

## NEARBY



### After 2 weeks, Dzukou Valley wildfire doused

**GUWAHATI** The wildfire at Dzukou Valley, straddling the Manipur-Nagaland border, has been doused after it raged for two weeks, officials said on Monday. No fresh fire or smoke was visible. The Dzukou Valley, situated at an average altitude of 2,452 metres, is a popular trekking destination known for its exotic flowers.

**NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4**

### Representation in HC to defer nursery admissions

**NEW DELHI** The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the city government to consider a representation by a lawyer to postpone nursery admissions in the upcoming academic session of 2021-22 in view of the prevailing pandemic. Justice Prateek Jalan recorded the statement made by the Delhi government's counsel that the information provided by the lawyer will be taken into account while framing the guidelines.

**CITY ▶ PAGE 2**

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## SC 'intends' to stay farm laws

Court slams Centre over handling of farmers' protest, to announce verdict today

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it intended to stay the implementation of the controversial agricultural laws while proposing to form an independent committee chaired by a former Chief Justice of India to "amicably resolve" the stand-off between the farmers and the Union government.

A three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, underlined its "disappointment" at the Centre's handling of the protest, including the string of failed talks, States "up in rebellion", suicides among protesters and the sight of aged farmers, women and children suffering in the biting cold amid the pandemic.

"We don't want to make any stray observations against you... But we are extremely disappointed in the way you are handling this situation. You [Centre] made a law without enough consultation, resulting in a strike. Many States are up in rebellion against you... The whole thing has been going on for months... You say you are negotiating, talking... What negotiating? What talking? What is going on?" Chief Justice Bobde told Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal and Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta. The court will pass orders on Tuesday.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**



**Staying put:** Farmers sitting outside their tents on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway near the Ghazipur border on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY (MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 2 & 4)

### Erroneous notions being peddled: govt.

Centre files urgent affidavit in court

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Centre filed an urgent affidavit in the Supreme Court on Monday, saying that protesting farmers were peddling an "erroneous notion" that the government and Parliament passed the controversial farm laws without consulting or discussing with anyone.

The affidavit by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare came hours after the court lashed out at the government for its inability to resolve the issue.

**WE DID OUR BEST ▶ PAGE 9**

The government, however, said the fact that the protests were confined to only one part of the country showed that the majority of the farming communities were happy with the laws.

**Decades of deliberations**  
"The legislation were not hurriedly made but are a result of two decades of deliberations," the Centre said.

The past two decades had seen "intensive engagements with the States" on the new laws, it said.

### Won't appear before panel, say farmers

Farmer unions rejected the Supreme Court's suggestion to appoint a committee to resolve the ongoing crisis. They said the Centre's attitude in the top court had made it clear that it would not agree to discuss the demand for the repeal of the three laws.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha said farmers were collectively and individually not willing to participate in any proceedings before a committee that may be appointed by the court.

**FULL REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 9**

### No need to shut poultry markets: govt.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday asked the State governments not to shut down poultry markets or restrict sale of eggs or broiler chicken meat in the wake of the avian influenza outbreak that has affected at least 10 States.

There is no need to panic as there have never been any cases of bird flu being transmitted to humans in India, and there is no danger of such transmission if the meat is properly cooked, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh told mediapersons.

The World Health Organization has said the virus will be destroyed if poultry products are cooked at 70 degrees Celsius or above.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**  
**BIRD FLU IN DELHI ▶ PAGE 3**

### ₹1,364 crore given to wrong beneficiaries of PM-Kisan

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

PM-KISAN payments worth ₹1,364 crore have been wrongly made to more than 20 lakh ineligible beneficiaries and income tax payer farmers, according to information provided by the Agriculture Ministry in response to an RTI request from activist Venkatesh Nayak. There are 11 crore beneficiaries registered under the scheme.

Punjab tops the list of States, accounting for 23% of those who wrongly received money. Maharashtra and Assam also saw a large number of such payments. As *The Hindu* had reported, a number of State Agriculture Departments have now been tasked with recovering the money wrongly paid.

PM-KISAN is the Centre's flagship scheme to provide income support worth ₹6,000 a year to farming families.

When it was launched just before the general election in 2019, it was meant to cover only small and marginal farmers who owned less than two hectares. Later that year, large farmers were included in the scheme as the government removed the land size criterion.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

## Centre orders 11 mn doses of Covishield

Govt. says it will pay for priority group

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that the State governments would not have to pay for vaccinating the priority group of three crore healthcare and frontline workers, stating that the Centre would bear the cost.

The announcement came as the Central government placed a purchase order with the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) for 11 million doses of Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, Covishield, at a cost of ₹210 per dose (including GST).

Official sources said the dispatch of vaccines is likely to start late on Monday.

HLL Lifecare Ltd., a public sector undertaking, issued the supply order on behalf of the Health Ministry.

"Both the approved vaccines are highly cost-effective in comparison to other vaccines from across the world," Mr. Modi said, adding that India would have faced great difficulty if it would have had to depend on foreign vaccines.

The Prime Minister noted that India's vast experience with vaccination would prove handy.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

 It's a matter of pride that both the vaccines for which emergency use nod has been given are made in India... Both are cost-effective in comparison to other vaccines from across the world

**NARENDRA MODI**



requests by some States to include MPs, MLAs and panchayat heads in the priority groups.

**'Highly cost-effective'**  
Lauding the constant coordination and communication between the Centre and the States, Mr. Modi said, "It's a matter of pride that both the COVID-19 vaccines for which emergency use authorisation has been given are made in India."

"Both the approved vaccines are highly cost-effective in comparison to other vaccines from across the world," Mr. Modi said, adding that India would have faced great difficulty if it would have had to depend on foreign vaccines.

The Prime Minister noted that India's vast experience with vaccination would prove handy.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

### In plane sight



**So near, yet so far:** A man atop a tractor loaded with paddy looks on as a passenger aircraft prepares for landing at the Biju Patnaik airport in Bhubaneswar on Monday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

## Woman gang-raped, brutalised in M.P.

Four accused detained, being questioned; State Home Minister vows speedy trial

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

SIDHI

A 45-year-old woman was grievously injured after four men allegedly raped and brutalised her in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district, the police said on Monday.

The incident took place on Saturday night following which the woman has been undergoing treatment at a hospital in the neighbouring Rewa district. Amiliya police station in-charge Deepak Baghel said. The four accused have been detained and are being questioned, said the officer, adding that they belong to the same vil-

 One more Nirbhaya! Till when would we tolerate assault on women?

**RAHUL GANDHI**  
Congress leader

lage as the woman.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi cited the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder incident while reacting to the crime. "One more Nirbhaya! Till when would we tolerate assault on women?" said Mr. Gandhi in a tweet in Hindi, tagging a media report.

State Home Minister Narottam Mishra told reporters in Bhopal that no culprit will

be spared. A speedy trial will be conducted in the case and the accused will be punished, he said.

According to the police officer, the woman was living with her two children and 40-year-old sister in a shanty on a hillock near Hardi village, about 60 km from the district headquarters.

Around 10 p.m. on Saturday, four men approached her and asked for water. When the woman told them she did not have water, the accused broke into her home, allegedly raped her and inserted an iron rod into her private parts, the officer

said quoting the victim's complaint. Her sons, aged 16 and 18, were not at home at the time of the incident.

The woman's sister called an autorickshaw from Hardi village and took her to Amiliya police station, from where she was taken to Sidhi district hospital, he said. The woman was later referred to a medical facility in Rewa as her bleeding continued.

A case has been registered under Sections 376 (rape), 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons), 452 (house-trespass) and 34 (common intention) of the IPC, he said.

## PLA soldier handed back to China

He was apprehended on January 8 after crossing the LAC

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldier who was apprehended last Friday in Eastern Ladakh was handed back to China at Chushul Moldo border point at 10.10 a.m. on Monday, the Army said.

He was apprehended in the early hours of January 8 after he transgressed across the Line of Actual Control (LAC), south of Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh.

State media in Beijing confirmed that China had lost a soldier and "called for an immediate return". "India

should return the soldier immediately, to help de-escalate the border tension between the two countries, and uphold regional stability," a statement said.

As a procedure in such circumstances, there was interrogation on the circumstances of the crossing and also medical examination before the handing over of the soldier.

**Massive deployment**  
Since the beginning of the stand-off in May, there has been a massive deployment of troops and equipment along the disputed boundary in Eastern Ladakh and along

the LAC.

In a similar incident last October, a Chinese soldier, identified as Corporal Wang Ya Long, was apprehended in the Demchok area and was later handed over to the PLA at the Chushul-Moldo border point.

The Defence Ministry recently said the Army had completed "advance winter stocking" and winter preparations and troops were "well entrenched to counter any misadventure by Chinese forces".

**CHINA DRAWS BACK TROOPS FROM LAC ▶ PAGE 9**

## Panel clears Parliament project

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Union government's proposal to construct a new Parliament building was on Monday approved by the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC), whose clearance was mandated by the Supreme Court in its January 5 judgment allowing the project.

The court had ordered that the permission of the HCC should be obtained before any work starts on the ground.

**DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10**

# 'SC panel formation won't be purposeful'

Will not move from the protest site till farm laws are repealed by the government, say defiant farmers

SHRNJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI With the Supreme Court on Monday stating that it intended to stay the implementation of the three agricultural laws and proposing to form a committee, protesting farmers at the Singhu border stated that they would not move from the protest site till the laws were repealed by the government.

The farmers who have been protesting across Delhi's borders for over 45 days now, said that formation of a committee would result in delaying the process and that they would accept nothing short of the laws being repealed.

#### Litigation takes time

Jagmeet Singh, a 22-year-old veterinarian from Patiala said, "We are here fighting for our rights. Litigation takes a lot of time and it may be decades before judgments are passed. Even earlier we have seen how cases, be it the 1984 riots case or other matters, have dragged on for several years. How



Farmers at the Singhu border protest site in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

can we depend on such provisions now? We do not want any committee or any commission of any sort. We will leave the protest site only after the laws are repealed."

Several of the agitating farmers also said that constitution of the committee as proposed by the apex court would be similar to the go-

vernment "imposing" the new laws on the farmers.

#### 'PM should resign'

Malraz Singh, a farmer from Amritsar who owns around six acres of land said, "Why are the authorities imposing things on us which we do not want. We did not want the laws but the Centre was ad-

mant on implementing the same. Now what are we supposed to do with a committee? After the manner in which the government has failed us, the Prime Minister should resign."

"The farmers are not going to move from here unless the laws are repealed and our demands are met," said

Mr. Singh, who had reached the Singhu border on the first day of the protest along with a group of 20 others.

Jagdev Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Barnala district said, "The government should know that we are not going anywhere without the laws being repealed. No committee can be useful to us whatsoever."

Another farmer from Punjab's Patiala, Sukhjeet Singh Sidhu said, "It looks like authorities are under the impression that they can form a committee and the farmers will retreat. But that is not the case as formation of a committee cannot be of any benefit to us. This will just end up dragging the matter for a longer period of time so that people end up leaving and going back to their villages. However, once people start leaving it will be very difficult to accumulate so many thousands of people together yet again. So we are not going to move as of now. We will move only when we are certain that the laws have been repealed."

**Depicts various stages**

The painting is a depiction of the various stages that the farmers' agitation has gone through in the last few months, explained Mr. Kumar who plans to be at the protest site for at least three days.

# Disabled Ludhiana professor paints facets of farmers' stir

Sikh body distributes heating pads among protesters

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A differently abled professor from Ludhiana reached the Singhu border on Sunday with a 20-foot painting, depicting the various stages of the farmers' agitation.

The painting by Praveen Kumar has been installed near the main stage at the protest site.

Mr. Kumar who completed the 300-km journey in his modified two-wheeler said, "I came to join the protest along with my nephew. While I started the painting back at home, some parts were left empty and I intend to complete it at the protest site itself."



Praveen Kumar paints during the ongoing farmers' protest at the Singhu border on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

were also distributed among women and elderly farmers by members of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, to protect them from the cold.

DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said, "Around 1,000 such heating pads have been procured. While 500 have been distributed at the Singhu border, around 300 have been sent to the Tikri border. The rest will be distributed at the Ghazipur border in the coming days."

# 'Education reforms have impacted learning outcomes'

Real success remains to be achieved: Sisodia



Manish Sisodia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI The seven-day Delhi Education Conference began on Monday with an independent report on the Delhi government's education reforms since 2015 being released by the Boston Consulting Group.

In its report, the American management consulting committee said that the education reforms have definitely had an impact on learning outcomes as CBSE Board results have shown a steady in-

crease and that there is improvement in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) outcomes in Classes 6 to 8 as well, although much remains to be done.

"New curricular elements such as Happiness Curriculum (HC) and Entrepreneur-

ship Mindset Curriculum (EMC) have been received positively. Student attendance is improving and students also attest to increased teacher attendance and engagement during focus group discussions (FGDs)," the report said.

It pointed out that the true impact of Delhi's reforms has been vitalising the entire system and infusing a sense of renewed aspiration, belief, and deep motivation into every stakeholder.

Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Manish Sisodia said that although a lot has been done to strengthen the infrastructure of schools in Delhi and improve

quality of education via teacher training and better school management, the real result still remains to be achieved.

"The real success will be when every child leaves the school with a passion to do something for their country and commit to driving a change," Mr. Sisodia said.

Mr. Sisodia also said that in the post-COVID scenario when schools reopen, the school management committees would play a major role. "We want to focus on amplifying the role of SMCs in the post-COVID era, and bridge the gap between parents and schools further," he said.

# Representation in HC to defer nursery admissions

Court tells govt. to consider situation

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the city government to consider a representation by a lawyer to postpone nursery admissions in the upcoming academic session of 2021-22 in view of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Prateek Jalan recorded the statement made by the Delhi government's counsel that the information or opinion provided by the lawyer will be taken into account while framing guidelines or taking any decision with regard to nursery admissions.

Advocate Rajat Vats sought direction to the Delhi government to make some guidelines or pass resolution for deferment of nursery admissions.

Mr. Vats said he had made a representation before the authorities on December 12, 2020, but no response has been received yet, after which he approached the court.

# HC nod to terminate 28-week pregnancy

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday granted permission to a woman to terminate her 28-week pregnancy after AIIMS medical board said her foetus can be aborted as it suffered from anencephaly, a condition where the skull bone is not formed.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh permitted the medical termination of the woman's pregnancy based on the board's report and disposed of her plea.

On January 7, the court

had asked AIIMS to constitute a medical board to examine the woman and give a report on the feasibility of terminating her pregnancy.

The woman stated that an ultrasoundography at the gestational age of 27 weeks 5 days found that the foetus suffered from anencephaly, making it incompatible with life.

In India, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act stipulates a ceiling of 20 weeks for termination of pregnancy, beyond which abortion of a foetus is statutorily impermissible.

# BJP delegation meets L-G over Hanuman temple demolition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI BJP state president Adesh Gupta and Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday met Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal to request his intervention in the demolition of a Hanuman temple at Chandni Chowk as part of its ongoing redevelopment.

The BJP delegation also asked the L-G to ensure that a new temple was constructed in Chandni Chowk where idols removed from the demol-

ished temple should be placed. Mr. Baijal "responded positively and assured appropriate action" in the matter, the delegation said.

"It is very unfortunate that in the name of beautification, the Public Works Department of the Kejriwal government demolished the ancient Hanuman temple...the government should explain why they took the matter to the court, especially when the religious committee has the authority to resolve the matter headed by Minister Satyendar Jain," he said.

# Chandni Chowk facelift likely to take more time

Ahead of Delhi's tableau showcasing the project on Republic Day, redevelopment work still far from complete

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

A little over a fortnight before it is scheduled to be showcased on a State tableau during the Republic Day celebrations, work related to the Chandni Chowk Redevelopment Project on a 1.3-km stretch between Red Fort and Fatehpuri Mosque is visibly far from being completed, *The Hindu* found during a visit on Friday.

Consecutive junctions along the entire length of the corridor – sought to be pedestrianised and kept out of bounds for motorised traffic for most part of the day – are disconnected from the main road which continues to be used by two-wheelers, the dusty central verge has been occupied by the homeless and lights are yet to be installed on a significant portion of the boulevard.

Underground work related to water and sewage pipelines was under way at the very beginning of the stretch adjacent to the Shri Digambar Jain Lal Mandir on Netaji Subhash Marg; on the opposite side of the street, the façade of the Bhagirath Place market was still being worked upon among a teeming rush of shoppers.

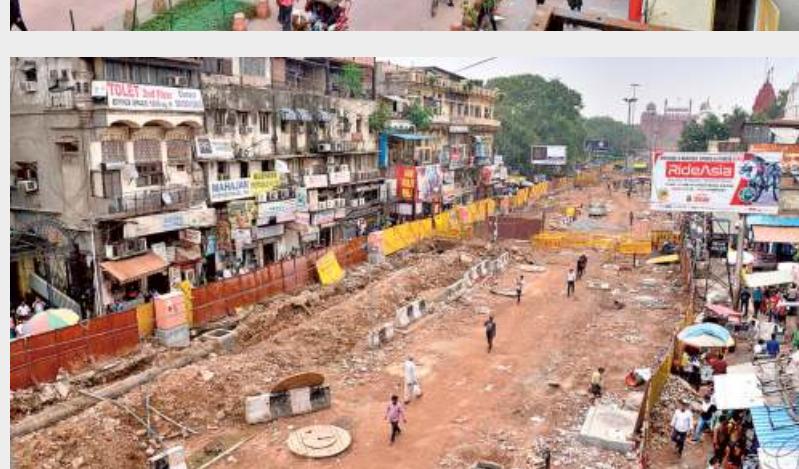
In August last year, *The Hindu* had reported on the progress of the initiative which has its roots in a cultural event organised in 1998 and at least a dozen government agencies engaged in one way or the other with it. Though there has been some visible progress since, the project is far from completion.

#### Delay due to pandemic

Initially scheduled to be completed till March, 2020, the project, like most others, encountered delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was then supposed to be completed by the end of December, 2020.

The 1.3-km stretch between Red Fort and Fatehpuri Masjid is to be turned into a vehicle-free zone between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m., allowing only non-motorised vehicles, have tree-lined footpaths on either side of the road as well as a wide central verge and seating space for visitors.

Most of the work is being done in red sandstone keeping the Mughal-era architectural style in mind; LED street-lighting is also a part of the plan ac-



(From top) Work on the Chandni Chowk redevelopment project in progress on Monday; a view of the same stretch in August 2019; the revamped area will be a vehicle-free zone and have tree-lined footpaths. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

not without the odd power transformer yet to be shifted, or gaps in the stone to be filled after the removal of electric wires or the shutting of an underground drain.

Access points to most areas abutting the stretch such as Nai Sarak have heavy construction equipment parked on top of layers of rubble, mud and garbage.

Some part of the road is cordoned off due to the ongoing work shifting the entire flow of pedestrian and usually two-wheeler, traffic completely onto the opposite carriageway.

"The issue is not only creation but also maintenance of the infrastructure being created at a significant cost. In Chandni Chowk, we are now facing serious issues of post-maintenance; the homeless have taken over the redeveloped areas after the lockdown. I have made several requests to the government as well as Delhi Police but nothing has been done," Sanjay Bhargava, president, Chandni Chowk Sarv Vyapar Mandal, complained.

#### Revised estimates

The improvement of arterial roads and inner streets, a government official said citing a meeting presided over by Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Satyendar Jain in his capacity as chairman of the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC) on December 29, will be taken up after the PWD submits revised estimates.

In addition to this, the official said, the façade restoration of buildings in the vicinity, a majority of which are heritage structures, is part of phase 2 of the project which is being done simultaneously with the ongoing work.

Delhi's Republic Day tableau – showcasing the Chandni Chowk project – has been accorded approval by the Ministry of Defence, marking the Capital's return to the festivities on Rajpath after three years.

It will not only be the only other "live" tableau apart from the Ram Temple-themed Uttar Pradesh float, but also, featuring mini contingents of four cyclists each riding along on either side of it in a symbolic bid to promote it as a means of commuting in a megacity, possibly have bicycles on Rajpath as part of a State float for the first time.

Office of Superintending Engineer  
3rd Circle P.W.D. Pithoragarh  
National Competitive Bidding (E-tendering)

Letter No. 42/984C-03/2021

#### Short Term E-Tender Notice

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from date 12-01-2021 & onward on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Cost of Tender (in Lac Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion	Contractor's category of registration
1	Construction of EVM/ VVPAT ware house at Takana in Pithoragarh District.	6.00	+18% GST	120 Days	Category 'A' and Above for Building works in any State Govt. of India/ Govt. Undertaking

DIPR/UK/14708

CMYK

ND-NDE

## Timings

DELHI

TUESDAY, JAN. 12
RISE 07:16 SET 17:45
RISE 06:23 SET 16:51
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 13
RISE 07:16 SET 17:45
RISE 07:23 SET 17:54
THURSDAY, JAN. 14
RISE 07:16 SET 17:46
RISE 08:15 SET 18:57

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	18	07
Safdarjung	18	07
Palam	16	08

**Delhi Palam Today**  
18°C Cold wave condition likely at some parts. Cold day condition may continue at some places with moderate winds.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
18°C Dry sunny weather with cold day condition would prevail at some parts. Evening also would remain chilly.

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Air Quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi	243	Gurugram 200
Ghaziabad	283	Faridabad 235
Noida	264	Greater Noida 283
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 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

## Centre's response sought on compensation plea

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Monday sought response from the Centre on a suit seeking compensation for loss of rent, profit and interest due to the alleged illegal occupation of a flat in Ansari Bhawan here by the Directorate of Estates, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs between 1999 and 2020. The suit is collectively filed by Rajiv Sarin, Deepak Sarin and Radhika Sarin, children of 94-year-old widow Vera Sarin.

## Plea claims nurses not paid since Oct. last year

NEW DELHI  
A plea has been moved in the Delhi High Court by the nursing staff of Rajababu Institute of Pulmonary Medicine and Tuberculosis, run by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, claiming they have not been paid their monthly salaries since October last year. The petition came up for hearing on Monday before a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh, which adjourned the matter to January 15 when several similar pleas are listed. PTI

## AQI likely to improve in the next few days

NEW DELHI  
The air quality of Delhi and Noida was in the "poor" category on Monday and Gurugram's was in the "moderate" level, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. The national capital's air quality is expected to improve in the next few days. The air quality index (AQI) of Delhi was 243 on Monday, as per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin, which is an average of the past 24 hours. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 200 and 264 respectively.

## Man hammers liquor supplier to death

Victim was involved in criminal cases

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
A 32-year-old criminal was hammered to death by a man on Sunday following a quarrel a month ago in south Delhi's Tigris, the police said on Monday. The accused was arrested.

DCP (South) Atul Thakur said that the deceased has been identified as Rahul, resident of JJ Camp, and the accused has been identified as Govind alias Pundi (22), resident of Tigris.

The police said that a PCR call was received at 3 p.m. on Sunday wherein the caller stated that a man had been hit with a hammer multiple times and that he is serious. When the police

# Delhi reports bird flu; govt. bans processed chicken from outside

Samples of eight dead birds from three locations have tested positive: officials

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

After bird flu was confirmed in the national capital on Monday, the Delhi government has banned packaged or processed chicken brought from outside the city from being sold in Delhi.

