushik Basu, professor at the Cornell University in the US and India's former chief economic advisor, Gandhi had alleged on Tuesday that the RSS uses schools run by it to push a particular world view like the radical Islamists in Pakistan do in madrasas.

Hitting back at Gandhi, Javadekar said his statement was "laughable" as his party had then ended the independence of institutions, denied media freedom and jailed dissenting voices.

He said lakhs of people, including MPs and MLAs, were arrested during that time while institutions were denied any freedom.

Now for him to say that they did not target institutions is laughable, Javadekar said.

The BJP leader also took a swipe at the Congress over its

'BJP should follow Rahul on Emergency, regret Guj riots'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

The Sharad Pawar-led NCP on Wednesday sought an apology from the BJP over the two decade-old Gujarat riots, like Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had done over the Emergency imposed by his late grandmother over four decades ago.

Terming the Emergency that was imposed by former prime minister Indira Gandhi a mistake, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said what happened during that period was wrong.

"Now it is the turn of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to accept that the Gujarat riots were wrong," Malik said. The BJP should apologise for the same, he added.

"After 45 years, Rahul

Gandhi has accepted that imposition of Emergency was a mistake. The Congress had also apologised for the (anti-Sikh) Delhi riots (of 1984)," the minister said.

"It is now the turn of the BJP and Prime Minister Modi to accept that the Gujarat riots were wrong," Malik said. The BJP should apologise for the same, he added.

Maharashtra Congress unit president Nana Patole said, "There is nothing wrong in Rahulji apologising for an old mistake. On the other hand, it is a magnanimous gesture."

Reacting to the NCP and Congress leaders' remarks, Maharashtra BJP spokesperson Keshav Upadhye said the Congress imposed the Emergency without caring for sentiments of the people.

promise to nullify the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Assam if it is voted to power in the state.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had made the statement during her recent campaign in Assam. Javadekar shared a 2015 news report citing the Congress' demand for citizenship for Hindu and Buddhist refugees from Bangladesh.

Responding to a question at the press conference, the

minister also rejected allegations that the Income Tax raids on the premises of filmmaker Anurag Kashyap and actor Taapsee Pannu were linked to their comments, which are seen at times critical of the BJP.

"This is too much," he said to the question and added that "probe agencies undertake investigations based on credible information and the matter later goes to courts as well."

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Jaishankar to visit Dhaka today ahead of Modi's trip

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH



External affairs minister S Jaishankar will visit Dhaka tomorrow at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart A K Abdul Momen, it was officially announced here.

During the visit, Jaishankar will hold extensive talks with Momen and also call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"The visit of the external affairs minister to Bangladesh follows the virtual summit held between the Prime Ministers of the two countries on 12 December and will also provide an opportunity to the two sides to take stock of the progress in bilateral relations,

establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh.

A number of key accords are expected to be signed between the two countries during Modi's visit, including those on energy and communication. Relations between India and Bangladesh have witnessed an unprecedented upswing over the last few years.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Modi and Sheikh Hasina had a virtual summit in which they pledged to further consolidate bilateral ties and jointly tackle the challenge posed by the pandemic. The Bangladesh prime minister had also paid rich tributes to the Indian armed

forces and thanked India for the liberation of her country from Pakistan in 1971.

India has gifted nearly two million doses of the Covishield vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII) to Bangladesh. Lately, Bangladesh has again been nudging India to quickly settle the Teesta water-sharing issue in the larger interest of the bilateral relations.

However, the Modi government has clearly told Dhaka that the water-sharing deal could only be signed once there was domestic political consensus over it in India. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has still not given her approval to the proposed deal.

Rahul, Priyanka slam Yogi govt over law and order situation in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

shooting as well as an incident in Bulandshahr where the body of a 12-year-old girl was exhumed from a pit days after she went missing.

Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and other Congress leaders have been attacking the Adityanath government over law and order situation in the state, alleging that criminal activities were on the rise, a claim denied by the state government.

Yogi raises Hathras in Assembly:

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday sought to turn the tables on the SP over law and order in his state, asking why the word Samajwadi gets tagged to every criminal.

The state BJP has been pointing at a Facebook account, which it claims indicates that the accused is a

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China mobilised conventional & cyber forces to threaten India'

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said that China had mobilised its conventional and cyber forces to threaten India and warned that the government's "cowardice" would have tragic consequences in the future.

He cited a news report that claimed that night satellite images show Chinese buildup in the Dapsang region near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

"Has the Samajwadi Party no link with the criminal as far as the unfortunate incident of Hathras is concerned? Why is it that the word 'Samajwadi' is associated with every incident of crime?" Adityanath said.

"Why is it that the 'Samajwadi' name gets dragged into every incident of crime?" Adityanath said.

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shooting as well as an incident in Bulandshahr where the body of a 12-year-old girl was exhumed from a pit days after she went missing.

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the upper castes for being in alliance with the BJP which banks on the support of the forward castes.

The chief minister in 2019 also got Bill for 10 per cent reservation to upper caste poor passed from the Bihar assembly to grant them reservations in government jobs and educational institutions in the light of the 103rd Constitutional amendment. This happened even as the main Opposition RJD had voted against the Bill

in the Parliament.

Analysts say the JD-U leadership has got nervous after its devastating performance in the October/November 2020 Assembly polls in the state when it was able to win only 43 seats after contesting 115 seats against 74 seats won by the BJP by contesting a similar number of seats. What was humiliating for the JD-U was that it stood distant third.

"JD-U suffered badly for primarily two reasons—first

the LJP fielded candidates against the JD-U candidates which split NDA votes and secondly, the BJP leadership failed to clear confusions from the minds of the voters about its 'alliance' with the LJP. At no election rallies, top BJP leaders such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said LJP was not a part of the NDA," commented a political expert. But for the support of the upper castes, headed, the JD-U would have fared even more badly.

when it finished third.

For the first time, the JD-U which is headed by chief minister Nitish Kumar has formed an Upper Caste cell quite on the patterns of various cells such as Minority cell, Dalit cell, Mahadalit cell, OBC cell to reach out to the upper caste voters.

The upper caste forms roughly around 14 percent of the total vote bank in the state. Strangely, the party has already been getting the support of

Dalit activist hacked to death in Guj village

AHMEDABAD, 3 MARCH

A Dalit Right to Information (RTI) activist under police protection was hacked to death by upper caste people in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat.

The gruesome incident happened on Tuesday evening in Sandor village in Ghoghataluka soon after a procession to celebrate victories in the local panchayat elections passed by the Dalit's house.

Amrabhai Boricha, the 50-year-old Dalit activist

was under police protection for last few days due to threats received by him from upper caste people of the village.

The upper caste mob returned soon after the victory procession and attacked the Dalit activist with sharp weapons.

He was hacked to death on the spot. His daughter was seriously injured in her attempt to protect her father.

According to the police, the upper caste people were annoyed with Amrabhai, the only Dalit in the village, as all their attempts to usurp his agricultural land and residential plot had failed. He had also filed many complaints under the Prevention of Atrocities Act, following which the Dalit activist was given police protection due to threats from the upper caste. But the protection given to him was downgraded and handed over to the jaws of Gram Rakshak Dal (GRD) when the attack took place.

SNS

Omar welcomes renewed bilateral engagement between India & Pakistan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 3 MARCH

The National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah on Wednesday welcomed the renewed bilateral engagement between India and Pakistan after a long hiatus saying the changed understanding of both the neighbouring countries vis-à-vis Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the evolving situation has made it pretty clear that the outlook of both the countries has undergone a big change and has been replaced with a policy of peaceful engagement.

Soft power

"Give it the resources and support it needs to become once again the world's premier development organisation of the 21st century." This was US President (then Vice-President) Joe Biden in 2011 on the 50th anniversary of the US Agency for International Development or USAID as it is widely known. A decade on, an influential section of the US establishment now expects him to walk the talk. America's soft power projection was the one aspect of US foreign policy which was probably the most severely undermined by President Donald Trump's transactional behaviour and the very real benefits it provided to the USA and countries across the globe were entirely under-appreciated. The US concept of national security resting on the troika of defence, diplomacy, and development is clearly making a comeback and the pressure is growing on President Biden to restore the primacy of USAID given that it can be the spearhead for this approach. As economist and development expert George Ingram writes in a recent monograph: "The two challenges uppermost on the agenda of the Biden Administration, Covid-19 and climate change, are issues of both domestic and international import. The international elements are, inherently, matters of global development. Addressing the international aspects of these transnational crises must be grounded on sophisticated analysis and deployment of resources that strengthen countries long term while reducing the impact of the crises... but security considerations and diplomatic interests often hold sway, because the short-term political gains are more certain... and the bureaucratic structure works to their advantage. The capabilities of the lead development agency USAID must be strengthened."

Scholars including Ingram make the argument that the whole point of President John F. Kennedy signing an executive order in 1961 consolidating US foreign assistance programmes in a new single agency, USAID, has been lost over the past three decades. First, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, President George HW Bush bypassed USAID to pump funds from various federal departments directly into Eastern European nations to ostensibly promote their "transition to democracy". In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton gave in to an effort purportedly aimed at reducing government bureaucracy which ended up giving the Department of State budgetary control over USAID which the former was not averse to exercising. The final blow came under President George W Bush when two new international aid programs were established outside the aegis of USAID and the State Department was given further responsibilities for USAID policies and budget. The role of various soft power initiatives in strengthening national security and managing conflict internationally is vital for any country. For the world's richest and most powerful nation, it is a categorical imperative. J. Brian Atwood, former Administrator USAID and Under Secretary of State, and Larry Garber, ex-Mission Director, West Bank and Gaza, USAID, too have lent their voice to the campaign for a greater role and more autonomy for USAID. The good news is that the nomination of Samantha Power a couple of weeks ago to be the Administrator of USAID comes with a first - a seat at the US National Security Council principals' table.

Diplomatic realpolitik

A s double-think runs wild in the White House, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) of Saudi Arabia must be enjoying a quiet chuckle. Diplomatic realpolitik has been accorded precedence over the severe action that was expected of President Joe Biden in the context of the US intelligence report that the Crown Prince was complicit in the ghastly killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. The Washington Post columnist was allegedly drugged and his body dismembered. Every tenet of human rights was thus violated. By advancing what they call a "free pass" to MBS, America's President has proffered a feeble excuse to justify his defence of the de facto leader of the desert kingdom. Biden, who had referred to Saudi Arabia as a "pariah kingdom with no redeeming social value" in course of his election campaign, has now softened his stance to a dramatic degree. It thus comes about that in the somewhat surprising reckoning of the US President, the price of directly penalising Saudi Arabia's crown prince is "too high". He may be right when viewed through the prism of certitudes of foreign policy. The US President was reportedly convinced by his newly formed national security team that there was no way to formally bar the Saudi crown prince from entering the United States or to take a call on the criminal charges against him. Altogether, it was feared by the current US administration that a drastic reprisal would have breached the equation with one of America's key Arab allies, not to discount the flutter within the Arab region generally. There is said to have been a consensus in the White House that the price of that breach was quite "simply too high" in terms of Saudi cooperation in the fight against terrorism and in confronting Iran. Mr Biden had been urged by a section of the establishment to at least impose the same travel restrictions against the Crown Prince as the Trump administration had imposed on others involved in the plot.

The White House appears to have drawn a fine distinction between MBS and the Saudi military. While the Crown Prince is unlikely to be invited to the United States in the immediate perspective, the establishment has denied that the Saudi ruler is being given a "pass". It is pretty obvious though, that the coveted International Visitor Program (IVP) will not be denied to the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince. Going by the terms of protocol, he may yet be treated as a state guest in America.

