

HC grants bail to 20-year-old in riots case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has granted bail to a 20-year-old student who was in custody since April, 2020 in the north-east Delhi riots case, saying the possibility of him tampering with evidence after release was remote.

According to the complaint, the accused, a resident of Gokalpuri, was one of three people who was part of a mob that allegedly set a house on fire and looted goods. The prosecution opposed his bail on the ground that the petitioner is accused of rioting and if enlarged on bail, there is possibility of him tampering with evidence and threatening the witnesses.

Justice Subramoniu Prasad said that the chargesheet in the case stood filed and proceeded to direct the release of the petitioner on a personal bond of ₹20,000 with one surety in the like amount.

Govt. school students get chance to scale up their business ideas

Website launched for investors to join in to mentor young turks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

From starting off with seed money of ₹2,000 to being grilled by investors on the feasibility of a business plan, students of Delhi Government schools under the Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum (EMC) have been given an opportunity to enhance their ideas. They can change a school project to something that creates employment within the community and gain practical experience to run a business.

Under the Business Blasters programme of the Delhi Government that is broadcast on television and on other platforms every weekend, a select number of students are being given the opportunity to scale up their business ideas by not only seeking investment and mentorship from investors like Nitin Saluja, founder of Chaayos. Seema Bansal, partner and director of BCG India, Abhiraj Singh Bhal, co-founder and CEO of Urban Company and Sairee Chahal, founder, CEO of SHEROES, but also to anybody who likes their products.

Invest in start-ups

The Delhi Government has launched a dedicated website for people to purchase products made by the students as well as other investors to join in to mentor the students or invest in their start-up.

Police arrest kingpin of 'sextortion' racket

Gang had rented flat in Paschim Vihar to run extortion activity

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Crime Branch on Friday arrested the kingpin of a sextortion racket being operated out of Paschim Vihar. The main accused and his accomplices used to lure victims of several lakhs of money by indulging in sexual activities.

POLICE

According to Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) Dheeraj Kumar, a case of extortion was lodged at the Paschim Vihar East police station, wherein the complainant alleged that ₹3 lakh had been extorted from him after being honey trapped.

"He had paid ₹1.5 lakh in cash and another ₹1.5 lakh through bank account transfer to the accused persons," Mr. Kumar said.

During interrogation, Neeraj allegedly disclosed that he and his five other gang members, including two women, hatched a plan to honey trap victims and extort money

from them. The gang allegedly committed sextortion of more than a dozen victims in the past one-and-a-half years and have extorted ₹5 to ₹10 lakh from each victim, based on his financial background, the police said.

They used to create fake girl profiles on Facebook and send friend requests to their targets, following which they used to chat with their victims and later send obscene photos on their personal mobile numbers.

After further enticing the victims with video calls with women, they used to invite them to a pre-decided place to indulge in sexual activities, during which the other members used to barge into the room posing as policemen and threaten the victim of consequences in exchange of money. The other members are currently on the run, the police said.

During interrogation, Neeraj allegedly disclosed that he and his five other gang members, including two women, hatched a plan to honey trap victims and extort money

Over 1 lakh fines issued for violating pollution norms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

As part of its crackdown on those violating anti-pollution norms, the Delhi Traffic Police issued 1,08,004 challans in the last two months for related offences as the city continues to battle high air pollution levels, officials said on Sunday.

The crackdown was undertaken to execute the Delhi Government's winter action plan against rising air pollution.

According to the data shared by the Delhi Traffic Police, at least 32,343 of the total challans in the last two months from October 1 to November 30 were issued to owners of vehicles found without valid pollution under control (PUC) certificates. A total of 1,866 challans were issued and 1,104 old vehicles impounded for those found running beyond the permitted 10 years (for diesel vehicles) and 15 years (for petrol-run vehicles).

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) A.K. Singh said strict action will be taken against those not having PUC and also those still plying old-age petrol and diesel vehicles beyond the specified number of years.

"In the last two months alone, we have checked 44,853 goods vehicles at all the border entry points," he said.



Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said the Business Blasters programme gives students the opportunity to become job providers instead of job seekers. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that the programme gives students the opportunity to become job seekers instead of job providers and learn the nuances of running a business from a young age. Mr. Sisodia has asked people to be a part of the change and help Government students become self-reliant individuals.