On Saturday, the government had banned the import of live birds to Delhi and also ordered the shutting down of Ghazipur poultry market as a precaution.

Samples of eight dead birds from three locations have tested positive for the disease, said officials on Monday.

"Samples of dead crows from a park in Mayur Vihar Phase 3, dead crows from Dwarka Sector 9, and 10 ducks that died in Sanjay Lake have tested positive for bird flu," a Delhi government official said.

Results of more samples



Ghazipur poultry market wears a deserted look after the authorities closed it for 10 days over bird flu concerns. ■ PTI

sent for testing are awaited.

## No need to panic'

"There is no need to panic. It is a common influenza. The news of its spread from bird to human has not been reported so far. Government is taking all steps to stop the spread. One more decision has been taken to

day [Monday] morning. Packed, processed chicken cannot be brought from outside and sold in Delhi. So, both livestock, packed and processed chicken cannot be brought from outside and sold in Delhi," Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said.

The Minister added that

bird flu does not transmit from humans to humans and urged people not to worry. "People who eat chicken and eggs do not have to worry. If you eat fully cooked chicken and eggs, then you will not get the infection," he said.

About Sanjay Lake, the Deputy CM said, "The area is being thoroughly sanitised. We are ensuring deep cleaning is being carried out by the officials."

## Rapid response teams

"Doctors of all 48 Veterinary Hospitals of the Department of Development, Animal Husbandry Unit of Delhi government are continuously monitoring bird flu across the State."

Also, 11 rapid response teams have been set up, and they are continuously collecting samples," an official statement said.

The Minister added that

## Police arrest over 100 from illegal dance bars

Special team formed in Jan. first week

## SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's special team, which was formed earlier this month to crack down on illegal dance bars here, has made over 100 arrests till now.

The team was formed after getting numerous complaints regarding illegal dance bars here, a senior officer said.

He added: "We either send a decoy visitor or act on specific information before conducting the raids at illegal bars. We have arrested visitors, staff and performers from such places."

In January first week, the team conducted raids in Paharganj, Rani Bagh

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) Minister Hardeep Puri on Monday said the pace of the PM-UDAY scheme – for granting ownership rights for properties in Delhi's unauthorised colonies – needed to be picked up as only around 3,000 conveyance deeds and authorisation slips had been issued since it was launched in December 2019.

The scheme was targeted towards the 50 lakh residents of unauthorised colonies in the Capital, which was expected to yield eight lakh applications, said Mr. Puri. However, as on January 1, 3.6 lakh people had registered on the Delhi Development Authority's portal for the scheme

## Pace of ownership rights scheme in illegal colonies needs to pick up: Puri

'Only 3,000 deeds, authorisation slips issued since Dec. 2019'



Hardeep Puri  
and 1,487 conveyance deeds and 1,659 authorisation slips had been issued, according to data shared by Mr. Puri.

Asked about the progress of the scheme on Monday, Mr. Puri said the number of registrations would have been higher if not for the pandemic.

He said the DDA would be coming out with development control norms for these colonies by March.

Without development control norms on one hand and protection from demolition accorded via the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Act, Mr. Puri said the residents of the colonies did not have "the same incentive to register".

He said the matter was reviewed when the government recently decided to extend the protections under the Act, which was set to expire on December 31, 2020, for another three years. "We have reviewed it. The pace needs to pick up a bit".

HUA Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said the DDA was working on a strategy and would be holding public consultations regarding the development control norms.

## Man robs food vendor when asked to pay ₹20

Accused arrested for thrashing victim

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A man was arrested for allegedly robbing and thrashing a fast-food vendor who had asked him to pay ₹20 for a plate of snacks, the police said on Monday.

The incident took place in south-east Delhi's Jamia Nagar.

## Involved in crime

The accused has been identified as Firoz Khan 26, a resident of Hazi Colony.

He has been previously involved in eight cases, including robbery and theft, the police said.

According to the complainant Subhash Gupta, Firoz came to his food stall on January 9 and ordered a plate

of chilli potatoes. After eating, when he was asked to pay, Firoz got angry and started abusing him.

When the vendor opposed, Firoz punched him and beat him up. He also stole ₹1,500 and an Aadhar card from his cart and ran away, the police said.

The injured vendor was then taken to a nearby hospital and later a case was registered and the accused was arrested on Sunday, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) R.P. Meena.

"On sustained enquiry, the accused disclosed that he was a drug addict and had no work. He committed crime to earn quick buck for his daily needs," he said.

## Men held for stealing items from cars

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Two persons, including a Civil Defence Volunteer (CDV), have been arrested for allegedly stealing valuables from a car, the police said on Monday.

DCP (South) Atul Thakur said the accused have been identified as CDV Rajesh Kumar and his accomplice, Yogi Sharma (37).

On January 8, a patrolling team found two men stealing from a car. A knife, a toy revolver and stamp of Deputy Director DSSB was recovered from their possession. Rajesh said he used to commit crimes as he was an alcohol addict.

## HC seeks govt. reply on plea to declare all child marriages in Capital invalid

Directions come after woman seeks to nullify her marriage

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the AAP government to respond to a petition seeking to declare all child marriages performed in the Capital as invalid.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh issued notice to the Delhi government and sought its stand on the petition by a woman, who has also sought to nullify her marriage which was allegedly performed when she was a minor. It also issued notice to her father, brother and the man she was married to seeking their response to the plea before Fe-

bruary 12, the next date of hearing.

The woman has challenged a provision of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, which makes wedding of minors voidable only at the option of either of the parties who was a child at the time of the event.

The petitioner has sought a declaration from the court that every child marriage performed in the State should be void ab initio to be treated as invalid from the outset.

The woman's counsel informed the court that she was staying at an undisclosed location as she apprehended that her family would force

her to agree to the child marriage, which was performed in April 2010 when she was a minor. The woman, who claims to be born on December 10, 1993, has contended that when her marriage was performed she had no option but to give her consent.

The woman said she was residing peacefully with her parents till November 19, 2020 when the person to whom she was married to as a child came with his parents to take her to Gujarat with them.

When she objected, she was allegedly beaten up. Subsequently, she escaped from her home on November 20, 2020.

## Foundation work begins in New Ashok Nagar for Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS

Priority section is targeted to be functional by 2023: NCRTC

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Foundation work for the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) near east Delhi's Dharamshila Marg in New Ashok Nagar has begun.

According to the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), the 4.3 kilometre elevated section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor will see the construction of a viaduct from the Sarai Kale Khan RRTS Station to New Ashok Nagar Down ramp which will also include an entry ramp to a stabilizing yard at Jangpura.

Once constructed, this

corridor is expected to bring down the travel time between Delhi to Meerut in less than 60 minutes. The priority section of the corridor is targeted to be operationalized by 2023 and the full corridor by 2025, according to the NCRTC.

The Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor has 24 stations and two depots at Duhai and Modipuram and originates from Sarai Kale Khan RRTS station in Delhi and ends at Modipuram (Meerut) in Uttar Pradesh. The total length of the corridor is 82.15 kilometres.

It will also be seamlessly integrated with New Ashok Nagar metro station, the NCRTC said,

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The man allegedly threatened her of dire consequences, the officer said.

A case was registered under Sections 376 (rape)

Abhay submits conditional resignation



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Leader of the Opposition in the Haryana Assembly Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Monday appealed to all those MLAs, who had been offering to quit in support of ongoing farmers' agitation surrounding farm laws, to instead vote against the ruling BJP-JJP government during the no-confidence motion to be brought by the Congress in the next Assembly session.

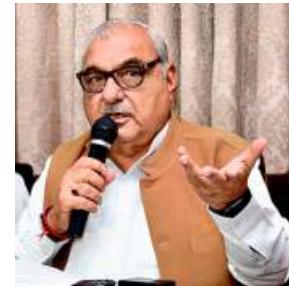
"The Congress is going to bring a no-confidence motion against the coalition government in the upcoming Assembly session. All those MLAs, who had in the past few days extended their support to farmers and offered to resign should vote against the government. If legislators such as Abhay Chautala of the INLD resign, then the Opposition will have one vote less and it will indirectly help the government. All legislators who oppose the

**January 26 deadline**  
Mr. Chautala said if by January 26, the Centre did not withdraw the laws, his letter should be considered as his resignation.

Mr. Chautala is the sole INLD MLA in Haryana.

## Vote against Haryana govt., Hooda tells legislators who offered to quit

This will also let the public know who stands with farmers'



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) MLA from Ellenabad in Haryana Abhay Singh Chautala on Monday, in a letter to Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta, offered his conditional resignation in support of the agitating farmers.

**January 26 deadline**  
Mr. Chautala said if by January 26, the Centre did not withdraw the laws, his letter should be considered as his resignation.

Mr. Chautala is the sole INLD MLA in Haryana.

State government of deliberately creating a situation of confrontation with farmers. Criticising Chief Minister Manohar Lal's 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' at Kaimla village of Karnal, Mr. Hooda questioned the rationale behind the Chief Minister holding the event.

On Sunday, a crowd, mostly of farmers, ransacked the venue of the programme, meant to highlight the advantages of the new farm laws.

### Provocative steps'

"When the farmers of the area were opposing the Chief Minister's programme, why did the government insist on organising it? If the government wanted to stop creating a tense situation, it could have simply cancelled the event in view of the protest, but it did not do so. The government should not push the State towards anarchy by taking provocative steps," he said.

Mr. Hooda accused the

three laws should vote against the government in the House, instead of resigning. This will also let the public know who stands with the farmers and who is with the government," he said.

### Appeal for peace

Mr. Hooda appealed to the farmers to continue their movement in a peaceful and disciplined manner. "In democracy, non-violence is the biggest weapon of the movement. I hope that the farmers will finally prevail," he said.

Mr. Hooda accused the

police said the FIR has been registered against 71 identified persons, besides unknown people, who allegedly were involved in vandalising the event site by smashing the chairs and the stage, tearing posters, etc.

"We have booked 71 protesters by name, besides unknown people as well under different Sections. The accused obstructed public servants from discharging their

## Farmers' protest: 71 booked for rioting at CM's event in Haryana

We will continue to protest against BJP leaders till laws are repealed, says BKU



Farmers ransacking the venue of CM's 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' in Karnal on Sunday. ■ PTI

Haryana police have booked at least 71 people for rioting, obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions, among other charges after a group of people protesting the Centre's farm laws ransacked a venue at Kaimla village in Haryana's Karnal where Chief Minister Manohar Lal was scheduled to address a farmers' gathering (*kisan mahapanchayat*) on January 10.

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**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Tuesday:** Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Lakshadweep. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Dense fog likely at isolated places over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim

**CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala	—	27.7	16.0	Kozhikode	4.2...	30.2...	25.2
Ahmedabad	—	28.2	17.4	Kurnool	—	31.7...	20.1
Aizawl	—	24.0	8.7	Lucknow	—	20.9...	8.5
Allahabad	—	22.0	13.0	Madurai	1.5...	27.8...	23.2
Bengaluru	—	25.4	19.7	Mangaluru	—	35.1...	24.0
Bhopal	—	23.6	17.5	Mumbai	—	34.5...	23.0
Bhubaneswar	—	34.4	19.8	Mysuru	—	30.0...	21.0
Chandigarh	—	18.0	10.8	Patna	—	17.5...	7.0
Chennai	0.1	30.5	25.6	Pond Blair	0.9...	30.3...	25.7
Coimbatore	—	27.2	22.6	Puducherry	6.9...	28.2...	23.1
Dehradoon	—	21.8	8.4	Pune	—	32.3...	19.4
Gangtok	—	10.2	9.2	Raipur	—	33.6...	17.0
Goa	—	34.0	23.7	Ranchi	—	27.5...	16.3
Guwahati	—	25.5	14.8	Shillong	—	17.2...	5.6
Hubballi	—	29.0	19.0	Shimla	—	18.7...	7.0
Hyderabad	—	30.6	16.4	Srinagar	—	4.0...	0.1
Imphal	—	24.2	8.6	Thiruvananthapuram	0.6...	31.5...	23.8
Jaipur	—	22.0	7.4	Tiruchi	4.6...	27.0...	23.0
Kochi	—	29.6	22.6	Vijayawada	—	30.2...	21.6
Kohima	—	13.4	4.0	Visakhapatnam	—	31.9...	21.4
Kolkata	—	29.0	20.6	(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)			

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

**CITIES** **SO<sub>2</sub>** **NO<sub>x</sub>** **CO** **PM<sub>2.5</sub>** **PM<sub>10</sub>** **CODE**

Ahmedabad	12	90	54	.135	.115	■■■■■
Bengaluru	11	90	42	.76	.86	■■■■■
Chennai	25	14	26	.130	—	■■■■■
Delhi	8	55	59	.347	.222	■■■■■
Hyderabad	13	86	33	.216	—	■■■■■
Kolkata	11	69	37	.225	.144	■■■■■
Lucknow	.8	56	69	.277	.172	■■■■■
Mumbai	.4	25	77	.324	.186	■■■■■
Pune	.54	57	84	.81	—	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	20	103	43	.205	.212	■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** 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<sub>x</sub>:** 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<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Siliguri, West Bengal recorded an air quality index (AQI) score of 374 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gadag, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 37

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sent a notice to the Maharashtra government and the State Director General of Police over the death of 10 babies in a fire at Bhandara district general hospital.

The NHRC has sought a detailed report on the incident within four weeks, officials said on Monday.

The Commission, while issuing the notice, observed that it is a "serious issue of violation of human rights for which the accountability of negligent officers and officials is required to be fixed, with retrospective effect".

The fire had broken out in the Special Newborn Care Unit of the State-run hospital in the early hours of Saturday. A total of seven babies were rescued, doctors had said. The age of deceased infants ranged between less than a month and a couple of months.

"The National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of media reports that ten infants were killed in a fire that swept through the Sick Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) at Bhandara District General Hospital in Maharashtra on January 9. The fire reportedly broke out at around 1.30 a.m. and the hospital administration could rescue only seven out of the 17 children kept in the ward," the NHRC said in a statement.

The Commission has issued notices to the State chief secretary and Director General of Police, seeking a detailed report within four weeks, the officials said. The

report must contain the fire audit reports of various hospitals in the State as well as measures that have been taken or contemplated to be taken by the State against the erring or negligent officers and officials so that they cannot go on with impunity, the statement said.

The Commission has also observed that the babies were in the custody of a State-run hospital where they lost their lives, and "hence, the State cannot escape its responsibility". The State police chief is also expected to inform the commission about the outcome of the investigation being conducted by the police authorities, the rights panel said in the statement.

A relief of ₹5 lakh has been announced by the State government from the Chief Minister's Fund to each bereaved family and a State-wide fire audit has also been announced. A case of accident has been reported and investigation is being conducted, it said.

The Commission has issued notices to the State chief secretary and Director General of Police, seeking a detailed report within four weeks, the officials said. The

## Runaway woman from West Bengal traced

RAINA ASSAINAR  
NAVY MUMBAI

them and in December-end, we received a tip-off that they had rented a flat in Kharghar," senior police inspector Ravindra Patil said.

The police arrested the accused and seized forged letterheads, stamps, and rubber stamps of various government departments from the flat. The accused, who have cases of forgery and cheating registered against them in Kolhapur, have been remanded in police custody till January 13.

"Only ₹1.26 lakh remains in their bank account. It is evident from their transactions that they cheated at least 30 people who had paid them ₹2 lakh each. We are now tracing all the victims," Mr. Patil said.

Sub Inspector Sopan Rakonde spotted the woman loitering in the station at

2.30 a.m. on December 26. Mr. Rakonde said, "She was reluctant to speak to us. She said she wanted shelter and we made arrangements for her food and stay at the women's room in our police station. We then shifted her to a shelter home in Kharghar. She told us she was from Berhampore and we circulated a WhatsApp message with her photo. Finally, we were able to get in touch with her parents."

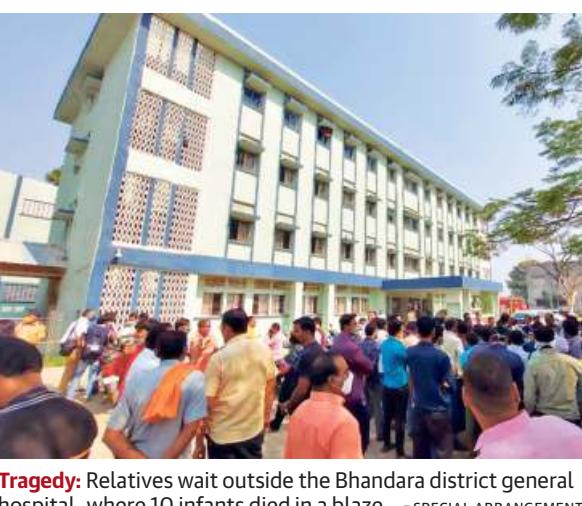
On Sunday, her parents reached Navi Mumbai and she was handed over to them at the shelter home. "She was reluctant to go home. After an hour of counselling, she agreed to return with her parents," Mr. Rakonde said.

The Vashi police said the woman left with ₹2,000, bought a train ticket worth ₹1,000 and reached Mumbai. "The first day she stayed in a hostel and did not like the place. She then reached Vashi and stayed in the railway station for a few days," Deputy Commissioner of Police Suresh Mengade, Zone I, said.

Sub Inspector Sopan Rakonde spotted the woman loitering in the station at

## Bhandara blaze: NHRC sends notice to MVA govt., DGP

Commission has sought a detailed report on the incident within four weeks



**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NAGPUR

After 14 years of marriage and three stillborn children, Hiranya Bhanarkar (39) had finally conceived and given birth to a girl on January 6, only to lose her in the fire at the district hospital in Maharashtra's Bhandara district in the early hours of Saturday.

## Couple loses 4th child after 3 stillborn kids

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NAGPUR

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Dr. Ashok Dhawale, president, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) said, "We have given a call of protest across Maharashtra and the country. In Maharashtra, we have invited all like-minded organisations to come together and protest. We are yet to get the exact order passed by the Supreme Court, but we have decided to go ahead with the meeting on Tuesday."

Mr. Dhawale said in States like Maharashtra, AIKS is inviting labour unions, civil society groups and political parties with secular ideals to join the meeting. He said farmer leaders like Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana chief Raju Shetti and leaders of the Peasants and Workers Party will be attending the meeting, which will be organised at Bhupesh Gupta Bhavan in Prabhadevi.

but also every citizen of the country. "The BJP understands the language of votes and nothing else. Today, they see it as a problem limited to Punjab and Haryana. Based on Lok Sabha seats in these two States, they refuse to take the protest seriously. We will be ensuring that the BJP is answered in a language it understands," he said.

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## Farmers' stir: coalition of Left parties, civil society groups to meet today

Plan to chalk out strategy for road ahead

**STAFF REPORTER**

MUMBAI

A coalition of Left parties and civil society groups from Maharashtra will be meeting on Tuesday to decide the road ahead in their ongoing agitation against the three farm laws.

Dr. Ashok Dhawale, president, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) said, "We have given a call of protest across Maharashtra and the country. In Maharashtra, we have invited all like-minded organisations to come together and protest. We are yet to get the exact order passed by the Supreme Court, but we have decided to go ahead with the meeting on Tuesday."

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## 'State govt. policies, RBI measures led to rise in sale of homes in MMR'

18,331 units sold in last quarter of 2020

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

market amid strict travel restrictions," Mani Rangarajan, Group COO, Housing.com, Makaan.com and PropTiger.com said. "The zero stamp duty and GST waivers offered as part of the festive deals by builders, were another reason that led to an improvement in sales numbers over the previous quarters," he added.

According to a quarterly analysis of India's eight prime residential markets by brokerage firm PropTiger.com, 18,331 housing units were sold in the MMR in the October-December period of 2020, an rise of 148% compared to the July-September quarter.

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU  
CHENNAI RIVERS RESTORATION TRUST (CRRT)  
INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS (IFP)  
National Competitive Bidding**

1. The Member Secretary, Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust, proposes to appoint a Firm for Maintenance of Adyar Eco Park (358 acres) in Chennai for a period of three years.

**Description of Services** **EMD**

**Appointment of Firm for Maintenance of Adyar Eco Park (358 acres) in Chennai for a period of three years** **Rs. 4,00,000/-**

2. The assignment is open to all eligible firms. Request for Proposals (RFP) may be downloaded and used free of cost from the websites viz. www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.chennairivers.gov.in

3. Pre-qualification, technical and financial proposals under the "three cover system" must be delivered in the office of Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust (CRRT), Adyar Eco Park, 6/103, Dr. D.G.S. Dinakaran Salai, Raja Annamalai Puram, Chennai-600028 on or before 15:00 hours on 10.02.2021 and Pre-qualification cover -1 alone will be opened on the same day at 15:30 hours, in the presence of



## A safety net

The pandemic has upended schooling, and the effort should be to help the hardest hit

The Union Education Ministry's directive to the States to launch a mission to avoid large-scale dropouts in schools in the coming year, partly by relaxing the detention policy, should end the anxiety of millions of students about their academic prospects. Managing schooling during COVID-19 has been a challenge, with UNESCO estimating that at the end of 2020, about 320 million students were locked out of schools globally. South and West Asia are among the regions where students are at highest risk of not returning to schools and tertiary institutions, along with sub-Saharan Africa. Assessing the problem is key to planning for 2021. The Indian school education system remains top-down in making policy, which may not advance educational reform, but the vast administrative resources can be used to quickly assess the pandemic's impact on students, teachers and schools. The pandemic year has thus far witnessed apprehensive governments keeping the majority of school instruction online, and treading carefully when it comes to reopening campuses. They must prioritise the door-to-door surveys needed to identify students who are not in a position to return to classes when schools reopen, and whose economic circumstances have changed due to the pandemic's impact on their families. Clearly, the priority should be to draw up a database, to plan incentives that will prevent dropouts. Education continues to be covered by a cess on tax, and the funds could be deployed in 2021 towards this objective, through the Centre's Samagra Shiksha scheme and other COVID-19 relief plans.

The irrevocable role played by examinations in determining the fate of students, who come from varied backgrounds and preparation, has long been criticised for its rigidity, and these arguments were raised afresh when the Centre removed the no-detention policy under the RTE Act a couple of years ago. In the year of the virus, asymmetries among groups of students stand aggravated, and any detention would be illogical and unjustified. Particular mention should be made of the situation for girls, whose enrolment in higher numbers has been achieved over the years with considerable effort, as well as children in less-urbanised States where access to schools is weak. When the pandemic had still not swept India in February last year, Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said, among the reasons for children remaining out-of-school or dropping out were poverty, economic reasons, and ill-health. The economic factors have, over the past dozen months, been exacerbated by COVID-19, while the digital divide witnessed in online education became an unprecedented cause of deprivation. Moreover, vaccination cannot cover the bulk of the population quickly, and education can possibly achieve a semblance of normality only well into the next academic year. This is the time to create a safety net for education, letting no student fall through.

