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NEARBY



Odisha to move SC over border dispute with A.P.

Bhubaneswar
The Odisha government on Monday decided to move the Supreme Court challenging the conduct of panchayat elections by Andhra Pradesh in three villages of Koraput district and violation of status quo on the border dispute.
REGION ▶ PAGE 5

9,740 get jab in city, 54% of daily vaccination target

NEW DELHI
A total of 9,740 healthcare and front-line workers took the COVID-19 vaccination on Monday and there were 11 Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson. The number of people vaccinated on Monday was 54.1% of the daily target of 18,000.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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171 still missing as death toll in Himalayan tragedy rises to 26

Rescue workers trying to reach 35 labourers believed to be trapped inside tunnel

DEEVESH K. PANDEY
VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI



Anxious moments: Rescue operations under way at Tapovan tunnel in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand on Monday. ■ PTI

The death toll in the Nanda Devi deluge in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district went up to 26 on Monday, even as operations continued for the second day to rescue nearly 35 labourers trapped inside the 2.5-km-long Tapovan hydel project tunnel filled with slush and debris. A total of 171 persons, including the trapped workers, are still missing.

Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, who reached Joshimath in the evening to take stock of the situation, said a joint team had entered 130 metres into the tunnel by around 7 p.m. and might take another two to three hours to reach the T-point. Earlier, Union Power Minister R.K. Singh also inspected the tunnel.

"There is a turning point at 180 metres where we hope to find the workers, as briefed by the NTPC officials. However, removing the slush is proving to be a time-consuming exercise as only one JCB can enter and exit at a

time. We may explore other options to create access routes to the point where the labourers are suspected to be stranded," said a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) official.

Slush removal
After personnel from the Army and the Engineer Task Force opened the mouth of the tunnel in the morning, a team comprising personnel from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the NDRF and the State Disaster Response Force started removing the slush using earth movers and excavators.

An ITBP official said the rescue team had gone into the tunnel with victim-locating cameras and sniffer dogs.

According to the Uttarakhand police, 202 persons were reported missing hours after the disaster struck.

Among them, 21 were from one Ritivik company, 100 others associated with it, 46 from Rishi Ganga company, 21 worked for Om Metal and three for H.C.C.

Two persons each from the Tapovan, Ringi and

slush using earth movers and excavators.

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Two persons each from the Tapovan, Ringi and

Landslip likely trigger: experts

Though the jury is still out, glaciologists and experts in rock sciences are converging on the view that the cause of the Chamoli deluge was probably a landslip and not a glacial lake burst.

Other experts opine that a large mass of rock or debris might have impacted the glacier and triggered an avalanche. ▶ PAGE 9

Karchho villages and five from Raini village were also reported missing.

The missing persons included 12 villagers, 172 staffers of the NTPC project and 46 workers at the Rishiganga project, the ITBP official said.

The flash flood in the Alaknanda river system on Sunday washed away the Raini bridge and cut off 13 villages located close to the border with China.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 9

Farmers from many

Centre still open to talks with farmers, says Modi

MSP will continue to be in force, PM tells Rajya Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said his government was still open to talks with farmers demanding a repeal of the three farm laws passed last September. He said the minimum support price for crops "was, and would remain in force".

Mr. Modi added that calling the Sikh community names was not doing any good to the country.

Replying to the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address in the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister claimed that a proper response had been given by India to the situation along the Line of Actual Control.

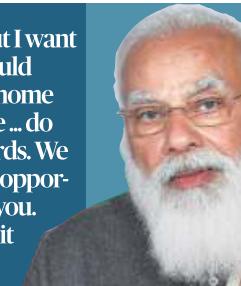
Mr. Modi said the nation was proud of every Sikh. "Some people are feeding wrong things in minds of the Sikh people ... What have they not done for this country? The words and blessings of the Guru Sahibs are precious. Language used by some for the Sikhs in an attempt to mislead them is not going to benefit anyone," he said.

States, including Punjab, have been camping on the borders of Delhi for the past two months in protest against the laws.

"We must not forget what happened with Punjab. It suffered the most during Partition. It cried the most

Protest is your right, but I want to request that you should ask the elderly farmers to go home ... We should not lose this time ... do not take the country backwards. We should give these reforms an opportunity and see if they benefit you. If there is a lacuna, we will fix it

NARENDRA MODI



PM coins two new terms

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday coined two terms – 'andolan jeevi' (professional protesters) and 'Foreign Destructive Ideology' – to lampoon protesters and foreign individuals who have tweeted in support of the farmers' protest. ▶ PAGE 9

Empty talk, say farmers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in Parliament on Monday was full of insults and empty talk, leaders of farm unions said. The leaders added that if the government was serious about resuming talks on the laws, then it should take steps to do so. ▶ PAGE 9

during the 1984 riots," Mr. Modi said.

Comparing the farm laws with the Green Revolution, Mr. Modi said there had been a huge outcry in the country even then.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

In Tamil Nadu, V.K. Sasikala gets massive welcome

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HOSUR/CHENNAI

The distance between Bengaluru and Chennai is around 350 km – one that is usually covered in 6.5 to 7 hours of driving. However, for V.K. Sasikala, the former aide of late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, it appeared to

take almost a full day as she started her Chennai-bound journey after completing her jail term in Bengaluru.

Though Ms. Sasikala's journey started at 7.30 a.m. on Monday, her vehicle reached near Kancheepuram town only at 1 a.m. on Tuesday. The convoy stopped sev-

eral times on the route, as eager loyalists gathered to welcome her, shower her car with flowers, and some even got in the path of her vehicle.

During the AIADMK.

The convoy rolled into Tamil Nadu to ritual drumming, and a reception of *pooranakumbams*, reminiscent of the welcome accorded to victorious kings and heroes in ancient times.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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New labour codes to allow four-day work week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The new labour codes set to be implemented soon would provide companies the flexibility of reducing the number of working days to four days a week and provide free medical check-ups to workers through the Employees State Insurance Corporation, Labour and Employment Secretary Apurva Chandra said on Monday.

Mr. Chandra said the draft rules under the labour codes are being finalised. He added that most States were in the process of framing their rules and some, including U.P., Punjab and M.P., would be ready with their drafts this week.

He said the concerns about the working hours going up from 10.5 hours to 12 hours, with one hour of rest, that arose during consultations had been addressed. "We have tried to make some changes. We have tried to give flexibility in working days," he said.

Under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 draft rules, the limit of working hours for a week was 48 hours. Mr. Chandra said this limit was "sacrosanct" and the employers and workers would have to agree to a change in working days. "It cannot be forced."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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CM YK

'At least 30 protesters missing since Jan. clashes'

Samyukt Kisan Morcha's legal team faces hindrance as they do not have contact details for some of the people

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The whereabouts of at least 30 people after the January 26 violence and January 29 clashes are not known as of February 7, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's (SKM) legal team at the Singhu border said on Monday.

"For the last four-five days, our team has been going from one trolley to the other and checking details against the list that we have. This exercise has been completed at the Singhu border," said advocate Ramandeep Bhathal, member of the legal team.

Apart from checking the

trolleys, Ms. Bhathal said that the team on the ground shares details with their seniors who further check at police stations. "Our own Information Technology cell also tries to trace the numbers of those that we have," Ms. Bhathal said, adding that they fear that most of the missing persons would have been arrested.

However, a problem being faced by advocates is that there are a few names in the list of "missing persons" for whom they have no contact details. "We have been making announcements at the stage too, but we need people to come and tell us



Women farmers arrive to join the ongoing protest at the Singhu border on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

about numbers of families or persons who are missing so that we can get their details," Ms. Raman said.

The open school, 'Sanjh

Sath', also opened for the second day at the Singhu border on Monday. The school was shut since January 24. "Initially because of

For the last four-five days, our team has been going from one trolley to the other and checking details against the list that we have

RAMANDEEP BHATHAL
Member of SKM's legal team

January 26 preparations and later, because of Internet suspension, we couldn't open the school. Today, over 50 children had come for the class. It'll slowly increase," said Balbir Singh Barwa from Ropar who is among the group which runs the open school.

Protesting farmers also

said that despite no formal resumption of talks with the government yet, they'll continue their agitation till the laws are repealed. "This fight is to be fought with love. Whether they agree or not, we won't leave till they do. All struggles take time to reach their desired end. We are willing to stay here for even two years," said Balbir Singh (51) from Patiala, adding that they're not scared of arrests being made.

Mr. Sukhwinder said that the protest will continue to grow stronger and all their fights will include "flowers" as a response to any strict measures.

Nihang Sikhs lose third horse in two weeks

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Another horse of Nihang Sikhs died on Monday after undergoing treatment for 12 days, the group at the Singhu border said. Two horses had died earlier on January 26 taking the total count to three.

Dheera Singh Nihang (40) said that the horse's name was Chhinda and he was six years old. "On January 26, when we had gone to the Red Fort, the horse was attacked. We called the doc-

tors to check on him but his condition worsened," Mr. Dheera said.

Chhinda breathed his last on Monday after which he was laid to rest for a brief period at the protest site where members of the group chanted for his peaceful departure. "He has died during the protest. He is a martyr," said Mr. Dheera.

Two horses had died on January 26 allegedly due to tear gas shell fired by security personnel as a crowd control measure.

Report on whereabouts of man, HC tells police

He has been missing since R-Day tractor rally; SHO refused to file complaint; plea

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the city police to submit a status report on the whereabouts of a 27-year-old man, who has been missing since he participated in the farmer's tractor rally on Republic Day.

A Bench of Justice Siddharth Mridul and Justice Anup J. Bhamhani gave the direction while hearing a habeas corpus plea by the cousin brother of the missing person.



Violence breaks out at the Red Fort during a farmers' rally on R-Day. ■ FILE PHOTO

Baljeet from Jind in Haryana, said his cousin brother Bajinder had joined the tractor rally in protest against the three farm laws.

However, Mr. Bajinder never returned after the rally and since then his whereabouts are unknown, Mr. Baljeet said in his plea.

Advocate Soayib Qureshi, representing Mr. Baljeet, said when his client along with other relatives went to a police station in Nangloi for registering a missing complaint, "to their complete shock" the station house officer refused to register any missing complaint.

The SHO gave "false assurance that they will let him know in case any information regarding his brother is received," the plea added.

The petition stated that the "inaction and negligent attitude of the Respondent No.3 have led to the apprehension that his brother has been illegally detained by the Respondent No.3 and therefore, they are deliberately resisting from writing any official complaint or FIR and providing any information to the petitioner in this regard".

The High Court will hear the case on Tuesday.

Super Bowl features 30-second TV ad on farmers' protest

Unions thank U.S. Sikh community

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Football championship Super Bowl, which is one of the most-watched events on American television, has featured a 30-second commercial on the ongoing farmers' agitation in India, terming it the "largest protest in history".



Farmers protesting at Ghaziupur on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

from Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer. "We want you to know, our brothers and sisters in India, that we stand with you," he says.

Fresno has a large Sikh population, as high as 40,000, according to some local reports.

Pop music icon Rihanna's viral tweet on the protests also gets a mention.

"Fresno City community put that ad during the Super Bowl. This is great work by community to aware people regarding Farmers Protest. Thank you Fresno Sikh Community," said the Kisan Ekta Morcha tweet.

After tweets from Rihanna and other celebrities put global spotlight on the protest, the Ministry of External Affairs rebuked them in an official statement.

It includes a message

CITU Haryana unit to gherao eight Ministers

Move is part of union's nationwide campaign supporting farmers' agitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The Haryana unit of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) will gherao eight Ministers, including Chief Minister Manohar Lal, over the next week to express solidarity with the farmers seeking repeal of the farm laws.

It is part of CITU's nationwide campaign supporting the farmers' agitation.

On February 14

Giving details, CITU Haryana vice-president Satvir Singh said the workers from Gurugram, Rewari and Mewat would lay siege to the residence of Union Minister of State for Statistics and Gurugram MP Rao Inderjit Singh, on February 14 in support of the farmers' demand for withdrawal of laws and legal



Farmers protesting in Kundli, Haryana. ■ FILE PHOTO

guarantee for Minimum Support Price. Similarly, the CITU workers from Sonipat, Panipat, Kaithal and Karnal will gherao the office of Mr. Lal in his Assembly constituency the same day.

The workers in Palwal and Faridabad would gherao

Transport Minister Mool Chand Sharma's residence in Ballabgarh. The CITU workers gheraoed the homes and offices of Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, Women and Child Development Minister Kamlesh Dhandha and Agriculture Minister J.P.

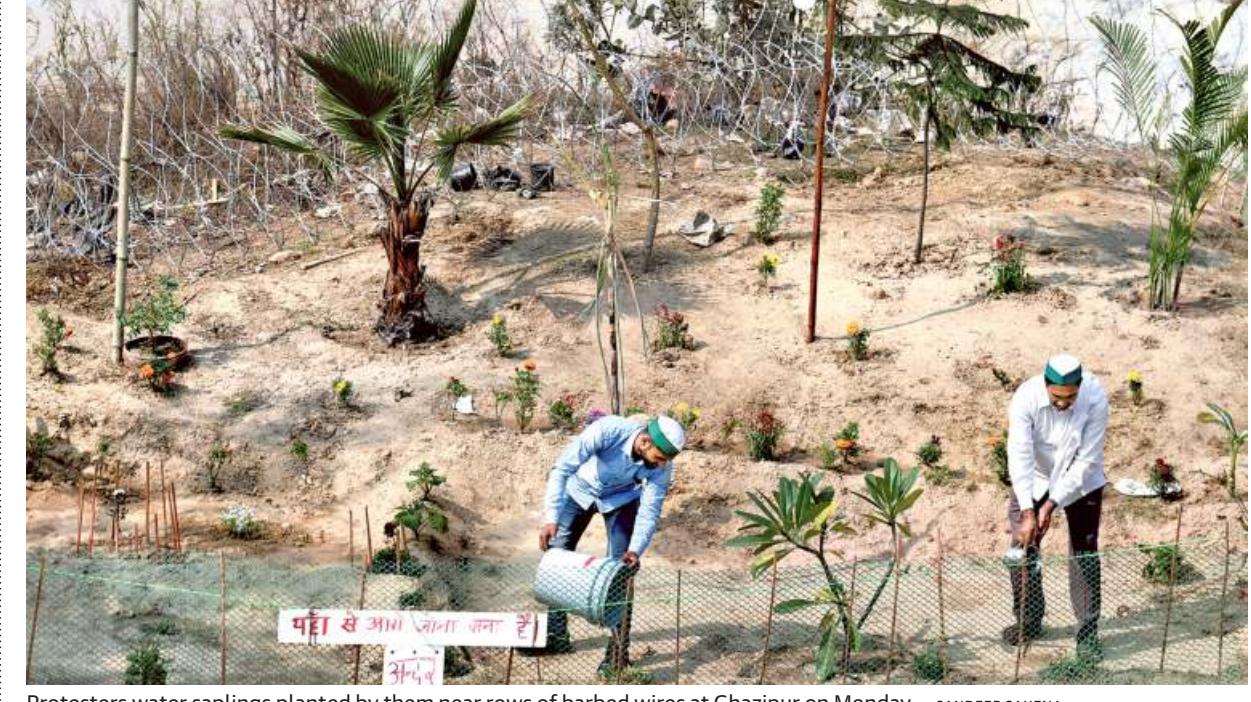
Dalal on February 7.

Mass movement

Mr. Singh said the government wanted to discredit the ongoing farmers' agitation saying that it was a movement of a particular community and caste. But the CITU, through these protests, wanted to send across a message that it was a mass movement and involved the working class as well. "The workers and labourers are also impacted by the agriculture so as the economy. So the farmers movement is not just about a community and a region, it concerns everybody," said Mr. Singh.

The other demands of the CITU include to regularise temporary workers, stop privatisation and eradicate contract system.

Flower power



Protesters water saplings planted by them near rows of barbed wires at Ghaziupur on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Police call back additional forces from protest sites

Personnel are likely to return to their districts and units today to deal with day-to-day policing duties

SAURABH TRivedi

NEW DELHI

New Delhi Police has asked its additional force, who were deployed across the national capital's borders during the farmers' rally, to return to their districts or units on Monday.

Told to relieve force

Special Commissioner of Police (Operations) Muktesh Chander had ordered internal mobilisation from various districts and units of Delhi Police in connection with law and order and farmers' rally arrangements.

All districts, where the



additional force is deployed, are directed to relieve the force mobilised from Delhi Police by 6 p.m. on Monday.

The personnel will go back to their districts and units on Tuesday.

Districts may mobilise additional force from their own resources to augment

police arrangements in connection with farmers, the order further reads.

A senior police officer said that for security deployment at the borders they had withdrawn police personnel from various units and police districts that resulted in delay of day-to-day work. Many files are pending to get cleared at district headquarters.

Pending work

"Apart from security deployment at the borders, they have to take care of regular policing across the city. Due to the reason investigations in many cases have been hampered. It's been more

than two months and they can't let other complainants to suffer," said the officer.

The officer said that reserve security personnel (para-military) and local police will be deployed at the borders for safety and security.

After the city witnessed violence during the January 26 tractor rally organised by protesting farmers, Delhi Police had strengthened the security at Singhu, Tikri and Ghaziupur borders by deploying extra forces and putting multi-layered barricades, barbed wires and nails studded on the roads. Nearly 400 police personnel were injured in the clashes.

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(A) 1.58/CGM/SM(WC-9)/ET-2020-21; Name of work: D/o Village (Misc. repair & finishing work in Community Center of Ambedkar Vihar Sector-37), Noida Cost: Rs. 50.77 Lacs.

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(B) 1.75/NOIDA/CGM/SM(WC-9)/ET-2020-21; Name of work: D/o Sector-163 to 167A & 167B (C/o Park Boundary wall in Sector-164), Noida Cost: Rs. 61.93 Lacs.

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Chief General Manager, NOIDA

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Ghaziabad	329	Faridabad	
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0-50	Good	51-100	Moderate
101-200	Poor	201-300	Very Poor
301-400	Severe	>400	

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

IN BRIEF

Delhi's AQI deteriorates to 'very poor' category

NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Noida deteriorated to "very poor" category on Monday and Gurugram's to "poor" category. It is likely to remain within the 'very poor' category for the next two days.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA CORRIGENDUM

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1	UHBVN	43/CCR/2020-21 (2020_HBC_154578_1)	PREVIOUS DATE OF CLOSING: 04.02.2021, PREVIOUS DATE OF OPENING : 05.02.2021, SCHEDULED DATE OF CLOSING: 18.02.2021, SCHEDULED DATE OF OPENING: 19.02.2021	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	xenciviluhbvrotak@gmail.com
2	DHBVN	NIT NO. 04/CTO/DH/ MBP/2020-21 (ID:2021_HBC_155448_1)	EXTENDED CLOSING UP TO 15.02.2021 (16:00 HRS.) & OPENING OF PART-I ON 18.02.2021 (16:00 HRS.)	www.dhbvn.org.in	8059900357 semp@dhbvn.org.in
3	HPGCL	2021_HBC_155315_1 NIT NO.330/RGTPP/MM-1/T0E-4414 DT. 07.01.2021	LAST DATE OF BID SUBMISSION 15.02.2021 UP TO 15:00 HRS. SUPPLY OF SOLENOIDS, LIMIT SWITCHES, AIR FILTER REGULATOR & TRANSMITTERS TO RGTPP, HISAR.	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8222023551 mm2.rgtp@hpgcl.org.in
4	HPGCL	2021_HBC_154976_1 NIT NO.330/RGTPP/MM-1/T0E-12646 DT. 07.01.2021	LAST DATE OF BID SUBMISSION 10.02.2021 UP TO 15:00 HRS. SUPPLY OF 300N, CAST IRON BUTTERFLY VALVES ALONG WITH ACTUATOR TO RGTPP, HISAR.	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9315164637 mm1.rgtp@hpgcl.org.in
5	HPGCL	2021_HBC_154			

IN BRIEF



DTC workers to protest over delayed salaries

NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) employees, whose salaries have been delayed by over a week, have threatened to protest outside the public transporter's headquarters if it is not disbursed by Wednesday. The Delhi Parivahan Mazdoor Sangh, in a communication to the Lieutenant-Governor and the Chief Minister, said the salaries, which are usually disbursed by the first or second of every month, was yet to be received and no explanation has been offered.

Two snatchers held for targeting women

NEW DELHI

Two persons – Raja Babu (20) and Sumit (20) – have been arrested for allegedly snatching bags from women in south Delhi's Sangam Vihar, the police said. The accused had taken a loan and turned to crime to repay the amount and interest, they said.

One held for illegal phone exchange, key accused on the run

DoT files complaint after tip-off on set-up running in Chawri Bazar

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The police on Monday said they have busted an illegal international telephone exchange running from Old Delhi's Chawri Bazar with the arrest of a 40-year-old man.

The accused, Imran Khan, has been running a tools shop for the past 13 years but due to a financial crisis, he provided the space to his uncle, Zulfiqar Ali, 47, who used it for the illegal telephone exchange. He also provided a high-speed Wi-Fi connection for the set-up.

Zulfiqar, from Turkman gate in central Delhi, is the main accused in the case and is absconding. Also known as Raja in his locality, Zulfiqar had taken proprietorship for the illegal set up under the name of Adeeba Enterprises.

He also owns an agency for soft drinks.

The matter came to the fore after police received a complaint from the Department of Telecom (DoT) that it had received a tip-off regard-

ing an illegal telecom setup being run by Zulfiqar at Choori Walan. The police said calls from foreign countries, including the U.S.A., U.A.E., Canada, Nepal and Australia, were being terminated illegally to Indian telephone and mobile numbers.

Loss to exchequer

The police said international calls can only be terminated in India through DoT licensed operators. The accused was bypassing the legal international gateways (internal long-distance licensees, national long-distance licensees, and access service licensees) thus

causing financial loss to the exchequer to the tune of ₹60,74,000/day.

However, the total financial loss is under calculation.

The police suspect that the relatives of the accused may be actively involved in assisting Zulfiqar in operating the setup. As per accessed invoices and documentation, the accused had taken telecom resources from a service provider – Adeeba Enterprises. He had taken the connection on November 26 last year.