On Sunday, Suhk Sagar, a science student from the School of Excellence, Khichripur, who learnt how to repair mobiles and headphones in his leisure at his friend's mobile repairing shop, picked up funding or ₹50,000 and an internship at Chaayos as he and his team impressed Mr. Saluja with their start-up idea called Moosite.

"When the online classes started, many children in my class did not have access to mobile phones. So we decided to refurbish old mobile phones and sell them at a low price so that everyone could afford. Business Blasters did not just teach us pricing, time management and leadership skills but it has also given us a platform to be independent at such a young age and that's something I am very happy about," Sagar, a Class 12 student said.

Another start-up 'Home 2 Creations' started by Sheeza Ali and Sakshi Jha that sells accessories like wall hangings, keychains, knit and loom bags and chocolates, raised an investment of ₹20,000 from Ms. Bansal and Mr. Saluja.

A third start-up Ink Family that sells personalised printed cups, T-shirts and COVID masks with messages, jokes received additional seed capital of ₹80,000 and advanced orders worth ₹28,500 as well as internships. Yash Patwal from Ink Family said starting the business was a tough journey but have managed to effectively use social media to gradually increase orders.



If children are exposed to this level of air pollution, their lungs would not grow to the normal level. All this will show the effect when they are adults

contributing to all these.

What do you observe in your long-term patients when pollution spikes?

Some of them, who were doing fine, suddenly come back to us saying that for the last one week their symptoms have worsened. The on-

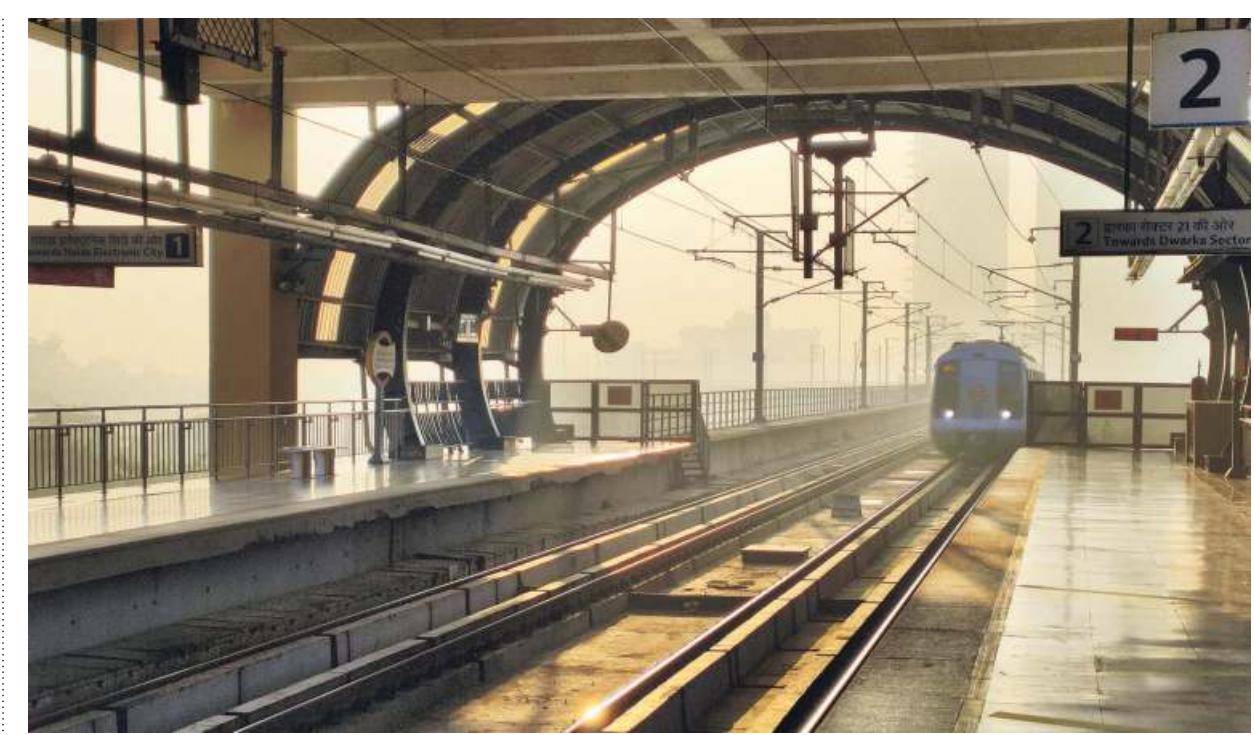
ly reason could be environmental factors. These patients have been coming to us in the last 15 days. In the last two weeks, we have seen a 20-25% rise in cases as pollution increased and we see the same pattern almost every year.