## Bridging the Gulf

Saudi Arabia, now rebuilding ties with Qatar, should learn not to threaten its neighbours

The Gulf reconciliation summit, in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, where the kingdom and its allies decided to end their blockade of Qatar, has brought to an end, for now, their long feud. In 2017, Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt imposed the blockade and severed diplomatic ties, accusing the tiny Gulf country of supporting terrorism. They also issued 13 demands for it to be lifted, which included shutting down the Qatar-funded TV network, Al Jazeera, closing a Turkish military base and reducing diplomatic relations with Iran. Qatar did not budge despite the heavy economic cost. When the Saudi and Emirati airspaces were closed, Iran offered Qatar global connectivity. Al Jazeera is still live. And, Qatar has invited more Turkish troops, bolstering its ties with Ankara, which is eager to play a bigger role in West Asia. Moreover, it played an important role in the U.S.-Taliban deal and continued to host talks between Taliban representatives and the Afghan government. If the original Saudi plan was to isolate Qatar and make it kneel, it has backfired. And in the last weeks of the Trump administration, MBS and his allies seem to have realised their strategic folly.

Qatar has made few concessions to reach the reconciliation. The 13 specific demands were replaced by a broad agreement on non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs and cooperating to ensure regional stability and security, which can be open to different interpretations for different sides. After the summit, Qatar's Foreign Ministry has said that the country had no intention of altering ties with Iran and Turkey. In practice, the Saudi side stepped down from its demands and made amends with an unshaken Qatar as a new President is going to assume power in the U.S. The Saudi U-turn could be the result of a genuine tactical rethink. The rift in the Gulf helped Iran and Turkey, Riyadh's main rivals, while it failed to scuttle Qatar's standing. Iran, reeling under U.S. sanctions, also got some financial relief from Qatari payouts for using its airspace. By lifting the air and sea blockades, the Saudis and the Emiratis could deny Iran of those funds and also try to put up a united Arab regional front as Joe Biden is preparing to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal. The Saudis may also be hoping that bridging the Gulf between two American allies would help them warm up to the Biden administration. While ending the feud is welcome, it cannot be overlooked that this unnecessary crisis was born out of an ill-thought-out Saudi-Emirati strategy of coercion. It reflects poorly on them. They should learn from the mistakes and build ties based on mutual interests and cooperation, not on threats and coercion.

# Reframing India's foreign policy priorities

Apart from an ideational restructuring, prudent plans, achievable objectives and a line of continuity are a must



M.K. NARAYANAN

The year 2021 should see a cementing of the many trends that had their genesis in 2020. Leadership change in the United States is perhaps the most awaited change, but is unlikely to bring about a major power shift in the international arena. Even before the changeover, and despite the promise of a Biden presidency to invigorate the U.S.-Europe axis, Europe has turned its back on the U.S. and revived its China links, by 'concluding in principle the negotiations for an EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment'. In one swift move, Europe has thus shattered all hope that China would remain ostracised in 2021.

Many countries will now find themselves scrambling for cover. India which has greatly curtailed its relations with China since April 2020, (in the wake of Chinese aggression in Eastern Ladakh) will find itself 'out on a limb', with many countries likely to seek closer economic relations with China now.

### A stronger China

The year 2021, hence, begins on a triumphal note for China and China's Supreme Leader, Xi Jinping. China is about the only major country which had a positive rate of growth at the end of 2020, and its economy is poised to grow even faster in 2021. Militarily, China has further strengthened itself, and now seeks to dominate the Indo-Pacific Ocean with its announcement of the launch of its third aircraft carrier in 2021. Simultaneously, it is seeking to strengthen its military coordination with Russia. Consequent on all this, and notwithstanding Chinese intransigence in several matters including its heavy-handed actions in Hong Kong and Uighur, China's position across Asia is, if anything, stronger than in 2020. News emanating

from China is that President Xi will further cement his position, both as Party leader and as President during 2021, despite internecine tensions within the Communist Party of China. China is, hence, unlikely to concede any ground to its opponents across the world in 2021, a fact that India will need to reckon with. It cannot expect any Chinese concessions in Eastern Ladakh, until India 'makes amends'.

### Economy first for Europe

The new year will be dominated by strong authoritarian leaders like Xi Jinping in China, Vladimir Putin in Russia, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey. International politics may not be very different from that in 2020, but any hope that the Compact of Democracy would emerge stronger will need to be eschewed. Europe, minus Britain following Brexit, and the retirement of Germany's Angela Merkel, could become even less relevant in world affairs. The China-EU Investment Treaty which saw Europe capitulating to China's brandishments is an indication that Europe values its economy more than its politics.

Major changes are afoot in Eurasia and West Asia which could lead to significant shifts. Russia is beginning to display greater interest in the affairs of countries on its periphery and, together with strengthening ties with China and reaching an entente with Turkey, this seems to signal reduced interest in countries such as India. In West Asia, the Abraham Accords, leading to a realignment of forces in the Arab world, have sharpened the division between the Saudi Bloc and Iran-Turkey. Despite the hype surrounding the Abraham Accords, the situation, however, remains fluid and has not reduced the risk of a confrontation between Iran and Israel. This does pose problems for India, since both have relations with it. Meanwhile, China demonstrates a willingness to play a much larger role in the region, including contemplating a 25-year strategic cooperation agreement with Iran.

Saudi Arabia could find the go-

GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

ing difficult in 2021, with a Biden Administration taking charge in Washington. The healing of wounds among the Sunni Arab states in the region should be viewed as a pyrrhic victory at best for Saudi Arabia. One by-product of this could be a sharpening of hostilities between the Sunni and Shia camps. Given the strategic flux in the region, Iran could well be tempted to use its nuclear capability to enhance its position, confident that the West may be unwilling to challenge it at this juncture.

### India isolated

At the start of 2021, India seems the odd man missing as far as these developments are concerned. No breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations has, or is likely to occur, and the confrontation between Indian and Chinese armed forces is expected to continue. India currently plays no significant role in West Asia. India-Iran relations today lack warmth. In Afghanistan, India has been marginalised as far as the peace process is concerned. While India's charges against Pakistan of sponsoring terror have had some impact globally, it has further aggravated tensions between the two neighbours, and in the process, also helped Pakistan to cement its relations with China. While hostility between India and Nepal appears to have reduced lately, relations continue to be strained. Through a series of diplomatic visits, India has made valiant efforts to improve relations with some of its neighbours such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, but as of now worthwhile results are not evident. One key takeaway is that as India-China relations deteriorate, India's neighbours are not

averse to taking sides, increasing India's isolation.

Whether India's perceived marginalisation from global mainstream events as we enter 2021 signifies a sharp drop-off in its foreign policy capabilities is, no doubt, debatable. India's foreign policy objectives are to widen its sphere of influence, enhance its role across nations, and make its presence felt as an emerging power in an increasingly disruptive global system. It is a moot point though whether any of these objectives has been achieved. Today, India's voice and counsel are seldom sought, or listened to. This is a far cry from what used to happen previously. India will serve as the president of the powerful UN Security Council for the month of August, 2021, but if it is to make a real impact, it must be seen to possess substantial weight to shape policies, more so in its traditional areas of influence.

### Diplomacy and perceptions

Many explanations could be available for this state of affairs. Admittedly, our diplomats conduct their activities with a high degree of competence, but they are possibly hampered by other factors. One, could be the kind of policy choices the country has adopted in the recent period, which have possibly altered the perception of India in certain quarters. There is again a perception that India's closeness to the U.S. has resulted in the weakening of its links with traditional friends such as Russia and Iran, impacting the country's image. Perhaps the most relevant explanation could be the shifting balance of power in the region in which India is situated, notably the rise of China, and the enlarging conflict between the two biggest powers in Asia, compelling many nations to pick sides in the conflict.

A less obvious, but perhaps more relevant aspect, could also be that India's foreign policy suffers from an idealistic vacuum. It is not the sharp decline in the economy, problems caused on account of the pandemic, or the growing polarisation in values

across nations and societies, but more possibly India's inability or failure in the idealistic realm that lies at the root of our foreign policy inadequacies.

### More misses than hits

Currently, India remains isolated from two important supranational bodies of which it used to be a founding member, viz., the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Efforts to whip up enthusiasm for newer institutions such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), have hardly been successful. India has opted out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (a majority of Asian countries are members), and failed to take advantage of the RIC, or the Russia, India and China grouping, even as relations with Russia and China have deteriorated. On the other hand, India's foreign policy imperatives, across Asia and South Asia in particular, today seem to be a mixture of misplaced confidence, sometimes verging on hubris (as in the case of Nepal), a lack of understanding of the sensitivities of neighbours such as Bangladesh and long-time friends (such as Vietnam and Iran), and according excessive importance to the policy needs and pressures of nations such as the U.S. There is possibly a misplaced perception in much of Asia that the India of today is not unwilling to sacrifice its strategic autonomy under U.S. pressure.

As part of the idealistic restructuring of India's foreign policy, what is urgently required, apart from competent statecraft, is the adoption of prudent policies, pursuit of realistically achievable objectives, and, above all, a demonstration of continuity of policy, irrespective of changes in the nature of the Administration. These may be time consuming, but are a surer recipe for success in attaining foreign policy objectives.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

## Dialogues for democracy, lessons from Rajasthan

Federalism and good governance need engagement between people and officials, as the MGNREGA programme shows



SAKINA DHORAJIWALA & PURNA CHANDRA KISHAN

lation but also to take continuous feedback from the field and carry out periodic midway course corrections. In the case of MGNREGA, engagement with civil society organisations had been institutionalised in the MGNREGA *samvads*; some of which were attended by the Chief Minister of Rajasthan.

MGNREGA wages are now directly credited from the central government to a worker's bank account. While there is a case to be made for direct transfers, this system is not without its pitfalls. An overreliance on the technical architecture of MGNREGA has subverted workers' rights. The troubles are compounded when things go wrong as workers run from pillar to post knocking on the doors of various government officials, banks, payment disbursement agencies, panchayat officials, etc.

### Issue of payment rejections

One such vexing problem is that of payment rejections which are like bounced cheques. These occur when the government initiates the payment, but money does not get credited due to technical issues. There are numerous reasons for rejections and their resolutions require a thorough understanding of the complex payment architecture that not only involves various line departments and banks but also the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). Workers are bereft of their own money unless the core underlying problems are successfully addressed. For example, on occasions, the block level data entry operators make errors



in entering the account or Aadhaar details of workers. At other times, banks consider accounts as 'dormant' when the accounts are not used for some time.

### Software flaws

While these are somewhat tractable, a very common rejection reason called 'inactive Aadhaar' is more complex to resolve. This happens when the linkage of the worker's Aadhaar and their bank account is broken in the software maintained by the NPCI. Let alone workers, many government officials and bank officials are unaware of how to resolve these errors. Short-staffed and overcrowded banks mean that workers have to make multiple trips to banks only to be told rudely that their 'payments have not come'. Field officials often resort to temporary and incorrect quick fixes which backfire leaving the workers in an abyss.

Notwithstanding the range of hostilities workers face in the process, the reasons for rejections are rarely provided, thereby adding more uncertainty to their precariousity. From the perspective of the ad-

ministration, it is difficult to look into each payment, understand the reasons for rejection and help the worker take action on an individual basis.

### Guidelines after a workshop

To resolve payment rejections, the Department of Rural Development of the Government of Rajasthan has held numerous discussions. These resulted in a workshop involving worker groups and civil society organisations who interacted directly with the aggrieved workers, administrative officers from the village level to the State level, and bankers. As the dialogue evolved, detailed guidelines were issued with well-defined responsibility, clear timelines, and monitoring and protocols to be followed by officials. This has resulted in a significant reduction in payment rejections in Rajasthan. In a period of one year from the workshop, the Rajasthan government was able to clear ₹380 crore worth of payments to workers that were earlier stuck due to rejections. Currently, only 2.7% payments are pending regeneration from the State government, and 12.3% are under process by the banks; the goal is to ensure that every person who has worked, gets their full payment on time.

Open communication channels, an eagerness to work with worker groups and a keen ear to the ground have benefited thousands of MGNREGA workers in Rajasthan. The Right to Information (RTI) Act that had its origins in pe-

ople's movements in Rajasthan, mandated proactive disclosure of information. However, programme information on many occasions continues to be inaccessible and, when available, some are in ill-defined formats. This provision got a major boost in Rajasthan as the Rajasthan government launched the Jan Soochna Portal, or JSP (<https://bit.ly/2LmKLmv>), in 2019. The JSP is a single platform in the public domain providing information across 60 departments of over 104 schemes. The design and formats of each scheme have been painstakingly arrived at through a 'digital dialogue' involving government officials and numerous civil society organisations.

The American civil rights activist Jesse Jackson said, 'Deliberation and debate is the way you stir the soul of our democracy.' Federalism and good governance require constant constructive engagement between people and officials. If a government is committed to constitutional principles, then paying attention to multiple points of view and listening to the voices of the marginalised is a prerequisite. While there is still a long way to go, the ongoing consultative experiences in Rajasthan do offer hope.

Sakina Dhorajiwala is a Researcher with LibTech India. Purna Chandra Kishan is Secretary, Rural Development and Commissioner MGNREGA, Rajasthan. Inputs by Rajendran who teaches in Azim Premji University, Bengaluru and is associated with LibTech India

## 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.

### Trauma and change

The deplorable incidents at Capitol Hill are a blot on the U.S. The polarisation of the American people began early with the slogan, 'MAGA', and subsequent arrogant actions against Canada and Mexico, a distancing from world institutions and a tightening of immigrant rules. In addition to this was Mr. Trump's nonchalant approach towards COVID-19. What was worse was his refusing to accept

the electoral verdict. With the dawn of January 20 will begin the time to heal, restore harmony and the economy and focus on the pandemic fight.

N. SURYANARAYAN,  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.

### Racial abuse

Racism, that hydra-headed monster, has again raised its ugly head on the sporting field ('Sport' page, "Ashwin calls for iron-fisted action", January 11). While it is appalling that various

sport and players have been the target of racial abuse, it is even more shocking that such incidents continue despite the concerted efforts by authorities worldwide to evolve strategies to reduce, if not eliminate, it altogether. This speaks of the extent of hatred and bitterness that is present in the hearts of the perpetrators.

Perhaps, cricket also needs a movement on the lines of "Kick Racism Out of Football" and "Show racism

the red card" that are widely involved in trying to make football a racism-free sport. We could have a "Run Out Racism" for training, challenging discrimination and making cricket an inclusive sport.

V.V. KOUSHIK,  
Chennai

■ Along with ball tampering, match fixing and substance abuse, racism is a blot on international sport. Here is how an Indian girl countered such remarks in an American

elementary school: "You are a pale milk chocolate. I'm a rich brown variety." By over-reacting to a silly racist or personal remark, we turn the spotlight away from the pitch, on to the vagrant bunch of spectators and aid in fulfilling their aim of attention grabbing.

Moreover, we reflect our own inferiority complex and craving for public approval. Play the game and leave the dust on the ground.

P. DAVID BALASINGH,  
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

■ The despicable behaviour of some spectators at the Sydney Cricket Ground is beneath contempt. The world is often reminded that cricket is a gentleman's game that prides itself on being a constant metaphor for fair play. But the fact is that sport also mirrors the society it is played in and Australia definitely needs to reflect on this.

S.S. PAUL,  
Chakdaha, Nadia, West Bengal



# Arrow's Paradox in the age of social media

Shortened attention spans, relentless messaging, and the mechanics of elections make for an incendiary mix



SIDDHARTH PAI

The mechanics of all elections are flawed. Each country has different rules regarding its voting systems, and each set of rules is necessarily a compromise. Some countries use 'first past the post' systems, while others use electoral colleges. Yet others use referendums where two choices are pitted against one another, such as the Brexit vote.

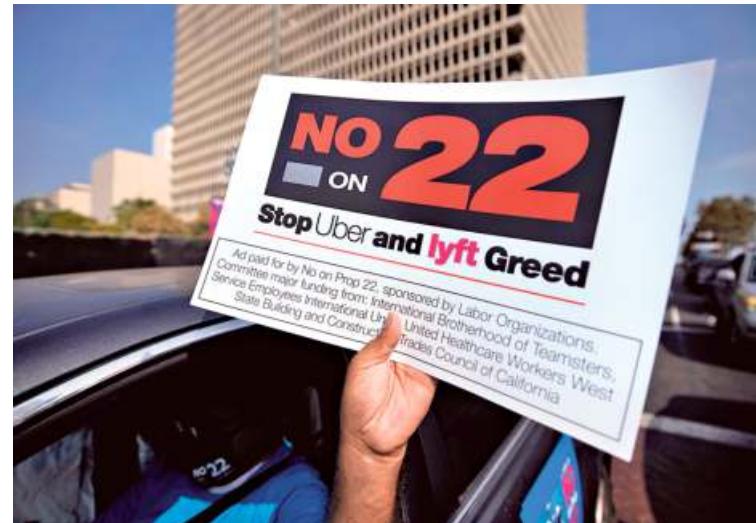
#### The influence of the minority

The mathematician Kenneth Arrow laid bare the flaws in elections. Arrow's doctoral thesis, completed in the 1950s, identified that in any electoral system where three or more preferences exist, a curious paradox comes into play: proponents of the minority voice can dictate the broader choice. His finding is now called Arrow's Paradox.

This can be illustrated with an example. Let's say a population participates in an election in which candidate 'A' says let's go to war and candidate 'B' says let's not go to war. While there are only two choices (war or peace), the voting populace may be distributed along three lines: the first category comprising the hawks who are in a minority but want war; while the other two categories, the majority of the voters, comprising those who don't want war. The majority is more or less evenly split into the doves who prefer not to go to war ever and the realists who don't want to go to war unless it's absolutely necessary.

In an election where only two choices can be made, the hawk minority, which wants war, can dictate the outcome by convincing the realists (who believe in not going to war unless absolutely necessary) that war is actually needed at this moment. Note that this isn't the minority swing vote which causes a 'tipping point' in an election; it is a systematic way for a minority to go about setting a voting agenda such that it carries the day.

The Internet, and especially social media, help this minority instigate a



"California's voters seem to have been won over by misleading campaigns run before the vote on Proposition 22." App-based gig workers hold demonstrations outside Los Angeles City Hall to urge voters to vote 'no' on Proposition 22. They lost the election. ■REUTERS

large part of the populace. This is a more recent development that boosts Arrow's Paradox to levels hitherto unheard of. The recent U.S. presidential election and its aftermath is an example.

In today's digital world, humans are constantly bombarded with messaging of all kinds, and our attention spans have dwindled. We make up our minds in ever smaller bits of time – often within the first few seconds of viewing an Internet-based message or video. Most readers would have experienced this phenomenon.

Research has been dedicated to this phenomenon and books have been written about it. Adam Alter, the author of *Irresistible - The Rise of Addictive Technology and The Business of Keeping Us Hooked*, said in an interview to the U.S.'s National Public Radio: "Ten years ago, before the iPad and iPhone were mainstream, the average person had an attention span of about 12 seconds." Now, he says, "research suggests that there has been a drop from 12 to 8 seconds – shorter than the attention span of the average goldfish, which is 9 seconds."

As recent events around the U.S. election have proved, newly online populaces do not have the ability to discriminate or adequately process what they see online. Ancient scripture advocates "shravanan, manan, nidhidhyasanam" (listen, continuously reflect on what you

heard, and then deeply contemplate what you heard before arriving at the truth). But today's combination of shortened attention spans, the relentless bombardment of messaging, and the indisputable mathematics of Arrow's proofs make for an incendiary mix. This is true even in the most technologically advanced regions such as the State of California in the U.S.

#### Vote on Proposition 22

For instance, during a U.S. presidential election, other referendum choices are also on the ballot in each State. Given last year's circus, many of these issues, some of them pivotal, got relegated to the back seat. One such issue was California's referendum on Proposition 22, which was critically important to companies such as Uber and Lyft. These gig economy businesses that use 'casual' workers had threatened to leave the State if the measure was not voted in. These businesses wanted their drivers to be classified as contractors and not as employees.

California is a left-leaning State and voted overwhelmingly for Joe Biden. It is also the undisputed tech capital of the U.S. Yet, Proposition 22 made it through. The gig economy ride-hailing apps spent over \$200 million to win. Those opposed to it could only muster about a tenth of that sum. Bigger money paid off. Over 58% of California's voters opted to

continue classifying drivers at these services as contractors, seemingly acting after mere *shravanam*, without the additional steps needed after that to get to the truth.

Employee classification would have given rise to a slew of labour rights that today's gig workers do not enjoy as 'independent contractors'. Workers will not have the same rights as other employees to paid sick days, overtime pay, unemployment insurance or a workplace covered by occupational safety and health laws. California's Assembly had tried to head this off earlier with a law of its own called Assembly Bill 5, which would have guaranteed these rights.

California's voters seem to have been won over by misleading campaigns run before the election to sway voters' opinions in this otherwise left-leaning State. They were bombarded with emails, glossies, text messages and video spots. Gig companies put out messages that in the first few seconds promised that they would pay their contractors more than the minimum wage. This appears to have caught voters' attention and led them to act without stopping to reflect on what was the real truth. The truth, at least according to the National Employment Law Project (NELP), was that someone driving an average of 35 km every hour in a 40-hour work week would make \$287 less per week if Proposition 22 passed. The NELP says a "permanent underclass of workers" has now been created.

Gig businesses will take heart from the victory in California and hope to replicate this success across the U.S. (and beyond its shores). Emboldened by the result in California, Uber and the other companies will move similar legislation in other U.S. States and possibly other countries.

It is certain that there will be future attempts at influencing elections using both intense messaging which takes advantage of our shortened attention spans as well as the setting of agendas of electoral choice which Arrow first described.

We should learn from such issues in India. Enlightened legislation may be needed.

Siddharth Pai is founder of Siana Capital, a venture capital firm focused on Indian Deep Tech and Science

# A step back in gender equality

Paying women for domestic and care work is a recognition of their efforts but may not reduce and redistribute their burden



SUNNY JOSE

Is the electoral promise of paying women for carrying out domestic work and care work a progressive public policy? The proposal, put forth by Kamal Haasan's political party, Makkal Needhi Maiam, has generated curiosity and reopened the old but unsettled academic debate. On the face of it, the proposal might appear progressive. However, closer scrutiny suggests otherwise.

#### Disproportionate burden of work

Women bear a disproportionately high burden of unpaid domestic work and care work in India. It would be instructive here to examine how Tamil Nadu, where the electoral promise is being made, fares vis-à-vis India. The all-India Time Use Survey (2019) says that 82% of females (six years and above) as against 24% of males from Tamil Nadu participate in unpaid domestic work. The huge disparity persists even if we look at the age group of 15-59 years: 90% of females and 24% of males participate in domestic work. A similar disparity prevails at the all-India level as well: 81% of females (six years and above) and 26% of males participate in unpaid domestic work. There is an equally huge disparity in the average time spent by participating males and females. While females (six years and above) in Tamil Nadu spend, on average, 261 minutes a day in unpaid domestic work, males spend only 91 minutes. The corresponding figures for females and males in India are 299 minutes and 97 minutes, respectively. The data suggest that females bear more than 83% of the burden of domestic and care work both in Tamil Nadu and India.