When the police reached the spot, Zulfiqar was not present. The neighbours informed the team that the pre-

mise is owned by Zulfiqar and occupied by his relative.

During the probe, it emerged that the illegal setup was terminating foreign calls in India by passing the legal international and national gateways and displaying those numbers with an Internet connection. He had also taken 2,500 trunk channels from the service provider, an officer said.

A laptop was also recovered from the spot. "It had apps for remote sharing," an officer said. The value of recovered items has been estimated to be ₹1 crore. Further probe is under way.

Officers give UPSC exam tips to school students

Over 10,000 join session online

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education organised an interactive session for students from Delhi government schools with IAS officer Udit Prakash, Director-Education, Delhi, and IPS officer Ingit Pratap Singh, DCP (South West) on Monday so that they could take an informed decision about considering a career in the civil services.



Around 75 students from Classes 9-12 attended the session in person.

■ FILE PHOTO

of the tough test.

Mr. Singh shared his journey from entering the armed forces and having to leave it thrice due to medical conditions, to finally becoming an IPS officer. He told students to keep working harder if they meet with failure and not to give up. "If one door closes, one has to knock on another," he said.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia told students to be passionate about their dreams and seize every opportunity.

The Minister also took a dig at the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party, saying that one party was engaged only in promoting the identity of one family, while the other party was busy ensuring it does not honour its own promises.

"Congress is today opposing farm laws while its own government in Punjab has made provision for contract farming there," she alleged.

Mr. Gupta alleged that work and projects that should have been completed by the Delhi government

+
The Prime Minister ensured nobody slept hungry during the critical time of the pandemic and the government provided free ration to the poor," she said.

Budget takes care of every section of society: Smriti Irani

Minister says it will strengthen foundation of the country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani on Monday termed the Union Budget as one which takes care of every section of the society and "will further strengthen the foundation of the country in every field".



Smriti Irani ■

Industry president Sanjay Aggarwal were among those in attendance.

"The Prime Minister ensured nobody slept hungry during the critical time of the pandemic and the government provided free ration to the poor," she said.

DPCC told to regulate banquet halls

DDA regulations cannot hinder environmental norms: NGT

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to ensure enforcement of directions pertaining to the regulation of banquet halls to curb pollution.

Parking amendment

Taking note of the Delhi Development Authority's stand that regulations for parking had to be amended, the NGT observed that such regulations of the urban body cannot stand in the way of compliance of environmental norms.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "With regard to the stand that the DDA has to amend its regulation for parking, it may be noted that the regulations of the DDA cannot stand in the way of compliance of environmental norms which can be enforced even without the DDA amendment in view of the fact that the provisions of [relevant environmental laws], override in case of conflict with any other statute and environmental norms may thus be strictly enforced as already

directed."

The tribunal disposed the plea by directing the DPCC to regulate the banquet halls and enforce directions of both the DPCC and the NGT.

Remedial action

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by petitioner Deepak Datta seeking remedial action against illegal running of banquet halls in Shivaji Marg.

The plea alleged that the banquet halls were operating without statutory consent and were in violation of the environmental norms.

21 from Myanmar in Delhi for organ transplant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Twenty-one people from Myanmar, with chronic cases of kidney, liver and cardiovascular diseases, have arrived in Delhi to undergo organ transplant.

The hospital said the patients have been waiting for organ transplants for over six months. Easing of travel curbs has come as a respite for patients requiring specialised medical attention, it said. "The Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals along with the Indian Embassy arranged for a chartered flight to get the patients to India for immediate transplants and expedite treatment for patients requiring attention for cardiovascular ailments.

They reached India on February 5," the hospital said.

Minimum temp. dips to 76°C

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhiites woke up to a cold morning on Monday with the minimum temperature settling at 7.6 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department said.

The minimum temperature was one notch below the season's average.

The maximum temperature was recorded at 24.6 degrees Celsius. On Sunday, the minimum temperature had settled at 8.3 degrees Celsius.

Partly cloudy sky

The weatherman has forecast partly cloudy sky for Tuesday with shallow to moderate fog in the morning.

"The maximum and minimum temperatures will be around 25 and 9 degrees Celsius respectively," the IMD said.

Bad light



People play cricket at a park amid smoggy conditions in Delhi on Monday. ■ AFP

Kejriwal's daughter duped of over ₹30K

Police trying to trace e-commerce 'buyer'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's daughter Harshita Kejriwal was allegedly duped of ₹34,000 by a person who approached her as a buyer on an e-commerce platform, the police said on Monday.

An FIR under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code was registered at the Civil Lines police station.

The police said Ms. Kejriwal had put up a sofa for sale on an e-commerce website, following which she was approached by a person, who was interested in buying the item.

To check if the bank details shared by Ms. Kejriwal were correct, the accused initially transferred a small amount into her account.

Later, he sent a QR code and asked her to scan it so that the amount fixed as per the deal could be transferred to her account.

Money deducted twice
When she scanned the QR code, ₹20,000 got deducted from her account, a senior officer said.

When she enquired about it, the man claimed he sent a wrong QR code by mistake and soon sent another link, asking her to do the same. This time, he assured her she would get the deducted amount along with the price for the sofa. But again, an amount of ₹14,000 got deducted from her account, he said.

"A probe is underway. We are trying to trace the suspect," the officer added.

Congress hits out at AAP govt. on women's safety

Lamba highlights pendency in courts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Monday hit out at the Delhi government for failing to "provide safety to women" and also not ensuring timely justice to victims.

Ex-MLA Alka Lamba said over 2 lakh cases relating to assaults and harassment on women and girl children are pending in the 55 Fast Track and POCSO courts in Delhi.

She said each of these courts is under pressure to deal with 4,500 cases with only 37 government lawyers. In short, she alleged that each lawyer has to tackle 6,500 cases.

Ms. Lamba said the Delhi Prosecutors' Association had moved a plea in the Delhi High Court, seeking directions to the government to create more posts of Additional

Public Prosecutors and thereafter to initiate the process for appointment of Additional Public Prosecutors in 55 Fast Track and POCSO courts in Delhi, but the government has rejected the proposal.

"Since courts are under the jurisdiction of the government, it is their duty to ensure justice to the victims," Mr. Lamba said.

Delhi Pradesh Mahila Congress president Amrita Dhawan said harassment and assaults on women are rising daily. She also criticised the Delhi Commission for Women for its toothless functioning. "Women's safety seems to be just an election stunt for AAPs after coming to power, it blames the police and the Union Home Ministry for the rising crimes," Ms. Dhawan said.

DDA, civic bodies accountable for illegal use of parks: NGT

Panel directs DPCC to prevent violation of green norms

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following a plea alleging illegal and unregulated use of parks for commercial purposes, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to maintain vigil and prevent violation of environmental norms. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and civic bodies were also directed to ensure enforcement of existing norms.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that in view of Delhi High Court orders prohibiting the use of parks for social, cultural, commercial and marriage functions, the DDA and civic bodies will be held accountable for the

violation.

"Further direction of installing ETP [Effluent Treatment Plant] is contradictory as such question does not arise if no such social, cultural, commercial or marriage function is to be held in the parks. This needs to be strictly enforced by the Horticulture Department of DDA and the civic bodies," the Bench

said.

The tribunal in its order further added: "A plea of DPCC to depend on amendment by DDA is an attempt to avoid responsibility as even without such amendment powers under the EP [Environment Protection] Act and the Water Act override any statute, which cannot stand in the way of enforcement of environmental norms, particularly in view of orders of Delhi High Court, prohibiting use of parks for such functions."

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by the Budhela Welfare Association, which sought action against the unregulated use of parks for commercial purposes in Vikaspuri. The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by the Budhela Welfare Association, which sought action against the unregulated use of parks for commercial purposes in Vikaspuri.

■ FILE PHOTO

AN-NDNE

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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that RAVNEET SINGH S/o TARIQ SINGH, R/o WZ-408/4, PLOT NO. 167, 3rd FLOOR, BACK SIDE, GALIN 16, KRISHNAPUR, TILAK NAGAR NEW DELHI-110018 OF AFGHANISTAN is applying to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs for Naturalization and that any person who knows any reason why Naturalization should not be granted should send a written signed statement of the facts to the said Secretary.

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I LODOE Jungney s/o Kunsang Kyap, r/o Dolanji p.o. Kotla Panjola, Teh Pachhad, Sirmur (H.P.), have changed my name to Lodoe Jugney, before notary Devinder Thakur.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

THE 'SHARE Certificate' for the property 'B704 Sheetal vihar, plot 10 sec. 23, Dwarka, ND-70' is missing. If found kindly return to the above address. Saloni Mathur (981106152).

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
General Public is informed that Our Clients Sh. Dhirender Gaba S/o Hans Raj Gaba and his wife Versha Gaba both R/o D-012, Roheja Atlantis, Sector-31, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001, due to some personal issues with each other since last two years have mutually agreed/decided to live/separate from date 08/02/2021 from each others. In future both of them are not intended go for legal consequences. But if any of them want to re marry they will obtain divorce from court.
Praveen Rastogi (Advocate)
Enrol No-D/244/06

PUBLIC NOTICE

Dy. Chief Material Manager/Depot, CPROS-54 Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenities complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955

"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
E-mail :- dycmngkpd@gmail.com
Website:- www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in
& www.tenders.gov.in

Tender Notice No. 18, Dated : 05.02.2021

Invitation of tenders through e-procurement system

Dy. Chief Material Manager, North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur and on behalf of the President of India, invites tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items. Complete description of the item and other condition are available on website www.ireps.gov.in & www.tenders.gov.in.

Item No.: 1, Tender no & due date: 10215005 Due on Dt. 06.03.2021.

Brief description of stores: LOW MAINTENANCE LEAD ACID BATTERY 8V,500AH, Qty Required: 70 Nos., Earnest Money: ₹75260/-

2. Above tenders are available on IREPS site www.ireps.gov.in, the firm desirous in participating against e-tender are advised to electronically regd. Themselves on the above website for which they would required to obtain class-III digital certificate (if already not obtain) from certifying agencies authorized under govt. of India IT Act. 2000. Manual offers will not be accepted.3. Advertised tender and bulletin tenders of dy.cmngkpd office, NER are being opened through EPS (E- Procurement system) only. Firms desiring to participate in dy.cmngkpd office. Tenders should obtain necessary digital certificate and get themselves registered with CRIS/N Delhi, Necessary details in this regard can be obtained from the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

4. In case of difference between English and Hindi version of the tender notice the English version shall prevail.

5. Head of allocation towards, S D money is 000844517 &

Earnest 'money' is 000844506. 6. The tender cost & EMD will be accepted through On-Line payment on IREPS Portal only for the tender published on or after 01.09.2016 against all the Dy.CMNGKPD/NER/GKP tenders except Global Tender.

Dy. Chief Material Manager/Depot, CPROS-54 Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenities complain

SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955

"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

HC dismisses plea on mosque land

Plot is different from the one mentioned in petition, say U.P. govt., mosque trust

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Monday dismissed a petition filed by two Delhi-based sisters claiming ownership over the five-acre land in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village allotted by the Uttar Pradesh government for a mosque and hospital project.

Fresh petition

A Lucknow Bench of Justices Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Manish Kumar granted the petitioners liberty to file a fresh petition.

H.J.S. Parihar, senior advocate who argued the case for the petitioners, said he

may be permitted to withdraw the petition with liberty to the petitioner to file a fresh petition. "In view of the aforesaid, the writ petition is dismissed as withdrawn with the aforesaid liberty," the court said.

The State government, through its counsel, had opposed the plea saying the plot allotted for the mosque was different from the one mentioned in the petition. The trust entrusted with building the mosque and hospital quoting a revenue official last Friday also said the same.

The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation issued the clar-

fication days after the two women moved the Allahabad High Court claiming the ownership in Sohawa Tehsil of Ayodhya. They claimed their father Gyan Chandra Punjabi had come to India during partition from Punjab and settled in Faizabad (now Ayodhya) district where he was reportedly allotted 28 acres in Dhannipur village by the Nazul Department for five years which he continued to possess beyond that period.

Later, his name was included in the revenue records but it was struck down from the records against which their father had filed

an appeal before the Additional Commissioner, Ayodhya, which was allowed, they claimed.

In the petition, Rani Kapoor alias Rani Baluja and Rama Rani Punjabi demanded that the authorities be restrained from transferring the land to the Sunni Waqf Board till the pendency of the dispute before the settlement officer.

IICF secretary Athar Husain said the land dispute was in neighbouring Sheikh-Jafar village.

Formal construction of the Dhannipur Mosque Project was launched on Republic Day.

Bid to boost tourism in Jaisalmer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

In a unique citizen-airline partnership, the stakeholders of tourism industry in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer town, along with the district administration, have signed a memorandum of understanding with a private airline to ensure an unhindered flight connectivity. The pact is set to give a boost to tourism in the "Golden City".

The air carrier had earlier stopped flights to the popular tourist destination amid losses on the route because of high cost and low passenger load during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The alliance of stakeholders, including hotel and desert resort owners, taxi operators, tour operators and guide associations, has offered to reduce the airline's business risk through a new model. According to the agreement, the operational cost of flights will be calculated for 15 days and losses will be borne by local businessmen. A guarantee fund of ₹84 lakh has also been created to facilitate resumption of flights from February 12.

Punjab Cong. to hold protest against fuel prices

Price of crude oil in international market is lower than in 2014: State PCC chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Hitting out at the BJP government at the Centre over rise in prices of fuel and domestic gas, the Congress in Punjab announced a State-wide protest on February 11.

Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar on Monday said though international

crude prices had witnessed undue financial burden on the common man by hiking prices of petrol, diesel and gas. The government has been blocking the benefit of a decrease in the price of crude oil. The Union government must take measures to control the prices of petroleum products and give relief to

the citizens."

"A gas cylinder used to cost ₹438 in 2014 when Dr. Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister," said Mr. Jakhar pointing out that the cost had now crossed ₹750. "This too when price of crude oil is almost half than what it used to be in 2014," said Mr. Jakhar.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

SIXTEENTH ANNIVERSARY



Dr. Kamala Anandaram
10-05-1943 09-02-2005
Professor of Forensic Medicine (Retd)
Madras Medical College & Thanjavur Medical College.

Dr. Kamala Lives On
In the morning mist,
watching the sun rise
On the balcony,
sipping the tea that bears
Gulping down breakfast in
hurry to go to work
Returning to our garden full of
flowers & fruits
Enjoying the evening TV and
making jokes

You are silently beside us
Always ENOBBLING OUR LIVES
We love you!

O. Anandaram, IRS(Husband)
Annapoorna Oggil (Daughter)
Mukund Krishnaswami (Son-in-Law)
Maanas & Yojan (Grandsons)
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INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND
POLICE HEADQUARTERS, RANCHI

Jharkhand Police intends to insure the lives and limbs/body parts of its police personnel like Bomb disposal squads who are engaged in Bomb disposal duty other than anti naxal operations in the State. The number of such personnel is approximately 61. The Insurance Cover for them is proposed to stay from 00.00 hrs. on date- 31.03.2021 and is proposed to remain valid initially for a period of one year and is proposed to be extended for a period of one year more depending on the suitability of the chosen Insurance Company.

As per existing rules, Jharkhand Police is authorized to pay a maximum annual premium of Rupees-/(Rs only including service tax) per personnel covered under this insurance scheme. However, bid will be finalised in favour of the bidder who quotes the lowest annual premium per personnel.

Expression of Interest is invited from the bonafide and reputed companies engaged in insurance of lives and limbs/body parts. The 'Expression of Interest' should contain the Capital Sum Insured, detailed terms and conditions and procedure for settlement of claims.

The Minimum coverage proposed is as below:-

Capital Sum Insured (CSI): Rs-40,00,000/-

Benefit/ Coverage	% of capital sum Insured
A. Death	100%
B. Permanent total disability	100%
C. Loss of two limbs, loss of sight of two eyes or loss of one limb & loss of sight of one eye.	100%
D. Loss of one limb or loss of sight of one eye.	50%
E. Permanent Partial Disablement	In accordance with IRDA (Insurance Regulatory Development Authority) Norms.
F. In case of Hospitalization in private or Government Hospital due to injury, all expenses of Hospitalization	Rs- 15,00,000/- Maximum preferably cashless system.
G. Children's education compensation	Rs. 1,00,000/- Maximum for two children on death of police personnel
H. Expenses of carriage of dead body during Bomb disposal duty	Rs. 25,000/-
I. Road Accident and other accident during Bomb disposal duty	Rs. 7,50,000/- for death & Rs 5,00,000/- for Medical expenses.

The 'Expressions of Interest' are expected to be submitted to the D.I.G.(Budget) in the Office of the D.G. & I.G. of Police, Jharkhand on or before 19.02.2021 by 16:00 hrs, after which no proposal would be accepted. 'Expression of Interest' will be opened in presence of the representatives of respective bidding Insurance Companies in the office chamber of the D.I.G.(Budget) in the office of the D.G. & I.G. of Police, Jharkhand, Ranchi on the 24.02.2021 at 15:00 hrs. The final award may involve a process of negotiations after opening of the 'Expressions of Interest' regarding clarification on the various points raised in such 'Expressions'. The 'Expressions of Interest' is also can be seen on Jharkhand Police Website www.jhpolice.gov.in.

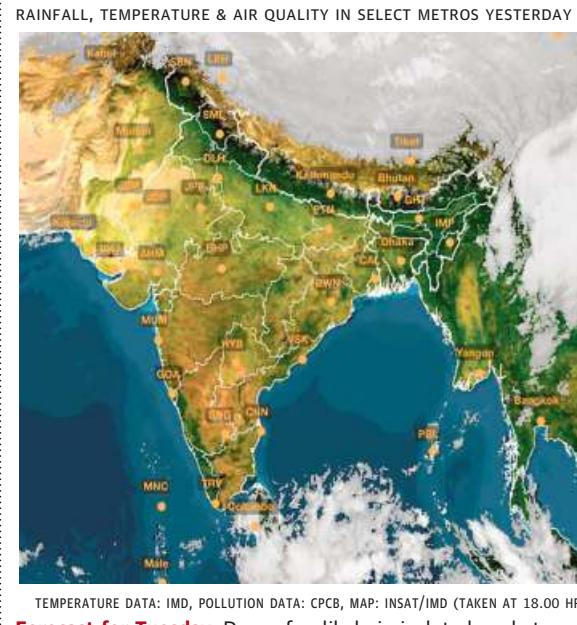
DIG of Police (Budget), Jharkhand, Ranchi.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed item rate tenders on form No. 6 & 8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Tauni Devi Division, HP-PWD Tauni Devi for the following works on behalf of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh from the approved and eligible Class C & D contractors enlisted in HP-PWD so as to reach in this office as per time schedule given below:- 1. Date of receipt of Applications for tender forms:- 24.02.2021 upto 1.00 PM. 2. Date of issue/sale of Tender forms 24.02.2021 upto 5.00 PM. 3. Date of receipt of Tender:- 25.02.2021 upto 10.30 AM. 4. Date of opening of Tender:- 25.02.2021 at 11.00 AM.

Sr. No.	Name of Road	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time
1	C/O link road from Kuthera to Dei-Ka-Naun km. 0/0 to 2/670. (SH- P/L PCC drain at RD. 0/300 to 1/650 and 2/0 to 2/670) (Under OTMPN).	4349		

WEATHER WATCH



Forecast for Tuesday: Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and west Uttar Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-27.0	11.3	...-27.0	Kozhikode	...-35.0	22.5	...-22.5
Ahmedabad	...-30.2	12.4	...-30.2	Kurnool	...-32.0	17.8	...-17.8
Aizawl	...-21.6	8.7	...-21.6	Lucknow	...-24.7	8.6	...-8.6
Allahabad	...-25.8	8.2	...-25.8	Madurai	...-32.4	20.2	...-20.2
Bengaluru	...-29.8	16.0	...-29.8	Mangaluru	...-35.7	19.8	...-19.8
Bhopal	...-26.5	7.9	...-26.5	Mumbai	...-34.5	18.0	...-18.0
Bhubaneswar	...-30.8	15.8	...-30.8	Mysuru	...-30.2	16.2	...-16.2
Chandigarh	...-24.5	8.0	...-24.5	New Delhi	...-24.6	7.6	...-7.6
Chennai	...-30.7	20.7	...-30.7	Patna	...-25.4	10.6	...-10.6
Coimbatore	...-31.0	17.0	...-31.0	Pond Blair	...-73.4	27.0	...-23.0
Dehradun	...-25.0	6.7	...-25.0	Puducherry	...-30.8	19.5	...-19.5
Gangtok	...-17.5	5.9	...-17.5	Pune	...-30.2	12.4	...-12.4
Goa	...-35.4	20.3	...-35.4	Raipur	...-27.0	8.4	...-8.4
Guwahati	...-29.2	11.0	...-29.2	Ranchi	...-24.0	8.6	...-8.6
Hubballi	...-29.0	18.0	...-29.0	Shillong	0.8	18.6	...-7.3
Hyderabad	...-30.0	15.7	...-30.0	Shimla	...-19.4	8.4	...-8.4
Imphal	...-24.3	6.5	...-24.3	Srinagar	...-11.0	3.8	...-3.8
Jaipur	...-27.6	9.8	...-27.6	Tiruchi	...-34.1	23.1	...-20.4
Kochi	...-32.6	23.2	...-32.6	Vijayawada	...-32.3	20.4	...-20.4
Kohima	...-19.8	5.0	...-19.8	Visakhapatnam	...-30.4	20.4	...-20.4
Kolkata	...-26.4	14.6	...-26.4	Visakhapatnam	...-29.5	21.6	...-21.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	31	.81	28	...-87	114	...
Bengaluru	11	123	32	90	107	...
Chennai	12	20	48	85	78	...
Delhi	9	101	60	387	331	...
Hyderabad	.4	124	65	118	132	...
Kolkata	31	25	41	125	173	...
Lucknow	13	76	70	279	272	...
Mumbai	.2	44	50	.210	.182	...
Pune	..63	.7	.122	.100
Visakhapatnam	16	.43	17	.95	.108	...