Do you see a spike in patients coming from other States also when pollution increases?

To some extent, yes. But they might be coming in the next couple of weeks. But we see a spike in people from outside Delhi too.

What would you suggest people do in terms of precautions?

People should keep a close watch on the air quality and be outdoors on the good days and indoors on bad days. They should avoid morning and evening walks. They should go for a walk between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Wear a mask when you step out.



A metro train enters a station as the AQI remained in the 'very poor' category in the Capital on Sunday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

AQI improves slightly but still 'very poor'

Pollution panel forms 40 teams to monitor enforcement, compliance of orders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The air quality in the Capital improved slightly but remained in the lower end of the 'very poor' category on Sunday.

The AQI forecast shows that due to an increase in wind speed, the air quality is likely to improve further but will remain in the 'poor' category on December 6 and 7 and fall to 'moderate' category on December 8. The IMD has also forecast clear skies from December 6 with a fall in the minimum temperature by a few notches.

In another development, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) that has constituted an enforcement taskforce to rigorously monitor enforcement and compliance of directions/orders issued by it, on Sunday, said that it had constituted 40 flying squads/inspection teams for intensive field-level incognito checks at industrial units, construction

and demolition sites commercial/residential units and air pollution hotspots.

140 sites inspected

"Till Saturday, more than 140 sites were inspected by the flying squads and based on the reports furnished by them, serious violations by various units are being identified for strict actions, including closure. Suitable actions against other non-conforming units is also being initiated," the CAQM said.

It added that it is holding exhaustive review meetings daily with the 40 inspection teams/flying squads continuously supervising and rigorously monitoring enforcement and compliance of statutory directions/orders issued by it.

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authorities, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) to continue to ensure compliance and strict implementation of the directions and submit their daily action taken-report to the enforcement taskforce on a daily basis.

The CAQM on Friday had ordered shutting of educational institutions, allowing only online mode of education. It had also directed that industrial operations and processes in NCR, not running on piped natural gas or other cleaner fuels, be allowed to operate only up to eight hours a day from Monday to Friday and shall not be allowed to run on weekends.

It had also ordered that all industries in NCR, still using unapproved fuels, be closed by the respective Governments with immediate effect and a strict ban on use of diesel generators, except for emergency services.

Anti-smog guns at metro project sites

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro on Sunday said it has pressed into service 14 anti-smog guns as part of the various measures adopted to combat pollution at its construction sites. The guns throw mist from time to time to keep a check on the dust pollution in the area.

Currently, as part of its Phase-IV expansion as well as some other construction projects, 12 civil contracts are operational across the city. "These state-of-the-art anti-smog guns are capable of spraying fine mist up to 70 to 100 metres. One gun is considered adequate for covering an area up to 20,000 square metre," a DMRC official said.

Demolished wall of illegal structure being rebuilt

Environmentalist submits application before Supreme Court in Khoribasti case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Demolished boundary walls of these structures could be rebuilt in just a couple of days and in some case the reconstruction of walls had already started

L.T. COL. (RETD.) SARVADAMAN SINGH OBEROI

poration to clear the unauthorised structures on the forest land earlier this year, and the farmhouse belonging to Vipul Goel, who was Environment Minister of Haryana in the previous BJP Government, was demolished. However, the rebuilding of the demolished structure has

now started.

Mr. Oberoi submitted the pictures, taken on December 3, of the partially demolished and the newly built boundary wall of the farmhouse belonging to the former Minister.

Listed in affidavit

As per the application, the farmhouse spread across 10.9 acre is situated in Ankhir village of Faridabad and is covered under Section 4 and 5 of the Punjab Land Preservation Act. The farmhouse is at serial no. 3 among 123 illegal encroachments listed in affidavit filed by the Haryana Forest Department before the National Green Tribunal in the matter titled Sonya

Ghosh vs. State of Haryana & Ors.

In reply to an additional affidavit of the Haryana Government, Mr. Oberoi had last month pointed out as to how the departments concerned had carried out cosmetic demolition of the boundary walls of the illegal structures on the forest land in pursuant to court order just to produce photographs as evidence of demolition.