Can the proposed policy address the huge burden that women are forced to endure daily? Posed differently, what should a progressive policy proposal aim at: paying women a wage for domestic and care work or addressing the huge gender disparity? The insights offered by the feminist economist Diane Elson (2017) are pertinent. The gist of her argument is this: public policy should aim at closing the huge gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work through 'recognition, reduction and redistribution' (Triple-R).

The party's proposal only satisfies the first component of Triple-R, that is 'recognition'. Paying a wage is a formal recognition of the fact that unpaid domestic and care work are no less important than paid market work, as

the latter is parasitic on the former. Since it is women who predominantly carry out unpaid domestic and care activities, often at the expense of their employment prospects and health, the monetary reward is a recognition of their contribution to the well-being of the household and the opportunities foregone by women. The proposal appears progressive, for this reason and to that measure.

#### Failing two aspects

If the broader aim of a progressive public policy is to close the gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work, how does the proposal measure up? Specifically, will paying women a wage for domestic and care work reduce their disproportionately huge daily burden? The proposal not only fails miserably in this aspect, but also has the potential to increase women's burden. This is because paying monetary benefits carries with it the possible danger of formally endorsing the social norm that domestic and care work are 'women's work', for which they are being paid. The purportedly progressive proposal thus has the risk of furthering the gender disparity in unpaid work within homes.

What's more, it also fails in the other crucial aspect of 'redistribution' of the burden of unpaid work. In fact, it might give space for men to claim that women are bound to do these unpaid activities as they are being compensated for the time spent or income foregone, and that women can at best expect men only to help but not participate daily in carrying out these activities.

The fact that only 24% of men from Tamil Nadu participate in and spend less time than women on unpaid domestic work calls for a policy proposal that increases men's participation and the time they spend in unpaid work at home. Instead of incentivising men to participate more in household work and reducing women's burden by redistributing the responsibility, the current proposal might do the opposite.

Incentivising men, monetarily or otherwise, to participate more and spend longer hours in carrying out unpaid domestic work is one thing, but paying women a wage for shouldering the primary responsibility is another. At best, the latter might help meet what the academic Caroline Moser referred to as 'practical' gender needs. But it cannot possibly address the 'strategic' gender needs of reducing and redistributing women's burden. The electoral promise, therefore, lacks the transformative potential of achieving gender equality in sharing unpaid work.

Sunny Jose is RBI Chair Professor at the Council for Social Development, Southern Regional Centre, Hyderabad. Views are personal

## Decoding Cuba's currency reforms

Cuba will gain from a unified peso but it must take citizens along in order to implement the new reforms

#### GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

The devaluation of the Cuban peso (CUP) and the withdrawal of the convertible peso (CUC), the second currency of the country, neither of which can be traded internationally, caps Cuba's gradual economic transition since the end of the Soviet Union.

The reforms that came into force on January 1 aim to eliminate price distortions arising from multiple exchange rates and reduce Cuba's dependence on imports of basic commodities. These conditions have been exacerbated by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, decline in the export of the nation's famed medical services, the depletion of foreign exchange revenues from tourism, and the crippling impact of U.S. economic sanctions.

As per the latest devaluation plan announced in December by President Miguel Diaz-Canel, the CUP's artificial one-to-one parity with the U.S. dollar has been removed. The currency will instead trade at 24 pesos to the greenback and the CUC will be phased out in six months. The CUP is in circulation in the domestic economy and serves as the principal medium by which goods are priced and wages paid.

#### A dual domestic currency

During the turmoil in Cuba's sugar industry and a plunge in nickel prices in the 1990s, a volatile CUP had fallen to 140 to the dollar. Against this backdrop, the CUC was introduced in 1994 as a unit of account and store of value, to prevent the country's excessive reliance on the U.S. dollar following the end of the former Soviet Union. In recent years, this second currency has more or less steadied at one CUC to 24 CUPs in official exchange outlets and is the predominant mode of transaction for tourists and residents at high-end shopping outlets and other imported goods.

Apart from the disparities attributed to the prevalence of a dual domestic currency, Havana has at times had to deftly deploy the surge in dollar remittances and tourism to bolster the peso, by legalising the greenback in the 1990s. It has also had to respond in kind to American sanctions at other



#### DATA POINT

### Smaller firms, a bigger concern

from the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector opted for the COVID-19-related moratorium in August 2020 compared to April 2020. Corporate and individual borrowers did the opposite – more opted out of the moratorium in August 2020 after initially availing of it in April 2020. This points to a relatively higher stress in the MSME sector. Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) will bear the brunt of this stress as more than 30% of their loans have gone to the MSME sector as of March 2020, and close to 90% of those loans were under moratorium as of August 2020. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Naresh Singaravelu, and Sumanth Sen

**1. STRESSED SECTOR** | Loans under moratorium decreased in August 2020 compared to April 2020 across all sectors except MSME. This points to a lingering stress in the sector even after the unlocking process commenced

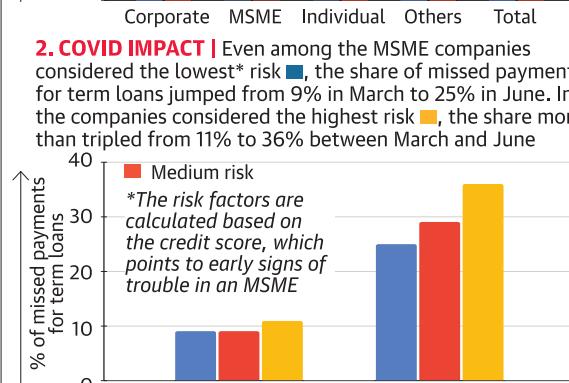
In August, 68% of all MSME loans were under moratorium, a marginal jump from 65% in April

**2. COVID IMPACT** | Even among the MSME companies considered the lowest\* risk, the share of missed payments for term loans jumped from 9% in March to 25% in June. In the companies considered the highest risk, the share more than tripled from 11% to 36% between March and June

\*The risk factors are calculated based on the credit score, which points to early signs of trouble in an MSME

% of missed payments for term loans

March 2020 June 2020



**3. MOST EXPOSED** | More than 30% of UCBs' total loans went to the MSME sector as of March 2020 – the highest among all bank types. Thus, the stress in the MSME sector will have a bigger impact in the balance sheets of UCBs

Loans to MSME as % of total advances

UCBs SFBS PVBS FBs PSBs NBFCs

35 25 15 5

**4. AFFECTED BANKS** | As of August 2020, 89.6% of all loans given by UCBs to the MSME sector were under moratorium – the highest among all bank types. It is still not known what share of these loan accounts will turn into NPA (loans overdue >90 days)

PSB: Public Sector Bank PVB: Private Sector Bank SCB: All Scheduled Commercial Banks NBFC: Non-Banking Financial Company FB: Foreign Banks SFB: Small Finance Bank

100 80 60 40

% of loans to MSME under moratorium

UCBs PSBs SCBs NBFCs SFBS PVBS FBs

100 80 60 40

#### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 12, 1971

#### Trudeau garlands P.M.

Disregarding protocol, the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr Pierre Trudeau, to-day [January 11] garlanded Mrs Indira Gandhi at New Delhi airport. Mr. Trudeau was carrying a garland in his hand as he emerged from the special aircraft which brought him to the capital. On stepping down, he put it around Mrs. Gandhi's neck – even before he was formally welcomed. An embarrassed Mrs. Gandhi shook hands with Mr. Trudeau. Protocol then took its course, with the Delhi Mayor, Mr. Hansraj Gupta, garlanding the bachelor Prime Minister. With disarming informality, he also embraced an Indian diplomat, who was a fellow-student with him at the London School of Economics. As he was being introduced to the officials, Mr. Trudeau spotted Mr. K.R. Narayanan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, who had recently joined the Jawaharlal Nehru University for research on Nehru and non-alignment. Welcoming Mr. Trudeau, Mrs. Indira Gandhi told him that his visit had brought Canada closer to India. She said the task that confronted India was incomparable with that of any other country because of its vast population. Mr. Trudeau, in his reply, said his visit was indicative of the "lasting interest and friendship that unite our people."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 12, 1921

#### Ban on a film

Bombay, January 10: The film version of Brieux's book, "Damaged Goods" was advertised to be shown at a local cinema on Saturday last. In the same morning the Police Commissioner of Bombay requested the proprietor at the cinema in question that the film should not be shown. The story depicted in the film is well known to the public. The incident therefore has aroused great deal of public interest. The proprietor of the cinema interviewed stated to a press representative that he is unable to understand the reason for the action taken by the Police and thought the Police were acting under instructions of Home Department, Government of India. He declared this film, as everybody knows, was passed by the British Board of Film Censors, passed by Lord Chamberlain, and was also passed by the Bombay Board of Censors. It opens a large and important question, said the Proprietor, regarding film industry in this country if after any film has been passed by the constituted Board of Censors the Government can step in and prevent its being exhibited.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Supreme Court 'intends' to stay farm laws

At one point when Mr. Venugopal questioned the court's "hurry" to pass the order of stay, Chief Justice Bobde said, "Mr. Attorney, we are giving a very long rope to you. Don't give us a lecture on patience..."

During the hearing, Chief Justice Bobde appealed to senior citizens, women and children at the protests to return home. "Tell them the Chief Justice of India wants them to go home... Whether you have faith in us or not, we are the Supreme Court of India and we will do our job," he said.

The court questioned the government's "insistence" on the implementation of the laws. "We don't know whether you [government] are part of the solution or the problem. There is not a single petition filed here which says the laws are beneficial... If the laws are put on hold, negotiations before the committee will be much better," CJI Bobde said.

The court, however, made it clear that it would not at this stage go into the question of constitutionality of the laws.

Mr. Venugopal said the court would be taking a "drastic decision" if it stayed

## ₹1,364 cr. given to wrong PM-Kisan beneficiaries

However, certain exclusions remained. If any member of a farming family paid income tax, received a monthly pension above ₹10,000, held a constitutional position, or was a serving or retired government employee, they were not eligible for the scheme. Professionals and institutional landholders were also excluded.

Until July 2020, 20.5 lakh people who should have been excluded had wrongly received PM-Kisan payouts. According to the Agriculture Ministry data, 56% of these undeserving persons belonged to the "income tax payee" category, while the remainder belong to the "ineligible farmers" category.

## Centre orders 11 million doses of Covishield

He added that the most important factor in this vaccination drive is identification and monitoring of those who need to be vaccinated. "For this, CoWin digital platform has been created. With the help of Aadhaar, beneficiaries will be identified as well as timely second dosage will be ensured. After a person receives the first dose of vaccination, CoWin will immediately generate a digital vaccination certificate. This certificate will also act as a reminder for the second dose, after which, a final certificate will be given," he said.

Stating that India aims to achieve vaccination for 30

crore people in the next few months, he said all States and UTs will have to put in place mechanisms to keep rumours related to vaccination in check. "For this, help from religious and social organisations, NYK, NSS, SHGs etc should be taken," he said.

The country on Monday after 229 days reported less than 170 daily COVID deaths with total fatalities in the past 24 hours standing at 161, while the total number of new COVID cases was reported at 16,311. The number of persons found infected with the UK strain now stands at 96, as per data from the Health Ministry.

No need to shut poultry markets, says govt.

Asserting that unfounded rumours about the safety of poultry products could have a devastating impact on the industry, and hurt thousands of small farmers, Mr. Singh appealed to the States not to take drastic action without scientific evidence.

The Minister specifically appealed to the Delhi government to reconsider its decision to shut Ghazipur mandi, Asia's largest wholesale market for chicken, and said he had written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on the issue. There is also no evidence that restricting inter and intra-State movement of poultry products is necessary, he added. So far, five States, including Delhi, have issued such restrictive orders.

Since January 3, when the

laws. None of the farm leaders, during the discussions, had shown a single provision in the laws which was unconstitutional.

"Mr. Attorney, sorry to say, we may be taking a decision because you, the Union of India, did not take responsibility. You were not able to solve the problem... You should have been able to solve the strike, but you did not," CJI Bobde replied.

Mr. Venugopal said the farmers were going to bring 2,000 tractors to "join" the Republic Day parade. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, however, refuted the claim. "Mr. Venugopal, these farmers too have members in the Army. They will do no such thing... Really don't understand the attitude of the government," he said.

To the farmers, the CJI clarified: "Even after we stay the implementation of the laws, you [farmers] carry on the protest. We don't want any criticism that the court is stifling the protest."

He, however, asked whether the farmers would "move a little" from their present protest sites to convenience citizens once the talks with the committee got going.

## A.P. High Court stays gram panchayat elections

Judge suspends SEC order for polls in February 'in the interest of public health'

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

A single-Judge Vacation Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court comprising Justice M. Ganga Rao on Monday granted stay till further orders on the State Election Commission's decision to hold gram panchayat (GP) elections in four phases next month.

Advocate-General S. Sriram asserted that the action of the SEC was premeditated and swayed by material extraneous to record and mala fide. He insisted that the SEC treated the concerns raised by the government as adversarial but not as a participant in the process of fixing the election schedule.

The A-G said the duty to be fair, reasonable and non-arbitrary equally applied to the SEC. He observed that the SEC had said at the time

of postponing the elections for mandal parishad territorial constituencies (MPTCs) and zilla parishad territorial constituencies (ZPTCs) that it would resume the process from where it is stopped. But, it (SEC) set the ball rolling for the gram panchayat polls without making a mention of the MPTC and ZPTC elections.

**'Situation not conducive'**  
Mr. Sriram said the SEC did not apply its mind to the enormity of the ground situation arising from vaccination, the involvement of many government departments in it and the deployment of men and resources for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appearing for the SEC, senior advocate N. Ashwani Kumar said the government had been seeking postpone- ment of the elections on one



**Bigger worries:** The A.P. government had moved the High Court citing the pandemic and vaccination drive. • V RAJU

pretext or the other, but Justice Rao observed that the impugned order of the SEC ought to be suspended in the interest of public health.

In the petition filed by it on Saturday, the government maintained that the vaccination drive would be akin to a general election and its entire machinery would be involved in the process.

The court-mandated con-

sultative process was going to be a farce going by the tone and tenor of the letters which State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar wrote to the Chief Secretary and Principal Secretary (Panchayat Raj) regarding the conduct of elections, it was stated.

The SEC later filed a writ appeal in the High Court challenging the stay.

Election Commission  
Joint Director removed

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

State Election Commission (SEC) Joint Director G.V. Sai Prasad has been discharged from his services for allegedly influencing the employees to apply for leave *en masse* as part of a larger design to adversely affect the functioning of the Commission".

Barring one or two misguided persons, the rest of the employees rebuffed his counsel and indoctrination to desert the Commission, it was mentioned in the proceedings.

The SEC invoked its plenary powers vested under Articles 243-K and 324 of the Constitution to discharge him from his services to safeguard the integrity of the election process.

## IN BRIEF



**Cinemas to reopen in Kerala on Friday**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The cinemas in Kerala will reopen on Friday after a gap of nine months. In a major relief to owners, the State government decided to waive entertainment tax and reduce the fixed electricity charges during the COVID-19 outbreak period when the cinemas were shut. On Friday, Tamil film *Master* will be screened. Malayalam films will be released from January 21.

## A.P. former Minister's bail petition dismissed

HYDERABAD  
A court in Secunderabad on Monday dismissed the bail petition of former Andhra Pradesh Minister Bhuma Akhila Priya Reddy, held in connection with the kidnapping of former national hockey player K. Praveen Rao and his two brothers. The court granted three-day custody of Ms. Reddy to the police. Later, police announced three more arrests in the case.

## Intermediate semesters set to begin in Karnataka

BENGALURU  
Classes for students of intermediate semesters for both postgraduate and undergraduate courses in degree, diploma and engineering courses will begin on January 15, said Karnataka Deputy CM and Higher Education Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan on Monday. It was also decided to reopen college canteens and libraries.

## Check illegal use of loudspeakers, says HC

BENGALURU  
The Karnataka High Court on Monday directed the State government to immediately issue directions to the police and the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board to initiate action against use of amplifiers and loudspeakers in religious places in the State in violation of laws on noise pollution and the directions issued by the Supreme Court.

## Setback for Jagan in quid pro quo cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and other accused in five chargesheets filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in quid pro quo cases suffered a setback on Monday when a special court rejected their request that the trial of ED cases be held back till the prosecution against them in the same court in Central Bureau of Investigation cases was disposed of.

Incidentally, the ED had filed chargesheets against them in the court of Principal Judge for CBI cases on the basis of chargesheets filed by the CBI under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code.

Counsel for Mr. Reddy and other accused had argued that the CBI cases be tried first and then the ED cases be taken up.

## File affidavit, SC tells ex-HC judge

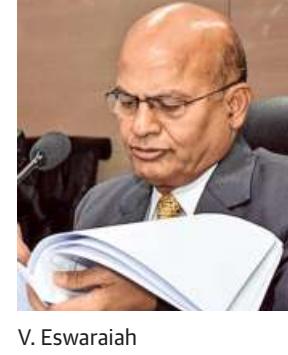
Row over phone conversation between him and suspended judicial officer

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked former Andhra Pradesh High Court judge, Justice V. Eswaraiah, to file an affidavit about the "private phone conversation" between him and a suspended judicial officer, which the State High Court dubbed a "serious conspiracy" to destabilise the judiciary.

The High Court, on August 13, ordered a judicial inquiry by former Supreme Court judge, Justice R.V. Raveendran, into the phone chat. It had termed the conversation an attempt to "malign" a senior sitting Supreme Court judge and the then Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

On Monday, appearing for Justice Eswaraiah, advocate Prashant Bhushan asked a three-judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan how a private chat could be called a



V. Eswaraiah  
"conspiracy" to revile the judiciary.

**'Nothing private'**  
Senior advocate Kapil Sibal and advocate Vipin Nair, for an intervenor-advocate, P. Samuel John, said "there was nothing private about the conversation." Mr. Sibal said the conversation was "motivated to attack the system." Mr. John, in his application, said it was common knowledge among the members of the Bar that the present State

government has launched a series of systematic attacks on the High Court and its judges for questioning its "radical" executive decisions which does not pass judicial scrutiny.

Justice Bhushan recorded Mr. Bhushan's oral statement in court that Justice Eswaraiah "does not dispute the conversation." Mr. Bhushan informed the court that a transcript of the conversation has been filed along with the appeal against the August 13 order of the High Court.

"The petitioner [Justice Eswaraiah] had in fact spoken publicly about the misconduct of the sitting Supreme Court judge and his nexus with the erstwhile government [of Chandrababu Naidu] and he was privy to the various facts regarding this misconduct," the petition filed by Justice Eswaraiah said. The petition said

the misconduct Justice Eswaraiah was talking about was the "subject matter of an enquiry by the cabinet committee regarding dubious property transactions for unlawful gain, also involving the sitting Supreme Court judge and other public servants at the helm of affairs in the erstwhile government of Andhra Pradesh."

"This conspiracy was the subject matter of an FIR which names Dammalapati Srinivas, formerly Additional Advocate General, Andhra Pradesh, and 12 others, including the two daughters of the Supreme Court judge ... In these circumstances, it was legitimate for the petitioner to seek any further information about the misconduct of the judge from anyone who might be privy to such information," the petition said.

The court scheduled the next hearing for Monday. Shripad Naik shifted to Goa

## Record flight



**Woman power:** Captain Zoya Aggarwal, who headed the all-woman cockpit crew of the first Air India flight from San Francisco to Bengaluru, waves after landing at the Kempegowda International Airport on Monday. They scripted history by flying non-stop for 17 hours. • PTI

## AYUSH Minister injured in car accident, wife dies

Shripad Naik shifted to Goa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MANGALURU

Union Minister of State for AYUSH Shripad Yesso Naik lost his wife Vijaya in a road accident in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka on Monday.

The Minister, who was travelling with his wife and four others, including the driver, was seriously injured and was shifted to Goa for treatment.

Another person in the car, who is said to be a BJP worker, also died in the accident which took place between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. near Hosakambi village in Ankola taluk. The bodies of Ms. Vijaya and the BJP worker were shifted to Goa.

Three others in the car who sustained minor inju-



Shripad Yesso Naik  
ries have also been taken to Goa.

A senior police official said the six persons were travelling from Yellapur to Gokarna in Uttara Kannada when their car overturned.

The Minister and his wife visited Sri Krishna Math in Udupi on Sunday. On Saturday, he attended a function at Dharmasthala.

## Solo sailor quits Navy to get closer to sea

Abhilash Tomy prepares for daredevil ocean race he had to abandon last time

S. ANANDAN  
KOCCHI

On Sunday, Commander Abhilash Tomy shared on social media *The Moment*, a poem by Margaret Atwood, on the moment of realisation after many voyages and years of toil that it was things/beings around you that made you what you are, as he hung up the uniform after 24 years of service in the Navy. He thanked the naval fraternity, those who sailed along, for doing that. But a sailor hardly leaves the sea.

Commander Tomy, the first Indian to circumnavigate the globe solo and unassisted in a sail



**New adventure:** Commander Abhilash Tomy is the only Indian to sail round the world non-stop and solo. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

yacht, intends to give another shot at the Golden Globe Race next year. The GGR, as it is called, is a daredevil ocean race with basic, read vintage, sailing

equipment which he attempted in 2018. But a vicious storm in the southern Indian Ocean derailed him and he sustained a spinal injury. He was subsequently rescued in a multi-nation effort and had to undergo a surgery.

After recovering from his injuries, Commander Tomy, a naval pilot, was medically cleared for flying and sailing. He flew his last sortie on Dornier around Goa sometime in September and was sailing and kayaking.

"For me to do the race, all I need is money and I am looking for sponsors," he told *The Hindu*. But unlike last time when he got a retro boat built for the race, he would prefer buying a second-hand one which would not necessitate processes like registration.

## Kerala govt. seeks CBI probe into Walayar case

Dalit sisters raped, found dead in 2017

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has recommended a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the alleged rape and suicide of two minor Dalit girls, both sisters, at Walayar in Palakkad in 2017.

After a trial court acquitted the three persons said to be responsible for the deaths, the government and the police had come under severe criticism from various quarters.

Recently, the Kerala High Court had set aside the acquittal by a special court for the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCO)

SO). It slammed the botched investigation and ordered further inquiry and retrial.

The case had become a political hot potato for the government. The Congress and the BJP pointed out that the suspects, all men in the neighbourhood of the victims, were CPI(M) supporters. They alleged that the police had consequently developed cold feet and scuttled the probe bowing to political influence.

The Opposition parties also allege that the lawyer who defended the accused was a CPI(M) functionary who had officiated for years as the District Child Welfare Committee's chairperson.

CM YK

Ajit Singh tells farmers to remain vigilant

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

Rashtriya Lok Dal president Ajit Singh on Monday asked farmers protesting against the three farm laws to remain vigilant against "mischievous elements" sent by the government to turn their protest violent.

Cautioning the farmers, Mr. Singh, in a statement, said, "Such a situation may arise that the government might create violence in the protest through its own mischievous elements."

He appealed to farmers to maintain unity and asked them to stand united and firm on their demands by maintaining non-violence.