Battling loneliness

From all denominators, if one examines in depth, Japan is suffering from an acute social problem to which it is struggling to seek an answer. As the traditional family structure is dying fast and people, both men and women, are seeking their own independent space, the fabric of the Japanese family structure has come under serious threat



Japan is an economically developed country and envy of the world. The people are flush with all necessary material comforts that technology provides. But the big question is: do all these make the Japanese happy? For an analyst who has dealt with the nuances of Japanese society closely for over four decades, the short answer is no. Why is this so?

Japanese society is facing acute societal problems. Birth rate/fertility rate is declining. More people are graying. Social security burden on the government is increasing. Over 80,000 centenarians need government healthcare and other support, and the numbers are growing. Women and men of marriageable age are either delaying marrying or not marrying at all. Even if they marry, they are unwilling to have kids as they are not prepared to sacrifice their freedom and profession. Rearing a child is a full-time job, for which they are not prepared. This has led to the dubious coinage of the acronym DINKS (double income no kids).

Amid these complexities, the impact of these on social behavior is worrying as many are not able to cope with the new challenges and unable to navigate through life. This has led to the ugly situation when more men and women are unable to cope with the new situation and resorting to short-cut routes to end their lives by committing suicides. This is the malady of a developed society which policy makers have failed to address.

This raises the question: Is Japan a happy society? From all denominators, if one examines in depth, Japan is suffering from an acute social problem from which it is struggling to seek an answer.

As the traditional family structure is dying fast and people, both men and women, are seeking their own independent space, the fabric of the Japanese family structure has come under serious threat, which has led to this situation.

Government measures to address this new situation may be laudable but have proved to be inadequate. For example, Abe's Womenomics to harness the potential of women power in the wake of labour shortage yielded little result. The pandemic further added to the crisis as more and more lonely people were unable to adjust to the new life style and took resort to commit suicide to end the agony.

This time the government of Yoshihide Suga was awakened to this grave situation and appointed a minister of loneliness as suicides surged, thereby following the example of Britain to establish a Cabinet portfolio to battle loneliness. The surge was because of a large number of people ending their lives because of the pandemic due to the feeling of isolation.

Suga appointed Tetsushi Sakamoo as state minister in charge of coordinating measures to help those feeling isolated as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. For Sakamoto, it is an additional portfolio as he is already a minister dealing with Japan's declining birthrates and promoting regional revitalisation. British Prime Minister Theresa May established the world's first minister to com-

bat loneliness in 2018 after realising loneliness was the most serious public health issue. But this ministerial portfolio did not become popular as UK saw three loneliness ministers in three years. Australia too has been toying with the idea of creating a similar position but has not done so far.

In 2020 Japan's suicide rates increased for the first time in 11 years, particularly among women. The Minister of Loneliness is tasked to address this big social problem. In October 2020, more people died from suicide than the

total number of Covid-19 deaths up to that point. There were 2,153 suicide deaths but 1,765 virus deaths that month. Earlier studies show that loneliness is linked to a higher risk of health issues like heart disease, dementia, and eating disorders. In October 2020 alone 879 women died by suicide, a 70 per cent increase compared to the same month

in 2019. As attitudes towards marriage are changing among working women, more and more tend to remain single and live alone. Many who do not have permanent jobs worry about supporting themselves if they lose the jobs, adding to further stress. The pandemic period aggravated their vagaries.

The disturbing development is that more women in their 30s or younger are committing suicide. The pandemic prevented them from hanging out with friends to ease their stress. In August 2020, 40 women under

the age of 20 took their own lives, an increase by 11 over August 2019. A total of 193 women in their 30s or younger committed suicide in August 2020, up by 74 per cent from a year earlier. This also included teenage girls.

Loneliness has long been an issue in Japan, often discussed alongside "hikikomori", or people who live in extreme social isolation and do not leave their homes, often for years, and meet solitary deaths.

People with interest in this issue have sought solutions but with little success. For example, engineers designed a robot to hold someone's hand when they felt lonely. Sometimes people are engaged to "do nothing" except to give company.

Sakamoto's tasks are challenging. He has to devise comprehensive measures cutting across ministry jurisdictions. Because of changing life style, societal ties in general have become weaker. Non-profit organizations that are already working on issues related to loneliness are also likely to be partnered in this task. Japan has a history of suicides among school students and junior high students. The suicides among school students normally peak every year soon after the new session starts. Those who could not complete their holiday homework face taunts from friends who have completed theirs or are reprimanded by teachers.

In order to escape from such embarrassment and humiliation, they seek ways to end their lives. The pandemic in 2020 that disrupted lifestyles aggravated the situation. Sakamoto's task is to stem this disturbing situation. It would be interesting to see what policy measures he adopts.



RAJARAM PANDA
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Perspectives of the '71 triumph

SIR, This refers to 'Triumphs in 1971' on 25 February by Prafull Goradia. The headline suggests that India did not triumph in the Indo-Pak war of 1971. Morarji Desai might have commented that "We had inherited one Pakistan but Indira has given us two". The fact is that in 1971, India was successful in reducing Pakistan by half. Mr Goradia is aware that the foreign policy of a country is primarily determined by its geographical position. Post-1971, there is nothing to grieve about India's policy in dealing with the young state of Bangladesh. It is for Pakistan to re-evaluate its loss or gain after the break-up in 1971. C. Rajgopalachari, had predicted that the Pakistan of the 1947 edition would not last for more than 25 years.

This is exactly what happened after India's glorious victory in 1971.

When Morarji Desai was Prime Minister, he did not allow his foreign minister, Atal Behari Vajpeyi, to make a statement in Parliament when ZA Bhutto was hanged by Pakistan's President, Zia-ul-Haq, in 1979. Prime Minister Morarji Desai put India's nuclear programme on the backburner (77-79) when the Janata Party held a massive majority in Parliament. Power slipped through Morarji's fingers in 1979. He was awarded Nishan-e-Pakistan, the highest civilian honour of Pakistan. The sarcasm underlined in the article's headline is unpalatable.

The poor plight of Hindus in divided and undivided Pakistan is well documented. So too is the

predicament of Hindus in Bangladesh. It is open to question whether the Simla agreement of 1972 between India and Pakistan was politically and diplomatically the correct decision. Sheikh Mujib did not live long after the creation of Bangladesh. He was not a secessionist, however. He had fought till the last for a federal structure in United Pakistan vide his six-point programme because the Pak military mafia plus ZA Bhutto never wanted it. Bhutto was obsessed with his hatred of Hindus (even the Muslims of East Bengal). This is fully reflected in his tirade of hatred when he spoke in the UN Security Council in 1965 about the "thousand year war" against India.

After the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, there is nothing for India to be apologetic about its Bangladeshi policy. And, it was a triumph of India in 1971, the sarcasm of Prafull Goradia notwithstanding.

Yours, etc., Roop Chand Jain, Kolkata, 28 February.

VIGIL OVER OTT PLATFORMS

SIR, The government has taken the right step in terms of maintaining constant vigil on the content of Over The Top (OTT) platforms and digital media. OTT platforms have been hugely depending on violence, bloodshed and barbarism. Sexual violence, harassment of women, brutalisation of female characters and the male gaze occupy a major chunk of the screen time to cater to the adrenaline rush of the consumers, specifically the youth, but in fact are tarnishing their minds.

The social media, on the other hand, has become a tool to breach the peace and harmony of the country. One hopes that the new stringent guidelines will make some difference.

Yours, etc., Chandan Kumar Nath, Guwahati, 1 March.



BJP is making a strong pitch for an anti-incumbency contest in Bengal. As in 2019, Narendra Modi remains the BJP's main face in Bengal. But an assembly election may dim Modi's aura, requiring local leaders to show their skills. With Assam and Bengal elections coinciding, the Citizenship Amendment Act has forced the BJP to effect a delicate balancing act. Delays in notifying CAA rules can be a worry for the BJP, thus prompting Trinamul Congress to use it as a gimmick.

In pursuit of a third straight term in Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK has passed a quota for the influential Vanniyar community. Sasikala's return from prison could also turn into a full-blown power struggle within the AIADMK. Wiped out of Bengal and Tripura, the CPI-M faces a difficult task in Kerala. For the Congress, victories in Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will help the party to shore up its image amidst the regular setbacks and growing dissidence against Rahul Gandhi. The 2nd of May may yet redefine national politics.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 1 March.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Claims of vaccines for sale 'fraud'

Ministry of Health spokeswoman Or Vandine denied recent claims the ministry had surreptitiously given Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccinations to unauthorised persons in exchange for money at Calmette Hospital. She condemned a local media report, saying vaccination is free and not for sale under any circumstances, and that it is currently only available to volunteers from such groups as have been identified as eligible by the health ministry. "I deny that accusation totally and condemn those persons who pollute society with such fabrications and spread these false notions and disinformation. We don't require anyone pay any money to be vaccinated," she said that because Cambodia's vaccine supplies are limited, they were only being offered to those who are members of previously announced priority groups.

She requested that authorities take action against any media organisation that spreads this fake news. The Chinese embassy issued a warning on February 24, stating that it had recently received reports from some Chinese citizens in Cambodia claiming text messages in Chinese on their mobile phones offering vaccinations for a \$120 service fee. The Chinese-language messages said that recipients could make an appointment in Cambodia to receive the "Chinese National Medicine's New Coronavirus Pneumonia Vaccine". The Chinese embassy said there have also been reports of people openly peddling a "Chinese-made Covid-19 vaccine" on social media at prices as high as \$450 per dose, adding

The Phnom Penh Post
CAMBODIA'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD

that Cambodians have rightly been sceptical of these claims. "According to our understanding, the Cambodian government and military are responsible for the storage and administration of the Chinese-supplied Covid-19 vaccines. "Vaccinations [in Cambodia] are still subject to extremely strict approval procedures. There is no possibility that the vaccines donated by China to Cambodia would be for sale on the open market." All advertisements peddling Chinese Covid-19 vaccines are fraudulent, so please be aware of and ignore them," the embassy stated. Vandine also requested patience from those who wished to be vaccinated against Covid-19 now but must wait because supplies of the vaccines remain limited. She said those who are not in groups designated by the health ministry must please refrain from coming in for vaccinations at this time. They must wait until they see an announcement issued by the ministry. The ministry will gladly vaccinate more people when it has more vaccines to do so. In a February 24 Facebook post, the Australian embassy stated that the Cambodian government had confirmed that all foreign nationals living or working in the Kingdom will be eligible to be vaccinated as part of the country's Covid-19 vaccination rollout.

GOVIND SINGH AND ARMIN ROSENCRANZ

The increasing cost of petrol and diesel has raised eyebrows and tempers across India. The Government has attributed the increase in price to the monopoly of the international oil companies. The oil producing countries are believed to have reduced the production and supply of crude oil, resulting in rises in demand and correspondingly in the prices of fossil fuels.

Opposition parties in India have been quick to point out flaws in this explanation. The cost of petrol and diesel is relatively cheaper in neighbouring countries. The Finance Minister's advice for the Centre and respective states to negotiate and bring down fuel prices is further suggestive of taxes and surcharges behind this rise.

Last year, the major oil producing countries of the world cut oil production due to Covid-19. The pandemic-induced lockdown had reduced global consumption of oil and thereby its demand. Decline in transportation activity, including air transport, led to a global drop in carbon emissions. By mid-2020, NASA and other global monitoring agencies had begun publishing the environmental impacts of the economic slowdown due to Covid-19.