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

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

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

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

MVA govt. to probe celebrity tweets on farmers' protest

Investigation by State's intelligence department draws angry response from BJP

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Monday said the State government's intelligence department will conduct a probe into allegations that some celebrities were pressured by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to post identical tweets in support of the Central government over the farm laws.

Mr. Deshmukh made the remarks after a group of Congress leaders, led by party spokesperson Sachin Sawant, raised the demand for an investigation into the BJP's alleged connection with the tweets, in a meeting via videoconferencing.

"The Congress delegation wanted to meet me regarding the ongoing farmers' agitation. As I am COVID-19 positive, I accepted their letter digitally. They have raised serious questions. I have given directions to conduct



Congress leaders have raised serious questions. I have given directions to conduct the probe as per the procedure

ANIL DESHMUKH
Maharashtra Home Minister

whether these celebrities were arm-twisted by BJP."

BJP national president J.P. Nadda took a swipe at the Maharashtra government over the move. "MVA in Maharashtra has a unique model of governance - hail noises of anarchy from overseas who show India in poor light but harass patriotic Indians who stand for the nation. It is difficult to decide what is more flawed: their priorities or their mindset?" he tweeted.

Devendra Fadnavis, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly, termed the move "disgusting and deplorable".

"Has this MVA Govt lost all its senses? MVA should feel ashamed while using the word 'probe' for BharatRatnas! Actually, now it seems necessary to probe the mental state & stability of the ones who made such demands & of people who ordered probe against our BharatRatnas!" he tweeted.

Mr. Sawant said that the BJP was misinterpreting the party's demand. "Our demand is a probe against the BJP and its hand in planting these celebrities and not against these celebrities. We have also demanded protection to these celebrities from threat posed by the BJP," he said.

"Why BJP is keeping mum on why tweets of Akshay Kumar and Saina Nehwal are matching with each other? Why Suniel Shetty tags his tweet to a BJP office-bearer? Why BJP is scared of probe?" Mr. Sawant tweeted.

The Congress spokesperson also said many of these celebrities had never posted political tweets before. "We want a probe as to whether they were politically pressurised," he said. Mr. Sawant added that everyone has a constitutional right to express their personal opinion, but if it is done under pressure, then it must be probed.

Punjab defending Ansari, U.P. govt. tells apex court

BSP MLA is accused in several cases

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh government accused its Punjab counterpart in the Supreme Court on Monday of "vociferously" defending politician Mukhtar Ansari, who is in district jail Rupnagar in connection with an alleged extortion case.

Appearing for Uttar Pradesh before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the Punjab government is "supporting a gangster".

Mr. Mehta said Ansari, a BSP MLA from Mau constituency, is accused in cases involving several heinous offences.

"The State (Punjab) says Mukhtar Ansari is suffering from depression. Ansari says he belongs to a family of freedom fighters. The point is there are several cases of heinous offences

lodged against him (in Uttar Pradesh). He is a gangster. He is happy in jail in Punjab," Mr. Mehta submitted.

"Why should the State of Punjab support Mukhtar Ansari," the Solicitor General asked.

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by U.P. seeking a direction to Punjab and Rupnagar Jail authority to immediately hand over the custody of Ansari to District Jail, Banda. It has also sought a direction to transfer the criminal proceedings and trial in the extortion case in Punjab to the special court in Allahabad.

The counsel appearing for Ansari said that he has also filed a petition seeking transfer of case from U.P. to Punjab and that plea should also be heard along with this matter. The court scheduled the case for hearing on February 24.

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, FEB. 09
RISE 07:05 SET 18:07
RISE 05:12 SET 15:39

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 10
RISE 07:04 SET 18:08
RISE 06:06 SET 16:41

THURSDAY, FEB. 11
RISE 07:03 SET 18:09
RISE 06:53 SET 17:44

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 25 08
Safdarjung 25 08
Palam 23 10

Delhi Palam Today 25°C Dry comfortable weather during morning. Dry comfortable weather and bright sunny day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 26°C Shallow fog/mist likely during morning. Dry comfortable weather and bright sunny day.

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Gupkar alliance sees setback in DDC posts

BJP wins Doda, Udhampur in Jammu region

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Gupkar alliance, an amalgam of five political parties, on Monday witnessed a further slide in the election to the District Development Council (DDC) Chairman posts in the Kashmir Valley despite the numbers, while the BJP won Doda districts

in the Jammu region.

Officials said Independent candidate Nazir Ahmad Khan, who quit the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to contest against the Gupkar alliance's joint candidate from the National Conference (NC), was declared the winner from Budgam in central Kashmir, despite the alliance having 10 votes out of 14 sub-district segments.

"It was a tie between Mr. Khan and the NC candidate, with both bagging seven votes. A draw was organised

and Mr. Khan emerged the winner," an official said.

At Kupwara in north Kashmir, the Sajad Lone-led Peoples Conference candidate Irfan Panditpuri won the Chairman's post.

Mr. Lone's party, which recently quit the Gupkar alliance, had won five seats in Kupwara, followed by the NC with four seats.

The Gupkar alliance needed four more votes to win. However, many NC candidates did not turn up to vote.

Meanwhile, in a bid to cosy up to the PC, the J&K Apni Party (JKAP), having ideological proximity with the BJP with regard to issues such as Article 370 and special status, decided to abstain from voting in Kupwara and threw its support behind Safeena Baigh, an independent candidate for the post in Bararamula.

The election for the DDC Chairman and Vice-Chairman in Bararamula was adjourned due to a lack of the prescribed quorum.

Seat-sharing worry for grand alliance in Assam

AIUDF is eyeing Muslim-majority constituencies in the State currently held by the Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) appears to be making ally Congress uncomfortable in poll-bound Assam.

Meeting planned

The Congress, AIUDF, Communist Party of India, CPI (Marxist), CPI (Marxist-Leninist) and the regional Anchalik Ganab Morcha had in January formed a grand alliance to take on the ruling BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections to be held by May. The Congress heads this grand alliance.

The six parties are expected to meet later this week on seat-sharing arrangements. But the AIUDF is believed to have made the Congress nervous by organising rallies



in constituencies the latter won in 2016 and by finding fault with the MLAs from these seats.

"We are a constituent of the grand alliance, so I cannot say if Mujibur Rahman will be the consensus candidate. But you have elected him in advance from the Dalgaon seat. I will say in the meeting of the grand al-

liance that the demand for Mr. Mujibur is huge," Mr. Ajmal told a crowd at a rally in Dalgaon.

The Dalgaon seat in northern Assam's Darang district is currently held by Ilias Ali of the Congress. Mr. Rahman is the projected candidate of AIUDF.

Apart from Dalgaon, the AIUDF is reportedly

pressuring the MLAs of these constituencies, if not the Congress leadership.

The AIUDF chief seems to have unnerved the MLAs of these constituencies, if not the Congress leadership.

The Congress has been appealing to the AJP-RD to come on board for a united front against BJP.

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Troubled mountains

The Uttarakhand glacier burst should prompt a review of how the Himalayas are treated

The staggering collapse of part of a glacier in Uttarakhand's Nanda Devi mountain and the ensuing floods that have claimed many lives come as a deadly reminder that this fragile, geologically dynamic region can never be taken for granted. A significant slice of the glacier, dislodged by a landslide, according to some satellite images, produced roaring torrents in the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers in Chamoli district, trapping unsuspecting workers at two hydro power project sites. Scores of people are still missing in the wave of water, silt and debris that swamped the rivers and filled tunnels in the Tapovan power project, although the immediate rescue of nearly 15 people by the ITBP, the Army and other agencies brings some cheer. The rescuers face a challenging environment as they try to locate more survivors and bring relief supplies to paralysed communities. These immediate measures are important, along with speedy compensation to affected families. But the Centre and the Uttarakhand government cannot ignore the larger context of the State's increasing frailty in the face of environmental shocks. Once the crucible of environmentalism, epitomised by Sunderlal Bahuguna, Gaura Devi and the Chipko movement, the State's deep gorges and canyons have attracted many hydroelectric projects and dams, with little concern for earthquake risk. Red flags have been raised repeatedly, particularly after the moderate quake in 1991 in the region where the Tehri dam was built and the 2013 floods that devastated Kedarnath, pointing to the threat from seismicity, dam-induced microseismicity, landslides and floods from a variety of causes, including unstable glacial lakes and climate change.

India is heavily invested in dam development and growth of hydropower, largely in the Himalaya region – especially to cut carbon emissions. By one estimate, if the national plan to construct dams in 28 river valleys in the hills is realised in a few decades, the Indian Himalayas will have one dam for every 32 km, among the world's highest densities. Yet, as researchers say, this may be a miscalculation for reasons, including potential earthquake impacts, monsoonal aberrations that could repeat a Kedarnath-like flood, severe biodiversity loss and, importantly, extreme danger to communities downstream. There is also some evidence that the life of dams is often exaggerated, and siltation, which reduces it, is grossly underestimated: in the Bhakra dam in Himachal Pradesh, for instance, siltation was higher by 140% than calculated. The need is to rigorously study the impact of policy on the Himalayas and confine hydro projects to those with the least impact, while relying more on low impact run-of-the-river power projects that need no destructive large dams and reservoirs. Unlike what the NITI Aayog seems to think of environmental accounting, this would be a sound approach.

Law and compassion

The question of remission should not be a matter of politics and electoral considerations

Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit has decided that only the President can decide the issue of granting remission to the seven life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. Is the Governor correct in putting the ball in the President's court, contrary to the State Cabinet's advice? It has often been stressed by the Supreme Court that the clemency powers of the President, under Article 72, and the Governor, under Article 161, stand on an equal footing, and are exercised solely on Cabinet advice. The only limitation in Article 161 is that it should relate to "the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends". It may be that the Governor decided that it is beyond the State's executive power because the Rajiv Gandhi case was tried under a central anti-terrorism law and under CBI probe. Further, in a situation arising from the State government's attempt in 2014 to remit their sentences under the Cr.P.C., the apex court had ruled in 2015 that such remission would require the Centre's concurrence. However, this is not a tenable argument, as the same judgment made it clear that its opinion was limited to the Cr.P.C. and would not bind the sovereign power conferred on the President or the Governor under the Constitution. Also, it cannot be forgotten that the apex court had dropped charges under the now-defunct TADA, and sentenced the convicts only under the IPC for the murder conspiracy. As the only surviving sentences are under the IPC, there seems to be nothing in law that bars the Governor's jurisdiction.

The decision is debatable for the unusual delay in the Governor reaching his conclusion as much for its legal correctness. It took Mr. Purohit more than two years – since the State Cabinet advised him in September 2018 to order the convicts' release – to decide the question. The Supreme Court has been asking him to avoid a situation in which it would have to intervene. One could speculate that the delay reflected the Centre's concern about releasing those involved in the plot to assassinate a former Prime Minister, and its ramifications for its policy of 'zero tolerance' towards terror. It is equally a matter of speculation whether the ruling party at the Centre is reserving the issue for appropriate use closer to the Assembly polls. It is unfortunate that a new legal question on which authority has the power to decide the issue has been tossed into the equation so late in the day. The Court should settle this. The convicts' continuing incarceration for nearly 30 years, notwithstanding the gravity of their crime, has acquired a humanitarian dimension to many. It is vital that law and compassion, rather than politics and electoral considerations, form the basis for any decision on their release.

The long and the short of India's Naypyitaw dilemma

The February coup has undone the comfortable space New Delhi's Myanmar policy occupied for close to a decade



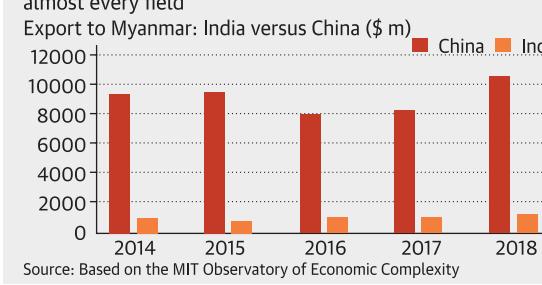
HAPPYMON JACOB

The long-lingering power struggle in Naypyitaw has finally ended, and the Myanmar junta, led by General Min Aung Hlaing, has won the struggle, dashing decade-long hopes for a truly democratic Myanmar. The future of Myanmar's democracy is uncertain, but the country, sandwiched between two powerful states competing for power and influence, is certain to be a key piece in the region's geopolitics. Given its high-stakes in Myanmar, New Delhi would need to be nimble-footed and creative in its responses with well-thought-out strategic choices taking precedence over knee-jerk reactions.

Coup, politics and geopolitics
If Myanmar's democracy prior to the February 2021 coup was inadequate and intolerant towards minorities, its political future will be a lot more complicated, making the choices of outside powers far more constrained. Strong reactions and the threat of sanctions from the United States and the West in the wake of the recent coup could lead to unique political realignments in Myanmar. As a result, even though the democratic credentials of the former State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, remain deeply diminished today, thanks to her shocking justification of the ill-treatment meted out to the Rohingya, the international community may not have any alternatives when it comes to pursuing the restoration of democracy in the country. Ms. Suu Kyi no doubt made a Faustian bargain to cling on to power, certainly since the bloody crackdown against the minority Muslim community in

The competitive edge

China's engagement of Myanmar is far more entrenched than India's in almost every field



2017, and yet the recent events have brought her right back into the centre of the international community's political calculations in Myanmar.

Sometimes, good intentions have deeply compromised outcomes. To rebuild the charisma of the fallen messiah, those batting for Ms. Suu Kyi in the international community may have to condone her government's past actions against the Rohingya in order to highlight her suitability to be the saviour of democracy in Myanmar once again.

She will now be the poster girl for the international campaign to restore democracy in Myanmar and the case against Myanmar's conduct during her government's tenure at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will most likely be put on the backburner. In this process, the plight of the hapless Rohingya will take a backseat or be conveniently forgotten. Put differently, increasing global support for Ms. Suu Kyi could potentially spell doom for the persecuted Rohingya.

The China factor
This is a coup that seems to suit no one except the Tatmadaw, the armed forces of Myanmar. In the short run, the coup stands to hurt the interests of China, India and even the rest of the international community, all of whom were able to do business with Myanmar in their own unique ways.

However, the international

community's sharp reactions will likely force the Tatmadaw to turn to China. Even though international sanctions are unlikely to have a major impact on the country's largely inward-looking junta and its Generals with little external interests, it would still expect Beijing to give them political and diplomatic support both within the region and globally.

For China, the coup has complicated its larger regional economic plans in Myanmar, at least for the time being. Beijing has recently been cultivating Ms. Suu Kyi, who was keen on a strong relationship with China given the growing criticism she was facing from the West. But the junta's jailing her could complicate Beijing's plans for the country.

On the positive side for Beijing, decisive western sanctions will force the military to get closer to China. For Beijing, given that it does not come with the 'baggage' of democratic norms, it may simply be a matter of re-jigging its schedule in Myanmar and getting used to the new scheme of things there. To that extent, China will be its biggest beneficiary of the February coup by default.

China, therefore, has every reason to go easy on the junta and offer them support in return for increasing the Chinese footprint in the country. On its part, the Tatmadaw, which has traditionally not been an ardent fan of Beijing, would have to change its tune.

While China's choices are

straightforward, it is far more complicated for others, especially India.

New Delhi's quandary

New Delhi faces the most challenging dilemma on how to respond to the military coup in Myanmar. The dual power centres of the military and the civilian government that existed in Naypyitaw until recently, suited New Delhi quite well as it did not have to worry about hurting the international community's normative concerns or sacrificing its national interests while engaging them both. More so, until recently, New Delhi's Myanmar policy was not shaped by a difficult choice between norms and interests: neither was Ms. Suu Kyi's political experiment without its faults nor were India's national interests hurt by the Tatmadaw.

The February coup has undone that comfortable space New Delhi's Myanmar policy occupied for close to a decade. While India's national interests, under the new circumstances, would clearly lie in dealing with whoever is in power in Myanmar, India would find it difficult to openly support the junta given the strong western and American stance.

On the other hand, it can ill-afford to offend the junta by actively seeking a restoration of democracy there. Being a close neighbour with clear strategic interests in Myanmar, offending the junta would be counter-productive. While Ms. Suu Kyi was getting cozy with Beijing, it was the Myanmar military that had been more circumspect, to Delhi's delight of course. With Ms. Suu Kyi in detention, Beijing will focus its energies on wooing the Generals.

Although the Ministry of External Affairs statement – "We believe that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld. We are monitoring the situation closely" – is definitely in favour of restoring democracy, its past support for the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar is un-

likely to return; this is particularly because the nature of the regional geopolitics has changed thanks to the arrival of China on the scene. New Delhi's new Myanmar policy will therefore be a function of interests rather than norms.

Cooperation, Rohingya issue

While a friendless Myanmar junta getting closer to China is a real worry for New Delhi, there are other concerns too. For one, Myanmar's military played a helpful role in helping New Delhi contain the north-eastern insurgents by allowing Indian military to pursue insurgents across the border into Myanmar. Coordinated action and intelligence sharing between the two forces have in the recent past been instrumental in beating back the insurgent groups in the northeast.

Equally important is the issue of providing succour to the Rohingya in the wake of the military coup in Myanmar. Unless the military decides to engage in a peace process to gain some brownie points for itself, the Rohingya question is likely to be pushed aside with the campaign against them continuing relentlessly, perhaps with even more ferocity. The inability of the states in the region to address the legitimate concerns of the Rohingya or increased violations of their rights could potentially lead to a rise of extremism within the community, which in the longer run would not be in India's interests.

New Delhi then is left with very few clear policy options. And yet, it must continue to maintain relations with the government in power in Myanmar while discreetly pushing for political reconciliation in the country. In the meantime, the focus must be on improving trade, connectivity, and security links between the two sides.

Happymon Jacob teaches at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and recently founded the Council for Strategic and Defense Research, a New Delhi-based think tank

First steps in the journey to universal health care

The lesson of COVID-19 is to go on a steady, incremental path given the weak fund capacities in the backward States



SOHAM D. BHADURI

About 20 years ago, Thailand rolled out universal health coverage for its population at a per capita GDP similar to today's India. What made this possible was a three decade-long tradition of investing gradually but steadily in public health infrastructure and manpower. This meant that alongside the availability of funds, there also existed robust institutional capacity to assimilate those funds. For India, the lesson of COVID-19 entails setting forth on a steady and incremental path to universal health coverage; not attempting a sudden and giant leap. This is important because enough evidence exists on weak fund-absorbing capacities particularly in the backward States – at times, such unused funds have been to the tune of over half of the State's public health expenditure.

Budgetary allocations
The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare budget for 2021-22, viz. ₹73,932 crore, saw a 10.2% increase over the Budget estimate (BE) of 2020-21 – a modest increase even nominally. Also, a corpus of ₹64,180 crore over six years has been set aside under the PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PMANSBY) for strengthening health institutions, and ₹13,192 crore has been allocated as a Fi-

nance Commission grant. While the allocations still leave a lot to be desired, these could make the first steps of a journey that steadily builds towards sustainable universal health coverage through incremental strengthening of grass-root-level institutions and processes. Two important and prominent arms of universal health coverage in India merit discussion here.

Universal insurance
The BE for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), which covers over 50 crore poor Indians for hospital expenses up to ₹5 lakh per annum, has stagnated at ₹6,400 crore for the current and the preceding couple of years. And so have the actuals and revised estimates at around 50% of the BEs, which should be cause for concern. Large expenditure projections and time constraints involved in input-based strengthening of public health care have inspired the shift to the insurance route for achieving universal health coverage.

However, insurance does not provide a magic formula for expanding health care with measly levels of public spending. Available estimates have pegged the costs to be between ₹62,000 crore and ₹108,000 crore for 2021, if PM-JAY is to meet its stated commitments. Given these circumstances, making do with such paltry spending year after year would mean that the scheme benefits are being spread out too narrowly or too thin, implying the inability to afford enough protection against catastrophic health expenses to the poor. Beyond low allocations,

poor budget reliability merits attention. Another related issue is the persistent and large discrepancies between official coverage figures and survey figures (for e.g. the National Sample Survey, or NSS, and National Family Health Survey) across Indian States, indicating that official public health insurance coverage fails to translate into actual coverage on the ground. This is particularly intriguing for forward States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka, where state-level public health insurance schemes have been operational for around a decade. Robust research into the implementation issues responsible for such discrepancies and addressing them is warranted. Without the same, the PM-JAY's quest for universal health coverage is likely to be precarious.

Finally, even high actual coverage should not be equated with effective financial protection. For example, Andhra Pradesh has among the highest public health insurance coverage scores (71.36%, NSS 75), but still has an out-of-pocket spending share much above the national average (72.2% of total health expenditure). In contrast, Himachal Pradesh (H.P.) with a much lower public health insurance coverage (3.87%, NSS 75) has a lower out-of-

pocket (46.4%). Among other factors, this could be attributable to the much higher per capita public health spending in H.P. more than twice that of Andhra Pradesh, which highlights the importance of government investment.

Comprehensive primary care

Health and Wellness Centres – 1,50,202 of them – offering a comprehensive range of primary health-care services are to be operationalised until December 2022. Of these, 1,19,628 would be upgraded sub health centres and the remaining would be primary health centres and urban primary health centres. Initially, most States prioritised primary health centres/urban primary health centres for upgrading over sub health centres, since the former required fewer additional investments. Till February 2, 58,155 health and wellness centres were operational, of which 34,733 were sub health centres and 23,422 were primary health centres/urban primary health centres. This means that of the remaining 92,047 health and wellness centres to be operationalised by December 2022, 84,895 will be sub health centres. This offers huge cost projections – as per early (conservative) estimates, turning a sub health centre into a health and wellness centre would require around ₹17.5 lakh, and around ₹8 lakh annually to run it thereafter.

The current allocation of ₹1,900 crore, an increase of ₹300 crore from previous year, is a paltry sum in comparison. Since 2018-19, when the health and wellness

centre initiative began, allocations have not kept pace with the rising targets each year. Additional funding under the PMANSBY and Finance Commission grants is reassuring, but a greater focus on rural health and wellness centres would be warranted.