Mr. Singh, a former Union Minister, wondered why the Union government was not considering the demand of the farmers to scrap the three new farm laws and bring in a new Bill after consultation with all groups concerned.

Mr. Singh said this was the "hour of the test of the resolve of the farmers".

## Parra booked under UAPA

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

A J&K court on Monday sent PDP leader Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra to seven-day transit police remand in a case related to "his clandestine connections with Pakistani terrorists and secessionist organisations", just three days after NIA granted him bail. "The court is of the view that the accused could not be produced before the Special Judge... the transit remand is granted," NIA Special Judge said.

## Centre moves SC to stop tractor rally on Republic Day

Any protest will cause an embarrassment to the nation'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre, through the Delhi police, on Monday moved the Supreme Court seeking an injunction order against any proposed tractor, trolley or vehicle march or any other kind of protest by farmers to "disrupt" the Republic Day.

"It has come to the knowledge of the security agencies through various sources that a small group of protesting individuals/organisations have planned to carry out a tractor/trolley/vehicle march on Republic Day. The proposed march is slated to disturb and disrupt the august celebrations of the nation on Republic Day and would be bound to create a massive law and order situ-

## Did our best to remove apprehensions: govt.

Affidavit says bid to talk has been stonewalled by farmers

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre, in an urgent affidavit filed in the Supreme Court on Monday, said it had done its best to engage with farmers to remove "misapprehensions" about the new agricultural laws.

"The Central government has done its best to engage with the farmers to remove any misapprehensions or misgivings in their minds and no efforts have been found lacking," the affidavit filed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture said.

It added that multiple attempts to talk to the farmers about the laws had been stonewalled by the latter, whose stand has been "either you repeal the laws or no discussion would be made".

The Centre said, prior to the new regime, farmers under the State agricultural market produce committees (APMC) were forced to sell their products at "market

## Cong., Akali MPs walk out of meet on agriculture

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress MPs Partap Singh Bajwa and Chhaya Verma, and Akali leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa on Monday walked out of a meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture after the panel chairman refused to discuss

yards" to only a limited number of traders licenced under the APMC law.

The pandemic situation, with lowering demands, had necessitated the need for expanding market for farmers beyond the State boundaries through a facilitative legal framework and promotion of inter-State trade.

The new regime gives farmers the option to sell

Centre's three farm laws and their impact including the ongoing protests.

BJP MP and panel chairman P.C. Gaddigoudar did not allow the members to "deviate" from the pre-fixed agenda, resulting in the walkout by three members.

their produce outside the market yards. The Centre had also implemented the recommendations of the Swaminathan Report "by increasing the Minimum Support Price one and half times of the weighted average cost of production with bumper procurement at MSP." "The farmers are given an option over and above the existing one," it said

## No record of consultations on farm laws'

RTI reply by Agriculture Ministry goes against Centre's stand that wide-ranging talks were held

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

The Union Agriculture Ministry could not provide any record of pre-legislative consultations on the three farm reform laws, according to a response given by it to a query under the Right to Information Act.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has repeatedly said that wide-ranging consultations were held on the three laws.

The Centre has now filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court saying that it is an "erroneous notion" that no consultations were held.

In December 2020, RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj asked the Agriculture Ministry for all details regarding stakeholder consultations held before the Centre promulgated three ordinances on agricultural reforms in June.

She asked for dates and at-

tenees of meetings, copies of minutes, and lists of the States, experts and farmers groups who had been consulted.

### Copy sought

The RTI request also asked for a copy of the comments and communications that had been sent by the States with which the consultations had been held.

In a separate RTI filing, she also asked for details to

## Farmers reject court's proposal

Union leaders cite Centre's stand rejecting discussion on the farm laws

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
VIKAS VASUDEVA  
NEW DELHI/ CHANDIGARH

Farmers groups have rejected the Supreme Court's suggestion to appoint a committee to resolve the ongoing crisis over three farm reform laws. They say the Centre's attitude in court on Monday makes it clear that the government will not agree to discuss farmers' demand for repeal of the three laws in such a committee.

"While all organisations welcome the suggestions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court to stay the implementation of the farm laws, they are collectively and individually not willing to participate in any proceedings before a committee that may be appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court," said the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), in a statement issued late on Monday night.

The statement added that the decision comes after "Looking to the attitude and approach of the Government which made it clear before the court today repeatedly



**Firm intent:** Farmers arriving to participate in the ongoing protest against the farm laws in New Delhi. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

that they will not agree to the discussion for repeal before the committee."

Discussions with the lawyers were held at the Singhu border, led by union leaders Balbir Singh Rajewal, Darshan Pal, Prem Singh Bhangu, Rajinder Singh Deep Singh Wala and Jagmohan Singh.

The statement expressed "respect" and "gratitude" for the Court's "understanding of the problem and comforting words" but regretted

said the statement.

"We have been told that no such hearing has been fixed for tomorrow and that only the matters are listed for pronouncements for order by the Hon'ble Court. These events have deeply disappointed us and also farmers at large."

"A committee is just a delaying tactic which is what the government wants," said Krantikari Kisan Union president Darshan Pal.

"Why divert and dilute the growing farmers movement with a committee? The protest is against the government, so the government should face the wrath of the people, and repeal the laws," he said.

Unions were also apprehensive about being pushed into binding mediation without clarity on the committee's remit.

"Sometimes, they say it is a technical committee, sometimes they say it will be experts, sometimes they say it will be a committee of judges," said a leader, who did not wish to be named.

## PM should apologise to farmers: Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

After the Supreme Court rapped the Centre over its failure to resolve the deadlock with farmers over the new farm bills, the Congress on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to apologise to the farmers and repeat the three farm laws.

Congress communication chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala, addressing a press conference, urged the top court to consider re-

gistering cases against Mr. Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for destroying public property and digging up national highways to prevent the farmers from reaching Delhi.

The Congress also said it "respected" the top court's concern but maintained that issue could be resolved not through a legalistic route but by Parliament.

## China draws back troops from LAC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

China has withdrawn around 10,000 troops from the depth areas along the disputed boundary in eastern Ladakh while frontline troops continue to remain in position, according to news agency ANI.

Citing government sources, the report said the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has moved back 10,000 troops from its traditional training areas opposite eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) possibly due to extreme winters.

However, the deployment in the frontline areas has remained the same as also the heavy equipment moved in since the beginning of the standoff in May. The Army has deployed around 50,000 troops.

show that the Central government had placed the draft legislation in the public domain for 30 days, in accordance with norms set by its own Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy as well as by the Central Information Commission.

The requests were both passed between multiple departments in the Ministry.

Two Central Public Information Officers forwarded and transferred the requests.

Two others disposed of the request, with one from the Ministry's marketing cell saying that "this CPIO does not hold any record in this matter".

The fourth, from the section dealing with the administrative work of the Agricultural Marketing Division, disposed of the request on January 6, saying that "the information is treated as nil" as far as her section was concerned.

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INTERVIEW | N.K. ARORA

## 'Regulators not taking any shortcuts in ensuring safety of vaccines'

Adverse event surveillance mechanism is being set up in health facilities across the country, says the head of ICMR's National Task Force group

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

**N.K. Arora**, executive director of the New Delhi-based INCLEN Trust and head of the operations research group of the ICMR's National Task Force for COVID-19, says all safety-related information will be shared with the public as it emerges with the use of the COVID-19 vaccine.

This is for the first time the government is going to vaccinate adults. Does it require any special preparation?

■ Yes, it does. India has an existing vaccine safety surveillance mechanism called the AEFI (Adverse Events Following Immunisation) surveillance. It's comprised of a national secretariat under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), including doctors, data specialists and public health specialists. The vaccine safety surveillance network extends up to every district where a panel of doctors and health workers monitor events of concern after getting any vaccine, investigate and report to state and national level.

COVID-19 has necessitated immunisation of the adult population. The government has now involved cardiologists, neurologists, general

physicians and pulmonologists in AEFI committees at national, state, and district level.

Then, it is important for people to know that vulnerable population – the elderly, people with associated illness, such as diabetes, chronic lung disease, high blood pressure, kidney ailments, cancers and others may, otherwise also, suffer from any sudden health issues such as heart attack.

We cannot and should not link it to the vaccine in all cases. I believe that we need to practise 'exceptional transparency' in this case. I assure that all safety related information will be shared with the general population as it emerges with the use of COVID-19 vaccine(s) either in our country or in any other part of the globe with the same vaccine.

What kind of awareness programmes do we need before rolling out the immunisation for COVID-19?

■ We need to educate people and make them aware of less-known facts about vaccines. For example, some people might face mild symptoms such as pain or swelling, mild fever, among others. It is a normal immune response.

Right now, we are anticipating – theoretically – events of concern that might possibly happen after immunisation drive. The AEFI members will be trained to look for any adverse event before we start the immunisation process. Adverse event surveillance is being established to actively seek these events across designated health facilities across the country. Additionally, there are around 300 medical colleges and tertiary care hospitals across the country that have adverse drug reaction monitoring centres which also report adverse events after vaccines along with drugs.

Indian regulators gave authorisation to Covaxin even before its Phase 3 trial results were out. How do we explain this?



■ The government has now involved cardiologists, neurologists, general physicians and pulmonologists in AEFI committees at national, state, and district levels

■ We are passing through troubled times. COVID-19 has caused social disruption, economic downturn and significant number of deaths. To control this pandemic, the society as well as the system may have to take steps which may also be termed as drastic. Both pre-clinical and clinical data (complete data for Phase I and II, and partial data for Phase III) of Covaxin

have been thoroughly scrutinised by the regulators. This data shows that the vaccine is safe and induces a robust antibody response. However, to what extent the vaccine will protect the recipients from getting the disease is not known yet. Therefore, the regulators have allowed its use in trial mode.

What does trial mode mean for a vaccine recipient?

■ The way we do in a clinical trial phase: first, the recipient will be asked to give a written consent. Then he/she will undergo some blood tests before and after taking the vaccine. Additionally, the recipient will be followed up actively to see if the vaccine has led to any side effects. In short, it will be an extension of the Phase 3 trial. But in this, the person would know that he or she has received the vaccine, and not the placebo. It will be completely a person's choice if he or she would like to give the vaccine a try or not.

Developing a vaccine takes years. But this time our scientists have developed a vaccine against the novel

coronavirus in such a short time. How was this possible?

■ Developing a vaccine generally involves years of research. First, we need a vaccine candidate that is evaluated in animals for its safety and efficacy. After a vaccine candidate passes a pre-clinical trial, it enters the clinical trial phase. While scientists have worked round the clock in the laboratory, even regulatory approvals which used to take several months have been pretty quick. It helped eliminate all the time lapses between the pre-clinical and clinical trial stages. Earlier, the vaccine development involved a series of steps, but in the case of the coronavirus vaccine, the scientists and regulators worked in tandem, accelerating the whole process without compromises on any protocols and any step.

What is your opinion on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine?

■ To ensure that a vaccine is safe, we need to try it on a large number of people. The vaccine developers have not reduced the sample size at

any stage of clinical trials rather it was bigger than what we usually test a vaccine on.

When a vaccine is tested, most of the adverse events or unwanted effects, if any, occur in the first four to six weeks of its administration.

So, in order to ensure that it is safe, we keep a close watch, for the first two-three months, on the people it has been given to. This data helps us decide if a vaccine is safe. All concerned in the line of vaccine development, testing and evaluation have followed these procedures to the T. Both Indian vaccines are considered safe on this yardstick.

As for the efficacy of the vaccine, we need time to tell how effective a vaccine is. All the global agencies have set the benchmark that only those vaccine candidates which show an efficacy of at least 50-60% will be considered. Interestingly, most of the vaccines have shown an efficacy of 70-90% within the short period of two or three months of observation, way more than what we were expecting. Besides, when a vaccine is given an emergency use authorisation, as in the

case of the COVID-19 vaccine, the trial follow-ups continue for one-two years to assess the total duration of protection the vaccine will provide.

What is emergency use authorisation. Does it involve any short-cuts on the part of our regulators?

■ Not at all. In fact, our regulators are taking extra precautions. Some vaccine candidates were not considered for review by our regulators as the data was inadequate; some companies were asked to increase their sample size so that our regulators can have adequate evidence to support the safety and efficacy of the vaccine before they approve it.

Similarly, Indian regulators wanted the U.K.'s regulator to approve Oxford's vaccine first before even considering it for the Indian population. An important pre-requisite of the COVID-19 vaccine authorisation for our country is – the vaccine should have been evaluated on subjects in India. The regulators are not taking any short-cuts when it comes to ensuring the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

## IN BRIEF



Interim relief extended to Kangana, sister

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court on Monday extended the interim protection granted to actor Kangana Ranaut and her sister Rangoli Chandel till January 25 in a case where they are charged with sedition and promoting hatred and outrage among communities. A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Manish Pitale was hearing a plea filed by them to quash the FIR.

HC grants interim protection to Sonu Sood

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court on Monday granted actor Sonu Sood interim protection from any coercive action by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation against the alleged illegal construction at his residence. A single Bench of Justice Prithviraj Chavan was hearing a plea by the actor seeking extension of stay on a notice served by the city civil court and sessions court on October 24, 2020.

U.P. official charged with paedophilia examined

NEW DELHI Rambhawan, who was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in November on charges of sexually exploiting children, filming the acts and selling pornographic material online, has been brought to Delhi for medical examination at AIIMS. "We have got his seven days' custody for getting the medical tests conducted to strengthen the prosecution's case," a CBI official said.

No cash awards for combat situations: Army

Srinagar The Army on Monday clarified there was no system of cash awards for its personnel for any acts in combat situations or otherwise in the line of duty. The statement comes a day after the contents of the police chargesheet in the Shopian fake encounter were reported. Three civilians were killed and passed off as militants in July last year.

Illicit liquor tragedy accused found dead

Lucknow The bodies of two persons, including one accused in the illicit liquor tragedy of Bulandshahr, where six persons died last week, were found in an illegal liquor factory at Kasna in Greater Noida on Sunday. The deceased were identified as Pradeep and Santosh Sharma, said Rajesh Kumar Singh, DCP, Greater Noida. Pradeep and Kalu, another accused were named in the FIR.

## 96 infected so far with mutant U.K. strain, says Health Ministry

India reports fewer than 170 daily COVID-19 deaths after 229 days, it says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The total number of persons found infected with the mutant U.K. strain of COVID-19 is 96, according to an update issued by the Health Ministry on Monday.

India had also reported fewer than 170 daily COVID-19 deaths in the past 24 hours, after 229 days, the ministry said.

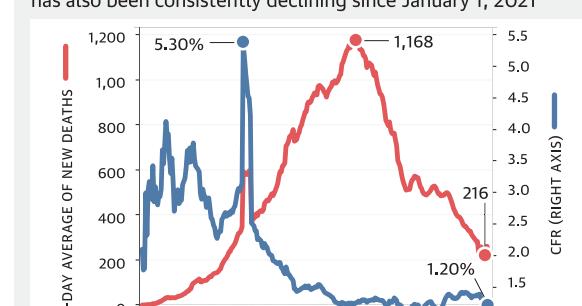
The decline in new cases and the high rate of recovery had in tandem resulted in a continuous fall in the country's active case load on a sustained basis, it noted.

The country reported 161 case fatalities in the past 24 hours, with six States and Union Territories accounting for 69.57% of them.

Maharashtra saw the most casualties of 34, followed by Kerala with 23 and West Ben-

### Easing burden

COVID-19 deaths in India have consistently declined since December 2020. The Case Fatality Rate (CFR) (deaths/cases) has also been consistently declining since January 1, 2021



gal with 19. Data released by the Ministry said the total active case load had fallen to 2.25 lakh (2,22,526) currently, and that the present active case load consisted of 2.13% of the total positive cases. Also, 16,959 people had

recovered and were discharged in the last 24 hours. This had led to a net decline of 809 from the total active case load.

The total recovered cases stood at 10,092,909.

The gap between the recovered cases and the active

cases, which was steadily increasing, was nearing 99 lakh, and at present stood at 98,70,383, the Ministry stated.

**Recovery rate improves** The recovery rate had improved to 96.43%, which was among the highest in the world and 78.56% of the new recovered cases were observed to be concentrated in 10 States and UTs.

Kerala reported the highest number with 4,659. In Maharashtra, 2,302 people recovered, followed by 962 in Chhattisgarh.

Of the new cases, 80.25% were concentrated in nine States and UTs.

Kerala had also reported the highest daily new cases at 4,545. It was followed by Maharashtra with 3,558 new cases.

## Govt. defends rules for animal seizure

Owners should not do illegal business'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Central government on Monday defended the law to deprive owners possession of their animals, including cattle, on the suspicion that they are being subject to cruelty or illegally transported for slaughter.

The Centre dismissed the argument that taking the animals from their owners divested them of their livelihood even before they were found guilty of cruelty by a court of law.

"The argument that owners are deprived of their right to livelihood is not sustainable. They have no right to do their business illegally. They have to transport the animals as per the requirements of the Transport of Animals Rules of 1978," it said in an affidavit.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde was hearing a petition filed by the Buffalo Traders Welfare Association challenging the validity of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Care and maintenance of case property animals) Rules 2017.

**Court's earlier directive** In the previous hearing, the court had asked the government to delete the Rules, saying the law stripped people

The Supreme Court had asked the government to delete the Rules in its last hearing. ■ FILE PHOTO

ple of their means of livelihood. But the government said the Rules were in consonance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960.

"The Rules prevent owners and transporters from causing animals unnecessary pain and suffering... Animals are sentient beings. They are capable of experiencing pain, sorrow, suffering and discomfort... Article 51A (g) of the Constitution enjoins upon every citizen to have compassion for living animals," the affidavit said.

The police seized the cattle and vehicles of only those who intentionally violated the Animal Transport Rules, it stated.

The case was scheduled for hearing next week.

## UPSC aspirants may get a second chance

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government told the Supreme Court on Monday that a decision to grant another chance for UPSC aspirants, especially candidates whose last attempt at cracking the prelims expired in October 2020, is under "active consideration".

A three-judge Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar adjourned the case to January 22. The court was hearing a petition filed by 59 UPSC aspirants, represented by advocate Anushree Prashit Kapadia, who were either unable to take the October prelims or handicapped in their preparations due to the pandemic and ensuing lockdown.

The court ordered that the permission of the HCC, which is headed by an Additional Secretary of the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry and includes government officials primarily, should be obtained before any work starts on the ground.

At a press conference, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker

Mehta was born in pre-Partition Lahore into a well-off Punjabi family in 1934.

He lost his eyesight at the age of three from meningitis. He did not let this challenge get in the way of a flourishing career or stop him from showcasing his literary prowess to the world.

"I felt that blindness was a terrible impediment, and that if only I exerted myself and did everything my big sisters and big brother did, I could somehow become exactly like them," Mehta wrote.

He is best known for his 12-volume memoir, which focused on the troubled modern history of India and his early struggles with blindness.

Mehta brought out 24 books that included volumes of reportage on India, among them *Walking the Indian Streets* (1960), *Portrait of India* (1970) and *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (1977), as well as explorations of philosophy, theology and linguistics.

According to sources, Mr. Mehta, a 1988 batch IAS officer, sent his VRS application to his parent cadre Gujarat a week ago.

## Panel clears Parliament project

The clearance was mandated by SC in its January 5 judgment allowing the work



Work in progress: The construction site of the new Parliament building, part of the Central Vista project. ■ FILE PHOTO

Mishra said the committee had discussed the proposal and cleared it on Monday. The panel looked at the preservation of heritage as per the Unified Building Bylaws, 2016. Permission was not sought earlier as the Minister

try, whose Central Public Works Department is carrying out the project, felt there was no heritage involved.

The new building was proposed to be built adjacent to the existing Parliament, which was built in the 1920s.

The Minister said: "I don't know what the overall cost will be. The cost will be absorbed by each Ministry."

Since the court ordered it to get the approval of the HCC, the Ministry had complied, Mr. Mishra said.

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri said the timeline for the completion was 2022, the 75th year of Independence.

Another part of the larger Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project, the revamp of Rajpath or Central Vista Avenue, would be started by February 1, with the contract likely to be awarded soon, Mr. Mishra said. The Republic Day Parade next year would be held on the revamped Rajpath.

The Minister said: "I don't know what the overall cost will be. The cost will be absorbed by each Ministry."

## A.K. Sharma takes VRS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

A.K. Sharma, Secretary in the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), has taken voluntary retirement from service ahead of his superannuation in July 2022.

According to sources, Mr. Sharma, a 1988 batch IAS officer, sent his VRS application to his parent cadre Gujarat a week ago.

## Author Ved Mehta passes away in the U.S

**Into the crypt** Experts advise one should always stay informed and cautious in this fin-tech space  
■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO

The recent crypto spring lured in many a first-timer. Experts candidly chat about what you need to know about cryptocurrency



# To coin or not to coin?

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

During the wild, off-chance you are at a startup incubator and have your ear to the ground, chances are that you might hear murmurings about crypto, such as 'how did your Ether investment work out?' or 'Don't worry about stop-loss just yet, ride this tide out!'

The headline mania – such as Bitcoin hitting a value of \$40,000 and the crypto-market reaching a \$1 trillion value – became the making of novice traders eager to make a quick buck. Despite this, and maybe also due to this, crypto is saddled with a stigma similar to that of gambling. These decen-

tralised digital currencies are seen as a tool only for the ultra-rich with a Midas touch.

The downside of novice traders entering the game is that they might not have done all the necessary reading and learning before heading into this coin-dazzled world. So what should people know before making a decision of 'to coin or not to coin?' The answer: there is no hard-and-fast formula.

Contrary to popular belief, not all crypto-business-people are utopists; wise ones warn that investing in crypto-coins or tokens is speculative, the market is largely unregulated, and that anyone considering it should be prepared to lose their entire investment. In

fact, on January 11, Bitcoin and other coins tanked, wiping off some \$170 billion from the market, signalling some market correction and proving that the industry itself is battling obstacles in terms of scaling, efficiency and security.

#### A little history...

In 2018, the scene had experienced what experts call a 'crypto winter': value was at rock-bottom and there was a lot of speculation around government intervention. Alongside this apprehension, crypto technologists took more than a sleeves-rolled-up commitment to technical development in the infrastructure. This strengthened the founda-

tion, which contributed to crypto's 'spring' in the late-2020 'success' of Bitcoin.

Alexis Ohanian, founder of Reddit and crypto advocate, explained in a past interview with CNBC that, "I'm personally happy with the fact that there has been a tough year in all these cryptocurrencies because it gets people focused on the things that matter, which is building the software

which is, hopefully, going to make these things tremendously valuable in the long term."

With lakhs of such currencies available to choose from, Neeraj Khandelwal, co-founder of India-based cryptocurrency exchange CoinDCX, says, "people should be guided by principles and ground rules, rather than persons or certifications." He adds that "the top 10 cryptocurrencies [such as

Chainlink, Tether, Binance Coin, as well as Bitcoin and Ether] are widely trusted and properly decentralised, in that no single party has control over the prices."

Neeraj's company CoinDCX powered through the Supreme Court-RBI ban (April 2018 - March 2020) announced on crypto based on the belief that it would not last long. "We were confident in the technology," he recalls, "We were not emotionally driven, we were rather focussed on the technology of CoinDCX itself and in the industry."