The Earth Observatory of NASA and European Space Agency detected a significant decrease in airborne nitrogen dioxide pollutant over China in February 2020. A thirty per cent drop in air pollution was recorded by NASA over the US east coast in March 2020. Global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions had dropped anywhere between 7 to 17 per cent by April 2020.

The contribution of the Covid-19 pandemic in bringing down carbon emissions is unparalleled. In doing so, the pandemic and the lockdown also helped quantify the environmental harms of burning fossil fuels. These harms are often not fully understood because they are not included in the total costs of using fossil fuels. The environmental harms associated with producing and consuming fossil fuel therefore constitute what is known as a negative externality.

An externality exists when the actions of one person or company affect the existence or well-being of another person or company, even when these two are not involved in a market transaction. Air pollution in town A can be borne by the winds and deposited on town B, creating an

Fossil fuel costs must include externalities



externality. Avoiding externalities over a long period can result in market failure since the true cost of the product in question is not being reflected.

The fossil fuel market has long ignored the negative externalities associated with extraction and burning of coal and petroleum. The first consequence of this has been the much reduced price of petrol and diesel, especially when compared to renewable energy.

Burning fossil fuels for the last two centuries has added large amounts of GHGs in the atmosphere. This anthropogenic addition of GHGs has resulted in global climate change. As a result, polar ice caps and glaciers are melting at a much faster rate and sea-level rise is threatening millions of people who live along the coasts.

The externalities linked with the use of fossil fuels originate with the extraction or mining of these fuels. Large-scale destruction of forests or marine areas, air and water pollution and annihilation of biodiversity from such sites are some initial externalities that are impacting both the present and future generations.

In 2015, the International Monetary Fund calculated the full price of the environmental damages caused by fossil fuels. They found that by not

accounting for these damages, all the nations are collectively discounting \$5.3 trillion each year as "fossil fuel subsidies". This means we are subsidizing pollution, biodiversity loss and the destruction of our own civilization.

Economics is logically a subset of ecology and must be seen as embedded in an ecological life-support system. A shift in approach from conventional economics to ecological economics, beginning with the inclusion of social and environmental externalities, is the need of the hour for preventing runaway climate change.

The writers are, respectively, Associate Professor and Dean at Jindal School of Environment & Sustainability, O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana.

Temporary respite, at best, in Nepal

C K LAL

The incumbent president of Nepali Congress Sher Bahadur Deuba holds the dubious distinction of being the only prime minister in the history of the country to have been sacked for his 'incompetence' to hold the polls on the promised date. Back in October 2002, he had meekly accepted his disgraceful dismissal and gone back home to sulk and seek the guidance of astrologers for appeasing appropriate stars on his birth-chart.

When reappointed to the post in 2004, Deuba had profusely praised the 'wide chest of the king', 'the greatness of the monarch' and the sense of 'justice of the Gorkhali ruler'. Steeped in the feudal tradition, he knew that fealty to the overlord was his duty and justice was just munificence of the sovereign rather than reward for unflinching loyalty of the vassal to the throne.

Unlike the refined manners of the landed gentry in Madhes, liegemen of the western hills in Nepal aren't too well known for their politeness. Even a stint as a visiting scholar at the London School of Economics has failed to temper the characteristic bluntness of Deuba. He speaks his mind and acts according to his impulses without any regard for political correctness.

Defending his unseemly prevarication over the dissolution of the Pratinidhi Sabha, he recently admitted without remorse: 'I had thought that the Supreme Court would issue a stay order. But since this did not happen, I

had publicly told that NC would accept both reinstatement of the parliament or a decision to go for a fresh election.'

Like a broken clock that is right twice a day, both of Deuba's postulates appear to have been grounded in political reality. Prime Minister KP Oli's decision to dissolve the house was ultra vires and it had deserved to be overturned on the basis of prima facie unconstitutionality through a stay order. Since an immediate reprieve to the petitioners was denied, Deuba was correct in his conclusion to wait, watch and equivocate.

Any opposition party in a parliamentary democracy needs to be prepared for snap polls at all times. Deuba was also right in using Oli's recklessness to shake his own party from its despondency. A face-off at the hustings with a divided adversary was an alluring prospect.

In power games, correct assessment is no guarantee of political success. Reinstatement of the Parliament has put Deuba in his place, which is that of an appendant of the ruling party in the Constitutional Council after the amendment to the relevant act through an ordinance. Even if the Election Commission formalises a division by conferring legitimacy on a faction of the ruling party, it's not very likely that either of the groups will easily accept him as their leader.

The constitutional bench of the Supreme Court has restored the status quo set before December 20 last year. For now, it implies that Oli is the leader of the ruling party in Parlia-

ment; Deuba is the head of the main opposition. All that the Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal duo can claim is that they are dissidents of the ruling party with a sizable following in the country. The legal battle of over two months has produced no political winners.

Premier Oli retains the legitimacy to hold on to the post, but has lost the moral authority to govern. In any case, taking a principled stand has little relevance in either Bahunism or Marxism-Leninism of the Jhapali variety. Oli's challenge to the dissidents to oust him through a no-confidence motion in parliament appears like the quarrelsome tantrum of a sore loser. Forget moral grounds, the prime minister is extremely unlikely to resign at this juncture for any reason and risk being cast into political oblivion.

The full court order is still awaited, but there is little consolation in the verdict even for the politics of Messrs Dahal, Nepal & Associates. Their laddu-feeding photo-op was a little premature, to say the least. Dahal is likely to remain in his rented house as long as Oli doesn't vacate his official quarters at Baluwatar. Exercising little influence in intraparty feuds, Nepal will have to learn to be partially employed in full-time politics.

The one saving grace of the court's ruling is that it has put a brake on Oli's dictatorial ambitions. Even when enthroned through legitimate means, right-wing politicos turn towards absolutism. Totalitarianism is the defining characteristic of left-wing extremism. Leaders like Oli with

fluid ideology prefer authoritarian ways of entrenching themselves in power.

Oli has been pushing the pedal to the floor as the need of the legitimacy gauge moved from the green of democracy through the yellow of the fundamental freedoms at risk towards the red zone of an executive authority unfettered by the moderating influence of the legislature. Having packed constitutional bodies with his personal loyalists, he was heading towards lifelong employment as a 'Dear Leader' of Nepal under the pretext of political stability.

The pyrrhic victory of democracy, however, has ended up restoring judicial supremacy in place of the sovereignty of the Parliament in the country. When lawmakers meet on 7 March 2021, they will have to accept that they owe their remaining tenure to the Constitutional Bench of the apex court rather than to their constituents.

In the post-1990 period, the tradition of judicial supremacy began

when the leading drafter of the constitution agreed to become its principal interpreter as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and restored a duly dissolved parliament in the name of political stability. When the constitution says what the judges decide it says, it loses its dynamism. Touted as one of the best constitutions in the world, the statute of 1990 didn't survive the trial and tribulations of courts.

When then-chief justice Khil Raj Regmi ruled that the term of Constituent Assembly couldn't be further extended and then went on to assume the responsibility of the chair of the interim election council a few months later, the interim constitution of 2007 died a painful death. The country once again went under the control of the permanent establishment.

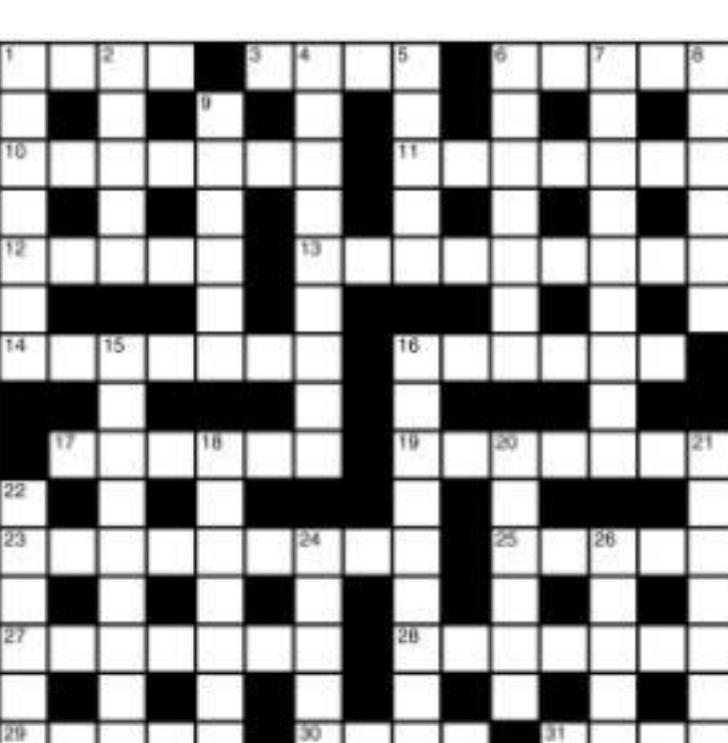
The Indian constitution aims to chart a middle course between the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty prevalent in Britain and the principle of judicial supremacy existing in the US. With the creation of a powerful judicial council and the vetting by parliamentary hearing, Nepal wanted to be even more careful in ensuring popular constitutionalism. The meandering path has turned out to be a middling one at best.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. If the restored parliament fails to oust Oli, perhaps the legislature will receive the axe once again and the judiciary will be his subsequent target. The court verdict is a mere respite. The cure of constitutional disease has to be found in politics.

The Kathmandu Post/ANN

NO 28843

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



ACROSS

- 1 FAIR TO MIDDLE LINE (10)
- 3 BLEACHERS (7)
- 6 ENERGY EQUALS DISCHARGED VOLTAGE DOUBLED, DIVIDED BY RESISTANCE (9)
- 10 What could have an unexpectedly beneficial effect? (7)
- 11 See sign involved creative act (7)
- 12 Refreshing place with nothing staying the same (5)
- 13 King follows period in office beset by enemy alien (9)
- 14 Greatest power invested
- 16 Instrument lined with lead to reinforce old metal (6)
- 17 Brownies regularly press skirts one by one (6)
- 19 Confusion spread by broadcast and stupidity (7)
- 23 Person making a claim before proposal (9)
- 25 Work out zero in school (5)
- 27 Musical group attempt to tour America (7)
- 28 Vintage department store regularly checks gold standard for design (7)
- 29 High-flier who predates good result for part of course (5)
- 30 Stage is plain to the audience (4)
- 31 Collide briefly with runners when cycling (4)

DOWN

- 1 Generous admission of liability stops arrests (7)
- 2 Romantic writer inspired by lake at sunset (5)
- 4 Cold air, almost -18C, disrupts a swimming lesson (9)
- 5 Drink fit for royalty served up (5)
- 6 Hawking's essential part in proving conclusion (7)
- 7 Article rendered on screen captures something evocative (9)
- 8 Guarantee criticism
- 9 He should honour contract to the letter (6)
- 15 What Gullum did in fight scene? (5)
- 16 Fine and bail armed suspect (9)
- 18 Do over American couple snubbed by judge (7)
- 20 Head to destination by alternative route (6)
- 21 Offence exploits openings in person? (7)
- 22 Original American term for 'ultra cheap shot' (6)
- 24 Refuse to meet with democrat instead of conservative (5)
- 26 One takes a bow when playing this part in dramatisation (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

100 YEARS AGO

OPTIONAL NOTE

Mr. Henry Ford, the patentee of the well-known car, is said to be meditating a new and revolutionary development in the domain of manufacture and agriculture. According to a recent New York despatch, he proposes to set up a number of factories to turn out his motor-cars and tractors in various towns and villages, the general idea being, apparently, to combine farming with manufacture, so that the farmer will be able to employ the winter months in making appliances which will double his efficiency as a farmer, while in the summer the factory hands will turn out en masse into the fields, which they have been engaged in manufacturing. The main interest of the scheme is in Mr. Ford's proposal not only to "scrap" the horse - which he contemptuously defines as "a clumsy hay-motor of one-horse power" - but also to dispense with the cow. As to the latter, his views on the horse prepare us for his dictum that "cows are the crudest machines in the world" - and when Mr. Ford discusses crude machines, it may be presumed that he knows what he is talking about. His scheme hinges upon the proposal to work up the cereals which the cow consumes into delicious foodstuffs, and so get rid of the necessity for either milk or beef. It is evident that the famous American inventor has hit upon one of those ideas which are capable of indefinite expansion.