Issues with funds

Two untoward implications could result from under-investing and spreading funds too thinly. Continuing the expansion of health and wellness centres without enough funding would mean that the full range of promised services will not be available, thus rendering the mission to be more of a re-branding exercise. Second, under-funding would squander an opportunity for the health and wellness centre initiative to at least partially redress the traditional rural-urban dichotomy by bolstering curative primary care in rural areas. This opportunity arises on account of the expanded array of services that health and wellness centres are supposed to provide, and the fact that an overwhelming majority of them will be in rural areas. Since curative care implies larger costs, they could be largely confined to delivering merely preventive, wellness, and referral services without adequate funding.

COVID-19 has prodded us to make a somewhat stout beginning in terms of investing in health. The key, and the most difficult part, would be to keep the momentum going unwaveringly.

Dr. Soham D. Bhaduri is a physician, public health policy researcher and commentator



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Uttarakhand disaster
Time and again we have seen and experienced the vagaries of nature but we still continue to ignore them as if they have no connection with us. This time the result has been destroyed hydel projects and a giant wave of water and sediments, which have swept away everything in their path. Many people are still missing, some are no more, there are huge economic losses, and there is a change in the natural topography. Are there any other vulnerabilities which

can trigger similar events in future? Economic development is necessary but it must be sustainable. We must not forget that it is "we" who are altering nature.

KISHOR BANSAL,
Greater Noida west, Uttar Pradesh

■ Although the reasons for the disaster are not yet fully known, the widespread belief is that this is a result of climate change impacting the sensitive Himalayan ecosystem (Page 1, "Experts point to climate change impact", February 8). If the

accelerated melting of the Himalayan glaciers continues, we may face many such adverse events. There should be a proper balance between developmental initiatives and the ecology. There are numerous polluting industrial units and large hydel projects in this region which are inadvisable. Apart from a plan of action to conserve the Himalayan

KALAPALA VINOD KUMAR,
Tukkulluru, Nizamabad, Andhra Pradesh

■ Large hydroelectric power plants in a fragile zone are a recipe for disaster, notwithstanding the economic benefits associated with it. The root of the problem lies in the construction of too many projects in this fragile and ecosensitive zone despite judicial rulings.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI,
Nainital, Uttarakhand

India and Grand Slams
While it is glad to read about a lone tennis player from India, Sumit Nagal, set to play in the singles draw of

the Australian Open, it is sad that in such a populous country, there is just one entrant to the Grand Slam, in Melbourne. The numerous tennis academies and coaching centres, including the Sports Authority of India,

K. PRADEEP,
Chennai

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
A Profiles page feature titled "The party that defied junta" (Feb. 7, 2021) erroneously said the National League for Democracy swept the 20

A Budget not for the environment

On several significant items relating to the environment, allocations have remained stagnant or fallen



ASHISH KOTHARI

In 1991, when the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh ushered in economic reforms that catapulted India into the global economy, I had asked him how he intended to balance rapid economic growth with environmental protection. He said that the experience of the West is that once there is enough money in the economy through growth, it can be put for ecological purposes.

A dismal gap

Leaving aside the fallacy of believing that all ecological damage can be compensated (a rainforest drowned under a dam can't be recreated, however much money you pour into it), the truth is that governments have not put in the substantial new financial resources raised through rapid growth into environmental protection. Budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) have consistently fallen as a percentage of total allocations. Second, even when there are increased allocations, such as for cleaning up the Ganga, their usage is ridden with such design flaws, inefficiencies and corruption that the environment is no better off than before. Steadily increasing levels of pollution, biodiversity loss, decline in forest health and destruction of wetlands is testimony to the dismal gap between governmental rhetoric and the environment, regardless of the party in power.

The 2021 Budget is no different. On several significant items relating to the environment, and taking inflation and needs into account, allocations have remained stagnant or fallen. This includes the MoEFCC and crucial institutions such as the Wildlife Institute of India and the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education. As Debadityo Sinha of the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy points out, this follows an earlier recommendation by the Ministry of Finance that the government should disengage with many such institutions. One consequence of this is that



NISSAR AHMAD

these institutions are having to raise funds through the private corporate sector, which inevitably compromises their ability to speak the truth when this sector indulges in ecologically damaging activities.

The government could argue that while direct allocations to environment-related institutions and schemes may not have risen significantly, there are substantial allocations to sectors that have a positive environmental impact. For instance, the 2021 Budget has allocated ₹3,500 crore for wind and solar energy, ₹4,000 crore for a 'Deep Ocean Mission', and ₹50,001 crore for urban drinking water. All of these have positive ecological potential, but let's examine them a bit more closely.

India's major push for renewable energy (RE) has earned it global appreciation. Back home, it is not so rosy. For one, there is no intention to phase out fossil fuels; on the contrary, coal mining and thermal power are being promoted under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package. And large hydropower is being promoted as RE, though its massive ecological and social impacts are well documented. Finally, even much of the solar and wind energy is coming in the form of massive energy parks that take up huge areas of land, displacing people and wildlife.

There is no indication in the Budget that the RE push will be predominantly decentralised, community-managed, and with full environmental impact assessments (currently not required for RE projects). Nor does the Budget have anything on curtailing wasteful and luxury consumption of energy or other products and services by the rich. With-

out controlling demand, even a complete shift to RE will be unsustainable; after all, silica has to be mined somewhere.

According to Himanshu Thakkar of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, the same issue be-devils the drinking water allocations. In principle any scheme for urban drinking water is positive. But with the continuation of a highly centralised approach to all such schemes, there is a 'one size fits all' approach, heavily focused on expensive infrastructure like big reservoirs and pipelines. Instead, a decentralised approach that uses a mix of local rooftop and backyard harvesting, restoration and conservation of urban wetlands, and regenerating groundwater could achieve much better results. And as in energy, there is no focus on incentivising responsible consumption, restraining luxury uses, and redistributing water more equitably, without which no amount of infrastructure will be enough.

The 'Deep Ocean' allocation is intriguing. It is being projected as a programme for conservation of biodiversity in the depths of our marine areas. This would be cause for cheer, given the serious neglect of our oceanic areas. But the institutions that are given responsibility under this are the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Indian Space Research Organisation, the Defence Research and Development Organisation, the Department of Atomic Energy, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Department of Biotechnology, and the Indian Navy, none with expertise in or even significant focus on marine conservation. Instead, this could become a project

for deep sea mining, for which already explorations are going on.

Potentially, an allocation of ₹18,000 crore for public transport could have significant benefits for people and the environment if it helps to reduce private vehicle density in cities. But if much of this is allocated to the metro rather than to buses and other such earthy alternatives (including last mile connectivity, incentives for walking and cycling), the picture becomes murky. Experience with the metro so far in India's cities is one of significant environmental impact, as also eventual lack of affordability for the poor.

Some worrying allocations

There is then the very worrying issue of allocations to non-environmental sectors that have a negative impact on the environment. For instance, the Budget proposes 11,000 km more of national highway corridors. In the last few years, massive road and dam construction has fragmented fragile ecosystems and disrupted local community life in the Himalaya, Western Ghats, north-east India and elsewhere. It is not only the road itself but what it brings with it that results in opening up previously intact ecosystems. As Kanchan Chopra of the Institute of Economic Growth says, how much more can we afford to destroy our 'natural capital' without it rebounding on us in forms like COVID-19?

Given that this could have been the occasion to climb into a green, nature-and-land-based livelihoods recovery that could create tens of millions of jobs as also regenerate India's depleted environment, this Budget is disappointing. But it is not surprising. It is in the logic of neoliberal 'development' planning, with a blind trust in growth as the panacea for all ills, to treat nature as a commodity for exploitation, or a 'sink' into which to dump waste. With global alarm about the ecological catastrophe we are rushing headlong into, COVID-19 recovery packages announced by the Indian government since mid-2020 ought to have put environmental regeneration and conservation, and self-reliance built on this, at the core of the Budget. That has unfortunately not happened.

Ashish Kothari is with Kalpvriksh and Vikalp Sangam. Views are personal

Improving Covishield efficiency

There are big benefits in delaying the second dose to 12 weeks and starting the first dose for the elderly and vulnerable



M.S. SESADRI & T. JACOB JOHN

cy or delayed but high efficacy? This is a question that the government must answer immediately, so that the due dates for the next dose can be revised in case the longer interval is chosen.

Had we begun the vaccine roll-out in the middle of the epidemic, early protection by two doses would have been preferred in order to accelerate the decline of the epidemic curve. But now that we are in the endemic phase, the 12-week interval between doses would be more appropriate. If the longer gap is chosen, a larger number of persons would be able to access the first dose and this would ensure better community coverage.

The present COVID-19 vaccination roll-out in India has completed first dose administration of vaccine to 43.9 lakh (47%) out of 92.6 lakh registered healthcare workers from the public and private sectors by February 3, 2021. It is important to understand that in this group, the earlier infections would have been much more than in the general population figure of about 60% at endemicity – may be 70%-80% already.

The vaccination centres are achieving only 50%-60% of their potential (50-60 vaccinations per day as against the possible 100). These slots are sought to be filled by other essential workers like the police and those in public service.

Slots for the elderly and vulnerable

It would be important to start registering the empty slots for the elderly and vulnerable and to administer the first dose of the vaccine to these subjects who are at high risk of serious disease and death from the novel coronavirus infection. After all, a single dose of the Covishield vaccine has some degree of protective efficacy starting about three weeks after the vaccination lasting up to 12 weeks. Delaying the second dose to 12 weeks and starting the first dose of the vaccine for the elderly and vulnerable will ensure that vaccination centres run to full capacity and the elderly and vulnerable are protected against serious disease or death. This is very important because, with relaxation of curbs on assembly and reopening of schools, these so far cocooned subjects will be exposed to the infection. The U.K. is already following the schedule of delaying the second dose of the Oxford vaccine by 12 weeks. It is important that India does the same and ensures that serious disease and death are prevented in elderly and vulnerable subjects.

Dr. M.S. Seshadri is Medical Director, Consultant Physician and Endocrinologist, Thirumalai Mission Hospital, Ranipet, Vellore; and Dr. T. Jacob John is retired Professor of Clinical Virology, CMC Hospital, Vellore

An uphill task for Mario Draghi

The former president of the ECB faces the unenviable job of bringing Italy's rival parties on board

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

It won't be an easy ride in Rome for Mario Draghi, the man who soothed Europe's financial markets in 2012 with his bold declaration to do "whatever it takes" to save the euro during the eurozone's sovereign debt and banking crises. Less than 15 months after he stepped down as President of the European Central Bank (ECB), when his negative interest rates policy was criticised for sucking money out of savers, he now finds himself thrust to the centre of Italy's fractious politics.

On Wednesday, Mr. Draghi, who was previously Governor of the Bank of Italy, accepted the mandate by the country's President, Sergio Mattarella, to form a new national unity government following the collapse of the coalition led by Giuseppe Conte in the last week of January.

A crucial verdict

During his eight-year stewardship, the Frankfurt-based institution's policy to buy unlimited quantities of sovereign bonds of ailing economies was a pivotal moment in stabilising the single currency area, even if the initiative incurred the wrath of Germany and other affluent European Union (EU) States of straying into uncharted fiscal territory.

Now, Mr. Draghi's efforts to rescue the Italian economy, drawing on €200 billion in grants and loans from the EU's €750 billion recovery fund, would pronounce, so to say, a verdict on the bloc's response to the pandemic. Crucially, Mr. Conte's government collapsed because Italia Viva, the party of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, withdrew backing citing strong differences with the government's recovery plans that must be approved by Brussels.

The sheer political complexity of the latest endeavour the technocrat has embarked on could not be overstated. Above all, Mr. Draghi must attempt to cement the differences among Italy's several feuding parties. The most recent government collapse, where Mr. Renzi was primarily responsible, was the second in the last couple of years. In 2019, the populist Five Star Movement, the largest party in the Italian Parliament,

fell victim to the personal ambitions of Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right Northern League. Mr. Draghi faces the unenviable task of bringing these rival parties on board, failing which Italy will have to go to election before the scheduled 2023 date. With 88,000 deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic, this would amount to a costly and unacceptable distraction.

Reactions

The League, which would still prefer to test its recent high ratings at the hustings, has said that the party would back Mr. Draghi's bid to form a government, given its strong base among business classes in the industrialised northern regions. Mr. Salvini, whose personal authority has eroded somewhat, would have to be mindful of the Brothers of Italy party linked to post-fascist forces, which has likened the proposal to a government born in a laboratory.

On the other hand, soon after the President's invitation to Mr. Draghi, the acting leader of Five Star declared his opposition to a government led by an unelected technocrat. The centre-left Democratic Party and Viva Italia are expected to support the unity government. Mr. Draghi's stint at the ECB was underpinned less by a concern to mirror the German Bundesbank's anti-inflationary stance than the overarching priority to ensure the survival of the euro. It is arguable that his stance was vindicated by a prolonged cycle of persistently low inflation and ultra-loose interest rates, although Wolfgang Schauble, Germany's Finance Minister at the time, blamed Mr. Draghi's policies for the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany party. That kind of decisiveness could trigger very different consequences in Italy's highly fragmented polity.

'Super Mario' was the sobriquet Mr. Draghi had earned for the calming effect of his interventions into financial markets. At the current juncture in Italy, something close to that seems like securing a parliamentary majority and averting an avoidable general election.

Girimella Subramaniam is Director - Strategic Initiatives, AgroShin Technologies Pvt Ltd



DATA POINT

Muffling the media

Freelance journalist Mandeep Punia was arrested on January 31 by the Delhi Police while covering the farmer agitations against the three new farm laws at the Singhu border. Barely 40 days into 2021, five journalists, including Punia, have been arrested in India. No other year since 1992 has recorded more than four journalist arrests in India, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Apart from the five arrests, an arrest warrant was issued against another scribe. FIRs, many with sedition charges, were filed against 10 other journalists. In general, the better the political rights and civil liberties in a country, the higher the press freedom. However, India is an outlier to this trend: other citizens are better off in terms of civil liberties and political rights compared to journalists.

By Suman Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

IN JUST A MONTH | A list of all the arrests made and FIRs filed against journalists in January 2021:

Jan. 17: Three journalists of the website 'The Frontier Manipur' were arrested under the UAPA and charged with sedition

Jan. 20: Senior journalist Paranjay Guha Thakurta was issued a non-bailable arrest warrant by a Gujarat court

Jan. 25: Three journalists in U.P.'s Kannur Dehat district were booked for airing a report about a school function drill

Jan. 28: FIRs were lodged against six senior journalists for inciting violence on January 26 through their social media posts

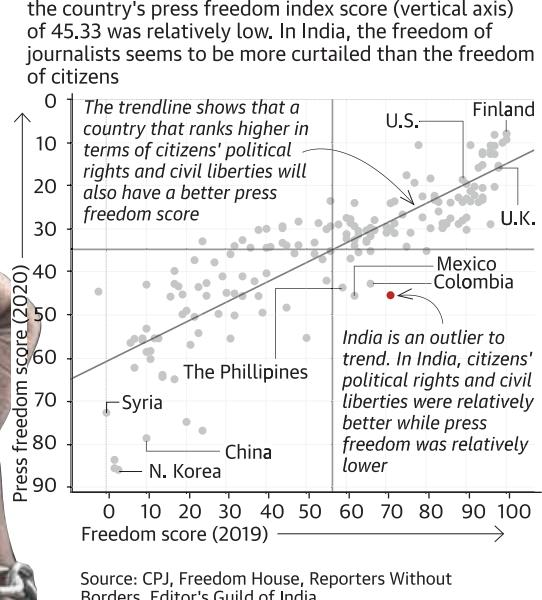
HIGHEST IN 30 YEARS

With five arrests in January, this year has already witnessed the highest number of arrests of journalists since 1992 in India, according to the CPJ



NOT SO FREE PRESS

India's score of 71 on the citizens' political rights and civil liberties indicator (represented by freedom score 2019, horizontal axis) was relatively high. However, the country's press freedom index score (vertical axis) of 45.33 was relatively low. In India, the freedom of journalists seems to be more curtailed than the freedom of citizens



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 9, 1971

India likely to agree for talks with Pak

India is expected to indicate its readiness for talks with Pakistan on the question of resuming suspended overflights by Pakistani civilian and military aircraft, provided Islamabad agrees to comply with India's demand that Pakistan compensate for the blown-up Indian Airlines Fokker Friendship aircraft and return the two hijackers, according to authoritative sources here [New Delhi, Feb. 8]. Pakistan, in a note, three days ago, proposed "mutual discussion" to settle the problem of overflights. India's reply, expected to be conveyed to-morrow to Pakistan, will reiterate its earlier stand that Pakistan meet India's twin demands before talks could be initiated on the resumption of overflights, these sources said. India has not yet received any such indication, the sources said. India has charged Pakistan with "direct involvement" in the hijacking and blowing up of the aircraft. Pakistan, meanwhile, has reserved the right to make counter-claims for compensation for alleged damage to its High Commission in Delhi and injuries to the members of its staff.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 9, 1921
The way to freedom
(From an editorial)

The strongholds of irresponsible power and reaction in any country are maintained not only by the threatened exercise of physical coercion but also to a very large, if not actually greater, extent by the acquiescent support of the very victims of oppression. This silent submission of the people at large to the yoke of autocracy is mainly due to the hypnotic influence of organised power and prestige on the mentality of the masses, who unconscious of their collective might, feel themselves helpless against the serried ranks of exalted officialdom and military power. It is this deceptive vision and self-enslaving cowardice, born of the ignorance and inertia enveloping the mass mind, that is sedulously sought to be cultivated by the demonstration of costly functions in the name of the public and cleverly exploited by the self-styled guardians of 'Law and order' to sustain their sway over the people. By a peculiar process of political alchemy in the Governmental laboratory, the involuntary share of the masses in these demonstrations as idle spectators and ignorant admirers is transmuted into a manifestation of loyalty and love and loudly proclaimed to the world as a symbol of peace and plenty in the land.

FROM PAGE ONE

171 people still missing after Himalayan tragedy

The entire Rishiganga power project was destroyed, while 46 labourers working at the project site and five villagers were reported missing, Director-General of Police Ashok Kumar told presspersons.

ITBP personnel were roped in to provide relief and food material to the stranded people in nine villages, using helicopters.

Located five kilometres downstream from the main disaster site, the Tapovan power projects of NTPC were also damaged severely. Mr. Kumar said that initially 25 persons working in one small riverbed tunnel were said to be missing. However, 13 of them later reported to the authorities. The others were rescued by an ITBP

Govt. still open to talks with farmers, says Modi

"No one was ready to become Agriculture Minister in Shastriji's (former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri) time. Planning Commission also opposed the agriculture reforms then. But Shastriji moved forward. Left (parties) said the same thing then that it is being done on the instructions from America. Congress leaders were called 'American agents'. Thousand protests were organised but Lal Bahadur Shastri moved forward and today we have surplus production," Mr. Modi said.

Stating that the government wanted to accept good suggestions, Mr. Modi urged the Opposition members to take the country forward by explaining the good features of the laws to the farmers.

"Agriculture Minister is talking to farmers. There is no tension yet. Protest is your right but I want to request that you should ask the elderly farmers who are sitting there to go home. We should give these reforms an opportunity and see if

Sasikala returns to massive welcome

collect the notice for violating the police order forbidding the use of AIADMK flag. Earlier, in a late night directive on Sunday, Krishnagiri Superintendent of Police Bandi Gangadhar had warned against the use of the AIADMK party flags by Ms. Sasikala or her loyalists. The police also forbid a convoy of more than five vehicles tailing Ms. Sasikala vehicle.

Legal team in tow

A legal team accompanying the convoy intervened and discussed with the police, before refusing to abide by the notice on the grounds that it was "subjudice".

Amid videos of Ms. Sasikala leaving Bengaluru in a vehicle bearing the AIADMK flag, the West Zone police at the border were poised to issue a notice to the convoy directing the removal of the flag. However, just ahead of the Athibelle checkpost in Karnataka, a few hundred metres from the inter-State border, she changed to another vehicle, which also sported an AIADMK flag. Minutes later, the convoy rolled into Tamil Nadu.

The reason for the change of vehicle was unclear. However, video footage of a minor brush with a minivan that found itself amid the convoy in Karnataka was circulated on social media, soon after. In Zuzuvadi in Hosur, tense moments prevailed, when the police stopped Ms. Sasikala's vehicle and demanded that she

ed by May or June. This would help in formulating health, housing, food and other schemes for migrant workers. The Budget had included interest from Provident Fund contributions over ₹2.5 lakh being taxed. Mr. Chandra said 1.23 lakh people out of the 6.5 crore PF contributing accounts would be impacted by this.

New labour codes to allow four-day work week

He added that ESIC would provide free medical check-ups to workers so the employer does not have to bear the costs.

Speaking about the Budget announcements regarding the Ministry, Mr. Chandra said a portal for collecting information on gig, building and construction workers would be start-

Anti-cow slaughter Bill passed in Karnataka

Amid uproar, it was passed by voice vote even as Opposition members demanded division of vote in Legislative Council

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Amid uproarious scenes with Opposition members tearing copies of the Bill and protesting in the Well of the House, the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020, was passed by voice vote on Monday in the Legislative Council. This was even as the Opposition Congress and the Janata Dal (S), whose combined strength forms a majority in the House, demanded a division of vote.

On Monday, he tweeted: "I reiterate our government's commitment to develop hills of Uttarakhand in a sustainable manner and we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring the achievement of this goal."

A team of the DRDO's Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment scientists has been flown in to Joshimath for surveillance and reconnaissance. Indian Space Research Organisation scientists are also conducting a comprehensive analysis of the disaster.

The Bill was tabled again in the council on Monday.