He explains that crypto-investments should be made only when someone is "stable and thinking in the long-term." He adds, "we should not take ultra-high risks with hard-earned money. If you are absolutely keen and have done consistent studying and analysis into the crypto world, then start with a small amount and monitor that for a reference to increase exposure."

CoinDCX has its own learning platform as well: DCX Learn,

should be patient, have some foresight after seeing how the market behaves for a certain time period, and maintain self-control and restraint. Also one should always stay as informed as possible," urges Akshay, "because crypto evolves in a volatile manner at any time. Don't think that you can always be ahead of a curve that is unpredictably impacted by innumerable factors."

#### Don't fall prey

Neeraj warns that, like most other fin-tech industries, crypto has its fair share of red flags. Those firing up their search engines to read up are most likely inundated with ads of bizarre encouragements: 'give us your money and we'll double it for you using crypto!' or even ads for shady-seeming exchange platforms that just do not sit right. Neeraj urges netizens not to cave. "People should not believe in everything written in online forums, and don't invest in just any token. People should restrict to the top currencies which can't be manipulated," he advises.

Agreeing with this, Akshay says, "Whoever is coming in, does not know how things might pan out. When the market sees a stabilisation, there may be a lot of losses for those who are experimenting."

Another down-side to the crypto-trading and investing realms is the risk of addiction. "There is an element of FOMO (fear of missing out)," says Neeraj. "Understand that the market is volatile and have a mindset that you are in it for the long term. As markets go up, they also come down; so in these compulsions, short-term decisions are risky. This behaviour can eliminate a fair number of risks."

"Just as you would not do it with your 'offline money', don't trust your crypto with a stranger," adds Akshay. "No matter how much returns they promise, it is impossible to predict prices in this space."

It is easy to find resources and experts a click away to seek advice on crypto. But on a regulation level, things are still grey. Whether 2021 will finally be the year India clarifies laws around crypto remains to be seen.

**Technical developments strengthened this space's foundation, which ended crypto winter and kicked off crypto's 'spring' with the late-2020 'success' of Bitcoin**

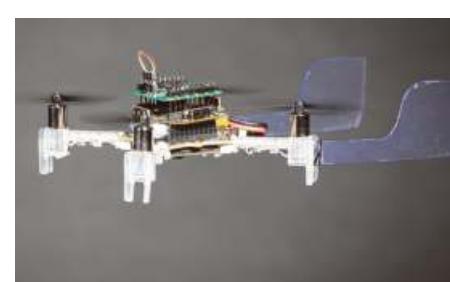
where people who sign up to the exchange program can learn the in's and out's, free of cost.

Akshay Aggarwal, CEO at Blockument Studios, says education is extremely important and any exchange platform should have an element of responsibility to each. He also runs Blockchained India, one of the world's largest networks of blockchain or crypto enthusiasts. Here, the members host virtual global talks about the latest developments to keep everyone in loop about an unpredictable tech.

"If you do decide to start crypto, it's always helpful to have a network or even a person you trust to bounce ideas off. This kind of 'closer peered investing' could be helpful in keeping you in check."

"The ideal crypto-investor

## TECH-A-BYTE



### Here comes the 'smellicopter'

Researchers at the University of Washington and the University of Maryland have developed an autonomous drone that uses live antennae from a moth to smell and avoid obstacles as it travels in the air. The 'smellicopter' was developed in association with the Air Force Center of Excellence on Nature-Inspired Flight Technologies and Ideas (NIFTI), and uses antennae from the *Manduca sexta* hawkmoth.

Moths can use their antennae to sense chemicals in the environment. Incorporating a live antenna from a moth as a sensor makes this drone tune and search in rescue operations. It also helps navigate an area with unexploded devices.

"By using an actual moth antenna with Smellicopter, we're able to get the best of both worlds: the sensitivity of a biological organism on a robotic platform where we can control its motion," said Melanie Anderson, lead author of the paper titled 'A bio-hybrid odor-guided autonomous palm-sized air vehicle.'



### Water, water, everywhere

Several Apple AirPods Max owners complained that their headsets formed water droplets inside the ear cups.

Mohsen Abbasi, a product designer, explained in a tweet that the huge temperature difference between the ear and the cup may have caused the issue. "The huge metal surface functions as a sink and your ears are source. There is nothing to do. This design requires heating element in the cups. Apple will put it on you for sure," Abbasi tweeted.

AirPods Max is made of metal, which makes it more likely to get cooled and start picking up moisture from warmer air inside. Abbasi suggested that Apple would fix the issue in its next generation AirPods Max by "heating the cups to match the ear temperature".

Compiled by Abhishek Chatterjee

CM YK

# If not WhatsApp, then what?

If you are one of the millions hitting 'Uninstall' on the Facebook-owned messaging app, here are some alternatives, with their privacy policies explained

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN AND DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

It has been a confusing January for WhatsApp. The platform celebrated a milestone of 1.4 billion video and audio calls on New Year's Eve 2020, but the celebrations seemed premature given the global backlash to the platform's updated privacy policy, which features a 'take or leave it' clause – if the user refuses to share data with Facebook, they will have to quit WhatsApp. On January 9, WhatsApp Head Will Cathcart tweeted that this policy is purely for business communication, rather than private. Still, before the new terms of service are set to take effect on February 8, WhatsApp and Messenger users alike are flocking to other apps, both out of fear of misuse of their data, and as a virtual protest against Facebook.

What are people looking for in these alternative apps? Encryption, an important buzzword across communication apps, converts data to an unintelligible form called ciphertext; decrypting the ciphertext converts the data back into its original form, called plaintext. Many of these apps feature AES methods which, according to a National Institute of Standards and Technology report, is the use of "cryptographic keys of 128, 192, and 256 bits to encrypt and decrypt data in blocks of 128 bits."



#### Telegram

Fast approaching 500 million users, Telegram observed a growth of more than 2.2 million users in the last week alone due to the WhatsApp purge. Unlike WhatsApp, Telegram is a cloud-based messenger with seamless sync across several devices at once.

The messaging app comprises two layers of secure encryption. Server-client encryption is used in Cloud Chats (private and group chats), while the platform's Secret Chats use an additional layer of client-client encryption. "All data, regardless of type, is encrypted in the same way – be it text, media or files," says the platform's official website, adding, "Our encryption is based on 256-bit symmetric AES encryption, 2048-bit RSA

encryption, and Diffie-Hellman secure key exchange [a method of securely exchanging cryptographic keys over a public channel]."

#### Signal

Signal's privacy policy is not as descriptive as that of Telegram but they do state they undertake end-to-end encryption, as do most communication apps these days. The chat history for the app is stored on the user's device instead of, as with WhatsApp and Telegram, on an app-specific cloud server. If you are going to use Signal, be vigilant of their third-party sharing policy and which apps you link with this app: "Our third-party Providers send a verification code to your phone number when you register for our services. These providers are

bound by their privacy policies to safeguard that information. If you use other Third-Party Services like YouTube, Spotify, Giphy, etc. in connection with our services, their terms and privacy policies govern your use of those services."

#### Spike

An under-discussed app more favoured in the West, Spike, is becoming a choice alternative here in India. Like most apps, they emphasise, "We store only the minimum data needed to provide you with the fastest experience possible... We do not rent, sell, distribute or monetise your data to anyone. There are no ads on Spike either." However, the personal data they store includes the data shared with the platform when you register for an account including payment information, postal address, date of birth, full name. This platform comes with a variety of payment plans, the basic one being free with a limit of 15,000 messages.

#### Session

Session does not require your name, phone number or email ID. The makers of the app – Oxen, backed by The Loki Foundation, an Australian non-profit tech group – claim that your messaging activities will leave no digital trail. The app creates a Session ID, which you need to share with the person in the contact to start chatting. Private group chats for up to 20 people are

possible. Photos, voice snippets and other files can be shared. Session does not collect any geolocation data, metadata, or any other data about the device or network. It is available for Android phones, iPhones and desktops.

#### Threema

As of January 9, Threema was the top paid app in Play Store's communication category. Available for ₹270, the app allows text and voice messages, voice and video calls, file-sharing and group chats – all encrypted. You can also use the built-in poll feature in group chats. Each Threema user receives a random Threema ID for identification – phone number or email are not required. You can even use the app on desktops and tablets (without SIM cards). The app became popular, especially in Germany, after Edward Snowden, in 2013, released documents on surveillance. There aren't many design themes to choose from; otherwise, the app promises top-notch security and privacy for the price you pay.





**Unusual portraiture** (Clockwise from left) Hair art of Mahatma Gandhi and Marilyn Monroe; (below) Midhun • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Meet Midhun RR, an artist who has been creating portraits out of human hair for the past four years



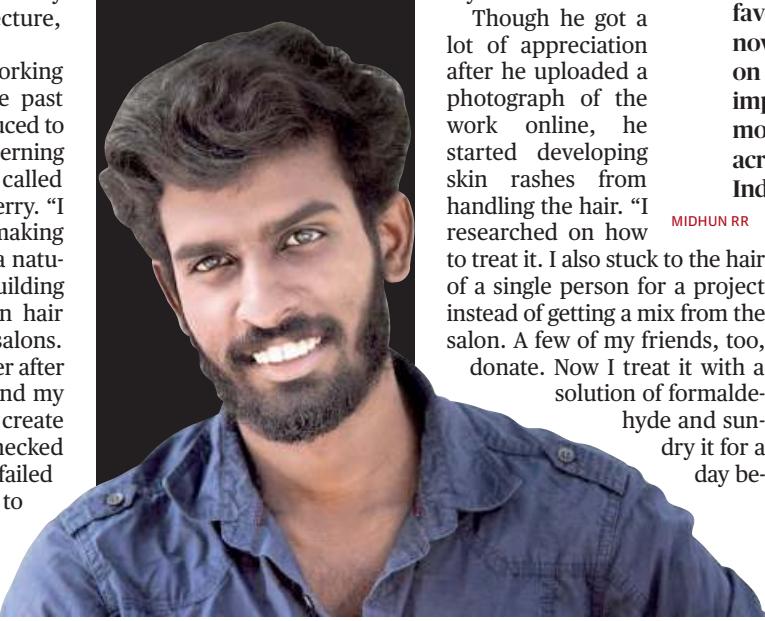
SUSAN JOE PHILIP

Artist Midhun RR was knee deep in a portrait of APJ Abdul Kalam made using human hair, last week. "The preparation time of the hair for a portrait is almost three days. I could finish the setting in two hours," says the 26-year-old who works as an assistant professor at McGan's Ooty School of Architecture, Udhagamandalam.

Midhun has been working with human hair for the past four years. He was introduced to the form while he was interning with an organisation called Sacred Groves in Puducherry. "I undertook a project of making mud walls that required a natural fibre as one of the building materials. I chose human hair collected from local salons. There was a lot of it leftover after completing this project and my friends suggested that I create something out of it. I checked online for references, but failed to find any and decided to try it out myself."

His first work was that of Marilyn Monroe which took him about

## Strands of ART



three hours to finish. "I made a lot of mistakes and learned from them. I outlined the image and cut the hair to desired lengths. I later placed them on the areas necessary. It was tough, as even my breath would send them flying away. Later I started to work alone in a room with my mask on," he says.

Though he got a lot of appreciation after he uploaded a photograph of the work online, he started developing skin rashes from handling the hair. "I researched on how

**C** Hair art remains my favourite. I am now working on a set of 10 important monuments across South India

MIDHUN RR

fore I work on it. This prevents the rashes," he says. After treatment, the hair is glued to the paper. "I either use a needle or a brush to keep the hair at the designated area," he says.

Midhun has now done around 25 artworks made of hair. "One of my most challenging works is of *The Last Supper* that I made for my house. I used my hair and it took me eight hours to complete. Getting the details of each face was a task but I am glad I could do it," he says.

Now he gets requests to do commissioned artworks as well. "Most of them are portraits," he says. Other than hair art, he is also interested in working with oil paint, watercolours, acrylic colours, paper cutting, pencil lead carving and sculpting. "But hair art remains my favourite. I am now working on a set of 10 important monuments across South India. I will be able to hold my first exhibition once it is done," he says.

lockdown and put a spanner in the works of everyone, everywhere.

"The community of musicians kept up a steady pace of work and once they realised the lockdown was going to be a long-term affair, they began putting their work online. However, unless you feel like you're a part of a whole community, an individual might lose interest in what they do," says Arvind.

And so, The Urban Weavers (TUW) as an artistes' collective came into being.

TUW works both ways, with artistes approaching the collective and vice versa.

They not only gives musicians a platform to showcase their music, but also helps with audio and video productions as well as conduct select travel getaways.

TUW can be found on [flow.page/tuw](#) and on their Instagram handle @the\_urban\_weaver.

## Chasing the spotlight

Bengaluru-based artists' collective The Urban Weaver gives budding performers an opportunity to showcase their talents

RUTH DHANARAJ

The term 'kingmaker' might prove too premature, but Arvind R Shenoy and The Urban Weaver certainly help make things happen for creative souls.

"My passion is event management – usually not considered an art, but more of a business," Arvind says. "My goal was to change that, because I felt in that arena, people behind the scenes are far more creative than many realise."

It began when he was a BBA student in Manipal in 2016, and he realised there weren't many avenues for musicians to perform.

In October 2017, he started or-



**Much-needed push** The Urban Weaver's team • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ganising open mic nights every Friday in Manipal.

A moment of clairvoyance in

November 2019 made him feel he had to be prepared to change tack in 2020. Along came the

lockdown and put a spanner in the works of everyone, everywhere.

## PEANUTS



**A page from the past** The fabric and yarn is sourced locally from markets in Udhagamandalam • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## POOCH CAFE



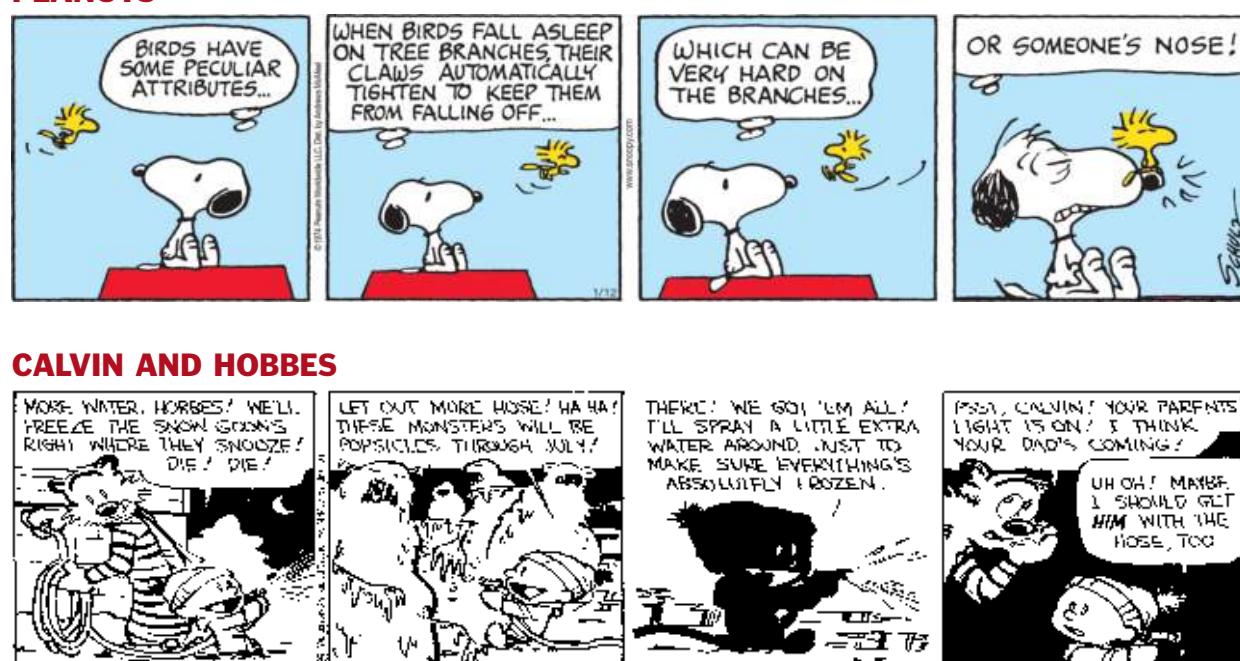
## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



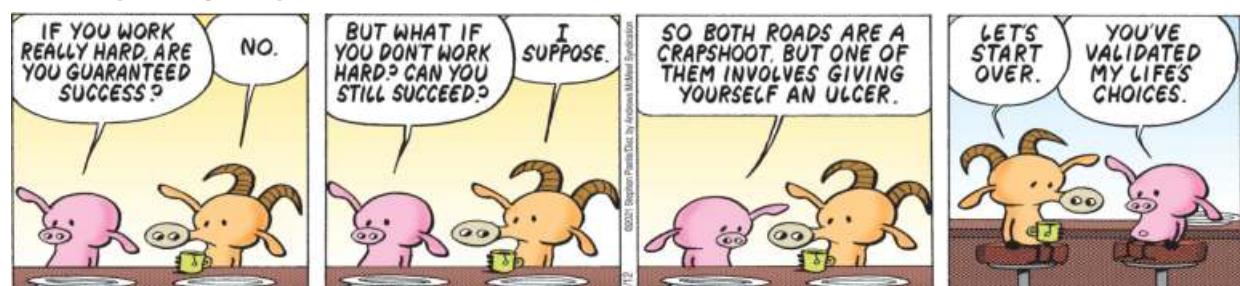
## TIGER



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



ni points out that one recent change is the addition of deep blue to the traditional colour palette.

Empowering the community seemed the only way to sustain their shrinking lifestyle and art, and so Shalini and her team began working with the women. Vasamilli, who has learned a smattering of English and heads the self help group,

A Dravidian ethnic group of the Nilgiris, the Toda people live in small huts made with bamboo and mud called *mundus*; there are currently about 2,000-odd Todas living in the district.

The Toda Collection from Kochi-based Linen Trail showcases the work of Toda women and also celebrates its core value of slow fashion. Shalini Anilkumar, the label's head designer, connected with the reclusive tribe through a social worker, and urged the women to embroider for Linen Trail and earn a steady livelihood.

"The Toda men are mainly into buffalo rearing and eke out a meagre living. The women run the homes and also do traditional embroidery though they do not get regular work," she says, adding that she wanted to highlight intricate Toda embroidery, which is done using wool on cotton textured fabric as a symbol of sustainability. The fabric and the yarn is sourced locally from markets in Udhagamandalam.

**Empowering communities**

The most well-known product of the Todas is the Pukhoor: the red, white and black striped shawl.

Toda life is connected to Nature and their art is steeped in their culture. The sun, moon and trees are worshipped and form common motifs in their embroidery. These are represented in symmetrical and precise geometric patterns.

Colours used symbolise purity, maturity and youth. The art is passed on to children who are taught the techniques almost like mathematics. Shalini

mained true to it. But I also wanted a long-term partnership with them and asked the women if they would embroider other patterns," Shalini adds.

### Fast vs slow fashion

Once the partnership began, they worked right through the lockdown last year.

Anirudh Kollara, Shalini's son and director of Linen Trail, explains how the collection is part of the slow fashion movement. "Fast fashion garments, which we wear less than five times and keep for 35 days, produce over 400% more carbon emissions per item per year than garments worn 50 times and kept for a full year. Linen uses very little water in comparison to cotton, and is a more sustainable fabric. We have designed in a way that each garment can be worn in different ways. Therefore, slow fashion garments have high quality and tend to be pricey. But we have tried to keep them affordable," he says.

The Indo-Western Toda Collection in ecru (cream), white and black comprises smart casuals and formals as well. In keeping with slow fashion, the ensemble is designed such that garments can be paired or worn in different ways to remain in a wardrobe forever. "We stuck to classic muted tones so that it doesn't limit the garment," says Anirudh.

A Toda embroidered cotton-wool shawl is priced at ₹3,000. A Rasamalli ecru jacket costs ₹6,850. The money from the work sustains the women; an extra 5% of the proceeds from sales go towards empowering the community. "They use it especially to hold weddings," says Anirudh.

*The Toda Collection is retailed online at [linentrail.com](#)*



**A page from the past** The fabric and yarn is sourced locally from markets in Udhagamandalam • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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# Democrats introduce article of impeachment against Trump

Republicans blocked a measure urging Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

Democrats in the House of Republicans introduced an article of impeachment against U.S. President Donald Trump – the “incitement of insurrection” for his role in the attack on the Capitol last Wednesday. The House could vote on this charge on Wednesday.

House Republicans blocked a measure on asking Vice-President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th amendment, a statute by which the President can be removed on grounds of incapacity. The measure will go to the full House floor for a vote.

On Sunday evening, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi articulated a plan to go ahead with the impeachment of Mr. Trump if Vice-President Mike Pence did not invoke the 25th Amendment.



First step: House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer speaking to reporters at the U.S. Capitol on Monday. •AP

## Kim elected general secretary of ruling party

REUTERS  
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has been elected general secretary of the ruling Workers' Party, state media KCNA said on Monday, taking over the title from his late father in a largely symbolic move seen aimed at further cementing his power.

The election took place on Sunday during the party's ongoing multi-year Congress, designed for Mr. Kim to map out blueprints for his diplomatic, military and

economic policy over the next five years and make key personnel decisions.

The Congress "fully approved" a proposal for promoting Mr. Kim to general secretary of the party, KCNA said, calling the position "head of the revolution and centre of guidance and unity."

In 2012, the party named Kim Jong-il as the "eternal general secretary".

The party also held elections for its Central Committee, a key governing body that includes the politburo.

## Iran warns against action over seized South Korean vessel

U.S., France urged the Islamic Republic to release the ship

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iran warned on Monday its seizure of a South Korean tanker in the Gulf must not be politicised, after the U.S. and France urged the Islamic Republic to release the ship.

"We have repeatedly told... the intervening parties, whether they are the United States or France, that the case does not concern

them at all and that they will not help to solve a technical problem if they politicise it," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized the Hankuk Chemi and arrested its multinational crew of 20

near the strategic Strait of Hormuz one week ago.

The move came as Tehran urged Seoul to release billions of dollars of Iranian as-

## Russian link to hacking in United States'

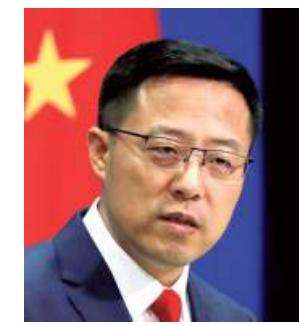
REUTERS  
LONDON

The group behind a global cyber-espionage campaign discovered last month deployed malicious computer code with links to spying tools previously used by suspected Russian hackers, researchers said on Monday.

Investigators at Moscow-based cybersecurity firm Kaspersky said the "backdoor" used to compromise up to 18,000 customers of SolarWinds resembled malware tied to the hacking group "Turla", which Estonian authorities have said operates on behalf of Russia's FSB security service.

The findings are the first publicly-available evidence to support assertions by the United States that Russia orchestrated the hack, which compromised a raft of sensitive federal agencies.