NEWS ITEMS

CLAIMS OF PUBLIC LIFE IN BOMBAY

Bombay, Mar 3

Speaking at the prize distribution of the Byramji Jijibhai Parsi Commercial Institution, Sir George Lloyd warned the Parsi community and also other commercial communities, against over-specialisation. He noticed some tendency abroad in the business community of Bombay to ignore the claims of public life and to leave to the few the onerous duties of public work. Nothing could be more harmful to the progress of a city so cosmopolitan as Bombay. He hoped more men of independent means would come forward and devote their whole time to public work, to the good of the city and the furtherance of its great interests. It was only in public life that members of different communities could really work together and come into friendly contact.

RAILWAY STRIKE IN BURMA

Rangoon, Mar 3

The menial staff of the railway at Mandalay have resumed duty. Information has also been received that the staff at Shanzu, Sidaw and Tacho - all reversing stations - and at Maymyo have also returned to duty. Everything is running smoothly again in Upper Burma. Men from other stations up-country also are going back to their respective duties. In Malagon, which is the seat of the trouble, there are, however, no such favourable indications of a return to work, and as Rangoon, Kemmendine, Pazundaung and Insein take their cue from Malagon the return of the local men to work has not been promising. Orders have been issued by the Agent to the strikers that they must either return to work or vacate the railway quarters.

NON-COOPERATORS USE VIOLENCE

Allahabad, Mar 3

A Benares Correspondent wires to the Leader giving an account of non-cooperators excesses in connection with the Benares Sanskrit examinations and says: Far from being non-violent, force and coercion were used to keep away the examinees. Even when Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya interviewed and urged the youths to give up all picketing and other violent methods of keeping students away from the examination he was made the subject of scurrilous abuse. There have been instances where out-station examinees have been barred and belted within the houses in which they were putting up, in which their hands were tied at their backs, and other far from non-violent methods were adopted to keep them away from the examination. One favourite method was the piffing of admission slips and their destruction.

THE FUTURE OF PALESTINE

Sir Alfred Mond, who is going to Palestine to discuss details of the new Palestine loan with Sir Herbert Samuel, in the course of an interview with Reuter's correspondent spoke most optimistically of the future of Palestine. He emphasised the enormous amount of work to be done. The country must practically be rebuilt. He dwelt on the enthusiasm of the Jews, especially in Central Europe, for settlement in Palestine. Many were actually walking from the Ukraine and were reaching Palestine via Constantinople. The difficulty was to restrain would-be immigrants until the land was prepared for the new population. Sir Alfred said he did not anticipate religious difficulties.





*Need of the hour is to reduce logistics cost in the country
as India cannot be competitive if this cost remains high*

PIYUSH GOYAL
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

Sebi to bourses: The Securities and Exchange Board of India on Wednesday asked stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories to put in place code of conduct and institutional mechanism to prevent fraud or market abuse by them and their designated persons. Under this, managing director (MD) / chief executive officer (CEO) of MIs will be obligated to frame code of conduct and put in place an institutional mechanism. Further, the board of directors needs to ensure compliance by MD / CEO in this regard.

Renewable energy pact: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday gave ex post facto approval to the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between India and France on renewable energy cooperation. The objective of the MoU is to establish the basis for promotion of bilateral cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy on the basis of mutual benefit, equality and reciprocity. It covers technologies relating to solar, wind, hydrogen and biomass energy.

PTI

Jio partners Firework: Reliance Jio has roped in Firework short video platform to offer vertical video 'stories' to its over 100 million KaiOS users in India. Firework has also been integrated within the Jio browser. Firework India CEO Sunil Nair said, "Jio has created a new category of connected users by bringing the KaiOS ecosystem to India and then pioneering app development on these phones, meant for an untapped audience."

SNS

Jeep India: Jeep India has announced that production for the locally-assembled 2021 Jeep Wrangler has commenced in its Ranjangaon joint venture manufacturing facility. "Jeep has always represented the ultimate in capability and open-air freedom, and we are incredibly proud that our Made-in-India Wrangler protects that important legacy in the market," said Partha Datta, managing director, Jeep India.

SNS

Britannia campaign: Britannia Tiger has launched "Krunch Kharo, Punch Dikhao" campaign with actor Sonu Sood to teach children lessons in self-defence, said a Press release from the company. The campaign is a 5-part video series with Sonu Sood depicting martial art forms from across the globe. It is an attempt to empower children to be their best, stay safe in conflict situations and build physical and mental strength, the Press release said.

SNS

Oppo survey: 5G is the top considered feature for users looking to buy their devices, according to a survey conducted by smartphone maker Oppo. The survey also highlighted that 5G feature is gaining popularity among the buyers from tier II and III cities of emerging India.

SNS

Stellar show by services sector in Feb

Activity expands at the fastest rate in a yr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

India's services activity expanded at the fastest rate in a year during February, while employment fell further and companies noted the sharpest rise in overall expenses, a monthly survey said today.

The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index rose from 52.8 in January to 55.3 in February, pointing to the sharpest rate of expansion in output in a year amid improved demand and more favourable market conditions.

The index was above the critical 50 mark that separates growth from contraction for the fifth month in a row during February as the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccines led to an improvement in business confidence towards growth prospects.

While, new work intakes expanded for the fifth straight month, panellists continued to indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions curbed international demand for their services.

"New export orders declined for the twelfth month running, albeit at the weakest rate since last March," the survey noted.

Meanwhile, Indian private sector output rose at the quickest pace in four months during February. The Composite PMI Output Index, which measures combined services and manufacturing output, increased from 55.8 in January to 57.3 in February.

Economic activity is generally expected to recover in the final quarter of fiscal year 2020/21 after coming out of technical recession in Q3, and the latest improvement in the PMI indicators points to a strong expansion in the fourth quarter, should growth momentum be sustained in March," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

On the domestic macroeconomic front, after contracting for two quarters in a row, the Indian economy recorded a 0.4 per cent growth in the Octo-



ber-December quarter, mainly due to a good show by farm, manufacturing, services and construction sectors.

The IHS Markit India Services PMI further noted that despite ongoing growth of total new business, service sector employment fell further during February and a number of companies suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic restricted labour supply.

"There were further job losses across both the manufacturing and service sectors, which also could restrict domestic consumption in the coming months. However, with capacity pressures mounting, business sentiment strengthening and the vaccination programme widening, it seems that the best days are ahead of us regarding employment growth," Lima said.

On the prices front, amid reports of higher freight, fuel and retail prices, overall input costs increased in February. Furthermore, the rate of inflation accelerated to the strongest since February 2013.

However, competitive pressures prevented companies from lifting their own fees. "Once firms' additional cost burdens start to feed through to clients via price hikes, demand strength may come under pressure," Lima noted.

Hopes that the Covid-19 vaccine programme will be successful in reducing case numbers across the country underpinned positive expectations towards growth prospects. The overall degree of optimism regarding the 12-month outlook for business activity strengthened to a one-year high, the survey said.

"The total contract value, of this one-of-its-kind deal

FATH BIROL
CHIEF, INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

phere is not an issue of today. It is an issue of almost last 100 years."

"And many countries, so-called advanced economies, came to this industrialised levels and income levels by using a lot of coal. These are the US, Europe, Japan," he said.

Endorsing the Indian stand of it not being responsible for global pollution, Birol said: "Climate change issue we have today, (that is) concentration of carbon in the atmos-

Room to cut excise duty on fuel by ₹8.5/litre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The government has room to cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by up to ₹8.5 per litre without impacting its target for revenue from the tax on the two fuels, analysts said.

Petrol and diesel prices hover at a historic high following a relentless increase in rates over the past nine months. There have been calls by opposition parties as well as sections of society to the government to reduce excise duty to ease consumer pain.

"We estimate excise duty on auto fuels in FY22 (April 2021 to March 2022), if it is not cut, at ₹4.35 lakh crore versus Budget estimate of ₹3.2 lakh crore. Thus, even if excise duty is cut by ₹8.5 per litre on or before 1 April 2021, FY22 Budget estimate can be met," ICICI Securities said in a note.

► It expressed optimism for an excise duty cut given demand recovery, impending privatisation and inflation concerns, but expected it to be more modest than ₹8.5 a litre.

Excise duty was raised by ₹13 and ₹16 per litre on petrol and diesel between March 2020 and May 2020, and now stands at ₹31.8 on diesel and ₹32.9 per litre on petrol.

The increase in excise

DUTY REDUCTION NOT TO IMPACT REVENUE TARGET



► Excise duty was raised by ₹13 and ₹16 per litre on petrol and diesel between March 2020 and May 2020, and now stands at ₹31.8 on diesel and ₹32.9 per litre on petrol.

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If the cut is more modest, which we expect, FY22 excise duty will be higher

duty was to mop up gains arising from international crude oil prices falling to a two-decade low.

But, with oil prices recovering, it has not yet restored the taxes to their original levels.

The rates of regular petrol had last month crossed the

Rs 100-mark at a few places in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which levy the highest value-added tax (VAT) on the fuel in the country.

Between November 2014 and January 2016, the government had raised excise duty on petrol and diesel on nine occasions to take away gains arising from plummeting global oil prices.

In all, duty on petrol rates was hiked by ₹11.77 per litre and that on diesel by ₹13.47 a litre in those 15 months that helped the government's excise mop-up more than double to ₹2,42,000 crore in financial year 2016-17, from ₹99,000 crore in fiscal 2014-15.

The government had cut excise duty by ₹2 in October 2017, and by ₹1.50 a year later.

Central and state taxes make up for 60 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol and over 54 per cent of diesel.

Petrol is priced at ₹91.17 per litre in Delhi and diesel comes for ₹81.47.

The rates of regular petrol had last month crossed the

Bajaj Electricals, Mahindra ink ₹1,000-cr logistics contract

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Bajaj Electricals Ltd and Mahindra Logistics Ltd today signed a logistics optimisation and outsourcing contract worth over ₹1,000 crore for the next five years.

As per the agreement, Bajaj Electricals Ltd (BEL) will outsource its entire logistics to Mahindra Logistics Ltd (MLL), which will also provide a complete end-to-end redesign.

It has been done with the twin objectives of achieving enhanced and industry-best service levels, coupled with a logistics cost saving in excess of 25 per cent, BEL said in a regulatory filing.

MLL has developed for BEL a fully redesigned and consolidated logistics network, with storage optimisation, transportation management and inventory movement through technology, best practice and automation, it added.

"The total contract value, of this one-of-its-kind deal

in the Indian logistics industry, will be in excess of ₹1,000 crore over the next 5 years and is the outcome of a unique and collaborative solution," the filing said.

Commenting on the development, BEL executive director Anuj Poddar said Bajaj Electricals has been actively working towards various strategic initiatives to enhance value for its customers and other stakeholders.