B.K. Hariprasad, Congress



Dissent in house: Animal Husbandry Minister Prabhu B. Chauhan placing the anti-cow slaughter Bill before the Council at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ BHAGYA PRAKASH

MLC, told presspersons that the government had "bulldozed" its way through and passed the Bill and that the

Opposition would continue the protest on Tuesday. Significantly, the Janata Dal (S), which is in alliance with the

BJP for the Council Chairman's election scheduled to be held on Tuesday, also opposed the Bill. "Congress

and Janata Dal (S) members raised objections to the Bill and sought a division of vote, which was not allowed. When the BJP does not independently hold a majority in the House, how can the Bill be passed by voice vote when division was sought?" Mr. Hariprasad questioned.

Mr. Pranesh took up the Bill for voting, leading to more outrage among the Opposition members. Some of the Congress members rushed to the Well of the House and tore copies of the Bill, while others, including Janata Dal (S) members went to the Speaker's table and protested. Meanwhile, the BJP members raised slogans of "Gomata ki Jai".

Amidst the pandemonium, Mr. Pranesh put the Bill to voice vote and announced it had been accepted and adjourned the House till Tuesday.

Janata Dal (S) member Maribritte Gowda objected to the restriction of debate, say-

Kerala govt. steps up surveillance in schools

Directives follow spike in cases in two Malappuram schools

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has issued directives to enhance school-level surveillance against COVID-19.

The directives were issued in the wake of reports that 190 students and 70 teachers of two government schools in Malappuram district had tested positive for COVID-19. Both schools have been closed for disinfecting.

Principals and head teachers of State schools have been asked to ensure that all protocols related to COVID-19 issued by the Directorate of General Education are being followed strictly.

Obliquely touching on the ongoing India-China stand-off, Mr. Modi said, "My government's stand on the situation at LAC is very clear. The entire country can see this and is very proud of us. There can be no doubt about our commitment towards building border infrastructure and border security," he said.

A communication calls for preparation of school COVID-19 cell reports every day and their handing over to the Health and Education Departments. Proper use of masks and sanitisers should be ensured.

Teachers have been asked to ensure that students do not crowd bus stops near schools. If need



Alert mode: Schools re-opened partially across Kerala on January 1. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

be, principals or head teachers can depute teachers to monitor gatherings there. Senior education officials have been told to visit schools and send daily reports to the Director of General Education.

Director of General Education Jeevan Babu K. told *The Hindu* that guidelines for following the COVID-19 protocol had already been issued to schools.

Though these were in place, precautionary measures would be streng-

thened further so that any COVID-19 cases inside schools were contained. Measures such as use of masks and sanitisers, and physical distancing would be re-emphasised.

As students could be exposed to COVID-19 not only in schools but outside too, meetings of parent-teacher associations would be convened. They would be given guidelines on reducing risks to the extent possible, as not much time remained for examinations, he said.

(With PTI inputs)

appointments' by the government, CPI(M) workers and their families had hugely benefited from the flurry of regularisations at the fag end of the administration's tenure. He released a list of relatives of top CPI(M) functionaries accorded well-salaried jobs in public sector entities and corporations. The government had made it a practice not to report vacancies to the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The university had come under fire from the Congress and the BJP for 'perverting' the selection process and 'passing over' eligible candidates to appoint Ms. Ninitha in the Muslim reservation category. Both parties had separately highlighted her appointment as "emblematic of the entrenched nepotism" in the CPI(M) and the LDF government. They had targeted Democratic Youth Federation of India State president A.A. Rahim and A.N. Shamshir, MLA, with similar charges.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala sought to make an election issue out of the slew of 'back-door

Governor seeks report from Sanskrit varsity

Row over appointment of ex-MP's wife

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Monday sought a report from Sri Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady on the controversy surrounding the appointment of R. Ninitha, wife of CPI(M) leader and former MP M.B. Rajesh, as an assistant professor in the Malayalam department at the varsity.

The university had come under fire from the Congress and the BJP for 'perverting' the selection process and 'passing over' eligible candidates to appoint Ms. Ninitha in the Muslim reservation category. Both parties had separately highlighted her appointment as "emblematic of the entrenched nepotism" in the CPI(M) and the LDF government. They had targeted Democratic Youth Federation of India State president A.A. Rahim and A.N. Shamshir, MLA, with similar charges.

One of the two tunnels being built at Kuthiran between Thrissur and Palakkad districts could be completed by March 31, the construction company, Thrissur Expressway Pvt. Ltd., told the Kerala High Court on Monday. The tunnels on the Manuthy-Wadakkanchery stretch on the NH-47 will reduce travel time significantly. The contract for the work was given in 2009.



Arif Mohammed Khan

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Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala sought to make an election issue out of the slew of 'back-door

IN BRIEF

First 'Kisan Rail' from Telangana chugs off

HYDERABAD The South Central Railway started the first 'Kisan Rail' service from Telangana on Monday. The train will transport 230 tonne of dry turmeric in 10 parcel vans from the Warangal station to the Barasat station of Sealdah division (West Bengal). The move is aimed at assisting farmers to sell their produce at better prices, a release said.

One Kuthiran tunnel will be ready soon, court told

KOCHI One of the two tunnels being built at Kuthiran between Thrissur and Palakkad districts could be completed by March 31, the construction company, Thrissur Expressway Pvt. Ltd., told the Kerala High Court on Monday. The tunnels on the Manuthy-Wadakkanchery stretch on the NH-47 will reduce travel time significantly. The contract for the work was given in 2009.

Karnataka HC sets aside plan to hold law exams

BENGALURU The Karnataka High Court on Monday quashed the decisions of the Bar Council of India (BCI) and the Karnataka State Law University (KSLU) to hold exams for intermediate (even) semesters (first-fourth year) of the five-year law course. A few petitioner-students had questioned the correctness of the communications issued by the BCI and the KSLU for holding exams.

Vijayanagara becomes Karnataka's 31st district

BENGALURU Karnataka got its 31st district with the State government on Monday issuing an official gazette notification carving out Vijayanagara district from the mine-rich Ballari district. The new district will have six talukas and Hosapete will be its headquarters. The plan for Vijayanagara district was first mooted by Chief Minister Yediyurappa in September 2019, citing administrative convenience. PTI

Three held for duping over 20,000 depositors

Two Chinese kingpins at large

ABHINAY DESHPANDE
HYDERABAD

Three persons who duped more than 20,000 people across the country to the tune of ₹50 crore were arrested by the Cyberabad police in Hyderabad on Monday.

Cyberabad Commissioner of Police V.C. Sajjanar said two Chinese nationals, currently at large, were the kingpins behind the multi-crore financial fraud.

He said the victims were asked to invest money offering huge returns in the name of 'Shared Bike (BK) and Sharing Economy' and witnessed Hosur Tahsil issued the notice to Ms. Sasikala's legal representative. The police also got an acknowledgement of the receipt of the notice. The police, however, did not remove the flag. Ahead of Ms. Sasikala's arrival, over 1,500 police personnel were deployed from the Western Zone under its IG K. Periaja at the inter-State border.

The reason for the change of vehicle was unclear. However, video footage of a minor brush with a minivan that found itself amid the convoy in Karnataka was circulated on social media, soon after. In Zuzuvadi in Hosur, tense moments prevailed, when the police stopped Ms. Sasikala's vehicle and demanded that she

promised 11% interest per day. "Around 4.5 times return on their investment was promised in 90 days," Mr. Sajjanar said.

Police froze ₹3 crore in 10 bank accounts and seized four laptops and three mobile phones from their possession.

The accused, Uday Pratap, 41, from Gurugram, Haryana, was the authorised signatory for an account with a private bank. Other arrested were taking instructions from Chinese nationals, Zhang Hongwei alias Peter and Peng Guowei aka Javie.

The High Court granted her bail on October 15 last year. The State of Kerala had appealed the bail order in the apex court.

The High Court had dismissed the prosecution version that Jolly had confessed to her crimes. She is accused of poisoning six persons, including her former husband Roy Thomas. "If an accused in police custody gave a confession to the police that he

committed the offence, the same is not admissible in the eye of law," the High Court had reasoned.

The High Court had also rejected the plea that bail for Jolly would spell danger to her life. It had declined the argument that she would influence the witnesses, who were mostly family members. The High Court had said that she would continue in jail despite bail because of her involvement in the other connected cases.

The High Court had criticised the police and the media for sensationalising the case.



Jolly Joseph

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Kerala CM takes up sanctuary zone issue

Allay concerns of residents, Pinarayi writes to PM

STAFF REPORTER
KALPETA

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allay the apprehension of the people in Wayanad over the recent draft notification of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) that envisages a buffer zone around the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS).

Mr. Vijayan, in a letter to Mr. Modi, said the State go-



Opposing notification: Protesters taking out a march at Kalpetta in Wayanad district on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

overnment had prepared recommendations for notifying ecosensitive zones (ESZ) around 21 protected areas in December 2019. The government after considering the genuine concerns of the people living near the sanctuar-

ies submitted an amended proposal on January 13, 2020.

According to the amended proposal for draft notification, the ESZ measures 88.2



A phone call that saved a dozen lives

VIJAITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

There is light at the end of the tunnel – Vinod Singh and his 11 colleagues lived this reality on Sunday.

Mr. Singh, 33, a welder, was the first to be rescued from one of the two blocked tunnels at Tapovan. A video where he is seen wriggling out of the tunnel, overwhelmed, chanting slogans in ode to the famous Badrinath temple, has since gone viral.

Mr. Singh, a resident of Joshimath, recalled the seven gruelling hours he spent in the tunnel with his colleagues, till they were rescued by a team of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel. “The tunnel, about four metres high, was covered in a mix of debris and water for up to three metres,” he said on the phone from the ITBP’s hospital in Joshimath.

Mr. Singh said it was a faint network on his phone that saved them. “We managed to drag ourselves up to 350 metres to the end of the tunnel, where we saw some light... I noticed that my BSNL phone had network. I first called my office manager and then my brother,” he said. An ITBP team, deployed 15 km away, was rushed to the tunnel.

Efforts are on to rescue those stuck in the second tunnel at Tapovan.

No glacial lake found, landslip likely trigger: experts

Nothing out of the ordinary was observed in satellite images, says CWC; team of experts constituted to investigate the deluge

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Though the jury is still out, glaciologists and experts in rock sciences are converging on the view that the cause of the Chamoli deluge was most probably a landslip and not a glacial lake burst.

A glacial lake outburst flooding (GLOF) occurs when a breach in the glacial lake causes a sudden surge downstream. Such lakes are formed when glaciers erode land, melt and over time become a large mass of water in the depression formed, and these can be breached, causing floods downstream. However, several scientists, based on an analysis of satellite images, have failed to spot any such lakes.

The Central Water Commission (CWC) monitors and prepares monthly reports on the state of glacial lakes and waterbodies measuring 10 hectares and above via satellite. Nothing out of the ordinary was observed. However, it is possible that smaller pockets of water that have not been caught in the satellite images may have flooded.

“There is a bit of a mystery and it will be some time before the causes can be determined,” CWC Director Sharat Chandra told *The Hindu*. The commission constituted a team of experts on Monday to investigate the deluge.

Other experts opine that a large mass of rock or debris might have impacted the glacier and triggered an avalanche.

‘Extremely steep’

Kalachand Sain, Director, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, said apart from glacial lakes not being observed, the glaciers were extremely steep and prevented normal flow of water.

Trail of destruction

In Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district on Sunday, flash floods in the Alaknanda river system wreaked widespread destruction. The deluge nearly swept away the Rishiganga and Tapovan-Vishnugad hydropower projects, and affected several places including Joshimath, Raini and Ringi

1. Possible source

A part of a glacier may have broken off and became “rock and ice” avalanche that later turned into a flood, according to Dan Shugar, a geomorphologist at the University of Calgary, Canada. He suggested the labelled point as the possible place where the glacier broke-off. The point is at a 5,600 metre altitude and situated near Trishul Peak.

AFFECTED PLACES/PROJECTS

2. The 13.2-MW Rishiganga hydropower project near Raini village: Project was washed away

3. The 520-MW NTPC Tapovan-Vishnugad project on the Dhauliganga: Project was washed away

enough to form such lakes. “A sudden surge of water is surprising and had it been from a broken glacier, we would be seeing a continuous flow of water. Right now, this appears to have stemmed,” he said.

On Monday morning, the official Twitter account of the CWC reported a “possible second wave of flood” in the early hours of Monday, with water-flow monitors recording a surge and then again ebbing within an hour. “The second wave doesn’t seem concerning and as of now water levels are back to normal.”

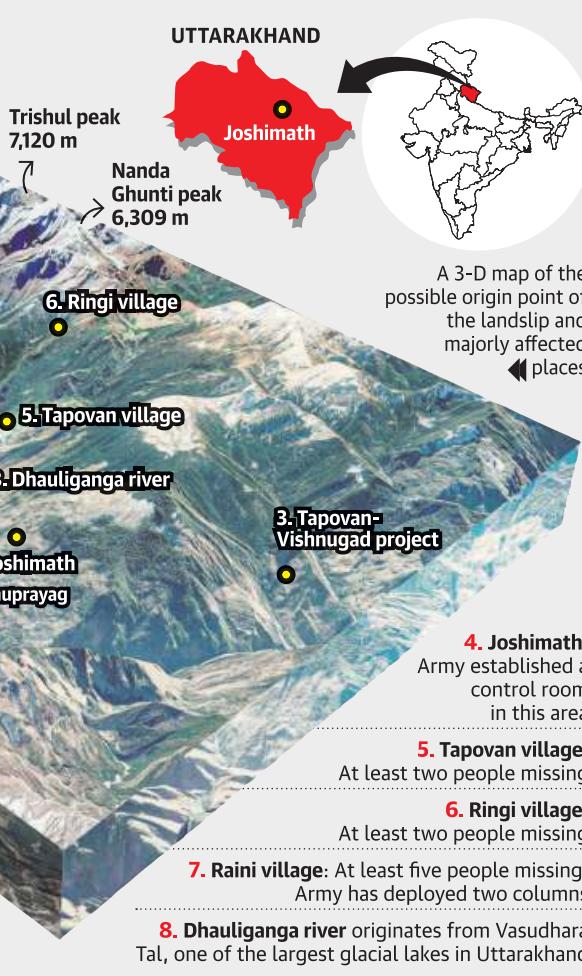
The winter season would

make it extremely hard and the ensuing damage to the connecting roadways make access difficult to reach the glaciers.

Satellite data observations showed that until February 6, there was significant snow but the cover appears to have significantly reduced the next day. “What caused this reduction? Did anything happen upstream?... We need to figure out.”

Mr. Sain said his colleagues – a team of five – were on the road to Joshimath, close to the spot, for further studies.

Mohammad Farooq Azam, Assistant Professor,



Glaciology & Hydrology, Indian Institute of Technology, Indore, offered a hypothesis again ruling out a GLOF. “We can now say with some belief that the incident occurred due to the fracture of a hanging glacier [about 0.2 sq. km in size] together with snow and rock avalanches, at a 5,600-metre altitude near the Trishul peak. Though it is hard to fully ascertain the source of the water and slurry, our current hypothesis is that the water accumulated locked in the debris-snow below the glacier was released when the glacier-rock mass fell. This was a drop of almost 2 km before hitting

marshy land. Since the temperature in the region is sub-zero, river level is much lower than it would be in the monsoon.”

Since 2017, debris and snow had been accumulating at the bottom of the glacier. The stream flowing out from it earlier was very clear, but after 2017, the glacier stream has been hidden below the accumulated debris-snow. It was possible that the debris-snow would have been absorbing and collecting water coming from the upstream glaciers and that could have been released when the ice-rock avalanche hit it, Mr. Azam said.

Hydropower projects in Uttarakhand vulnerable

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The hydropower projects in Uttarakhand are particularly vulnerable to damage by extreme flooding events, such as the deluge in the Rishiganga river on Sunday that damaged at least two plants.

The 13.2-MW Rishiganga project is classified as a “small hydropower” project (<25 MW) and there are seven such projects under various stages of development in Uttarakhand, according to a response to a question in the Lok Sabha in July 2019. There are eight projects above 25 MW and the damaged Tapovan-Vishnugad project being developed by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) falls into this category, according to a reply to a question last September.

The eight major projects in Uttarakhand are the 171-MW Lata Tapovan (NTPC) Central; 520-MW Tapovan Vishnugad (NTPC), 1,000-MW Tehri PSS (THDC) Central, 444-MW Vishnugad Pipalkoti (THDC); 60-MW Naitwar Mori (SJVN); 120-MW Vyasi (JLNL); 76-MW Phata Byung (LANCO) a private company commissioned project and the 99-MW Singoli Bhatwari (L&T).

China condoles loss of life in the deluge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Chinese government on Monday condoled the loss of life following the flash flood in Uttarakhand.

“We have noted that northern India had a massive flood. We want to express our condolences to the victims and sympathy to the bereaved families and

the injured. We hope the missing people will be rescued at an early date,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in Beijing.

“My deep sympathy and condolences to families that lost their loved ones in the glacier burst,” tweeted Chinese envoy in India Sun Weidong.

Modi sees ‘*andolan jeevi*’ and a new kind of ‘FDI’

He says a new breed of protesters found at every agitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday coined two terms – “*andolan jeevi*” (professional protesters) and ‘Foreign Destructive Ideology’ to lampoon the Opposition and certain protesters and foreign individuals who have twisted in support of the farmers’ agitation.

While replying to the Motion of Thanks on the President’s address in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Modi said that India was not merely the world’s largest democracy; it was the “mother of democracy”. A new kind of FDI had emerged in the country and it was “Foreign Destructive Ideology”. “We need to be

more aware to save the country from such an ideology.”

Mr. Modi spoke about a new breed of protesters – *andolan jeevi*, who could be seen at every agitation. “These parasites feast on every agitation. When they are not in the front, they operate from behind the curtains, and they cannot survive without

agitation,” he observed. “People who suspect India’s democracy, I want to ask them to learn to understand it. Our democracy is not a western institution, it is a human institution. India’s nationalism should be protected from multiple attacks,” he said.

Recently international pop star Rihanna shared a news article of the ongoing farmers’ agitation on Twitter, asking why it wasn’t discussed enough. This prompted the government to issue a press statement saying it was “unfortunate to see vested interest groups trying to enforce their agenda on these protests, and derail them.”

Why not enact law to ensure MSP, farmer leaders ask PM

Modi’s comments about ‘*andolan jeevis*’ evoke outrage

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech in Parliament on Monday was full of insults and empty talk, farm unions said responding to the remarks. If the government is serious about remunerative prices for farmers, then it needs to enact a law to guarantee them, and if it wishes to resume talks, then it must take steps to do so, union leaders said.

that never did any *andolan* against Britishers and they were always against the *andolans*. They are still scared of public movements.”

This insult comes from a ‘corporate *jeevi*’ Prime Minister whose RSS was never a part of the glorious *andolan* of the people of India against the slavery of British rule,” said Hannan Mollah, general secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha.

‘Insult to martyrs’

Noting that 200 people had died during the protests so far, Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh spokesperson Abhimanyu Kohar added that it was “an insult to use such a term for martyrs”.

With regard to the PM’s statement that minimum support prices (MSP) were here to stay, union leaders asked why Mr. Modi was un-

willing to put a legal guarantee in place to back up his words. Rakesh Tikait, who leads one faction of the Bhartiya Kisan Union in Uttar Pradesh, said without an MSP law, farmers are exploited and cannot count on a fair price. “The way rates of a flight ticket fluctuate three to four times a day, the price of crops will not be decided the same way,” he told reporters.

“Those wanting business over hunger will be driven out of the country,” he said.

“Without an MSP law, his assurance is empty talk. It is the same with negotiations. If the government really wants to restart talks, let them send us an invitation without terms and conditions. Otherwise, we also have terms and conditions. Should we say that we will not come for talks until the laws are re-pealed,” said Mr. Kohar.

The Prime Minister’s jibe about “*andolan jeevi*”, or professional protesters, evoked outrage. “Farmers would like to remind the PM that it is *andolans* that have liberated India from colonial rulers and that is why we are proud to be *andolan jeevi*,” said a statement from the joint front of unions, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha. “It is the BJP and its predecessors

ODISHA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ADVERTISEMENT NO.08 of 2020-2021 SHORT ADVERTISEMENT

RECRUITMENT TO THE POSTS OF ASSISTANT PROFESSORS IN DIFFERENT STATE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES UNDER THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

WEBSITE - <http://opsc.gov.in>

1. Online applications are invited from the prospective candidates for the posts of Assistant Professor in State Public Universities through the proforma application to be made available on the WEBSITE (<http://opsc.gov.in>). The link for registration/re-registration and payment of examination fee shall be available from 15.02.2021 till 14.03.2021 (Note- 22.03.2021 is the last date for submission of Registered Online Application) for recruitment to the posts of Assistant Professors in different state public universities of Odisha in the scale of pay in Cell-1 of Level 10 of the pay matrix under Odisha Revised Scales of Pay for University Teachers (UGC Scale of Pay) Rule 2019 with usual dearness allowance and other allowances as may be sanctioned by the Government of Odisha from time to time.

2. VACANCY POSITION:-

Total vacancy - 504

UR-276, SC-74, ST-130, and SEBC-24.

The details of vacancies subject wise, University wise and reservation status are shown in Annexure-I, II & III of long advertisement available at OPSC web portal www.opsc.gov.in.

3. AGE:-

Minimum age limit - The candidate must have attained the age of 21 Years as on 01.01.2021.

Maximum age limit - No limit (Supernumerary age becomes the maximum age limit by default).

(01.01.2021 is the reference date for calculation of age)

4. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION :

A.

i) A Master degree with 55% marks (or an equivalent grade in a point scale where a grading system is followed in a concerned/relevant/allied subject from an Indian universities or an equivalent degree from an accredited foreign universities. A relaxation of 5% shall be allowed for candidates belonging to Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe/ PWD candidates.

ii) Besides fulfilling above qualifications, the candidate must have cleared the National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by the UGC or the CSIR, or a similar test accredited by the UGC, like SLET/SET or who are or have been awarded a Ph. D. Degree in accordance with the University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of M.Phil./Ph.D. Degree) Regulations, 2009 or 2016 and their amendments from time to time as the case may be exempted from NET/ SLET/SET. The details of educational qualifications is in the long advertisement available in the OPSC web portal.