Moscow has repeatedly denied the allegations.



Zhao Lijian

already become politicised. The WHO has been criticised, particularly by the United States, for its response to the pandemic and was described by President Donald Trump as being "China-centric" and "a puppet of China".

China's authorities, for their part, have suggested they will control how much access international scientists will have and that its scientists will have a say in the outcomes.

In February and July last year, despite the arduous task of prevention and control, China invited WHO experts twice," he said. "Chinese experts and WHO and international experts also held frequent interactions through video-conference and seminars, sharing the outcomes China has achieved and the global progress in origin-tracing in a candid and science-based manner. The two sides also jointly formulated the China part of a global plan for scientific cooperation on origin-tracing.

The WHO Director-General welcomed the announcement on Twitter: "We look forward to working closely with our [Chinese] counterparts on this critical mission to identify the virus source and its route of introduction to the human population."

China's Foreign Ministry said during the visit, "The international experts will hold exchanges with Chinese scientists and medical experts over scientific cooperation in origin-tracing."

China's decision to not permit the trip last week appeared to come at the last minute and catch the WHO by surprise, with some of the experts already having left home and in transit when told the visit would not take place.

Investigations into the origins of the coronavirus have

rector of the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, said it would be "highly speculative" for WHO "to say the disease did not emerge in China". "It is clear from a public health perspective that you start your investigations where the human cases first emerged," he said.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Monday China had "maintained close communication and cooperation with WHO on global origin-tracing in an open, transparent and responsible manner".

"In February and July last year, despite the arduous task of prevention and control, China invited WHO experts twice," he said. "Chinese experts and WHO and international experts also held frequent interactions through video-conference and seminars, sharing the outcomes China has achieved and the global progress in origin-tracing in a candid and science-based manner. The two sides also jointly formulated the China part of a global plan for scientific cooperation on origin-tracing.

The two sides have reached a basic consensus on origin-tracing, which is a scientific issue that should be jointly studied by scientists all over the world," said Mr. Zhao.

"As new developments emerge, our knowledge of the virus deepens and more early cases are found, it is highly likely that origin-tracing will involve many countries and localities, and WHO will need to pay similar visits to other countries and regions as the need arises."

## Memorial on campus will be built again: Jaffna University V-C

S. Srisatkunarajah urges students to end their hunger strike

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Days after the Jaffna University administration bulldozed a structure erected in memory of war victims, setting off students protests, the university's Vice-Chancellor on Monday promised to "rebuild" the memorial on campus.

Urging a group of students to end their hunger strike, V-C S. Srisatkunarajah laid a "foundation stone" for the said new structure. "The development [of the destruction on Friday night] has caused a lot of concern within the country and outside too. People in the U.K. are talking about it. Tamil Nadu is boiling. Authorities felt the situation had to be diffused," he told *The Hindu* on Monday, when asked what prompted his shift.

Earlier, the V-C had said he had instructed the un-

iversity's administrative staff to remove the memorial – a sculpture of hands crying out for help – erected two years ago to commemorate the victims of Sri Lanka's civil war. The decision, he said, followed "instructions" from authorities, including Defence, Intelligence, Education Ministry officials, on grounds that it was an "unauthorised structure". The University Grants Commission said the memorial at the Jaffna University threatened "north-south unity".

**Demolition slammed**  
The removal of the structure, dedicated to victims of the final phase of the civil war, triggered spontaneous students protests, drawing national and international attention. Many, including other national student bodies, slammed the move, that they said curbed Tamils' right to remember their loved ones.

"After this became a big issue, I got messages from authorities, asking me to take steps," Prof. Srisatkunrajan said.

Asked if the structure, termed "unauthorised", had been authorised now, he said it had been cleared "in principle". "We have to later work out the design and form it will take. It will be something that marks peace, not war."

The Jaffna-based *Uthayan* newspaper reported that the Pradesha Sabha, or local administrative body in Nallur, Jaffna on Monday granted permission to erect a memorial on campus.

Meanwhile, businesses and shops across the north and east observed a hartal on Monday, protesting the demolition, local media reported.

The pontiff said he was

## Pope says women can read at Mass, but still can't be priests

They can also serve on the altar as eucharistic ministers

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ROME

Pope Francis changed church law on Monday to explicitly allow women to do more things during Mass, while continuing to affirm that they cannot be priests.

The Pope amended the law to formalise and institutionalise what is common practice in many parts of the world: that women can read the Gospel and serve on the altar as eucharistic ministers.

Previously, such roles were officially reserved to men even though exceptions were made.

The pontiff said he was



Pope Francis

making the change to increase recognition of the "precious contribution" women make in the church, while emphasising that all baptised Catholics have a

role to play in the church's mission.

But he also noted that doing so further makes a distinction between "ordained" ministries such as the priesthood and diaconate, and ministries open to qualified laity. The Vatican reserves the priesthood for men.

The change comes as Pope Francis remains under pressure to allow women to be deacons – ministers who perform many of the same functions as priests, such as presiding at weddings, baptisms and funerals. Currently, the ministry is reserved for men.

## New virus variant found in arrivals from Brazil: Japan

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TOKYO

The Japanese Health Ministry has found a coronavirus variant in people arriving from Brazil that's different from the ones in Britain and South Africa.

The variant was found in

airport tests on a man in his 40s, a woman in her 30s and two teens, the Ministry said on Sunday.

Japan was working with other nations, the WHO and other medical experts to analyse the new version of the virus.

### GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No.24/TD/EDP/2021 Dated the 12-01-2021  
Transport Department, Puducherry invites e-TENDER towards Implementation of Development, Customization, Deployment and Management of vehicle tracking platform for Safety & Enforcement as per AIS140 Specifications, in UT of Puducherry Under Nirbhaya Framework. The Tender Documents can be downloaded from the website <https://pudutenders.gov.in>

Closing Date : 15/02/2021 at 3.00 P.M

The bidder should submit their Tender online only at <https://pudutenders.gov.in> and the bidder should possess necessary digital signature for participation online.

TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER

PUDUCHERRY 605 004, Phone No. 0413-2280130/2280170  
No.363/DIP/AD(PRESS)/2020-21

Advt. No. 03/2021  
**Government of India  
Public Enterprises Selection Board  
invites applications for the post of  
Director (Technical)  
in  
Western Coalfields Ltd**  
Last date of receipt of applications in  
PESB is by 15.00 hours  
on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2021.  
For details login to website  
<http://www.pesb.gov.in>

STOP CORONA  
WASH YOUR HAND, WEAR MASK & MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE

DELHI JAL BOARD: DELHI SARKAR  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (T)  
VARUNALAYA PHASE-II, KAROL BAGH NEW DELHI-110005

Applications were invited from the eligible officers in leading newspaper on 08th January, 2021 for filling up the post of Member (Drainage) in Delhi Jal Board on deputation basis initially for a period of one year in the Pay Band of Rs 37,400-67,000 with a grade pay of Rs. 10,000/- (Pre-revised) Level-14 under 7th Central Pay Commission, within 45 days from the date of this advertisement to the Member (Administration), Delhi Jal Board. Due to some administrative reasons, the advertisement published in leading newspapers on 08th January, 2021 may be treated as withdrawn/cancelled with immediate effect.

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)

Advt. No. J.S.V. 306(2020-21)

(VILAS RAMPAL)

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (T)

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (CIVIL), IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR.  
EOI Notice No. EST-07/2020-21/403 Dt. : 07.01.2021

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) invites Expression of Interest in shape of Request for Quotation (RFQ) from renowned and experienced project construction Agencies / Firms / Entities for the following work.

SL. No.	Name of the work	Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Period of Completion	Value of Work	Availability & Submission of EOI	
						From	To
1.	i) Construction of Sports facilities in Kalings Stadium Bhubaneswar and ii) Construction of New International Hockey Stadium at Rourkela for Hockey World Cup, 2023	CGM(Civil), IDCO, IDCO Tower, Bhubaneswar	Bid ID-No. E-07/200-21	12 Months	Rs.300,00 Crore	17.00 Hours of 12.01.2021	15.00 Hours of 28.01.2021

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in), Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

CAD-1056 Chief General Manager (Civil), IDCO, Bhubaneswar, OPR-14003/11/0098/2021

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C)  
IDCO, IDCO TOWERS, JANPATH, BHUBANESWAR - 751022

Dated : 06.01.2021

Tender Call Notice No. IDCO/H.O./P&C/EST-E-1626/01/2020 19

NOTICE INVITING THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL OF GOVT. OF ODISHA

- Name of the Work : Providing out sourced services of semi-skilled & un-skilled workers for Maintenance of IDCO Tower & other Infrastructures developed by IDCO.
- Estimated Cost : Rs.104.44 Lakh (Approx.)
- Period of Completion : 03 (Three) years.
- Other details

Procurement Officer Bid/Tender reference No. P.C/EST-E-56/2020-21

15.01.2021 at 17.00 Hrs.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-14003/11/0010/2021

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal, [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in) and Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can only be seen in the e-Procurement portal [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in) and [www.idcoin.org](http://www.idcoin.org).

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-14003/11/0010/2021

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## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	49269	+1.00
US Dollar	73.40	-0.21
Gold	48866	+0.17
Brent oil	55.17	-0.19

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	508.35	-8.65
Asian Paints	2849.30	+4.60
Axis Bank	666.95	-5.75
Bajaj Auto	3617.35	+88.20
Bajaj Finserv	8986.10	-185.50
Bajaj Finance	4984.25	-97.75
Bharti Airtel	547.15	+6.90
BPCL	401.75	+1.60
Britannia Ind	3612.85	+37.60
Cipla	856.85	+18.15
Coal India	141.70	+2.00
Divis Lab	3822.40	-36.75
Dr Reddys Lab	5416.80	+78.55
Eicher Motors	2777.15	+16.30
GAIL (India)	135.70	+2.95
Grasim Ind	1004.30	+0.00
HCL Tech	1055.10	+60.45
HDPC	2751.20	+93.70
HFDC Bank	1451.45	+19.80
HDFC Life	725.10	+8.10
Hero MotoCorp	3197.70	+36.60
Hindalco	264.70	-3.50
Hind Unilever	2429.10	+37.90
ICICI Bank	544.70	+2.65
IndusInd Bank	929.10	-10.70
Infosys	1376.20	+64.10
Indian Oil Corp	96.00	-0.15
ITC	202.50	+1.00
JSW Steel	399.05	-3.80
Kotak Bank	1938.15	-32.55
L&T	1350.00	+23.40
M&M	789.10	+18.60
Maruti Suzuki	8232.75	+217.85
Nestle India Ltd.	18391.45	+85.20
NTPC	99.00	-1.15
ONGC	102.55	+1.90
PowerGrid Corp	203.55	+0.00
Reliance Ind	1897.25	-36.45
SBI Life	936.25	+0.75
State Bank	282.50	-3.50
Shree Cement	25569.30	+244.10
Sun Pharma	621.00	+0.20
Tata Motors	220.65	+22.50
Tata Steel	695.65	+17.50
TCS	3176.45	+55.55
Tech Mahindra	1077.60	+26.50
Titan	1563.90	+15.30
UltraTech Cement	5623.70	+31.95
UPL	497.45	-6.20
Wipro	464.80	+16.60

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.18	73.50
Euro	89.00	89.39
British Pound	98.75	99.19
Japanese Yen (100)	70.29	70.60
Chinese Yuan	11.30	11.35
Swiss Franc	82.24	82.60
Singapore Dollar	55.04	55.29
Canadian Dollar	57.30	57.56
Malaysian Ringgit	18.04	18.15

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## 'BSNL, MTNL turned EBITDA positive in H1'

NEW DELHI State-owned telecom companies BSNL and MTNL turned EBITDA positive in the first half of financial year 2020-21, DoT said on Monday. "The salary expenditure in BSNL and MTNL (Mahenagar Telephone Nigam Ltd.) has reduced by about 50% (about ₹600 crore per month) and 75% [about ₹140 crore per month], respectively," the telecom department said. PTI

## 'Warehousing space demand to grow in 2021'

BENGALURU Industrial and warehousing space absorption in India is expected to grow by 83% to 47.7 million sq.ft. in 2021, said international property consulting firm, Savills India. The overall industrial and warehousing space stock is also expected to increase by 21% to 278 million sq. ft. in 2021 as compared with 230 million sq. ft. last year, it said. Rental values remained stable last year across major cities, Savills said.

## GST shortfall: FinMin releases ₹6,000 crore

NEW DELHI The Finance Ministry on Monday released the 11th instalment of ₹6,000 crore to states and UTs to meet the GST compensation shortfall. Out of this, ₹5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and ₹483.40 crore to the three Union Territories with legislative assembly (Delhi, J&K and Puducherry), who are members of the GST Council. PTI

## GDP to expand by 10.1% in FY22: ICRA

MUMBAI India's GDP is expected to witness a record a double-digit expansion of 10.1% in FY22 but the value of the GDP will only mildly surpass the level that had been recorded in FY20, ICRA said in a report. "The seemingly sharp expansion will be led by the continued normalisation in economic activities as the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines gathers traction, as well as the low base," Aditi Nayar, principal economist, ICRA Ltd., said.

# 'Stretched valuations threaten stability'

RBI's Das warns disconnect between markets and real economy pose risks to the financial system

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

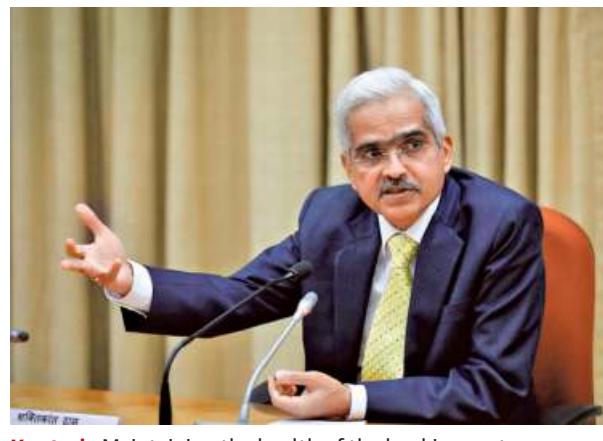
MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has flagged the growing disconnect between exuberant equity markets and real economic activity and warned that the 'stretched valuations of financial assets' threaten overall financial stability.

"The disconnect between certain segments of financial markets and the real economy has been accentuating in recent times, both globally and in India," Mr. Das wrote in his foreword to the RBI's biannual Financial Stability Report (FSR), which was released on Monday.

"Stretched valuations of financial assets pose risks to financial stability," he cautioned.

Pointing to the intercon-



Key task: Maintaining the health of the banking sector remains a policy priority, says Mr. Das. ■ REUTERS

nected nature of the financial system, the RBI Governor urged banks and financial intermediaries to be cognisant of the risk. India's stock markets have been on a tear since plunging to their lowest levels in

more than three years in March in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak and ensuing lockdowns.

As of Monday's close, the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex had appreciated almost 90% from its March 23, 2020, low.

The pandemic could also trigger balance sheet impairments and capital shortfalls, especially as regulatory reliefs are rolled back, Mr. Das cautioned.

## 'Obscure true picture'

"Congenial liquidity and financing conditions have shored up the financial parameters of banks, but it is recognised that the available accounting numbers obscure a true recognition of stress," Mr. Das wrote.

As per the FSR, the gross non-performing assets (GNPA) and net NPA (NNPA) ratios of banks fell to 7.5% and 2.1%, respectively, by September 2020. But the RBI warned that the withdrawal of pandemic-triggered reliefs could see a jump in bad loans at lenders.

"The improvements were

aided significantly by regulatory dispensations extended in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Macro-stress tests for credit risk show that SCBs' GNPA ratio may increase from 7.5% in September 2020 to 13.5% by September 2021 under the baseline scenario," the RBI observed.

## 'Ratio may escalate'

"If the macroeconomic environment deteriorates, the ratio may escalate to 14.8% under the severe stress scenario. These projections are indicative of the possible economic impairment latent in banks' portfolios," it said.

"Consequently, maintaining the health of the banking sector remains a policy priority and preservation of the stability of the financial system is an overarching goal," Mr. Das said.

## Next round of commercial coal mining auction 'soon'

Joshi unveils single window clearance

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said the next tranche of commercial mines auction will be unveiled this month and stressed that further rounds would continue thereafter.

Speaking at the agreement signing ceremony for commercial coal mining and unveiling of a single-window clearance system, he said commercial coal mining had been made a part of the system now. "The next tranche of commercial mining auction would be launched in January 2021, and further tranches will continue thereafter," the Minister said.

The Coal Minister said the single-window clea-



Pralhad Joshi

rance portal is in the spirit of minimum government and maximum governance. It would be a milestone for ease of doing business in the country's coal sector.

Presently, about 19 major approval or clearances are required before starting a coal mine in the country.

## Steep steel prices hurt several sectors as China gorges on ore

Automakers to construction industry face rising input costs

## K. BHARAT KUMAR

With several automakers recently announcing price increases to offset input costs, steel prices have come under the spotlight.

Steelmakers in turn have been impacted by surging global prices of iron ore, the main raw material, as demand from China has soared. And with Indian iron ore production having seen a dip in recent months, steel producers have been caught in a bind.

"China's focussed fiscal stimulus for the construction sector has led to a sustained and strong uptick in steel demand there," said Arnab Hazra, deputy secretary-general, Indian Steel Association (ISA).

"Steel demand in China is expected to cross the 1 billion [tonnes] mark for the first time [in 2020]."

Market intelligence firm SteelMint said on Friday that Indian iron ore exports had doubled to 40.7 million tonnes (mt) in 2020, from the previous year's 19.1 mt. Of this, China alone accounted for 38.1 mt versus the 16.6 mt that it imported from India in 2019. Iron ore exports are attractive for Indian miners because global prices are now at about \$170 a tonne. "Earlier, iron ore touching \$100 was news. \$165-170 is a once-in-a-lifetime price," said a steel industry official, requesting anonymity.

The other factor influencing iron ore supply and prices in India is a decline in production, especially at mines in Odisha.

The ISA wrote to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) last month flagged a dip in domestic iron ore production as a key factor that had left its members with little option but to raise steel prices. Iron ore output fell 30% from the year-earlier period to 92.1 mt in April-October 2020, it pointed out.



The ISA also urged a temporary ban on iron ore exports and cited frequent increases in domestic iron ore prices by state-run NMDC as particularly impacting smaller steel producers - which account for about 40% of India's 140 mt steel capacity.

## 'Obfuscating issue'

In a separate letter to the PMO, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) contended that the ISA was 'obfuscating the issue' and defended the iron ore sector's actions. Local steel prices had risen 'an unprecedented' six times in November and December, FIMI said, arguing that it wasn't necessary for the steel industry to raise local prices in line with international rates.

FIMI also said that of the 33.4 mt of iron ore exported between April and October, 22 mt were of a grade that the local steel industry did not require as input material.

A senior executive in a major steelmaker, speaking on condition of anonymity, pointed out that smaller steel players had not yet recovered from COVID-19 related lockdowns, either due to severe losses, poor working capital availability or lack of local iron ore availability. This had led to a shortage of construction steel, which is made mostly by secondary steel players.

By mid-December, long product prices had risen 15% over June, Motilal Oswal Securities observed in a recent report. And ratings agency ICRA noted last week that realty developers may suffer a 5-6% hit on margins given rising steel prices.

But prices may cool soon as China's demand softens. "We anticipate that by the middle of 2021" iron ore and steel prices will ease, the industry official said.

## Amazon again urges SEBI to suspend Future-RIL deal review

E-com firm also files appeal in HC on tribunal proceedings

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Amazon has written to SEBI again, apprising the regulator of the formation of the arbitration tribunal at SIAC while urging it to suspend the review of the ₹24,713-crore Future-RIL deal.

It has also filed an appeal with the division bench of the Delhi High Court against the December 21 order of the single-member bench, according to sources. The single-member bench of the Delhi HC had rejected Future Group's plea to restrain Amazon from writing to regulatory authorities about the SIAC's (Singapore International Arbitration Centre) constituted the arbitral tribunal in the arbitration pro-



ceedings initiated by Amazon against inter alia FRL, Mr. Kishore Biyani and Mr. Rakesh Biyani."

Amazon had dragged Future Group to arbitration after an indebted Kishore Biyani group signed a pact to sell retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing units to Mukesh Ambani's Reliance last year in a ₹24,713-crore deal.

Amazon's argument is Future violated the contract by entering into the deal with rival Reliance. In 2019, Amazon had agreed to purchase 49% stake in Future's unlisted firm - Future Coupons Ltd. - with the right to buy into F

# Down for the count, India battles back brilliantly to save SCG Test

Pujara and Pant's grit to the fore; Vihari and Ashwin buckle down to fend off Aussie attack

## INDIA IN AUS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SYDNEY  
A courageous and injury-wracked India pulled off a remarkable draw in a tense third Test against Australia on Monday, defying the hosts' much-vaunted bowling attack to take the series into a decider.

India resumed day five at 98 for two, needing a further 309 runs after being set a huge 407 to win.

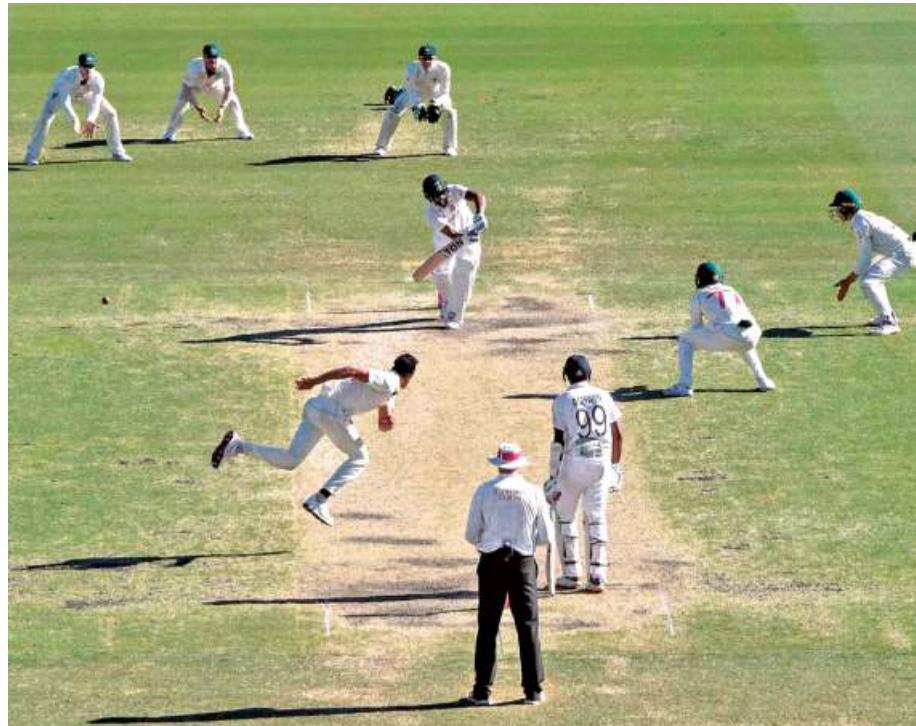
At first, India had a massive go at it, but later chose to bravely cling on for the draw with Hanuma Vihari, nursing a hamstring injury, surviving 161 balls for just 23 runs and R. Ashwin, who needed treatment on his ribs, making 39.