"This collaboration with MLL is one such key initiative and I am confident that it will help transform our logistics, help us serve our customers efficiently, strengthen our competitiveness and also drive improved margins," he added.

MLL managing director and CEO Rampraveen Swaminathan said the company is aiming to enhance service levels of BEL to their customers significantly, while simultaneously driving down costs.

"I don't think this would be possible without the

extensive use of technology - across network design, warehouse management and transport optimisation and control. Adapting our learnings from disparate industry verticals allowed us to create an innovative solution for the consumer durables and electronics business leveraging our reach, know-how and tech investments in equal parts," Swaminathan said.

As part of the solution, two large ultramodern eco-friendly mega-warehouses in Delhi and Mumbai, equipped with the latest technology, automation and skill-building, will serve as the heart of the network.

The network will further operate fully IT-enabled fulfilment centres to serve BEL's dealers, distributors and customers.

MLL will also deploy a healthy mix of dedicated long-haul fleets and local distribution trucks, enabled by the latest tracking technology and control tower operations, the filing added.

Policyholders will now be

Insurance brokers brought within ombudsman ambit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The government has amended insurance ombudsman rules, bringing insurance brokers within their ambit and also allowed policyholders to file online complaints, the finance ministry said today.

The amended rules have enlarged the scope of complaints to ombudsmen from only disputes earlier to deficiencies in service on the part of insurers, agents, brokers and other intermediaries.

The government on 2 March notified comprehensive amendments to the Insurance Ombudsman Rules, 2017, with a view to improve the working of the insurance ombudsman mechanism to facilitate resolution of complaints regarding deficiencies in insurance services in a timely, cost-effective and impartial manner.

Under the amended rules, the timeliness and cost-effectiveness of the mechanism has been substantially strengthened.

Policyholders will now be

enabled for making complaints electronically to the ombudsman and a complaints management system will be created to enable policyholders to track the status of their complaints online. Further, the ombudsman may use video-conferencing for hearings.

Further, insurance brokers have been brought within the ambit of the ombudsman mechanism, by empowering the ombudsmen to pass awards against insurance brokers as well," the ministry said.

"Number of amendments have been made for securing the independence and integrity of the ombudsman selection process, while also building in safeguards to secure the independence and impartiality of the appointed persons while serving as ombudsmen," the ministry said.

Further, the selection committee will now include an individual with a track record of promoting consumer rights or advancing the cause of consumer protection in the insurance sector.

IEA chief backs India on coal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

FATH BIROL
CHIEF, INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

phere is not an issue of today. It is an issue of almost last 100 years."

"And many countries, so-called advanced economies, came to this industrialised levels and income levels by using a lot of coal. These are the US, Europe, Japan," he said.

Endorsing the Indian stand of it not being responsible for global pollution, Birol said: "Climate change issue we have today, (that is) concentration of carbon in the atmos-

house almost half of the world population ~ produce more than 60 per cent of electricity from coal and the average age of their coal-fired plants is 11 years as compared to 40 years in Europe.

A coal-fired plant has a maximum age of 45-50 years.

"There is a lot of investment put in and there is a lot of investment to be paid back," he said adding plants in Asia have a 40+ year more lifecycle if they follow the cycle as prevalent in other countries.

Besides, coal in many developing countries is a key source of employment.

"For example in India, Coal India Ltd or even the Indian railways carrying coal is a big source of employment. Many people get their daily bread from coal," he said. "Therefore it is extremely important on how we on one hand get out of the coal and at the same time do not have a negative impact on emerging markets."

Right from the outbreak of the virus, CSMIA upped the ante on the adoption of health and safety measures to curb

the spread of the virus. While remaining operational during the nationwide lockdown to facilitate repatriation and cargo flight operations, the airport also worked towards setting forth SOPs for delivering a seamless and hassle-free passenger journey through the introduction of innovative technology. These included common use self-service (CUSS) kiosks for passengers to check-in and generate baggage tag themselves, self-baggage drop (SBD) counters and e-gates that allow passengers to scan their boarding pass to proceed to the security check amongst others.

CSMIA's advancement in the areas of technology and customer engagement activities to cater to the demand of the passengers has resulted in the airport bagging the award since 2017, the statement said.

Focusing on promoting a contactless journey, the airport expedited its planned developments and launched initiatives like introducing a touch-less feature via QR-code based technology to its self-check-in kiosks amongst others. CSMIA also undertook the "restart feedback survey" in a phase-wise manner to gauge passenger sentiments about flying during the pandemic and understand passenger expectations in the new normal.

Even before the pandemic, CSMIA had adopted several initiatives to enhance the self-reliance of the passengers and promote a seamless airport journey through the introduction of innovative technology. These included common use self-service (CUSS) kiosks for passengers to check-in and generate baggage tag themselves, self-baggage drop (SBD) counters and e-gates that allow passengers to scan their boarding pass to proceed to the security check amongst others.

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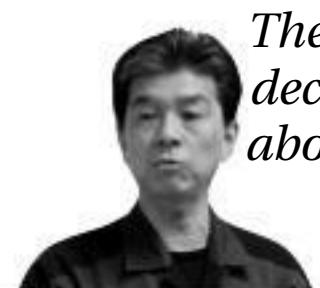
Meanwhile, a monthly survey said that India's services activity expanded at the fastest rate in a year during February amid improved demand and more favourable market conditions.

Bourses in Paris, London, Tokyo and Shanghai advanced as investors took heart from an easing in bond yields that has alleviated worries over possible interest rate hikes. The yield on the 10-year treasury inched down to 1.40 per cent early today.

Foreign investors had bought equities worth Rs 2,22,16 crore on net basis in Indian capital markets on Tuesday, exchange data showed.

Sectorally, all indices closed with gains barring auto. BSE energy surged 3.74 per cent, metal climbed 3.23 per cent, finance rose 2.80 per cent and bank gained 2.75 per cent. The Nifty bank which had a rough week so far took a breather and

There's no need to extend the current target to finish its decommissioning in 30-40 years despite uncertainties about melted fuel inside the plant's three reactors.



FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR PLANT CHIEF, AKIRA ONO
ON THE DECOMMISSIONING OF THE NUCLEAR PLANT

Myanmar security forces shoot dead 13 protesters

Around 35 people have been killed since the coup; It's horrific, it's a massacre: Youth activist Shunlei Yi

AGENCIES

YANGON 3 MARCH

Myanmar security forces opened fire on protests against military rule on Wednesday, killing at least 13 people, witnesses and media reported, a day after neighbouring countries called for restraint and offered to help Myanmar resolve the crisis.

The security forces resorted to live fire with little warning in several towns and cities, witnesses said, as the junta appeared more determined than ever to stamp out protests against the 1 February coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. "It's horrific, it's a massacre. No words can describe the situation and our feelings," youth activist Thinzar Shunlei Yi said via a messaging app.

A spokesman for the rul-



Anti-coup protesters run as one of them discharges a fire extinguisher to counter the impact of tear gas fired by riot policemen in Yangon Wednesday.

ed and carried away. Two people were killed in the country's second-biggest city Mandalay, a witness and media reports said. Two people were killed in the northern mining town of Hpakant, a resident there said, and one person was killed in the central town of Myingyan.

Around 35 people have been killed since the coup.

The violence came a day after foreign ministers from Southeast Asian neighbours urged restraint but failed to unite behind a call for the release Suu Kyi and the restoration of democracy.

"The country is like the Tiananmen Square in most of its major cities," the Archbishop of Yangon, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, said on Twitter, referring to the violent suppression of student-led protests in Beijing in 1989.

Security forces breaking

up protests in Yangon detained about 300 protesters, the Myanmar Now news agency reported.

Video posted on social media showed lines of young men, hands on heads, filing into army trucks as police and soldiers stood guard. Images of a 19-year-old woman, one of the two shot dead in Mandalay, showed her wearing a T-shirt that read "Everything will be OK".

Police in Yangon ordered three medics out of an ambulance, shot up the windscreen and then kicked and beat the workers with gun butts and batons, video broadcast by U.S.-funded Radio Free Asia showed. Democracy activist Esther Ze Naw said that the sacrifices of those who died would not be in vain. "We will continue this fight and win. We shall overcome this and win," she said.

Rockets fired at Iraq airbase hosting US troops: Report

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, 3 MARCH

At least 10 rockets targeted a military base in western Iraq that hosts the US-led coalition troops on Wednesday, the coalition and the Iraqi military said. It was not immediately known if there were any casualties.

The rockets struck Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar province at 7:20 am, spokesman Col. Wayne Marotto said. Later, the Iraqi military released a statement saying the attack did not cause significant losses and that security forces had found the launch pad used for the missiles.

An Iraqi military official said they had been found in the al-Baghdadi area of Anbar, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to brief media. It was the first attack since the US struck Iran-aligned militia targets along the Iraq-Syria border last week that killed one militiaman, stoking fears of



Aerial file photo taken from a helicopter shows Ain al-Asad airbase in the western Anbar desert, Iraq.

a possible repeat of a series of tit-for-tat attacks that escalated last year, culminating in the US-directed drone strike that killed Iranian Gen Qassem Soleimani outside the Baghdad airport.

Wednesday's attack targeted the same base where Iran struck with a barrage of missiles in January last year in retaliation for the killing of Soleimani. Dozens of US service members were injured, suffering concussions in that strike. Denmark condemned the attack saying that coal-

ition forces at Ain al-Asad are there at the invitation of the Iraqi government, helping to bring stability and security to the country. Despicable attacks against Ain al-Asad base in #Iraq are completely unacceptable," Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod tweeted.

The attack comes two days before Pope Francis' scheduled to visit Iraq in a much anticipated trip that will include Baghdad, southern Iraq and in the northern city of Irbil.

ICC probes alleged crimes in Palestinian territories

THE HAGUE, 3 MARCH

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said Wednesday she has launched an investigation into alleged crimes in the Palestinian territories, plunging the court into the midst of one of the most fraught conflicts of the past half century. Fatou Bensouda said in a statement the probe will be conducted independently, impartially and objectively, without fear or favour.

Bensouda said in 2019 there was a reasonable basis to open a war crimes probe into Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip as well as Israeli settlement activity in the occupied West Bank.

Following that assessment, she asked judges to rule on the extent of the court's jurisdiction in the troubled region. They did that last month, saying that the court's jurisdiction extends to territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

The Palestinians joined the court in 2015 and have long pushed for an investigation of Israel, which is not a member of the court.

The Palestinians asked the court to probe Israeli actions during its 2014 war against Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, as well as Israel's construction of settlements in the occupied West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem.

China kicks off politically significant annual Parl season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 3 MARCH

ple's Congress (NPC), the country's parliament and the advisory body the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) hold their sessions with full members totalling over 5,000 legislators and advisors.

The CPPCC will begin its week-long session from Thursday which will be attended by Xi and other leaders while the NPC kicks off its meeting from March 5.

The political season began on Wednesday with a nationally televised press conference by its spokesman.

During this year's meeting, the NPC, often described as a rubber stamp parliament for its routine approval of the

CPC proposals, is set to endorse the 14th Five Year plan and the plan for Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035.

While the 14th Five-Year plan envisages a massive overhaul of the country's domestic market to boost consumption in order to reduce China's reliance on shrinking exports markets, the Vision 2035 visualises a long-term plan, reflecting the development vision outlined by president Xi. China's status as a world's factory has been affected by declining global markets and the trade war initiated by former US president Donald Trump, followed by his successor Joe Biden as well.