5. HOW TO APPLY :

a) Candidates must go through details of the long advertisement available in the Website of OPSC before filling up online application form.

b) Before filling up the online application form, the candidates must go through the details instruction available at OPSC Portal.

c) The online application form is automated & system driven and will guide the candidate seamlessly in filling the application. The requisite options shall be enabled and information shall be asked as per data furnished by the candidate. Before filling up the information ensure that accurate information is fed, for edit option is limited and on confirmation there is no scope for further edit even if wrongful entry has been made while filling up application.

CUTTACK DATE:- 08.02.2021

Secretary
ODISHA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, CUTTACK
D-164; OIPR-12002/11/07/2021

National Fisheries Development Board

Department of Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying,
Government of India.

Pillar No: 235, PVNR Expressway, SVPNPA Post, Hyderabad-500 052
Phone No. 040-24000201, Fax No. 040-2401 5568, Mail: info.nfdb@nic.in

NFDB/PMMSY/Entrepreneurs/2020-21 Date:08-02-2021

The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) invites applications for ‘Entrepreneur Models in Fisheries & Aquaculture’ under PMMSY from Fishers, Fish Farmers, SHGs/ Fisheries Cooperatives/Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)/ Fish Farmers Producer Organizations/ Companies (FFPOs/Cs), Individual Entrepreneurs (Proprietorship Firms) and Private firms. For detailed guidelines, application & relevant documents visit: nfdb.gov.in Sd/- Chief Executive, NFDB

SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKRIT, KALADY, ERNAKULAM, - 683 574

No. Acad. B/14376/SSUS/2020 Date:04.02.2021

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited through online to the M.A.Museology programme for the academic year 2020-21 at the Main Campus, Kalady. Admission to the programme is based on the marks obtained in the Entrance Examination/ Interview to be conducted in March 2021. Details regarding the eligibility, online registration for Entrance Examination, Prospectus etc. are available in the University website www.ssus.ac.in, www.ssusonline.org. Last date for the receipt of applications through online is 15.02.2021. The University reserves the right to make any change in the programmes and Campuses

IN BRIEF

**Rafale induction event****₹41.32 lakh, says govt.**

NEW DELHI The expenditure incurred for the induction ceremony of Rafale jets into the Indian Air Force (IAF) at Ambala last September was ₹41.32 lakh including Goods and Services Tax (GST) of ₹9.18 lakh, the government informed Parliament on Monday. "The arrangements for this event were made mostly through local resources of IAF," the Defence Ministry said in the Rajya Sabha.

RS clears Bill to merge J&K cadre with AGMUT

NEW DELHI The Rajya Sabha on Monday passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill to merge the Jammu and Kashmir cadre of the IAS and IPS with the Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, and Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre. Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy said J&K had been witnessing speedy development after becoming a Union Territory.

Sidhu meets Sonia, triggers speculation

NEW DELHI Navjot Singh Sidhu, Congress MLA from Punjab, met party president Sonia Gandhi on Monday at her residence, triggering speculation that he could be given some responsibility in the party or reinducted into Capt. Amarinder Singh's Council of Ministers. However, there is no official word on what transpired at the meeting that included AICC Punjab in-charge, Harish Rawat.

Pak. intruder shot dead on IB in Samba: BSF

JAMMU A Pakistani intruder was shot dead on the International Border (IB) in Jammu's Samba district, the Border Security Force (BSF) said on Monday. The incident took place around 9.45 a.m. "The BSF troops observed a Pakistani intruder heading towards the fence near Border Post No. 64 in the area of Chak Faqira. Despite repeated warnings, he kept moving towards the fence and was fired upon," a BSF spokesman said.

DIG booked after Minister's brother alleges assault

AMBALA The Haryana Police has registered a case against Deputy Inspector General of Police (Vigilance) Ashok Kumar on charges of assault, criminal intimidation and obscene act on a complaint from Kapil Vij, brother of State Minister Anil Vij. Police said on Monday that Mr. Vij had attended a party where the DIG was also present. There was a heated exchange of words between them. PTI

Nitish Kumar to expand Bihar Cabinet today

BJP, JD(U) both to induct young MLAs

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA After much delay and speculation, the Nitish Kumar Cabinet will be expanded on Tuesday afternoon. Earlier on Monday, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said the expansion would take place when the BJP's list was given to him. Late on Tuesday night the CM's secretariat confirmed that the new ministers will take oath of office at 12.30 p.m. at Raj Bhawan.

Party sources told *The Hindu* that there will be nine ministers from BJP quota while, eight will be from alliance partner JD(U). Earlier on November 16, the Nitish Kumar Cabinet of 14 ministers, including the Chief Minister, had taken oath. With an Assembly of 243 members, there can be a maximum 36 ministers in the Cabinet.

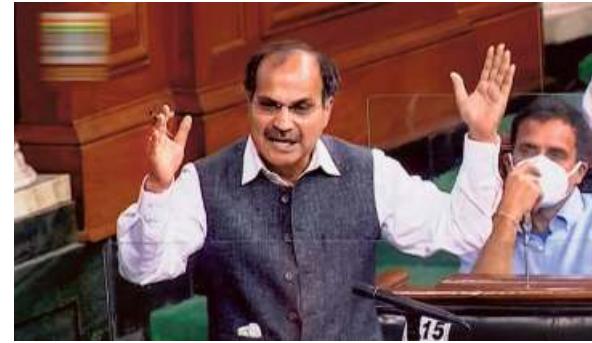
Names of young BJP leaders like Sanjiv Chaurasia, Nitin Navin, Neeraj Kumar Babloo, Shahnawaz Hussain, Subhas Singh, Samrat Chaudhury have been floated as new ministers. Similarly, names of JD(U) MLAs Shrawan Kumar, Sanjay Jha,

Red Fort: Cong. demands probe

Party accuses government of hatching a conspiracy to 'desecrate' the monument

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

**Demanding probe:** Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury speaks in the Lok Sabha, in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

a privilege motion against the Trinamool MP.

Speaking first from the Opposition, Mr Chowdhury asked for JPC probe into the Red Fort incident, the alleged TRP scam and the purported WhatsApp conversation of a TV anchor that were linked to the Balakot airstrikes.

He asked the government why it was 'afraid' of 18-year-old climate-activist Greta Thunberg for expressing her support to the farmers.

"With such a strong Home Minister like Amit Shah, how can some people reach the

Red Fort, that too on January 26 when the highest level of security was in place in Delhi. Why isn't there a proper investigation into it? It is actually a big, well-planned conspiracy to defame the farmers. The fact is that you have sent some vandals to the Red Fort to create vandalism. Forces within the government are behind it," Mr. Chowdhury alleged.

The Congress leader compared the present situation in Delhi with Kabul, Bagdad and Syria, saying barricades, barbed wire and nails have been put in and around

the sites of the farmers' protests.

"Farmers are at Delhi's borders. More than 200 farmers have lost their lives. Why is the Prime Minister not talking to them? Why this arrogance? You have a majority and you are trying to bulldoze through your majority. Don't insult the farmers, don't wage a war against the farmers. Are they your enemy?" Mr. Chowdhury said in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Mr. Chowdhury alleged that the Central government had earlier conspired against the Muslims and now against the farmers.

"We should not be afraid of debate. Dissent, disagreement and dialogue are the hallmark of our civilisation. Mahatma Gandhi had once said farmers are the kings. Given a chance, I would make a farmer the Governor-General," the Congress leader said, quoting Gandhi.

Pvt. hospitals await nod for vaccination

'Ready for registration of vulnerable'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

Awaiting the green signal from the Union government, private hospitals across India say they are all set to join hands to provide COVID-19 vaccination for the vulnerable population – those over 50 years and people with co-morbidities – and later others.

"We have a plan in place but await directives from the government. And as far as the use of certain vaccines (India has approved emergency use of two vaccines), it totally depends on sanctions from the government," said a statement issued by Max Hospital.

Vaccine tracker

Apollo Hospitals, which has launched a COVID-19 vaccine tracker, said its objective was to "host a dedicated platform wherein users will be able to voluntarily register themselves and keep abreast of the latest update around vaccine

development.

The data collected from individuals is kept in a highly secured environment with safety protocols."

Using technology

"It is imperative that we leverage the power of technology in every step of the way. Technology will yet again play a large role in ensuring that all citizens have access to the vaccine and how it will be administered and prioritised," an Apollo Hospital official told *The Hindu*.

Manipal Hospital said its registration portal for vaccination was closed for now for those other than healthcare workers.

Meanwhile, India registered 84 COVID fatalities in the past 24 hours with six States accounting for 79.76% of these – Maharashtra reported the most casualties with 30 new fatalities followed by Kerala with 19 daily deaths, noted a release issued by the Health Ministry on Monday.

Modi, Biden hold talks over phone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday spoke to U.S. President Joe Biden. It was the first conversation between the two leaders since Mr. Biden took office on January 20.

"We discussed regional issues and our shared priorities. We also agreed to further our cooperation against climate change. President Biden and I are committed to a rules-based international order. We look forward to consolidating our strategic partnership to further peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond," Mr. Modi said.

The reference to the "rules-based international order" is consistent with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's telephonic talk with Yang Jiechi, his counterpart in Beijing. Mr. Blinken said the U.S. will "stand up" for democratic values and "hold Beijing accountable for its abuses of the international system".

Bengal elections become loud and clear in Lok Sabha

Congress, Trinamool hit out at the BJP's campaign

**Locket Chatterjee** speaking in the Lok Sabha on Monday. PTI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's appeal to protesting MPs in the Lok Sabha finally got the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President for his address off the ground after a week of disruption, but the debate itself reflected the heat being raised by the upcoming Assembly polls in Bengal.

Repeated references to poet Rabindranath Tagore, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Jan Sangh founder Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and even late president Prahal Mukherjee made Bengal a major flavour of the debate after the three contentious farm laws being protested by the farmers' unions.

'Cut money' tradition
BJP MP Locket Chatterjee, who initiated the debate on behalf of the Treasury benches, heaped encomiums on the Narendra Modi government's handling of the pandemic and panned the Bengal government led by Mamata Banerjee for what she termed was the "cut money" tradition in the Trinamool Congress.

"Mamata Banerjee sends her MPs to Singhu border

ment had replaced his name on a dock with that of Jan Sangh founder SP Mookerjee. "Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Shanti Niketan and claims Rabindranath Tagore was born there! At least do your studies. Then he [Mr. Shah] goes and sits on the chair used by Tagore. That's showing disrespect," he said.

Hijacking Netaji
Trinamool Congress leader Mohua Moitra's references to the judiciary got several interruptions from the treasury and while she kept her speech mainly to the farmers' movement, she packed in at least one broadside on the BJP's appropriation of Netaji. "The Central government has made every attempt to hijack Netaji. But Netaji had given the chant of 'Jai Hind' and the BJP has replaced it with one that has narrow religious significance and is used to heckle minorities and to assert who is in charge," she said with reference to the "Jai Shri Ram" at a recent function in Kolkata marking the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji where Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed she had been heckled.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury responded to the Bengal references by pointing out that while it was good that the BJP, with an eye on the Bengal polls, was remembering Netaji in a big way, the Union govern-

Azad gets a pat on the back from PM

Modi asks other MPs to follow Congress leader's non-abrasive brand of politics

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

**Targeting Congress:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. PTI

Mr. Azad is retiring on February 15.

While addressing the House in response to the debate on the Motion of Thanks, Mr. Modi appreciated Mr. Azad for praising his government for conducting

the civic polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said Mr. Azad is a soft-spoken and polite person. "Gulam Nabiji is not known to use harsh words and I be-

lieve everyone here must learn from him. I respect him for this. He congratulates us for the elections in Kashmir."

Mr. Modi said that while

PM's speech had no substance, says Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

farm laws, senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge termed it "misleading".

Mr. Kharge was speaking at a joint press conference with his Rajya Sabha colleagues – Deepender Hooda, Shaktisinh Gohil, Akhilash Prasad Singh and Naseer Hussain – soon after Mr. Modi's speech.

"In the wake of the farmers' agitation, we expected that the PM would take back the laws and bring them

back to Parliament after consulting with all the stakeholders. But he didn't mention that. He only said people are agitating without understanding the contents of the law," Mr. Kharge said.

Mr. Gohil said the people were hoping for a solution to the over 70-day farmers' protests but the PM had disappointed everyone. "Farmers have only met with disappointment, it is unfortunate that the government has not

been able to understand the gravity of the situation," Mr. Hoda said.

Congress' chief whip in the Upper House, Jairam Ramesh, countered Mr. Modi's new definition of FDI with his own. "In Parliament today, PM Modi said FDI is also 'Foreign Destructive Ideology'. This from someone whose governance has been based solely on FDI – Fear, Deception, Intimidation," he tweeted.

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V.K. Singh statement on LAC 'unwitting confession': China

He said India transgressed LAC more often than China did



Gen. V.K. Singh

quent acts of trespass" by India. Its spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, "This is an unwitting confession by the Indian side".

"Similarly, none of you come to know how many times we have transgressed as per our perception. Chinese media does not cover it," he said. "Let me assure you, if China has transgressed 10 times, we must have done it at least 50 times," Gen. Singh said.

Confirming trespass'

China's Foreign Ministry on Monday pointed to his statement as confirming "fre-

SC asks govt. not to be rigid with UPSC aspirants

It wants age-bar clause from proposal

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Monday told the government to not be "rigid" about giving another chance to age-barred UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) aspirants, whose preparations for the civil services exam in October 2020 were hampered by COVID-19.

"They [aspirants] are asking you to give another chance... Is there a need to be rigid about this issue," Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, heading a Bench, asked Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, for the government.

Mr. Khanwilkar said, "Policies are made keeping in mind contemporaneous situation. If you want it done, you can get it done".

Mr. Raju submitted, "All these last-attempt candidates had appeared in the October 4, 2020 prelims on the condition that the leave would not extend to those who have now crossed the age of eligibility.

Extraordinary scenario

Justice Khanwilkar observed, "The pandemic situation was extraordinary. Some of these candidates

Twitter asked to remove 1,178 accounts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Privacy, accessibility, hate speech... the question of individual rights on the Internet is broad, complicated and fuzzy. Meet the organisations working to clear the air

Battle-ready, for the web

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

It was in 2015 that the Supreme Court of India struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, terming it 'unconstitutional'. Section 66A, through its vague language, was a handy weapon that allowed people to clamp down on any online statement that could be considered "offensive". Even now, five years after being scrapped by the highest court in the land, the Section is being used to book and arrest people.

On January 15 this year, the Delhi-headquartered Internet Freedom Foundation and CivicDataLab launched the Zombie Tracker, an online page monitoring cases filed using the 'dead' Section 66A. So far, they have collected data from 11 states in the country.

A 2020 report by the Internet Freedom Foundation traced its journey from 2008 to 2020, discovering that the Section is being used against – surprise, surprise – political dissidents. Some people have languished in custody for as long as six months before being given bail, and "the battle against the 66A Zombies," as the IFF puts it, continues to this day.

Obligation and curiosity'
Who are the people fighting these battles for us? Who spends their days poring over civil rights legalese and digital data, to make sure that our rights in the virtual world are kept safe? Like Internet Free-

dom Foundation's founder Apar Gupta, digital rights organisations around the country are being spearheaded by like-minded people from various backgrounds including Engineering, Law, Management and International Relations. They have banded together out of a sense of obligation and curiosity, often leaving prolific careers to work in donor-funded organisations.

As Amber Sinha, executive director of CIS-India, Bengaluru, (Centre for Internet and Society - India) puts it, "We try to study how our interests, which earlier existed in an analog world, are changing and reorienting themselves with our digital interac-

tions. The impact that they [these interactions] have on our digital rights; what we need to do to preserve and enhance them... this is one clear focus of our research."

'Digital rights' is a broad term: it can imply the right to privacy and data protection; it can be related to trolling, online threats and hate speech; it can address broader issues of equitable Internet access regardless of economic backgrounds and disabilities.

For instance, one of CIS-India's earliest areas of focus was on the right to knowledge of people with

'Digital rights' is a broad term: it can imply the right to privacy and data protection; it can be related to trolling, online threats and hate speech

print impairment. It later expanded this to look into how many people are unable to use technology and the Internet because of mental, visual and other impairments. According to Sinha, in 2013, CIS' "advocacy and research contributed towards India becoming the first nation to adopt the Marrakesh Treaty, which grants major copyright exceptions for the print disabled". Till date, 65 countries have ratified the treaty, which enables international access and production of special books for the blind and the visually impaired.

It was also in 2013 that the Indian Government approved a National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility, for equal access to electronics and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Sinha also adds that in 2009, CIS-India was the first organisation to call Section 66A 'unconstitutional'. In 2012, it played a part in the Justice AP Shah Commit-

tee, which wrote a report on the state of privacy law in India, and made recommendations for privacy guidelines in legislation and policy. CIS' research on privacy was noted with appreciation in the Puttuswamy and Aadhaar judgments of the Supreme Court in 2017-2018, and its research was also cited by the Srikarshana Committee on data protection in 2018.

The Bengaluru-based Apti Institute, founded by former management consultant Sarayu Natarajan, who has a PhD in Political Science from King's College, London. Her alma maters also include Columbia University and National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru. Co-founder Astha Kapoor has experience with the Planning Commission. The institute recently released a report on the gaps in online access to municipal services.

Today, IFF not only works in advocacy and research, but also provides pro-bono legal aid to Indians fighting for their digital rights in court.

The Reddit frenzy is real



Reddit's monthly active users grew more than 50% in January compared to the previous year, following the GameStop trading frenzy

SOWMYA RAMASUBRAMANIAN

Social networking website Reddit (AKA the 'front page of the Internet') hit 6.6 million app installs worldwide last month, making January its best-ever month.

The app gained significant traction last week as individual investors coordinated on the platform to buy shares of GameStop Corp, AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc and BlackBerry, and squeeze hedge funds that had bet big on the struggling companies to tank.

Reddit's installs rose over 40% last month, compared to 4.6 million installs in December last year, according to app intelligence firm Sensor Tower. The app grew about 128% in January, compared with the same period in the previous year.

The app has about 122 million installs globally from both Google Play store and Apple's App Store. Most of these downloads including in-app purchase revenue comes from the US, which accounts for nearly 46% of the total installs.

According to Sensor Tower, US consumers represent more than a third of total spending in the app to date. The California-based company's monthly active users grew more than 50% in January compared to the previous year. This trend is likely to continue, the research marketing agency estimates.

However, the pace of Reddit's continued growth may depend on how many users it can retain after the conversation dies down around the platform's role in last month's stock market disruption, the app intelligence firm added.



GAMESPOT



Undead chats
Screenshots from the video game
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



feels linear and restrictive – yet you can get lost finding that one interaction point.

The Medium is truly next-gen and looks eerily beautiful, especially the spirit world inspired by Polish surrealist Zdzislaw Beksiński known for his skeletal and organic artworks that all seem to glow from within. The game's score from Silent Hill's Akira Yamaoka and the visuals come together to create a superb atmosphere that is unreal as it is haunting.

Unfortunately, looping explanations sometimes ruin the ambient narrative; everyone knows the best horror is when things are left to the imagination. But still, The Medium spins a great, well-paced tale, that will keep you hooked, even though it ends on an ambiguous note.

If you are looking for a good horror game with memorable puzzle design, The Medium will satiate both those cravings. Thanks to well-crafted worlds that make for perfect nightmare fuel, this is a thought-provoking interactive ghost story worth the shivers.

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

Split-world hauntings

In a world where most games feel the same, The Medium brings back the classic adventure game with a unique twist



THE MEDIUM
DEVELOPER & PUBLISHER: Bloober Team
PRICE: ₹2,499 on PC ; ₹3,999 Xbox Series X or play free with the Gamepass Subscription

is a lot like *The Haunting* anthology series on Netflix in which ghosts are tied to the living in interesting ways – especially Sadness, a masked little girl and The Maw.

If you enjoyed point-and-click adventure games such as *Alone In The Dark* or *Grim Fandango*, you will love The Medium. Featuring pre-ren-

dered backgrounds with fixed camera angles as interacting with elements or solving puzzles, The Medium uses the duality of its world to create its puzzles, sending the screen into a split as you control Marianne and her spirit form, sometimes at the same time.

This feature carries over to

Living the car life

Vlogger couple Harikrishnan J and Lakshmi Krishna from Thrissur are on a mission to cover 12 States in an SUV that functions as their mobile home



PRABALIKA M BORAH

The name Ricky Pond might not ring a bell, but #DancingDad will. If you have been on Instagram and Facebook lately, you are likely to have seen videos of 47-year-old Ricky dance to a variety of Hindi, Tamil and Telugu songs, including 'Ghumar' (*Padmavat*), 'Rowdy Baby' (*Maari-2*) and 'Borabanda Meeda Bona Anta'.

Father of four, Washington-based Ricky is often seen dancing with three of his four children. His wife too decided to join in and make it merrier. With no earlier experience on social media, Ricky now gets requests from DJs and brands for paid collaborations as well as his fans who request him to dance to their favourite Indian songs.

Give Ricky any number and he will browse the Internet to find a short choreography. After a 40-minute rehearsal, he puts up the video for people to like, cheer or even laugh. All he wants to do is to make people smile.

Ricky's children, Dallin and Audrey, opened his TikTok account in March 2020. Over a video call, Ricky says, "My kids wanted to embarrass me. They were sure I would not go beyond 20 followers. Tables turned; now their friends and even their teachers follow me. At the end of the first day of signing into TikTok, I had 100 followers doing the Renegade steps which I recorded with Dallin and Audrey." A trained Clog dancer, Ricky says his kids had no idea that it is impossible to embarrass someone who has danced professionally and performed at shows in Germany and Hungary. "I also taught dancing for a brief period. Dance was an important



Dance like daddy The Pond family; (right) Ricky at work • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Rowdy Baby dad

Ricky Pond's children created a social media account for him as a joke. Then, their father suddenly became a celebrated 'dance-fluencer'

part of my life which took a back seat with work (he is a graphic designer) and all that comes with added responsibilities," he smiles.