The 256 balls they faced in their unbeaten partnership of 62 was the most by an India sixth-wicket pair on Australian soil, helping steer India to 334 for five at the close, 73 runs adrift.

### Paine's slips

Their resistance was built on the back of an explosive 97 from Rishabh Pant and a typically gritty 77 from Cheteshwar Pujara, but also helped by wicketkeeper Tim Paine dropping three catches.

When Nathan Lyon accounted for skipper Ajinkya Rahane without adding to his overnight four in Monday's



**Unflappable:** The Aussies threw everything at them, but Vihari and Ashwin stood firm. ■ AFP

second over the end appeared nigh.

But Pant surprisingly came in at number five ahead of Vihari and produced some fireworks. He came to the wicket with no strapping on his hurt elbow and, after settling in and surviving a missed catch by Paine on three, began to hit out, smacking Nathan Lyon for a four and a six off consecutive balls.

He then clobbered two more sixes in a row off Lyon

before bringing up his third Test 50 off just 64 balls. Paine dropped him again on 56, both times off Lyon. The scoreboard kept ticking over after lunch and a third Test century looked imminent only for the 23-year-old to throw his bat one time too many, caught by Pat Cummins off Lyon.

His wicket ended a 148-run

partnership with Pujara, who resumed the day on nine and slowly reached a second consecutive 50. In the

process he brought up 6,000 career runs, the 11th Indian to achieve the feat, before being bowled by Josh Hazlewood. That left Vihari and Ashwin to pull off an unlikely draw, with the pair so exhausted that they gave up running between the wickets at the end.

### Jadeja out of fourth Test

Ravindra Jadeja is set to be operated on his injured left thumb in Sydney on Tuesday, ruling him out of the

## SCOREBOARD

### AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

338.  
**INDIA – 1ST INNINGS**

244.  
**AUSTRALIA – 2ND INNINGS**

312 for six decl.  
**INDIA – 2ND INNINGS**

(Target: 407)

Rohit Sharma c Starc b Cummins 52 (98b, 5x4, 1x6), Shubman Gill c Paine b Hazlewood 31 (64b, 4x4), Cheteshwar Pujara b Hazlewood 77 (205b, 12x4), Ajinkya Rahane c Wade b Lyon 4 (78b), Rishabh Pant c Cummins b Lyon 97 (178b, 12x4, 3x6); Hanuma Vihari (not out) 23 (161b, 4x4), R. Ashwin (not out) 39 (128b, 7x4); Extras (lb-3, w-2, nb-6): 11; Total (for five wkt. in 131 overs): 334.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-71 (Gill, 22.1 overs), 2-92 (Rohit, 30.2), 3-102 (Rahane, 35.4), 4-250 (Pant, 79.1), 5-272 (Pujara, 88.2).

### AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 22-6-66-0, Hazlewood 26-12-39-2, Cummins 26-6-72-1, Lyon 46-17-114-2, Green 7-0-31-0, Labuschagne 4-2-9-0.

**Man-of-the-Match:** Steve Smith.

*Match drawn, four-Test series level 1-1.*

**Fourth and final Test:** January 15-19, Brisbane.

fourth Test against Australia at Brisbane and also making him doubtful for India's Test series at home against England. His recovery is likely to take at least four weeks.

# A spellbinding draw for the ages

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR

When Monday dawned, India was supposed to suffer the blues at the Sydney Cricket Ground. A dominant host, a tough second innings, a dressing room groaning with injured men and a tense fifth day of a third Test against Australia were all intimidating factors. A lesser team would have wilted.

But glorious Monday showed why Tests still matter in this age of emoticons and instant soup. Ajinkya Rahane's men had the audacity to even seemingly chase an improbable triumph despite the skipper falling prey to Nathan Lyon in the day's second over.

At 102 for three and with injured personnel including Ravindra Jadeja watching from the change-room, a truncated middle-order and a tail too weak to wag, India was at the crossroads.

Yet, Rishabh Pant had other ideas that hinged on an audacious jail-break, which brought to mind the iconic lines from the movie *Shawshank Redemption*: "Hope is a good thing, may be the best of things, and no good thing ever dies."

The southpaw promptly tore into the Aussie bowlers. It was a counter-attack breathless in its execution and expansive in its imagination.



**On the attack:** Pant treated Lyon with disdain. ■ AFP

Ashwin, struggling with a sore back, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Lyon ran into their next set of immovable objects.

Vihari and Ashwin's unbeaten knocks - 23 and 39 respectively - minuscule in number but gigantic in terms of the heart displayed, will endure long in the public imagination.

A fourth-innings target of 407 was always difficult but through Pant, Pujara, Vihari and Ashwin, India showed that it can step up and finished with 334 for five.

As far as stalemates go, this draw will be remembered for the ages. The series is level at 1-1 and Brisbane awaits with hopefully another round of incandescent thrills.

## Smith comes under fire

ANI  
SYDNEY

Steve Smith came under criticism from former cricketers after he was seen scuffing up the area around the batting crease on day five of the third Test at the SCG.

During the first session, the stump cams recorded members of the Australian side coming to the crease. Smith appeared to be using his feet to scuff the marks left by wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant. It then forced the batsmen to take his guard all over again, reported Fox Sports.

Sharing the video of the incident, former India batsman Virender Sehwag wrote: "Tried all tricks, including Steve Smith trying to remove Pant's batting guard marks from the crease."

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan tweeted his disappointment. "This is very, very poor from Steve Smith!"

## Kudos to the redoubtable duo: Rahane

Lavishes praise on Vihari and Ashwin who soldiered on despite injury



**Doughty warrior:** Even an injury that needed attention couldn't deter Vihari during his long stay. ■ GETTY IMAGES

**AMOL KARHADKAR**

**T**hey overcame injuries. They saw off a barrage of short-pitched stuff from the world's best pace unit. They wore down a quality spinner on a Day 5 pitch. They even conversed in Tamil.

But, most importantly, Hanuma Vihari and R. Ashwin's 259-ball blockathon ensured that the excellent work by Cheteshwar Pujara and Rishabh Pant in the first half of the last day's play didn't go waste.

No wonder then that India captain Ajinkya Rahane had a special word of praise for Ashwin and Vihari after the match.

"I think everyone chipped in for the team's cause but credit to those two guys who dug in and batted almost two-and-a-half hours," he said.

**Pep talk in Tamil**  
While overnight back pain didn't deter Ashwin, Vihari hurt his hamstring early on in his innings and was unable to even jog for singles.

Still, the duo carried on, with Ashwin playing the senior's role to perfection, egging on Vihari - at times in Tamil - with the Andhra batsman being a regular in

the TNCA league.

While Rahane stressed that the dressing room was "sure about Ashwin's ability as a batsman", he reserved special praise for Vihari.

Not only did he carry on despite the injury, Vihari came in to bat on Monday on the back of a woeful run - with the bat and in the field - in the series so far.

"We saw a special knock today. His knock was more special than a hundred."

"The way he batted after getting injured, to show that motivation, that hunger, to hang in there for your team was really good and that's what we want from each and every individual," Rahane said.

Had it not been for Pant's onslaught and Pujara's patience earlier in the day, the lower-order would have had to dig much deeper. While Pujara was his typical self, Pant grabbed his promotion to No. 5 with a blistering innings.

"Going out there at No. 5 - the captain or the team management can make strategies - but in the end it's up to the individual to actually go out there and deliver. Rishabh did that for us," Rahane said.

"It is a horrible feeling knowing that our fast bowlers and our spinner bowled their hearts out and gave everything to the team. I certainly feel I let them down," he added.

Paine also praised Rishabh Pant's innings but said he was not worried at any stage that Australia was in

## I let the team down, says 'butter-fingered' Paine

### Grinding it out

Most overs batted by India to save a Test

Overs	Target	Against	Year	Venue
150.5	<b>438</b>	England	1979	The Oval
136	<b>431</b>	West Indies	1948	Kolkata
132	<b>399</b>	West Indies	1958	Mumbai
131	<b>390</b>	Pakistan	1979	Delhi
131	<b>407</b>	Australia	2021	Sydney
107	<b>361</b>	West Indies	1949	Mumbai

S. DIPAK RAGAV

danger of losing the game.

"I thought throughout his whole innings we were creating chances to get him out; we just had to hold one. He played an amazing innings and some superb shots. We know that he has got that in him and is a huge talent. But we also know he gives you chances," he said.

"I am bitterly disappointed. I pride myself on my keeping and yeah, I haven't had too many worse days than that," said Paine.

"It is a horrible feeling knowing that our fast bowlers and our spinner bowled their hearts out and gave everything to the team. I certainly feel I let them down," he added.

Paine also praised Rishabh Pant's innings but said he was not worried at any stage that Australia was in

## Well done, Team India

Really proud of Team India. Special mention to Pant, Pujara, Ashwin and Vihari for the roles they played. Any guesses in which dressing room the morale will be high?

SACHIN TENDULKAR

What a remarkable performance by Team India. Once again, a great show of resilience under grave provocation, spite of injuries and several key players missing. Bravo!

V.V. LAXMAN

Hope all of us realise the importance of Pujara, Pant and Ashwin in cricket teams.

SOURAV GANGULY

The man went to bed last night with a terrible back tweak and in unbelievable pain. He could not stand straight when he woke up this morning. Could not bend down to tie his shoe laces. I am amazed at what Ashwin pulled off today.

PRITHVI ASHWIN

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13142

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

P	P	B	C	C	L	P

<tbl\_r cells="7

## TV PICKS

**Thailand Open badminton:** Star Sports 2 (HD), 7.30 a.m.  
**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), Noon & 7 p.m.  
**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m. & 1.45 a.m. (Wed.); SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 1.45 a.m. (Wed.)

## IN BRIEF



## English triumphs in playoff against Niemann

Harris English sank a six-foot birdie putt on Sunday's first playoff hole to defeat Chile's Joaquin Niemann and win the US PGA Tournament of Champions, snapping an eight-year title drought. The 31-year-old American's third career PGA Tour title will take him to World No. 17. English fired a four-under 69 on the final day to tie Niemann on 25-under 267. Third-ranked Justin Thomas, the 2020 winner, was third on 268. AFP



Lopetegui extends stay at Sevilla  
MADRID  
Sevilla coach Julen Lopetegui has extended his contract until 2024, the club announced on Sunday. Lopetegui took over in 2019 and oversaw Sevilla qualifying for the Champions League and winning the Europa League in his first season in charge. The club currently sits sixth in La Liga. Lopetegui's impressive first year came after a nightmare 2018, when he was sacked as coach of both Spain and Real Madrid within five months. AFP

## + Lakers send Rockets crashing

## NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LOS ANGELES  
Anthony Davis scored a game-high 27 points as Los Angeles Lakers crushed Houston Rockets 120-102 in Texas.

Lakers are now a perfect 5-0 on the road to start the season.

Elsewhere, Kawhi Leonard scored a team high 35 points and surpassed 10,000 career points as Los Angeles Clippers rallied to edge Chicago Bulls 130-127.

**The results:** Minnesota Timberwolves bt San Antonio Spurs 96-88; Brooklyn Nets lost to Oklahoma City 129-116; New York Knicks lost to Denver Nuggets 114-89; Houston Rockets lost to LA Lakers 120-102; Golden State Warriors bt Toronto Raptors 106-105; Detroit Pistons lost to Utah Jazz 96-86; LA Clippers bt Chicago Bulls 130-127.

**Siddarth bats well**  
Siddarth Gandhi scored a half-century as Cricfine Wonders beat Kays Delhi by 48 runs in the OneX T20 tournament.

## Mumbai comes a cropper against Delhi

Rana and Himmat take the attack to the cleaners; Dube's blitz goes in vain

## MUSHTAQ ALI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Arch-rivalry between the opponents besides the presence of some of the prolific stars in domestic arena was a recipe tailor-made for the opening Group E tie of the Syed Mushtaq Ali between Mumbai and Delhi to be a humdinger.

However, it turned out to be a lop-sided affair in favour of Delhi at the Wankhede Stadium here on Monday. An all-round performance by Shikhar Dhawan's boys took Delhi to a facile, 76-run win.

**One-way traffic**  
Ever since opener Hiten Dalal went after Dhawal Kulkarni and Tushar Deshpande in the first two overs of the match until last-man Kruthik Hanagavadi perished to veteran Ishant Sharma, it was a one-way traffic.

Nitish Rana's (74, 37b, 7x4, 5x6) power-packed innings, and his 122-run stand with Himmat Singh (53, 32b, 3x4, 4x6) meant Delhi put on a gargantuan 206 for four after being inserted in to bat.

A star-studded Mumbai batting line-up – with top six having been a part of IPL 2020 – couldn't withstand the pressure applied by Delhi pacers to fold up for a meagre 130 with 11 balls remaining.

Had it not been for Shrivam Dube's big-hitting (63,



Unstoppable: Nitish Rana's whirlwind 74 was the cornerstone of Delhi's imposing total.

• TWITTER/BCCI

The trio of Ishant Sharma, Simepreet Singh and Pradeep Sangwan reduced Mumbai to 17 for four in the fifth over

42b, 3x4, 5x6), Mumbai would have struggled to cross the 100-run mark.

But the all-rounder, who earlier had Rana's wrath with the ball, ensured he showcased his straight-hitting abilities.

**Fizzling out**  
With the trio of Ishant, Si-

marjeet Singh and Pradeep Sangwan reducing Mumbai to 17 for four in the fifth over, the fizz had been taken out of the game before Dube's arrival at the crease.

Earlier in the afternoon, Dube's medium-pace was taken to the cleaners by left-handed Rana, who tonked him for two fours and as many sixes in the 14th over.

**The scores:** Delhi 206 for four in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 74, Himmat Singh 53) bt Mumbai 130 in 18.1 overs (Shivam Dube 63, Pradeep Sangwan three for 20).

## Tuesday's matches

**Elite A (Bengaluru):** Punjab vs Karnataka; Jammu & Kashmir vs Tripura; Railways vs Uttar Pradesh, all at noon.

**Elite B (Kolkata):** Jharkhand vs Bengal; Odisha vs Hyderabad, both at noon; Assam vs Tamil Nadu, 7 p.m.

**Elite C (Vadodara):** Chhattisgarh vs Maharashtra; Gujarat vs Uttarakhand; Baroda vs Himachal, all at noon.

## MONDAY'S SCORES

**Elite D (Indore):** Services 163/4 in 20 overs (Ravi Chauhan 33, Rahul Singh 76 n.o.) lost to Saurashtra 166/7 in 19.1 overs (Arpit Vasavada 34, Chirag Jani 34 n.o., Varun Choudhary 3/39).

Vidarbha 104 in 19.3 overs (Siddhesh Wath 31, Deepak Chahar 3/10, Rahul Chahar 3/27) lost to Rajasthan 106/7 in 14.3 overs (Arijit Gupta 41 n.o., Darshan Nalkande 4/20, Akshay Wakhare 3/33).

Madhya Pradesh 214/3 in 20 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 87 n.o., Rajat Patidar 96) bt Goa 208/7 in 20 overs (Snehal Kauthankar 31, Suyash Prabhudesai 48 n.o., Eknath Kerkar 45).

**Elite E (Mumbai):** Andhra 107/6 in 20 overs (Ricky Bhui 39) lost to Haryana 108/4 in 15.5 overs (Chaitanya Bishnoi 42 n.o., Shivam Chauhan 35).

Pondicherry 138/6 in 20 overs (Ashish Rajiv 33 n.o., Jalaj Saxena 3/13) lost to Kerala 139/4 in 18.2 overs (Mohammed Azharuddeen 30, Sanju Samson 32, Ashish Rajiv 3/18).

**Plate (Chennai):** Meghalaya 62 in 13 overs (D.B. Ravi Teja 35) lost to Manipur 66/4 in 12.1 overs (Narsing Yadav 33 n.o.). Match restricted to 13-overs-a-side due to wet outfield.

Bihar 122 in 20 overs (Manav Patil 4/20) bt Arunachal Pradesh 104/9 in 20 overs (Ashutosh Aman 3/17, Sachin Kumar Singh 3/22). Mizoram 47/3 in 5 overs lost to Sikkim 50/0 in 3.4 overs. Match restricted to five-overs-a-side due to wet outfield. Chandigarh vs Nagaland. Match abandoned.

## Just Not CrickHate!



daCunha/AB/22

## Kohli, Anushka become parents of a baby girl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Kohli tweeted. "Anushka and the baby are both healthy and we are feeling beyond blessed to start this new chapter of our lives. We hope that you can respect our privacy at this time,"

"We are thrilled to share with you that we have been blessed with a baby girl this afternoon. We thank you all for your love, prayers and good wishes."

## Srinivas qualifies for men's semifinals

## CARROM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

World online champion K. Srinivas qualified in the second place for the men's semifinals of the Indian online carrom challenge.

Abhijit Tripathi was the best in the fourth round as he completed the eight boards with an impressive six points, the best performance matching the effort of Mohd. Arif in the first round.

However, Abhijit missed out on the knockout berth as he had conceded too much ground earlier.

In the women's section, Rashmi Kumari executed her second successive finish with 31 points. She topped qualification six points better than that of Nagajothi Kathavarayan.

Kajal Kumari and S. Shainy were the two others to make the semifinals.

Riaz Akbar Ali and Mohd. Arif also qualified with 93 and 97 points respectively from among the 23 who competed in the champions league.

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Kajal Kumari and S. Shainy were the two others to make the semifinals.

## Tejaswini tops 50m rifle three-position

## SHOOTING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Tejaswini Sawant topped the women's 50-metre rifle 3-position event, both in final and qualification, in the National shooting selection trials at the Dr. Karni Singh Range on Monday.

Tejaswini scored 458.7 in the 45-shot final to beat Anjum Moudgil by 0.9 point. She topped the qualification

earlier with 1171, four points better than Anjum.

Nischal climbed to the third spot after having qualified in eighth with 1153. Lajja Gauswami, Sunidhi Chauhan, Shreya Saksena, Gaayathri Nithyanandam and Kajal Saini were the others to make the final.

**The results:** Women's 50m rifle 3-position: 1. Tejaswini Sawant 458.7 (117); 2. Anjum Moudgil 457.8 (1167); 3. Nischal 446.5 (1153).

## Juventus struggles past Sassuolo

## EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS

MILAN

Goals from Cristiano Ronaldo and Welshman Aaron Ramsey helped Juventus secure a 3-1 victory over 10-man Sassuolo in Serie A on Sunday, lifting the champion to fourth place in the standings.

Juventus struggled to create many chances in the first half, but its cause was aided after Pedro Obiang was sent off for a dangerous tackle on Federico Chiesa just before half-time.

Juventus capitalised on the numerical advantage as Danilo was left in plenty of space to fire home a fierce opener in the 50th minute, but the lead lasted just eight minutes as Gregoire Defrel levelled to stun the host.

The result helped Juve close the gap with Milan to seven points, having played



On the scoresheet: Cristiano Ronaldo's late goal added a little gloss to Juventus's laboured show. • REUTERS

one game less. Sassuolo stays seventh.

Valencia snapped a two-month winless spell in LaLiga with a 1-0 victory away to Real Valladolid on Sunday.

**The results:** Serie A: Udinese 1 (Lasagna 27) lost to Napoli 2 (Insigne 15-pen, Bakayoko 90); Hellas Verona 2 (Kalinic 16, Dimarco 25) bt Crotone 1 (Mesias 55); Parma 0 lost to Lazio 2 (Alberto 55, F. Caicedo 67); Fiorentina 1 (Vlahovic 72) bt Ca-

riencia 1 (M. Bilefeld 1) (Yabo 64) bt Hertha Berlin 0.

giro 0; Juventus 3 (Danilo 51, Ramsey 82, Cristiano Ronaldo 90+2) bt Sassuolo 1 (Defrel 58).

**LaLiga:** Cadiz 3 (Alex 15, Lozano 56, Negredo 68) bt Alaves 1 (Jeselu 23-pen); Real Valladolid 0 lost to Valencia 1 (Soler 76).

**Bundesliga:** Augsburg 1 (Richert 46) lost to VfB Stuttgart 4 (Gonzalez 9-pen, Wamangituka 29, Castro 60, Didavi 87); Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Yabo 64) bt Hertha Berlin 0.

giro 0; Juventus 3 (Danilo 51, Ramsey 82, Cristiano Ronaldo 90+2) bt Sassuolo 1 (Defrel 58).

## Lombardy shows her class in Golconda 1000 Guineas



Honouring a champion: Trainer L.V.R. Deshmukh, left, receiving the winner's prize from Ananth Kishen Rao, as fellow HRC stewards V. Krishna Das and K. Bhupal Reddy look on, after his ward Lombardy claimed the Golconda 1000 Guineas on Monday. • NAGAROOPA

Narredu 1, Bruno (Ashad Asbar) 2, Total Darc (Akshay Kumar) 3 and Inside Story (Nakhat Singh) 4. Not run: Golden Lady and Muas 1-1/2, Sh and 3. Im. 8.17s.

R6 (w), 5, 7 and 5 (p). SHP: 21, THP: 21, FP: 32, Q: 27, Tanala: 451. Favourite: Her Legacy. Owners: Mr. Donald Anthony Netto & Mr. Peter C. D'Souza. Trainer: D. Netto.

5. PALAMPET PLATE (DIV. I) (1,800m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III): SWEET MELODY (B.R. Kumar) 1, Eagle Bluff (Abhay Singh) 2, Dillon (Ajit Singh) 3 and Grand Finale (Suraj Narredu) 4. 1, 3/4 and 1-1/2, Im. 54.55s, 19 (w), 8, 16 and 37 (p). SHP: 49, THP: 80, FP: 346, Q: 117, Tanala: 411.230. Favourite: Forever Bond. Owners: Mr. M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar of Chettinad Charitable Trust. Trainer: K. Sathesh.

6. HRC GOLCONDA 1000 GUINEAS (GR. II) (1,600m), 4-Y.O. ONLY: LOMBARDY (LEITH MOR-LOMBARDIA) (TREVOR) 1, MIRANA (Sedgefield-Song Dynasty) (Akshay Kumar) 2, DOWNTOWN GAL (Multidimensional-C'est Bon) (Neeraj) 3 and NIGHT SECRET (Night Of Thunder-Serenity) (Srinath) 4. 2, 3/4 and 1-1/2, Im. 38.49s, 16 (w), 5 and 17 (p). SHP: 39, THP: 12, FP: 77, Q: 117, Tanala: 204. Favourite: Lombardy. Owners: Ms. Simone Zavaray Poonawalla rep. Poonawalla Racing & Breeding Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Rishad N. Pandole & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

7. PALAMPET PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II): BLAZER (Akshay Kumar) 1, Mr. Shanghai (Ashad Asbar) 2, Her Legacy (Suraj Narredu) 3 and Max (Afroz Khan) 4. Not run: La Mer 3/4, 1-1/2 and 3/4, Im. 12.66s, 18 (w), 12, 14