IMPRINT



Footprints are seen in the sand on a beach on Mahe island, Seychelles. The President of the Indian Ocean island nation of Seychelles says he hopes enough residents will soon be vaccinated, hoping to achieve herd immunity by mid-March 2021.

AP

Intense preparation paves way for pontiff to meet ayatollah

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, 3 MARCH

meet on Saturday for at most 40 minutes in the Shiite cleric's modest home in the city of Najaf. Every detail was scrutinised ahead of time in painstaking. For Iraq's dwindling Christian minority ease intimidation from Shiite militiamen against their community.

With the meeting, Francis is implicitly recognizing him as the chief interlocutor of Shiite Islam over his rival, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Najaf did not make it easy, said one Christian religious official close to the planning from the Vatican side, speaking on condition

The Vatican's hope was that Francis would sign a document with al-Sistani pledging human fraternity.

of anonymity because of the visit's delicacy.

In December, Louis Sako, the patriarch of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church said the church was trying to schedule a meeting between Francis and the ayatollah. An edict from him provided many Iraqis reason to participate in the January 2005 elections, the first after the 2003 US-led

invasion. The Vatican's hope was that Francis would sign a document with al-Sistani pledging human fraternity.

The signature was among many elements the two sides negotiated over extensively. In the end, Shiite religious officials in Najaf told the AP a signing was not on the agenda, and al-Sistani will issue a verbal statement instead.

Each minute of Saturday's meeting will likely unfold as meticulously as a scripted stage play.

The 84-year-old pontiff's convoy will pull up along Najaf's busy column-lined

Rasool Street, which culminates at the Imam Ali Shrine, one of the most revered sites in the world for Shiites.

To the side is an alleyway too narrow for cars. Here, Francis will walk the 30 meters (yards) to al-Sistani's modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades. Waiting to greet him at the entrance will be al-Sistani's influential son, Mohammed Ridha.

Inside, and some steps to the right, the pontiff will come face to face with the ayatollah. This has not taken place by his Eminence with any guest before, said a Najaf religious official.

US sanctions will prolong the war: Yemen rebels

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAIRO, 3 MARCH

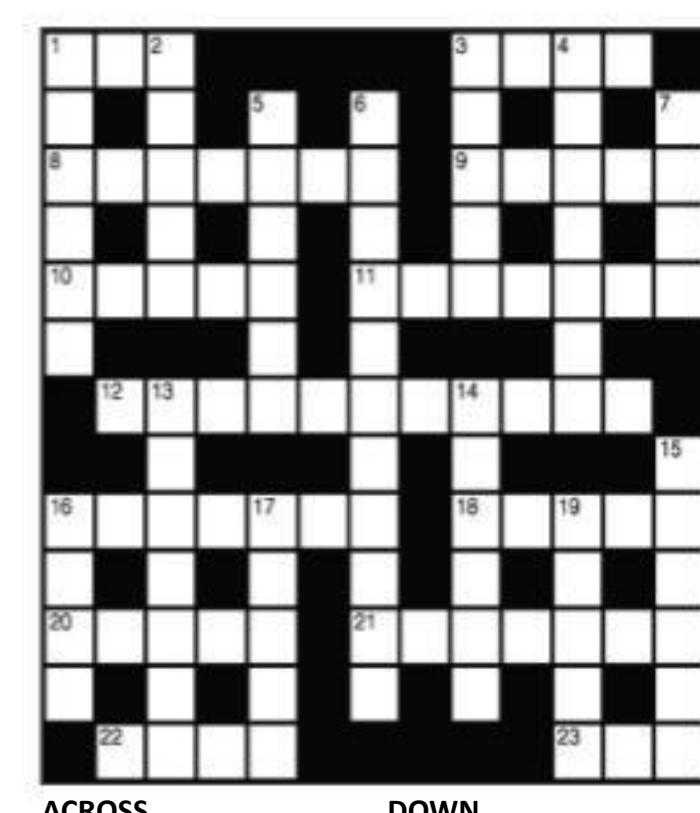
Saadi and Ahmed al-Hamzi were responsible for attacks impacting Yemeni civilians, bordering nations, and commercial vessels in international waters, the departments of State and Treasury said.

They said the Houthis play a significant role in the conflict in Yemen and exacerbate the dire humanitarian plight of the Yemeni people.

Mohammed Abdul-Salam, a spokesman for the Houthis, said the sanctions have shown the U.S. does not attempt to stop the aggression and lift the siege on Yemen.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Victory (3)
3 Large woody plant (4)
8 Type of varnish (7)
9 Arm joint (5)
10 Overturn (5)
11 Captive (7)
12 Set of thirteen (6,5)
16 Russian tea urn (7)
18 Vagrant (5)
20 Ballroom dance (5)
21 Plod (7)
22 Volcanic rock (4)
23 Auction item (3)

DOWN
1 Bender, 13 Grotto,
5 Ticking-off, 14 Run riot,
15 Eternity, 16 Offence,
17 Arm, 17 Onyx,
18 Foil.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote
the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

SMS Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513125, Call Centre 09910383333,

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JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111

EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377

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America is looking at the world with fresh eyes.
We're not simply picking up where we left off

US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN
DURING HIS FIRST MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	21°C H
HONG KONG	17°C	20°C H
TOKYO	07°C	10°C CL
LONDON	07°C	05°C H
DUBAI	24°C	21°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	09°C	04°C C H
NEW YORK	01°C	-03°C C S
MOSCOW	03°C	01°C H

S=sunny, CL=clear,
H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



Women during a walking rally to protest hate and racism in Michigan. AP

Quake hits central Greece: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.2 has struck central Greece. There were no immediate reports of injuries. The earthquake on Wednesday had an epicenter 22 km west-northwest of the town of Larissa and struck at 12:15 p.m., according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Center. AP

Hungary's Fidesz party: Hungary's governing party pulled out of its conservative group in the European Union's legislature on Wednesday following years of conflict over the rule of law and European values. The right-wing Fidesz party has held a two-thirds majority in Hungary's parliament almost uninterrupted since 2010. AP

Primetime Emmy Awards to be held in September: The 73rd edition of the Primetime Emmy Awards will air on 19 September, CBS and the Television Academy have announced. The Television Academy, unveiled the date on its official website, adding the ceremony will be also available to stream live and on demand on Paramount Plus. AP

IS killing in Afghanistan: The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the killing of three women working for a local radio and TV station in eastern Afghanistan, the latest in a spike in targeted killings across the war-torn country. Dozens of people gathered Wednesday for the funerals. AP

Meghan upset amid bullying report from palace home

LONDON, 3 MARCH

Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, on Wednesday said she was saddened by a report that she faced a bullying allegation during her time at Kensington Palace in London after her wedding to Prince Harry. The Times newspaper reported that the complaint was made in October 2018 by Jason Knauf, who was then the communications secretary for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at the time.

The complaint claimed the former American actress had allegedly driven two personal assistants out of the household and was undermining the confidence of a third staff member, the newspaper report said.

"The Duchess is saddened by this latest attack on her character, particularly as someone who has been the target of bullying herself and is deeply committed to supporting those who have experienced pain and trauma," said a spokesperson for Markle. "She is determined to continue her work building compassion around the world and will keep striving to set an example for doing what is right and doing what is good," the spokesperson said. PTI

Neera Tanden withdraws her nomination as Biden's budget chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 3 MARCH



In the first major setback to US President Joe Biden, Indian-American policy expert Neera Tanden has withdrawn her nomination as his top White House budget official after she faced strong opposition from both Democratic and Republican senators for her past controversial posts on social media.

Tanden, 50, had been facing a tough time for the confirmation of her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over her past Twitter outbursts against several lawmakers, including those from her own Democratic Party. Tanden, president

of the left-leaning think tank Center for American Progress, would have led a key economic post that oversees the production of the President's proposed budget for his agency if she had been confirmed. The OMB is in charge of the budget-drafting process in the White House, as well as having a large role in the issuance of new regulations.

Biden on Tuesday accepted her withdrawal and indicated that Tanden might be brought in the administration

in some other capacity. Her withdrawal marks the first high-profile defeat of one of Biden's nominees. Eleven of the 23 Cabinet nominees requiring Senate approval have been confirmed, most with strong bipartisan support.

"I have accepted Neera Tanden's request to withdraw

her name from nomination for Director of the Office of Management and Budget," Biden said in a statement.

But the President indicated that she will have a role to play in his administration.

"I have the utmost respect

for her record of accomplishment, her experience

and her counsel, and I look forward to having her serve in a role in my administration. She will bring valuable perspective and insight to our work," Biden said.

"I appreciate how hard you and your team at the White House has worked to win my confirmation. Unfortunately, it now seems clear that there is no path forward to gain confirmation, and I do not want continued consideration of my nomination to be a distraction from your other priorities," Tanden said in the letter. "I am incredibly grateful for your leadership on behalf of the American people and for your agenda that will make such a transformative difference in people's lives," she wrote.

Biden's Cabinet half-empty after slow start in confirmations: President Joe Biden's Cabinet is taking shape at the slowest pace of any in modern history, with just over a dozen nominees for top posts confirmed more than a month into his tenure.

Among Biden's 23 nominees with Cabinet rank, just 13 have been confirmed by the Senate, or a little over half. And among the 15 core nominees to lead federal agencies, 10 have been confirmed, or about two thirds. According to the Center for Presidential Transition, about a month into their first terms, the previous four presidents had 84 per cent of their core Cabinet picks confirmed.

FBI chief warns violent 'domestic terrorism' growing in US

WASHINGTON, 3 MARCH

FBI Director Christopher Wray bluntly labelled the January riot at the US Capitol as domestic terrorism Tuesday and warned of a rapidly growing threat of homegrown violent extremism that law enforcement is scrambling to confront through thousands of investigations.

Wray also defended to lawmakers his own agency's handling of an intelligence report that warned of the prospect for Capitol violence. And he firmly rejected false claims advanced by some Republicans that anti-Trump groups had organized the deadly riot that began when a violent mob stormed the building as Congress was gathering to certify results of the presidential election.

Wray's testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, his first before Congress since the insurrection, was one in the series of hearings centered on the law enforcement response to the Capitol insurrection. Lawmakers pressed him not only about possible intelligence and communication failures ahead of the riot but also about the threat of violence from white supremacists, militias and other extremists that the FBI says it is prioritising with the same urgency as the menace of international terrorism organizations.

National security officials to testify: Federal national security officials are set to testify in the second Senate hearing about what went wrong on January 6, facing questions about missed intelligence and botched efforts to quickly gather National Guard troops that day as a violent mob laid siege to the US Capitol. Senators are eager

Wednesday to grill the officials from the Pentagon, the National Guard, and the Justice and Homeland Security departments about their preparations for then-President Donald Trump's online gathering in Washington and interrupting the electoral count. At a hearing last week, officials who were in charge of security blamed each other as well as federal law enforcement for their own lack of preparation as hundreds of rioters easily breached the security perimeter and eventually broke into the Capitol itself.

Biden urges Dem to rally behind \$1.9T bill

'We need to pass this bill soon, that's what the people sent us here to do'



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 3 MARCH

President Joe Biden urged Senate Democrats on Tuesday to rally behind a \$1.9 trillion COVID-relief bill and stood by his proposed \$1,400 payments to individuals, even as some party moderates sought to dial back parts of the package.

He said we need to pass this bill and pass it soon. That's what the American people sent us here to do, and we have to get America the help it needs, Senator Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told reporters, describing a 20-minute conference call Biden had with Democratic senators.