Ricky is just seven-weeks old on Instagram. "I am close to reaching the half-a-million-mark," he says adding

that requests started pouring in for popular Indian songs. "I oblige because I want the world to be happy. All we need now is happiness."

Ricky started the hashtag #DancingDad just for fun, only to be surprised at how it triggered a chain reaction of dads posting videos with their children.

When he and Roxane his wife (an elementary school teacher) danced to 'Butta Bomma' (from Telugu movie *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*), fans could not stop raving about it. "Roxanne is opening up to doing the dances on a public platform and she is a better dancer than I am. Apart from 'Butta Bomma', we danced to 'Kaho Na Pyaar Hai' to wish Hrithik Roshan on his birthday," says Ricky.

Ricky admits that none of them understands a word of the songs they dance to but "music at the end of the day is music. If it tugs our heart and adds a little movement to your body, I say go for it without a thought."



Over a phone call from Florida, Kiran Deol looks back at the overwhelming support that *I Would Never* had received over the weekend, as it currently is For Your Consideration for the 2021 Academy Awards. The Indian-American filmmaker calls her latest short "a massive swing" at a changing filmmaking culture where there are no guarantees of knowing where said film would land.

Blurred lines

Filmmaker Kiran Deol directs and stars in a thought-provoking short film *I Would Never*, which joins the race for this year's Academy Awards

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

With *I Would Never*, Kiran wanted a "modest" approach. The film was made on a small budget and was even shot in a single room in just two days. It follows two best friends studying late at night; the session turns intimate, and boundaries are traversed in ways that change the relationship forever.

Kiran wrote and directed the short which also stars her long-time friend, Dan J Johnson. Starring herself, it harkens back to previous instances of Kiran stating that South Asian women are meant to be docile and submissive. Has that notion been challenged? She responds in two parts, "I knew I wanted to centre this film with people-of-colour. When I look at [almost] any film that touches on these subjects, it is mostly white women at the centre – which is valid and neces-

sary – but this is affecting women of all ages and races. I wanted that to be part of the film's fabric. I also spoke with a director friend of mine, Meera Menon, as I was nervous to do both. She said on the day, the biggest concern is making sure your actress is safe, comfortable and taken care of. I was also incredibly supported by everyone. I didn't watch a ton of playback; I trusted their eyes. It was ironic because it is a movie about broken trust, but it took so much trust to make."

"Comfort" being the key-word, films and series



that have sexual content now hire intimacy coordinators to ensure the 'trust' factor between participating actors. Given Kiran shouldered much of *I Would Never*, did she also end up being intimacy coordinator? "Our production was just so much smaller so there was an inherent intimacy built into this structure, such as the single-room setting. Because it was me in that position, there was a lot of control."

Only a few people have seen the film – among whom are actor Rachel Bloom, director Adam Shankman, actor Baron Vaughn, and screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna. Kiran is keen on audiences and filmmakers alike resonating with it. "I was so shocked when people said they had experienced something like this or knew someone who had. Why haven't we seen this portrayed more in films, if I am hearing it so often?"

She is thrilled at the world of shorts. "I learned a lot making this, about the level of care that goes into pre-production. In America, there is this idea of creating a proof of concept. The stakes are lower with short films because it is less money, and you can show people what is in your mind."

On the cusp Kiran Deol, filmmaker of *I Would Never* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



HARIKUMAR JS

Vlogger couple Harikrishnan J and Lakshmi Krishna from Thrissur, Kerala, are riding high on a cross-country odyssey, living out of their car. The avid travellers are on a mission to cover 13 States in their minimally refurbished compact SUV, all the while narrating the tales of their trip through their YouTube channel TinPin Stories.

When we caught up with the couple, Harikrishnan (31) and Lakshmi (24) had made a pit-stop in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, before gearing up to enter Punjab. "We call it a freewheeling 'car life' wherein we essentially travel, cook and sleep in our four-wheeler," says Lakshmi, a graphic designer. "It has been our mobile home for months now," chimes in Harikrishnan.

The duo, who tied the knot in 2019, first launched TinPin Stories to document their honeymoon travels in Thailand. They later quit their corporate jobs in Bengaluru to become full-time vloggers. The couple set out on their white Hyundai Creta (automatic/petrol) from their hometown in Thrissur on October 28 last year after Covid-19 lockdown relaxations. "We had already been to places such as Himachal Pradesh and Hampi and dreamt of going on a much longer trip. Then the lockdown derailed our travel



plans. A key reason we decided to travel in our own car was not to rely on public transport, keeping the pandemic in mind. Also, we felt this would help cut cost if we cooked and slept in it," says Lakshmi.

Their original plan was to travel 12 States and come full circle in about two months, but they soon realised there was a lot to explore, relish and learn at each milestone. Starting from Kerala, their route threads Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu before making their way back to their hometown in Thrissur.

To build a home
The two effected "minimal modifications" to their SUV to suit the purpose, chiefly fashioning two makeshift 'beds' out of the back seat with some smart ergonomics. "The back seat was folded and the headrest removed where we fixed two six-feet long plywood planks



We carry a small gas cylinder, a stove and basic cooking utensils that include a pressure cooker. A car inverter solves our power problems

Something new, every day (Left) Harikrishnan J and Lakshmi Krishna with residents of the village Dhola Ki Od in Rajasthan • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



that serve as beds with 2-inch foam mattress firmly attached to it. We carry a small gas cylinder, a stove and basic cooking utensils that include a pressure cooker. A car inverter solves our power problems. In fact, we spent not more than ₹4,000 on all these for the trip," says Harikrishnan, adding that they use a laptop, iPhone and a GoPro for vlogging.

They love to whip up dishes that are quick to make. "We prepare rice, curry, egg and poha, which we both enjoy. At other times, we resort to instant noodles to save time. Veggies and cereals are usually bought fresh on the road," he says. Also in the boot are three 10-litre water cans, one meant for washing. Water refills are done from fuel stations.

Google map serves as their primary guide. "We both take turns to drive and navigate both highways and byways. We just go with the flow and mingle with people from different communities and do not try to stick to any particular schedule. We both can

manage communicating in Hindi. However, we call it a day by 7 pm to zoom in on a convenient spot to park our car and settle for the night," says Harikrishnan. While sleeping, a mountable power bank-charged mini-fan comes in handy while a portion of the windows is kept open.

Nevertheless, there were occasions when they had to check into hotels briefly. "So far, only a few times. That's also when we get to do most of the laundry," says Harikrishnan with a laugh. The couple says the only challenging part of their odyssey has been finding sufficient time for vlogging. "We keep shooting videos and clicking pictures as much as we can but editing them well for TinPin Stories and uploading the clips are time-consuming," he points out.

So what has their 'car life' across the country taught them? "Be nice to people and they will be nice to you", say Harikrishnan and Lakshmi in one voice.

Growing protest

Myanmar's military seized power last week, arresting the country's democratically-elected civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi



As protests spread across the country, here is a recap of events:

Back to the old days

FEBRUARY 1: The Generals stage a coup, detaining Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of her National League for Democracy in pre-dawn raids

- In doing so, they end Myanmar's 10-year experiment with democracy after close to 50 years of military rule
- The Generals justify the coup by claiming fraud

in November's elections, which the Suu Kyi's party won by a landslide

- The junta proclaims a one-year state of emergency, and promise to hold fresh elections, but offers no timeline
- FEB. 3:** The military authorities bring an obscure charge against 75-year-old Suu Kyi — over unregistered walkie-talkies at her home, an offence under Myanmar's import and export rules
- The junta orders telecom networks to block access to Facebook, which is extremely popular in the country
- FEB. 5:** The military orders other social media providers, including Twitter, to be muzzled in an effort to stifle dissent

Internet blocked

• Myanmar citizens kick off resistance with the nightly clambour of people banging pots and pans — a practice traditionally associated with driving out evil spirits

• The junta orders the military to block access to Facebook, which is extremely popular in the country

• The junta orders other social media providers, including Twitter, to be muzzled in an effort to stifle dissent

Bold defiance

FEB. 7: Popular dissent surges over the weekend, with tens of thousands of people gathering on the streets calling for the release of Suu Kyi

FEB. 8: Defiance spreads with a third straight day of anti-coup rallies attended by hundreds of thousands of people across Myanmar

• The junta orders the military to ban people from gathering in groups of more than five, and a curfew will run from 8 p.m. until 4 a.m.



Source: AFP

Face-off: Police firing water cannon at protesters rallying against the military coup in Naypyitaw on Monday. ■ REUTERS



■

Action must be taken according to the law with effective steps against offences which disturb, prevent and destroy the state's stability, public safety and the rule of law

MILITARY GOVERNMENT

Myanmar issues crackdown warning

Uprising against military coup gathers pace; police fire water cannon at crowd in capital Naypyitaw

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

Myanmar's Generals issued a stern warning on Monday against further protests as an uprising against their coup gathered pace, with hundreds of thousands on the streets demanding the release of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The junta has so far refrained from using deadly force to quell the demonstrations sweeping most of the country, but with pressure building riot police fired water cannon in an attempt to disperse thousands gathered in Naypyitaw.

The military last week detained Ms. Suu Kyi and dozens of other members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party, ending a decade of civilian rule and

triggering international condemnation.

In the face of an increasingly bold wave of defiance, state broadcaster MRTV warned that opposition to the junta was unlawful and signalled a potential crackdown.

"Action must be taken according to the law with effective steps against offences which disturb, prevent and destroy the state's stability, public safety and the rule of law," said a statement read by an announcer on the channel.

Tens of thousands of people overcame a nationwide Internet blockade to rally over the weekend in the first major outpourings of opposition to the coup.

The movement built on Monday, with protests across the country and the start of a

nationwide strike.

In Yangon, the nation's commercial capital, crowds split onto the city's main roads, immobilising traffic and dwarfing the previous day's rally.

"Down with military dictatorship" and "release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and arrested people", protesters chanted, flashing the three-finger salute that has come to symbolise their movement as car horns were honked in support.

Nationwide strike
Calls for a nationwide strike gathered momentum over the weekend, with textile workers, civil servants and railway employees walking out of work in the commercial hub.

"This is a work day, but we

aren't going to work even if our salary will be cut," one protester, 28-year-old garment factory worker Hnin Thazin, said.

Construction worker Chit Min, 18, joined the Yangon rally, saying his loyalty to Ms. Suu Kyi outweighed concerns about his financial situation. "I am jobless now for a week because of the military coup, and I am worried for my survival," he said.

Similarly, large crowds marched in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city.

Police attempted to disperse thousands of people in Naypyitaw, where the deposed leader is believed to be detained. Water cannon was fired into the crowd, injuring at least two demonstrators, according to a photo-

tographer on the scene.

Huge rallies were also reported across the country, from Muse on the Chinese border to the southern cities of Dawei and Hpa-an.

State of emergency
Protesters started to disperse in the early evening.

Myanmar's Generals detained Ms. Suu Kyi, 75, and other top NLD leaders last Monday, justifying the coup by claiming fraud in last November's elections, which the party won in a landslide.

The junta proclaimed a one-year state of emergency, promising to hold fresh elections after that without offering any precise timeframe.

U.S. President Joe Biden has led global calls for the Generals to relinquish power.

Enhance combat readiness, Xi tells People's Liberation Army

President's message came ahead of major national holiday

ANANTH KRISHNAN



rapid reaction combat in plateau regions".

The official broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) reported a regiment attached to the PLA Xinjiang Military Command received the first batch last month and "immediately after the commissioning, the regiment sent the tanks to a freezng region at 4,300 m altitude for adaptation exercises, so they can rapidly form combat capability".

Media affiliated to the PLA also reported earlier this month a border defence company at Shenxianwan near the Karakoram mountains at an elevation of 5,380 m had been equipped for long-term winter deployment by "introducing high-tech planting technologies" for vegetable growing in the harsh environment.

Official media affiliated to the PLA reported over the past few days moves to bolster logistical support to military commands near the Line of Actual Control (LAC), including the Xinjiang Military Command commissioning "its first batch of China's newly developed Type 15 light tanks, which excels at

PLA Air Force in the southwestern province of Guizhou last week in his last major trip ahead of China's biggest annual holiday, the Lunar New Year, which runs from Thursday until February 17.

"It is usual practice for the Chinese military to enhance its combat readiness in major holidays," Fu Qian-

tong reported.

had instructed the State Department to "reengage immediately and robustly" with the council, but he acknowledged it still needs work. "We recognise that the Human Rights Council is a flawed body, in need of reform to its agenda, membership, and focus, including its disproportionate focus on Israel," he said.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA

The U.S. announced plans on Monday to reengage with the much-maligned UN Human Rights Council that former President Donald Trump withdrew from almost three years ago, as President Joe Biden's administration reverses another Trump-era move away from the council.

Mr. Blinken said Mr. Biden

multilateral organisations and agreements.

Secretary of State Antony

Blinken said the pullout in

June 2018 "did nothing to en-

courage meaningful change,

but instead created a vacu-

um of U.S. leadership, which

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U.S. to rejoin UN human rights forum

ASSOCIATED PRESS
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Government of Kerala	
Published Tenders from 01-02-2021 to 07-02-2021	
Stationery Department	
Tender ID: 2021_STY_411277_1 * Stationery Controller *	
Supply of Voting Compartment for Election 2021 * Closing Date: 17-Feb-2021 * PAC: Rs14251477	
Visit https://etenders.kerala.gov.in for more details.	
Ro.No:01-07/Feb/2021/PRD/(N)21	

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY

e-Tender Notice

Tender No : 56/SE/PHCK/2020-21, 57/SE/PHCK/2020-21 JJM-2020-21 - VAZHOOR and PALLIKATHODU PANCHAYATHS - KOTTAYAM DISTRICT - Phase I- PACKAGE 2 - LAYING PIPELINES AND PROVIDING FHTCs (In Phase 2 Zone 3 DMA 1 & DMA II) EMD : Rs. 2,00,00/-, 2,00,00/- Tender fee : Rs. 10,000 + 18% GST, 10,000 + 18% GST. Last Date for submitting Tender : 02-03-2021 04:00 pm. Phone: 04812562745 Superintending Engineer Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in PH Circle, Kottayam KWA-JB-GL-6-1024-2020-21

SHORT E-TENDER NOTICE

Competitive Tenders are invited for following. For more details please visit the E-Tendering Portal <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> or www.kmml.com

No.	Tender Id	Name of the Work
1	2021_KMML_411302_1	Supply and Commissioning of Diesel Generator Set
2	2021_KMML_409702_1	Supply of Tickle Condenser (Methanol Chiller)
2	2021_KMML_412259_1	Supply of PVC Pipes and Fittings

Chavara (Sd/-), DGM (MTs) For the Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd

Our Products: Titanium Dioxide, Titanium Tetra Chloride, Nano Titanium, Titanium Sponge

DIPR/889/TENDER/2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU	PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Buildings (C&M) Circle, Tirunelveli - 627 002.	
Tender Notice No.23/2020-2021/Date 03.02.2021	
Type of Contract : Lumpsum (Pre Qualification /Two Cover System) & Rate Tender System	
Tender Notice No.23/2020-2021/Date 03.02.2021	
For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, sealed Tenders are invited from the contractors registered in Public Works Department in the appropriate class to the office of the Special Chief Engineer, PWD, Buildings (C&M) Circle, Tirunelveli.	
Tender Schedule Available Date : 11.02.2021 to 16.03.2021 Up to 5.45 PM	
Tender Schedule Receiving Date : Up to 3.00 PM on 17.03.2021.	
Tender Opening at :	

MARKET WATCH

	08-02-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51349	1.22
US Dollar	72.97	-0.05
Gold	46875	0.29
Brent oil	59.96	1.09

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	582.05	15.10
Asian Paints	2416.85	40.10
Axisc Bank	736.15	16.55
Bajaj Auto	4237.45	6.20
Bajaj Finance	10021.05	298.85
Bharti Airtel	597.30	16.20
BPCL	420.05	5.05
Britannia Ind	3473.70	-67.95
Cipla	847.25	-0.45
Coal India	141.55	0.70
Divis Lab	3781.85	-40.60
Dr Reddys Lab	4859.80	58.90
Eicher Motors	2970.40	38.25
GAIL (India)	131.40	3.20
Gasim Ind	1210.80	24.70
HCL Tech.	957.75	11.60
HDFC	2733.35	11.85
HDPC Bank	1605.25	7.65
HDFC Life	684.05	2.50
Hero MotoCorp	3495.00	65.80
Hindalco	278.95	16.90
Hind Unilever	2236.65	-32.90
ICICI Bank	629.60	15.45
IndusInd Bank	1035.10	10.00
Infosys	1303.55	31.45
Indian Oil Corp	104.10	1.70
ITC	233.10	-1.25
JSW Steel	417.65	15.45
Kotak Bank	1957.15	-25.55
L&T	1551.80	35.30
M&M	928.40	62.90
Maurti Suzuki	7574.60	80.45
Nestle India Ltd.	17218.20	102.45
NTPC	100.30	0.80
ONGC	99.65	2.00
PowerGrid Corp	212.95	5.45
Reliance Ind	1951.45	27.70
SBI Life	859.10	-5.10
State Bank	397.05	3.95
Shree Cement	28022.20	1299.35
Sun Pharma	634.65	-0.10
Tata Motors	335.95	20.05
Tata Steel	702.95	17.90
TCS	3214.10	56.15
Tech Mahindra	982.55	23.15
Titan	1541.70	32.25
UltraTech Cement	6368.15	16.05
UPL	538.30	1.80
Wipro	435.30	9.75

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on February 08		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.76	73.08
Euro	87.54	87.95
British Pound	99.62	100.06
Japanese Yen (100)	68.88	69.20
Chinese Yuan	11.27	11.32
Swiss Franc	80.76	81.16
Singapore Dollar	54.47	54.72
Canadian Dollar	56.92	57.20
Malaysian Ringgit	17.89	17.99

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



HCL unveils ₹700 crore one-time staff bonus
NEW DELHI
IT major HCL Technologies on Monday announced a special one-time bonus for employees worth ₹700 crore, to mark the crossing of \$10-billion revenue milestone in 2020. "In celebration and gratitude, all employees with one year of service or greater will receive a bonus, the equivalent of ten days' salary," the company said.

'Plaints against 1,509 digital lending apps'
NEW DELHI
The RBI intimated it has received complaints against 1,509 digital lending apps, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur said in a written reply to Lok Sabha on Monday. The RBI has received complaints against 1,019 unregistered or unregulated digital loan apps and 490 registered NBFCs engaged in digital lending, he said. PTI

Panel slams DoT for delay in 5G trials

India unprepared for roll-out, partial deployment of 5G tech possible only by end 2021 or early 2022

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Slamming the government for its 'laid-back approach' and delay in conducting 5G trials, a Parliamentary Panel has said that sufficient preparatory work had not been undertaken for introducing 5G services in India and that the country was likely to witness only partial deployment by 2021-end or early 2022.

In the report tabled in Parliament on Monday, the committee, headed by Shashi Tharoor, added it was very likely that after missing the 2G, 3G and 4G buses, India was going to miss out on 5G opportunities, unless time-bound action was taken in areas where governmental intervention was required.

"The committee, while deplored the Department's [Department of Telecom's] unconscionably long delay



Meeting point: The panel urged a review of spectrum pricing as telcos differed with TRAI on the issue. ■ K. K. MUSTAFAH

in auctioning of spectrum, recommends that spectrum auction including auctioning of 3300 MHz to 3600 MHz be conducted at the earliest," the report said, adding that the DoT had assured that the said spectrum would be auctioned in the next six months or so. The panel said inadeq-

uate availability of spectrum, high spectrum prices, poor development of use cases, low status of fiberisation, non-uniform right-of-way issues and deficient backhaul capacity are some factors coming in the way of a 5G services roll-out in India. The committee noted that

telcos had submitted 5G trial applications in January, 2020 but that till date, guidelines for trials had not been made clear and there was no set date for commencement of trials. "It is really disturbing to note that 5G trials have not yet been permitted. This is in complete contradiction to what the Department had informed the Committee... In February, 2020, that the government has allowed all applications for 5G trials in limited areas and for limited time to test potential 5G India-specific use cases." The panel has sought the reason for delay from the DoT.

"The committee has been informed that by the end of calendar year 2021 or beginning of 2022, there will be some roll-out in India for some specific uses, because 4G should continue in India for at least another 5-6 years.

From the foregoing, the committee [is] inclined to conclude that sufficient preparatory work has not been undertaken for launching 5G services in India."

The committee was of the view that the issue of allocating the right amount of spectrum as demanded by the industry needed to be addressed if India were to realise the benefits of 5G. "The committee recommends that the DoT needs to have fruitful deliberation with the Department of Space and Ministry of Defence and an understanding must be reached... for identification of adequate spectrum for 5G services."

The panel found fundamental differences between the versions of telcos and TRAI on fixing of spectrum prices and urged a review of the spectrum-pricing policy.

Delhi HC grants FRL relief in asset sale case

Authorities cannot be restrained

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday stayed its February 2 interim order to Future Retail Limited (FRL) and various statutory authorities to maintain status quo with regard to its assets sale deal with Reliance Retail.

The bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said that statutory authorities such as the National Company Law Tribunal, Competition Commission of India, and the SEBI, cannot be restrained from proceeding in accordance with the law with regard to the deal. The order came on an appeal filed by FRL challenging the February 2 inter-



rim order by a single judge bench directing status quo with regard to its assets sale deal with Reliance Retail.

The February 2 order came on the plea of Amazon seeking enforcement of an order of the emergency arbitrator at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre restraining FRL from taking any steps to transfer its retail assets.

Monitoring fiscal deficit carefully: FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the government was taking steps to carefully monitor the fiscal deficit, which is estimated at 9.5% of the GDP for FY21.

The 'mool mantra' now was that fiscal deficit 'is something that one cannot escape, but at the same time, it needs to be carefully tackled', she said in her post-Budget address to members of the PHD Chamber of Commerce. India has exceeded its fiscal deficit target of 3.5% in FY21 by a wide margin, due to higher spending to stimulate the economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mining firm NMDC Q3 net surges to ₹2,157.8 cr.