The president's cry for unity came as Democrats, with no votes to spare in a 50-50 Senate, sorted through lingering divisions over the emerging bill. Those included moderates' efforts to focus spending more narrowly on those hardest hit by the deadly pandemic and resulting economic contraction.

Biden took to Twitter to signal he wouldn't budge from his demand that lawmakers add a fresh \$1,400 payment to the \$600 that millions of individuals received from a December relief measure. That new installment comprises nearly a quarter of the overall bill's cost.

The fact is that \$600 is not enough. The Senate needs to add a fresh \$1,400 payment to the \$600 that millions of individuals received from a December relief measure. That new installment comprises nearly a quarter of the overall bill's cost.

Schumer said Senate debate would commence as soon as Wednesday and predicted, We'll have the votes we need to pass the bill. Democrats want to send a final package to Biden by 14 March, when an earlier round of emergency jobless benefits expires.

The bill has hundreds of billions of dollars for schools and colleges, vaccines and testing, mass transit systems, renters and small businesses. It also has money for child care, tax breaks for families with children and assistance for states willing to expand Medicaid coverage for low-income residents. Two people said Biden told Democrats they must sometimes accept provisions

US 'concerned' by Russia, China using vaccines to engage with countries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 3 MARCH

The United States on Tuesday expressed concerns over Russia and China using Covid vaccines to engage with countries in a way where they're "not holding them to the same standard" the US and a number of other countries would do.

We are concerned by Russia and China using vaccines to engage with countries in a way where they're not holding them to the same standard the United States and a number of other countries would do.

"We are concerned by Russia and China using vaccines to engage with countries in a way where they're not holding them to the same standard the United States and a number of other countries would do.

Psaki was responding to a question if the Biden administration is worried that the US is going to be left far behind Russia and China which are giving vaccine to African and South American countries by tens of millions.

and even freedom of media. Of course that's a concern, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said. But the President's focus is on ensuring the American people are vaccinated. We look forward to engaging with and contributing to the global community's effort to do that. But our first priority is vaccinating the American people.

Psaki was responding to a question if the Biden administration is worried that the US is going to be left far behind Russia and China which are giving vaccine to African and South American countries by tens of millions.

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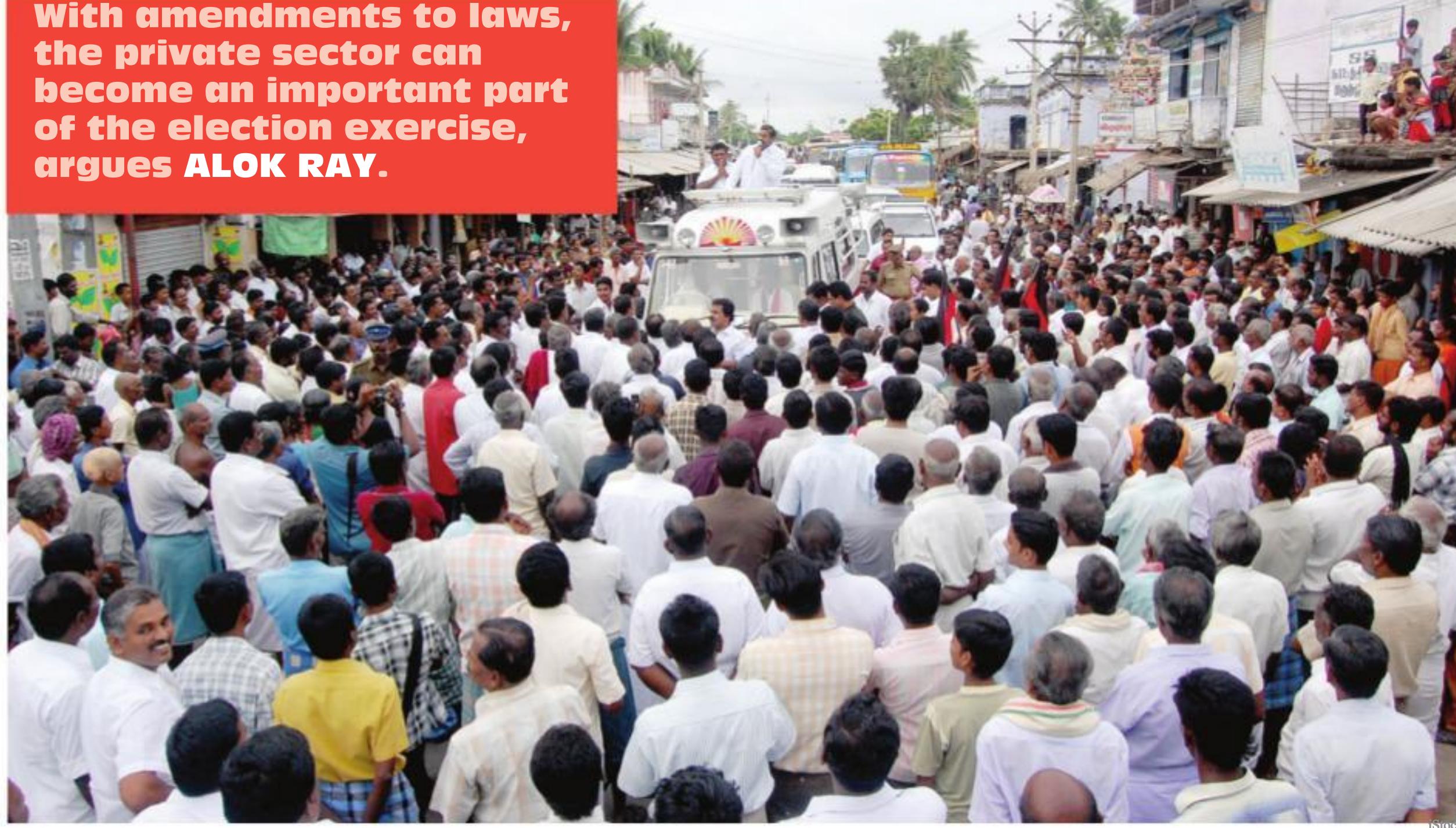
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Citizens' role in conduct of polls

With amendments to laws, the private sector can become an important part of the election exercise, argues ALOK RAY.



Recently, while addressing the Governing Council of NITI Aayog, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized on the larger role of private sector in wealth creation and for an Atmanirbhar Bharat. We must reorient our views to recognize the energy and indomitable spirit of the private sector. Very rightly, the PM's pitch to Chief Ministers for enlarging the space for private sector is the need of the hour to facilitate much awaited reform in the governance.

A few days ago, Mr. Aziz Premji, the founder-chairman of Wipro, urged the Centre to immediately involve the private sector to participate in the country's vaccination drive against the Covid-19 pandemic, saying it would be able to help the country vaccinate more than 500 million people in 60 days. No one can deny that a confident human resource bank empowered by technology as well as a positive attitude is becoming the lifeline for every big exercise. In bold decision, the Central Government decided on 24 February to allow 20,000 designated private hospitals to administer the Covid-19 vaccine while widening the ambit of the drive to include senior citizens and those above 45 with comorbidities.

Almost in every sphere of life, the private sector is putting in efforts to change narratives for the better. Then why is it that in the election exercise, old laws and practices compel us to cast out the private sector, despite the fact numbers of booths must be increased considerably because of Covid compulsions. Are employees of private corporates less competent than those of the public sector or is

their involvement considered a potential threat to this most crucial exercise of democracy of which they are also an integral part?

The Election Commission is preoccupied in appointing Presiding and Polling officers and in arranging their training for the ensuing elections in five states and UT. On 26 February, dates were declared, and it is apparent the Commission requires more human resources than earlier to ensure a free and fair election. It is reported that the Election Commission is suffering from acute shortage of staff in appointing Presiding and Polling officers in election booths. After receiving appointment notices, as usual, hundreds of them are praying to be relieved on various grounds including medical. The Commission is preparing a list of sensitive booths where strict vigilance is a precondition to ensure fair election.

Indeed, a tough time lies ahead for District Returning Officers to conduct the election as the Election Commission has to depend on employees of either Central or State Governments, local authorities or Government companies.

Articles 324 to 329 of Part XV of the Constitution provide that powers for the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls as well as the conduct of all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice President held under the Constitution are vested in the Election Commission.

Under Article 324, the President may, after consultation with the Election Commission, appoint Regional Commissioners as he may consider

necessary to assist the Election Commission in its functions. The President or the Governor of a State, shall, when so requested by the Election Commission, make available to the Election Commission or to a Regional Commissioner such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the Election Commission.

Articles 327 and 328 have empowered the Parliament and State Legislatures to make relevant laws. Parliament has enacted two laws namely Representation of the People Act, 1950 and Representation of the People Act, 1951 to make provisions, inter alia, for polling officials. Part II A of the 1950 Act provides for nomination of Chief Electoral Officer and District Election Officers who shall be officers of the State Government.

Officers of State Government or of a local authority may be appointed as Electoral Registration Officer or Assistant Electoral Registration Officer. Part IV of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 provides for administrative machinery for conduct of elections and prescribes, inter alia, for the nomination and appointment of Observers, Returning officer and Presiding as well as Polling officers of each polling station of constituencies.

Under Section 20 of the Act, subject to the superintendence, direction and control of the Election Commission, the Chief electoral officer of each State shall supervise the conduct of elections in the State and in the same manner, the District Election Officer shall coordinate and supervise all work in the district or in the area within his jurisdiction in connection with the conduct of all elections to Parliament

and the Legislature of the State. Under Section 20-B of the Act, the Election Commission may nominate an observer who shall be an officer of Government to watch the conduct of election or elections in a constituency or a group of constituencies and to perform such other functions as may be entrusted to him by the Election Commission.

Under the law, the general duty of the Returning Officer is to do all such acts and things as may be necessary for effectively conducting the election and the Presiding Officer has a general duty to keep order at the polling station and to see the poll is fairly conducted. The Polling Officers have to assist the Presiding officer for the polling station in the performance of his functions.

Section 26 empowers the District Election Officer to appoint Presiding as well as Polling Officers of each polling station, mentioning that the Presiding Officer or Polling Officer has not been employed by or on behalf of, or has been otherwise working for a candidate in the election. Law further provides that if a polling officer is absent from the polling station, the Presiding Officer may appoint any person who is present at the polling station other than a person who has been employed by or on behalf of, or has been otherwise working for a candidate in or about the election, to be the polling officer and inform the district election officer accordingly. In an emergency, the Polling officer shall officiate as Presiding officer. The intention of the law is clear and flexible to the extent possible.

Though Section 21 of the Act pre-

scribes that Returning and Assistant Returning Officers shall be officers of the Government or of a local authority, no such condition has been prescribed for the appointment of Presiding and Polling Officers.

The Election Commission of India does not have independent staff of its own and the Commission must depend on the staff of Central and State Governments to conduct the elections. The dual responsibility of the administrative staff is not conducive to conduct a fair and impartial election. The influence of ruling party at the Centre or in States may be a threat to the independence of the Commission. Appreciating this threat, Section 13CC of the 1950 Act and 28 A of the 1951 Act provide that the Chief Electoral Officer, District Election Officer, Returning officer, Assistant Returning Officer, Polling Officer and any other officer (Observer, Presiding Officer, Polling Officer), and any Police Officer designated for the time being by the State Government for the conduct of any election shall be deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission for their period of engagement or for the period commencing on and from the date of the notification calling for such election and ending with the date of declaration of results of such election, as the case may be and accordingly, such officers, shall, during that period, be subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission.