Cuts prices of lump iron ore, fines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Mining major NMDC Ltd. reported an almost 55% rise in consolidated third quarter net profit to ₹2,157.8 crore.

Total income increased by more than 42% to close to ₹4,461 crore. Of this, revenue from operations stood at ₹4,355.1 crore, an increase of almost 45%.

Driving the growth was iron ore, the mainstay, despite NMDC continuing to face mining licence issues

₹2,824 crore represented an increase of 77%.

Separately, the country's largest iron ore miner announced a reduction of ₹600 per tonne in the price of the commodity.

In a filing, NMDC said lump ore price had been fixed at ₹5,100 per tonne and that of the same quantity of fines of ₹4,210, with effect from February 7.

In January, NMDC had increased the prices to ₹5,700 and ₹4,810, respectively.

Brent nears \$60 per barrel on supply cuts

REUTERS
SINGAPORE

Oil prices rose on Monday, with Brent futures nearing \$60 a barrel, boosted by supply cuts among key producers and hopes for further U.S. economic stimulus measures. Brent crude for April was at \$59.91 by 10:01 a.m. IST, up 1%. Front-month prices last hit \$60 on February 20, 2020.

Saudi Arabia's pledge of extra supply cuts in February and March on the back of reductions by other OPEC members and allies is helping to support prices. OCBC economist Howie Lee said Saudi Arabia sent a "very bullish signal" last week when it kept monthly crude prices to Asia unchanged despite expectations of small cuts.

EID Parry back in black with ₹339-cr. profit in Q3

Lower selling prices, a drag: MD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

EID Parry Ltd, one of the largest manufacturers of sugar in India, reported standalone net profit stood at ₹339 crore for the third quarter ended December.

It had reported a net loss of ₹20 crore in the year-earlier period. Total revenue from operations stood at ₹439 crore (₹437 crore).

Performance during the quarter was impacted following an increase in fair and remunerative price without a corresponding increase in the minimum selling price of sugar and also due to lower selling prices.

The selling prices were under severe pressure due to the carry-over surplus and higher sugar produc-



tion, said S. Suresh, MD.

"Further, the much-expecte

Sundaram Brake Linings' Q3 net surges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Sundaram Brake Linings Ltd., a TVS Group firm, reported standalone net profit had risen 11-fold to ₹5.3 crore following the reversal of prior-period tax.

During the quarter under review, the company's total revenue from operations increased by about 6% to ₹68.9 crore. Finance costs declined to ₹30.81 lakh from ₹40.6 lakh in the year-earlier period.

In a regulatory filing, the company said prior-period tax represented the reversal of excess provision made for Assessment Years 2008-09 to 2012-13 after adjusting the payment of ₹6.32 crore under Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Act, 2020.

The estimated total investment in Hyderabad will be about ₹250-260 crore.

Granules India to invest ₹800 cr. in expansion

Drugmaker eyes facility abroad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Drugmaker Granules India plans to invest ₹800 crore over the next three to four years in projects that will cement its position as an integrated player, enhance scale and be ready to meet growing demand.

"This year and next year we are planning for ₹400 crore, CMD Krishna Prasad Chigurupati said about the ongoing investments on formulations facility in Hyderabad and API manufacturing in Visakhapatnam.

These include building a new block at the Gagilappur Finished Dosage and PFI plant here.

The estimated total investment in Hyderabad will be about ₹250-260 crore.

ABFRL returns to profit in Q3

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT</

Advantage England despite stellar shows by Washington and Ashwin

Going into the final day on a surface challenging to bat on, India needs 381 more runs for victory with nine wickets in hand after Leach prises out Rohit cheaply

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Washington Sundar delighted with an exhibition of high quality batting in the morning, timing the ball like a dream on a challenging surface.

He belongs to this stage.

Then, the wily R. Ashwin bowled with craft, exploiting a wearing surface, harnessing the angles, getting the ball to turn and bounce, and finishing with six wickets even as the Englishmen, seeking quick runs, adopted a confused 'start-stop' approach.

Despite the double punch from the Chennai duo on home turf – Washington made 85 not out and Ashwin grabbed six for 61 – England held the aces going into the final day of the first Test here.

Massive lead

Set a target of 420 after trailing in the first innings by a massive 241, India lost Rohit Sharma, bowled by left-arm-

er Jack Leach. The delivery pitched middle, turned, and hit off. At stumps on Monday, the host was 39 for one at Chepauk.

When England batted again, Ashwin struck with the innings' first delivery, spinning one away from left-hander Rory Burns after drawing him forward.

He went round the wicket, spun one, and got Dom Sibley, taken at leg-slip.

And southpaw Ben Stokes edged a sharply turning delivery from Ashwin to keeper Rishabh Pant who pouched it with agility.

Only the in-form Joe Root stroked with any fluency for his 40 before he was trapped leg-before by a Bumrah delivery that kept low.

Ishant Sharma had earlier brought one back into Dan Lawrence for his 300th Test wicket. There were more wickets for Ashwin as England failed to achieve the desired acceleration.

In the morning, Washington held centre-stage. On view were poise, balance and a distinctive quality some



Young and fearless: Washington showed that he was ready to innovate. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

left-handers possess – lazy elegance.

Actually, it's a lot about picking the length early and making subtle adjustments in footwork that creates more time for the batsman and makes his response ap-

pear relaxed and languid.

He possesses a pronounced back-lift but the willow, importantly, comes down straight. A forward press Washington has, but can so easily shift his weight to his back leg.

And then, he has the gift of timing. On occasions he appeared to be just pushing the ball but the sphere raced to the fence. Classy, he certainly is. Crucially, his head position is still – indication of the distribution of weight – as he

strokes the ball. He opened the field on the off-side with the ball's length dictating his footwork.

When Dom Bess pitched short, he went back and smoked him through cover-point. When he bowled fuller Washington eased him off the front foot. And he flashed Leach past covers to reach his second half-century in only his second Test.

And after being beaten by the clever James Anderson, Washington responded with a compelling straight six.

Crucial stand

Washington and Ashwin (31) added 80 crucial runs for the seventh wicket; Ashwin drove handsomely.

Leach, bowling with the harder second new ball, took out Ashwin with extra bounce; keeper Jos Buttler diving forward to snaffle a fine catch.

Even as Washington stroked with consummate ease, Leach and Anderson cleaned up the Indian tail.

The final day should be a gripping affair.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND – 1ST INNINGS

Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Archer 6 (9b, 1x4), Shubman Gill c Anderson b Archer 29 (28b, 5x4), Cheteshwar Pujara c Burns b Bess 73 (143b, 11x4), Virat Kohli c Pope b Bess 11 (48b), Ajinkya Rahane c Root b Bess 1 (6b), Rishabh Pant c Leach b Bess 91 (88b, 9x4, 5x6), Washington Sundar (not out) 85 (138b, 12x4, 2x6), R. Ashwin c Buttler b Leach 31 (91b, 3x4, 1x6), Shahbaz Nadeem c Stokes b Leach 0 (72b), Ishant Sharma c Pope b Anderson 4 (11b, 1x4), Jasprit Bumrah c Stokes b Anderson 0 (2b); Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-1); 6; Total (in 46.3 overs): 178.

win 16 (37b, 2x4), Dan Lawrence lbw b Ishant 18 (47b, 1x4), Joe Root lbw b Bumrah 40 (32b, 7x4), Ben Stokes c Pant b Ashwin 7 (72b, 1x4), Ollie Pope c Rohit b Nadeem 28 (32b, 3x4), Jos Buttler st. Pant b Nadeem 24 (40b, 2x4, 1x6), Dom Bess lbw b Ashwin 25 (55b, 3x4), Jofra Archer b Ashwin 5 (10b), Jack Leach (not out) 8 (18b, 2x4), James Anderson c & b Ashwin 0 (2b); Extras, (nb-7); 7; Total (in 46.3 overs): 178.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Burns, 0.1), 2-32 (Sibley, 10.6), 3-58 (Lawrence, 15.3), 4-71 (Stokes, 18.1), 5-101 (Root, 23.5), 6-130 (Pope, 28.4), 7-165 (Buttler, 41.2), 8-167 (Bess, 42.1), 9-178 (Archer, 46.1).

INDIA BOWLING

Ashwin 17.3-2-61-6, Nadeem 15-2-66-2, Ishant 7-1-24-1, Bumrah 6-0-26-1, Washington 1-0-1-0.

INDIA – 2ND INNINGS

Rohit b Leach 12 (20b, 1x4, 1x6), Gill (batting) 15 (35b, 3x4), Pujara (batting) 12 (23b, 1x4); Total (for one wkt. in 13 overs): 39.

FALL OF WICKET

1-25 (Rohit, 5.3).

ENGLAND BOWLING

Rory Burns c Rahane b Ashwin 0 (1b), Dom Sibley c Pujara b Ash-



Seasoned pro: R. Ashwin brought his experience into play while picking up a six-for in the second innings. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

We fought back very well: Ashwin

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

With India needing 381 on the final day, R. Ashwin said the team has fought back well over the last two days and felt confident of a good show on Tuesday.

The off-spinner, who picked up his 28th five-wicket haul and third at his home ground, also said the toss has played a significant role in the match.

"When I saw the wicket, I believed it would be a good one to bat on. But I thought it would do a bit more on the

first day than what it did. It was really flat and it was a crucial toss [to lose] for us," said the 34-year-old.

"But I think we fought back very well yesterday and today [Sunday and Monday]. If we can have a good fifth day, we will be happy to round off this Test."

Surprised

Ashwin also said he was surprised by the deterioration of the SG ball over the innings, with the seam unravelling after 40 overs, saying it was "bizarre" and not so-

mething he has seen often.

Speaking about his partnership with fellow Tamil Nadu player Washington Sundar, Ashwin said, "We believed we could wipe out the follow-on and go on big because we have played on pitches here. We got nicely settled in, but I got one that bounced a bit high.

"Washington is a fantastic batsman. I think a lot of people, going by the T20 format, where he plays at No. 7, don't recognise the batting talent. He is quite special," he added.

The best of the best | Only Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan had taken more wickets (420) than R. Ashwin (366) at the 75-Test mark. Murali also picked up 34 five-wicket hauls, the highest. Ashwin's 28 five-fors were the second highest among spinners and third highest overall behind Richard Hadlee's 33. Rangana Herath had also picked up 28 five-fors in his first 75 Tests

TOP 10 WICKET-TAKERS AFTER THEIR 75TH TEST

Player	Inns	Wkts	BBI	Average	StrikeRate	5WI	10WM
M. Muralitharan	123	420	9/51	23.64	60.1	34	10
R. Ashwin	140	386	7/59	25.47	53.9	28	7
Dale Steyn	142	383	7/51	22.56	41.7	24	5
Richard Hadlee	133	378	9/52	22.33	51	33	8
Glenn McGrath	146	358	8/38	21.28	50.1	22	3
Malcolm Marshall	140	352	7/22	20.81	46.4	22	4
Rangana Herath	137	351	9/127	27.97	60.7	28	7
Anil Kumble	132	346	10/74	27.74	67.8	20	4
Imran Khan	128	341	8/58	22.04	52	23	6
Waqar Younis	135	339	7/76	22.78	42.8	22	5

COMPILATION BY SRINIVASAN RAMANI

Second Test: tickets sold out in quick time

Ishant – Indian pace attack's long-distance man

The ability to bounce back from injuries and deliver consistently has kept him going

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Kapil Dev, Zaheer Khan and now Ishant Sharma. The 300-wicket club in Tests for Indian pacemen is elite in nature.

And when the lanky Ishant trapped Dan Lawrence leg-before on day four here, he had reached a significant milestone for an Indian paceman. The landmark reflects sweat, resilience and toil apart from longevity, ability to bounce back from injuries and deliver for his team consistently.

Bright start
Ishant is 32 now but was a lot younger when he made his Test debut as a tearaway against Bangladesh in 2007.

It is said the then Indian selection panel chief Dilip Vengsarkar had one look at him in a domestic game and

	Wickets	Tests
Anil Kumble	619	132
Kapil Dev	434	131
Harbhajan Singh	417	103
R. Ashwin	386	75
Zaheer Khan	311	92
Ishant Sharma	300	98

THE BREAK-UP OF ISHANT'S PERFORMANCE

M	I	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	SR	SWI/10WM
Overall	98	177	300	7/74	32.32	61.1
Home	38	71	101	5/22	31.20	64.7
Away	60	106	199	7/74	32.88	59.3

WICKET PROGRESSION: First: Mashrafe Mortaza (Ban); 100th: Darren Sammy (WI); 200th: Angelo Mathews (SL); 300th: Dan Lawrence (Eng)



was so impressed with Ishant's speed and bounce that he soon included him in the Indian team.

When he began his career, the tall Ishant extracted lift with his high-arm action but

primarily brought the ball in to the right-hander. His fiery spell to Aussie legend Ricky Ponting in the Perth Test of 2008 is still remembered for its hostility and control. At the end of his burst, Ishant,

undaunted by reputations, got his man.

In subsequent years Ishant was a regular feature in the Indian attack but without the sort of strike-rate that would take him a level higher. He

was tending to be a tad shorter in length and did not have a potent away-going delivery.

There has been a remarkable change in Ishant in the last four years, though. He was now pitching the ball up and moving the ball away from the right-hander or getting it to straighten. Ishant's bowling had gained the cutting edge.

During this period, his average is around 20 and he has been the senior man of a resurgent and potent Indian pace pack.

The ongoing match is Ishant's 98th Test. His record reads: 101 wickets in 38 home Tests at 31.20 and 199 in 60 matches abroad at 32.88. A balanced record.

Ishant will reach another milestone soon. His 100th Test. He is contemporary Indian pace attack's long-distance man.

Pant wins ICC award

TV PICKS

Australian Open: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. & 1.30 p.m.; Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
India v England: First Test, fifth day, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 9.15 a.m.
ISL: Star Sports 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Hamilton to stay with Mercedes

BRACKLEY Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton will stay with Mercedes for a ninth season after signing a one-year deal, the team said on Monday. As part of his new deal, Mercedes and Hamilton have established a charitable foundation in a commitment to "supporting greater diversity and inclusion in all its forms in motorsport," the team said. AP



Mitchell stars for Jazz

WASHINGTON Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points, had 11 assists and grabbed nine rebounds to spark the NBA-best Utah Jazz to its fourth straight victory on Sunday, beating Indiana Pacers 103-95. Mitchell matched a career high in assists but just missed a triple-double as the Jazz won for the 15th time in 16 games while the Pacers lost the fifth in six starts. **The results:** Utah Jazz 103 bt Indiana Pacers 95; Miami Heat 109 bt New York Knicks 103; Charlotte Hornets 119 bt Washington Wizards 97; Phoenix Suns 100 bt Boston Celtics 91; Sacramento Kings 113 bt LA Clippers 110.

Djokovic, Osaka, Serena make flying starts

Kerber, Monfils and Nishikori fall at first hurdle; Andreeescu makes winning return from injury

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic served a reminder of why he's the greatest Australian Open champion in history as he demolished France's Jeremy Chardy in straight sets in round one on Monday.

The eight-time winner's 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 win showed that normal service had resumed at Rod Laver Arena after the year's first Grand Slam was delayed three weeks owing to the coronavirus.

Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka and Simona Halep also enjoyed convincing wins as the tournament finally got underway in front of limited crowds after a troubled build-up.

Form and fitness are highly unpredictable after the coronavirus wiped out five months of last season and badly disrupted preparations, but Djokovic left little doubt about his readiness to pursue a record-extending ninth title in Melbourne.

Women's third seed Osaka struck the first serve on

Day 1 in numbers

O Number of matches Gael Monfils has won (from six attempts) since reaching the semifinals in Dubai last February

1 First time since 2015 that three-time Major champion Angelique Kerber is not into the second week at the Australian Open

1 2019 US Open champion **Bianca Andreeescu's** first match since China Open in October 2019. She didn't play the whole of 2020

5 At 40 years and 249 days,

centre court against Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova and strode out just 68 minutes later a 6-1, 6-2 winner.

Williams started her quest for a record-equalling 24th

Venus Williams is the fifth oldest woman to win a Grand Slam singles match

9 Number of years since Rebecca

Marino won a Grand Slam match (last Wimbledon 2011). The Canadian took a break from tennis from 2013 to 2018

41 Number of aces Alexander Bublik hit during his four-set win over Aljaz Bedene

Grand Slam title in style with a 6-1, 6-1 romp past Germany's Laura Siegemund in 56 minutes.

Later, the 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreeescu

C During quarantine, I was watching myself play back in 2019. It really inspired me. I don't normally like to do that. But it was good for me.

ANDREEESCU AFTER WINNING HER FIRST MATCH IN OVER 15 MONTHS

C Practice with Rafa (smiling). The reason we came here was to practice with Rafa for two weeks. He can give me many things about how to stay on court with the right mentality.

SINNER AFTER HIS FIVE-SET LOSS TO SHAPOVALOV

TUESDAY'S PICKS

MEN: 2-Nadal vs Djere | 4-Medvedev vs Pospisil | 5-Tsitsipas vs Simon | 7-Rublev vs Haeflmann | 9-Berrettini vs Anderson |

WOMEN: 1-Barty vs Berankis | 4-Kenin vs Ingles | 5-Svitolina vs Bouzkova | 6-Pliskova vs Paolini | 12-Azarenka vs Pegula |

14-Muguruza vs Gasparian

FALLEN SEEDS

Men: 10-Monfils, 25-Paire |

Women: 23-Kerber, 24-Riske, 30-Qiang Wang

In October 2019 at Shenzhen, China, where she suffered the knee injury that scuppered her entire 2020 season.

But Angelique Kerber, the 2016 Australian Open winner, was the first significant casualty of the women's championship when the 23rd-seeded German lost 6-0, 6-4 to 63rd-ranked American Bernarda Pera.

In the men's draw, US Open champion Dominic Thiem was made to work hard in the first set by Kazakh veteran Mikhail Kukushkin before coming through 7-6(2), 6-2, 6-3.

Sixth seed Alexander Zverev dropped a set and smashed a racquet before grinding to a 6-7(8), 7-6(5), 6-3, 6-2 win against American Marcos Giron.

Meanwhile, Gael Monfils, the French 10th seed, was stunned 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 by Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland, the World No. 86.

Japan's Kei Nishikori also fell at the first hurdle with a straight-sets defeat to Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain.

Loss to Ding setback for Vidit

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

A late-blunder against Ding Liren in the 10th round spoiled what could have been a fruitful day for Vidit Gujrathi on the second day of Opera Euro rapid online chess tournament on Sunday.

Vidit drew with Ian Nepomniachtchia and Hikaru Nakamura before beating the mercurial Russian Daniil Dubov to jump to the eighth spot.

Upbeat, Vidit proved equal to Teimour Radjabov but soon Ding ended his unbeaten run for the day and pushed him to the 11th spot with 4.5 points from 10 rounds.

With five rounds to go, Vidit needs to be among the top eight finishers in the 16-player field for a place in the knockout phase of the \$100,000 event.

Magnus Carlsen continued to lead with seven points, half a point ahead of Wesley So and Anish Giri.

The wait is finally over for players

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

After a long wait, the Indian tennis players will have a series of tournaments both at the national and international level in quick succession.

In between the international circuit, the players will get a chance to compete in the Hard Court National championship scheduled to be held at the Tennis Project in Gurugram, from March 15.

Prize purse

The national championship, being hosted in place of the Fenesta National that could not be held due to the pandemic, will offer a total prize purse of ₹10,00,000 for men and women.

The Tennis Project will also host a ₹5,00,000 Haryana Open women's tournament in the week of March 8.

The two ITF women's

events offering \$15,000 and \$25,000 in prize money will be staged in Delhi from March 1, and in Pune from March 22, respectively.

For the under-18 juniors, the national championship is scheduled to be held in Indore from March 29.

In fact, the junior players have an otherwise busy international calendar of five ITF junior tournaments in Indore, Chandigarh, Dehra Dun, Bhilai and Madurai, starting from February 22.

All the tournaments are grade-5 events except for the one in Chandigarh which will be grade-4.

Spectators make a return

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Around 3000 spectators turned up for the goalless I-League match between Churchill Brothers FC and Real Kashmir FC at the newly inaugurated Kishore Bharati Stadium here on Monday, making it the first competitive match to have attendance after COVID-19.

The results

Churchill Brothers O drew with Real Kashmir FC O.

Mohammed Sporting 2 (John Chidi Uzodinma 41, Asheer Akhtar 67) bt Gokulam Kerala FC 1 (Sharif Mohammad 77).

FC Goa snatches a draw in six-goal thriller

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

For the second game in a row against FC Goa, Mumbai City FC appeared to have struck in the final minutes to nick a win in an Indian Super League contest. But Ishan Pandita nodded home in the sixth minute of added time to share the spoils in Bambolim.

The result

Mumbai City FC 3 (Hugo Boumous 20, Adam le Fondre 26, Rowlin Borges 90) drew with FC Goa 3 (Glan Martins 45, Igor Angulo 51, Ishan Pandita 90+6).

Tuesday's match: Bengaluru vs ATK Mohun Bagan, 7.30 p.m.



Saving the bacon: Ishan Pandita heads in FC Goa's equaliser against Mumbai City. ■ SPORTZPIXS/ISL

MARUTI SUZUKI

NEXA

A GOOD SPACE FOR A GREAT BEGINNING.

Welcome the New Year by driving home the Ciaz.

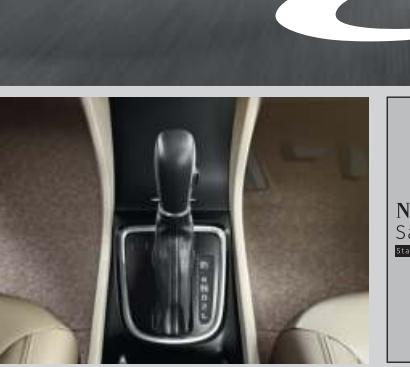
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