Further, Section 159 of the 1951 Act has empowered the Regional Commissioner appointed under Article 324(4) of the Constitution or the Chief Electoral Officer of the State to ask for staff as may be necessary for the performance of any duties in connection with an election from (i) every local authority; (ii) every University established or incorporated by or under a Central, Provincial or State Act; (iii) a Government company as defined in the Companies Act; (iv) any other institution, concern or undertaking which is established by or under a Central, Provincial or State Act or which is controlled, or financed wholly or substantially by funds provided directly or indirectly by the Central Government or a State Government. Under Section 159, employees of a wide category of Universities, Colleges and Schools, autonomous bodies and Government companies come under this jurisdiction, but private sector including corporates and private educational institutes having enormous resources and power have been kept out of this festival of democracy.

If bias of a business house towards any political party is an issue, then the same reasoning could be raised about employees of Central and State Governments.

In State Bank of India Staff vs Election Commission of India and others, 1994, the Patna High Court after an in-depth study of the provisions of laws decided that State Bank of India is not a local authority, although it is a statutory corporation and Section 159 could not override the provisions of Article 324. In this case, the High Court

rejected the liberal interpretation of the Election Commission and the Apex Court upheld the judgment of the High Court quashing the communication of the District Election Officer calling upon the Chief General Manager of State Bank of India to furnish the list of employees of SBI with full particulars for the purpose of deputing such employees on election duty and similar letters of appointments for presiding and polling officers in connection with the parliamentary election.

The scenario of public vis a vis private sector in 1950 or 1951 is not comparable with the enormous human resources now nurtured and possessed by the private sector, which employs more than 90 per cent of the total work force. Leaving aside the domestic, small and medium private sectors, the educated and expert human resources available at various levels of the corporate sector is not only essential in wealth creation but without their active partnership, national exercises like Elections, Census and other activities would remain a nightmare and an injustice to the majority of citizens. No country having a 130-crore population can afford to ignore their participation in such crucial exercises. We must get rid of our colonial-era belief that government officials possess more integrity and competency for such jobs. This is nothing but a suicidal negation of the nation's resources.

To start with, Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 159 should be amended to make the law more comprehensive, so that wider categories of citizens from public and private sectors could be appointed at least as Presiding and Polling Officers. The disciplinary aspect could be easily extended to private employees also. A reasonable policy of compensation for their engagement is not a big issue and hopefully private corporates would extend their support and cooperation in this exercise. Initially, we may include private corporates where the certification and compliance of Standing Orders is mandatory under the Code on Industrial Relations, 2020.

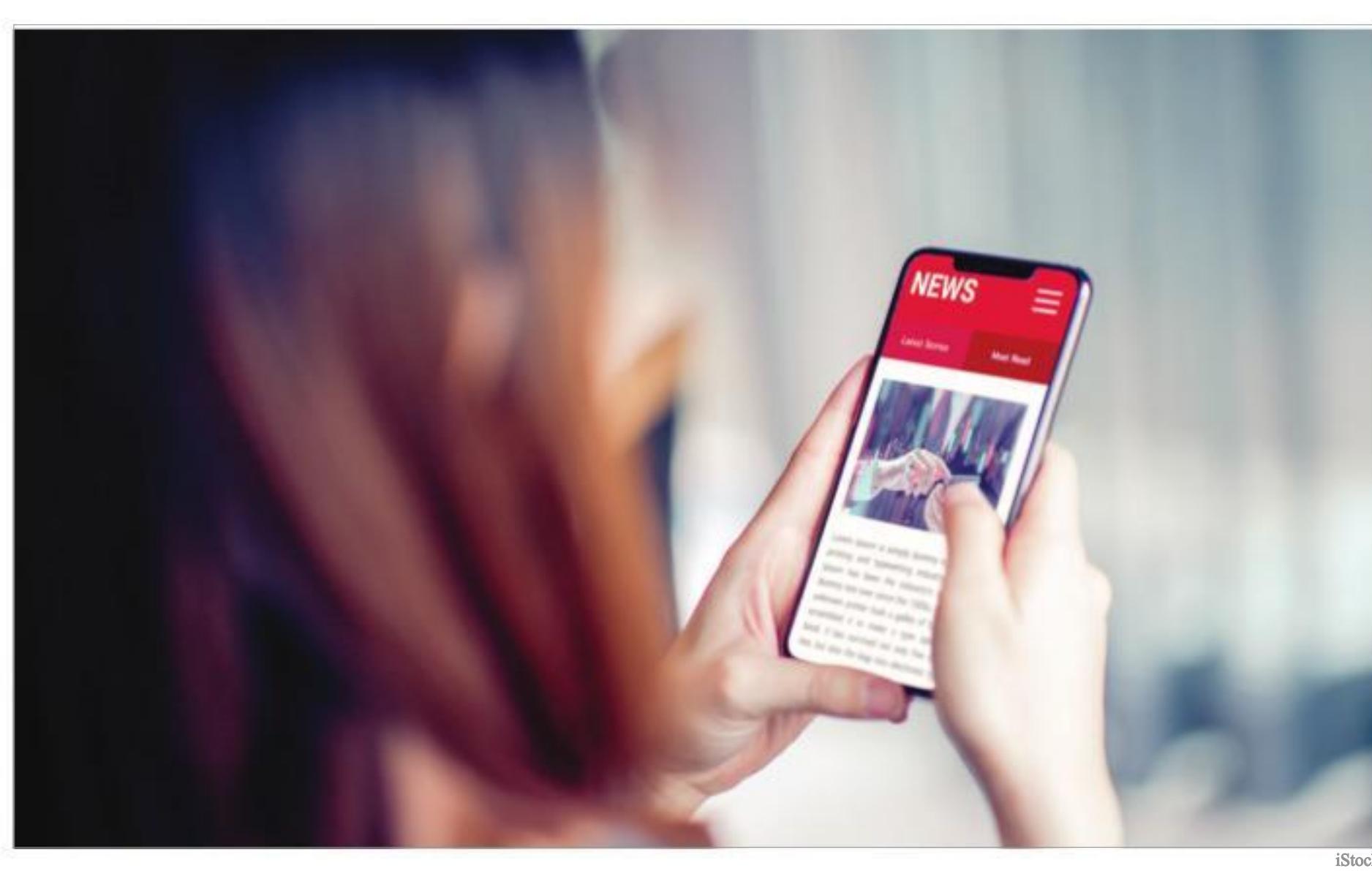
A law may also be considered to associate the enormous human resources available in private Universities, colleges and schools. In the USA, no Constitutional body such as the Election Commission exists, and States conduct elections through local authorities. A few States are associating even schoolboys in the election exercise to groom them in the democratic exercise.

After the Union Budget, 2021 pushed a strong privatisation agenda, the Prime Minister advocated for the private sector to act as a force multiplier in development and to improve the quality of life. We have to trust the private sectors as an equal partner in nation building. The human resource aspect in organizing the election could be resolved without any further delay. Election Commission, Law Commission of India and Central Government may consider this. No one can stop an idea whose time has come.

The writer is a lawyer and author.

Laws must help media

As media companies lobby for laws that would help them get a share of the profits made by internet companies on the news they produce, governments too must introspect on nations' need for media that informs the citizenry, says USAMA KHILJI



It is undeniable that the internet and social media have fundamentally changed the media landscape in the world in more ways than one. And as governments get eager to regulate the internet, media groups are lobbying for laws that can help them get a share of the profits internet companies make through adverts on the traffic that they

generate, of which news forms an integral part.

This is what happened in Australia recently, as governments in Canada, US and the EU mull over similar proposals. The logic is that news sites are providing a large part of content that is driving traffic on the internet where people share news and click

on it. This in turn provides added advertisement revenue to internet companies that are able to profit off the ads they target users with.

News companies are said to have been making lesser profit, resultantly laying off journalists and shrinking their presence in several locations, which inadvertently means people

have less information available to them, and the quality of it has also been impacted. Getting more revenue from internet companies will help revive that.

Internet companies on the other hand are saying that they did not have a role in the loss of revenue of media groups, and have used arm-twisting techniques with the Australian government that are otherwise typical of oppressive governments, threatening pull out. Facebook blanked out not only all news pages, but also several non-profit pages including many that were sharing critical information related to the pandemic.

Google threatened to leave the Australian market completely, but quickly moved to negotiate with the government once its fierce competitor Microsoft stepped in and not only supported the Australian proposal but also offered its search engine Bing for the Australian market, with commitments to share revenue with news agencies based on referrals from the search engine. Google's settlement with the government now includes an agreement with News Corp — the group owned by media tycoon Rupert Murdoch — to have all their channels included in Google news showcase, a new app with curated news.

Facebook has also entered into agreements with news groups, and the two giants seem to have convinced the Australian government not to force them to have agreements with news groups by virtue of existing deals they voluntarily entered into. The changes in the media code also include easing the mandatory arbitration requirement in case of no deals between tech giants and media groups.

So big tech and big news corporations have, under government pressure, negotiated an agreement of profit-sharing related to news and the internet. But where does this leave citizens?

Citizens benefit from indepen-

dent and high-quality journalism that is investigative, critical, and diverse. This includes smaller community media initiatives that may not be as well funded as large media corporations. But what these deals show us is that large media conglomerates are going to be able to strike deals, and big tech platforms with high profit margins are going to be able to share profits with media corporations.

But such pressure from governments on platforms to enter revenue-sharing arrangements is an added barrier to entry for smaller tech platforms to be able to disrupt the monopoly of big tech companies. This is also a barrier for smaller media start-ups that do not have the same bargaining power as large media conglomerates and are likely to be left out.

It is also time for governments to do some introspecting around the role they have played in the decline of news media. Instead of respecting the detailed work by journalists who dig into issues and ask tough questions — something that is their constitutional right and professional responsibility — governments across the world have been given to discrediting the press. Trump's notorious 'fake news' calls, disinformation campaigns against journalists critical of him and the withholding of government adverts from media groups seen as critical of the power elite in Pakistan, and sedition charges for those not toeing the government's line in India are just a few instances of how the press has been systematically discredited.

This has had real world consequences in the shape of not only security threats that discourage critical journalism, but also a decline in the subscriber base, which has been further fuelled by sensationalist blurs on social media that have become the go-to resource for news consumption. That, of course, is a dangerous trend where in-depth news has been replaced by click-bait-

ing sensationalist headlines to encourage web traffic which has become the main source of revenue for media houses.

Social media platforms also privilege those who are able to invest money through credit cards in social media promotions on their account to reach a wider audience. That is a major barrier of entry for small media start-ups especially in the developing world where lack of financial resources and lack of credit cards means a lot of the ad-money-hungry algorithms of social media platforms are effectively useless despite a large following. This is because, for example, Facebook pages cannot even reach their subscribers without boosting a post through paid promotions. This is a major freedom of expression disadvantage that social media platforms like Facebook must work to address.

And then there is the fact of how the internet was envisaged: an open source free medium for the exchange of information. Though ads complicate this model, the conversation that must be had instead is around the monopolistic behaviour of big tech companies that tend to buy out any competitors. Government intervention must not translate into mediation between big money groups for profit-sharing, but models that benefit the end-users of the internet.

Access to information must remain free and open on the internet. And if there is to be profit-sharing of ad revenue, it must be equitable, sensitive to the needs of all sizes of businesses and non-profits, and centred on the right to access to information, right to privacy, and freedom of expression of citizens. This includes governments recognising the fundamental role of independent journalism in upholding democracy and information integrity.

The writer is director of Bolo Bhari, an advocacy forum for digital rights in Pakistan. Dawn/ANN