Mr. Oberoi had brought out the fact that the demolished boundary walls of these structures could be rebuilt in just a couple of days and in some case the reconstruction of walls had already started.

Tihar prison cracks down on phone use

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Tihar jail administration, in a bid to prevent inmates from using phones inside the jail, has installed as many as 7,000 CCTV cameras, bought two body X-ray scanners and transferred 120 inmates to different wards.

It has also installed three mobile network jammers and procured walkie-talkie sets for jail staff, Director General (Prisons) Sandeep Goel said. We have identified 120 potential mobile phone users among inmates and have transferred them to other wards in order to prevent any mischief. Jail staffers are also being transferred regularly, he said.

The move comes after Tihar prison came under spotlight for a spate of incidents of inmate violence and extortion rackets being run out of the jail. The Supreme Court had called for an 'urgent need for prison reforms'.

INTERVIEW | DR. ANANT MOHAN

'Ultimately, everyone's health is going to be affected due to pollution'

The situation seems to be getting worse, we have to tackle it on a war footing rather than taking small steps, says AIIMS doctor

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Dr. Anant Mohan, head of Department of Pulmonology at AIIMS, Delhi, told The Hindu in an interview that they see a spike in patients every year when pollution levels are high and the future challenge for hospitals will be to deal with patients with both long-term complications and short-term problems.

What are the health impacts of air pollution? ■ It affects several organs. The respiratory tract is the most affected as it is in contact with the airway. In the upper respiratory tract, problems such as nose irritation, inflammation, infection of the sinuses, sore throats, shortness of breath, cough with phlegm occur – these are short-term effects. People, especially those with already diseased lungs, will notice more serious impacts like chest infections.

And the implications of this will be seen not just short-term, but also long-term.

Even though you can't see it right now, there are long-term impacts such as damage to lungs. Also, life expectancy is highly likely to be shortened by a few years due to air pollution. If children are exposed to this level of air pollution, their lungs would not grow to the normal level.

All this will show the effect when they are adults.

What changes do you observe in patients over the years?

I have been working at AIIMS for more than 20 years and the number of cases of respiratory problems are definitely on the rise. The rate of asthma in children is rising, the rate of COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) in adults is rising, and the rate of lung cancer is also rising. All these are in some ways environment-related. Air pollution is definitely

the reason could be environmental factors. These patients have been coming to us in the last 15 days. In the last two weeks, we have seen a 20-25% rise in cases as pollution increased and we see the same pattern almost every year.

Do you see a spike in patients coming from other States also when pollution increases?

To some extent, yes. But they might be coming in the next couple of weeks. We see a spike in people from outside Delhi too.

What would you suggest people do in terms of precautions?

People should keep a close watch on the air quality and be outdoors on the good days and indoors on bad days. They should avoid morning and evening walks. They should go for a walk between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Wear a mask when you step out.

Usually, we don't suggest people to wear masks indoors as practically it is very difficult. If it's practical for you, then do it.

Does staying indoors actually help?

The indoor air is also polluted. But pollution is likely to be more outdoors. There will be dust and pollution from vehicles outside and that can be avoided to an extent if you don't step out. But even people who are working from offices, they might not be out on the streets the whole day, but exposure to such polluted environment even for a short time is bad enough to cause problems.

What challenges lie in the future?

In the future, hospitals will be dealing with patients who develop long-term complications and also people with short-term problems and it will be more difficult to deal with that situation. A polluted environment is likely to compound problems in those with pre-existing lung diseases,

es, both in the short-term and long-term.

Is the situation getting better or is it getting worse?

The situation seems to be getting worse, no doubt. It is a sorry situation. Year after year, the same situation [high pollution] is happening and ultimately it is going to really affect everyone's health in a bad way. We have to tackle the situation on a war footing rather than taking small steps.

We have to work together at every level from individual to the community to the legislature to get results. It is an emergency situation. We have run out of time to just talk about it.

<p

INTERVIEW | AADITYA THACKERAY

'We are trying to rejuvenate Mithi, Dahisar, other rivers in Mumbai'

Can the rivers be blue? Possibly not, but we are looking at cleaner water today, and wider and deeper navigation, says Maharashtra Environment Minister

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

Last month, the Maharashtra Government received the Inspiring Regional Leadership Award at the COP26 for Climate Action in Glasgow. Just a fortnight later, its richest civic body, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, was fined ₹28 crore by the National Green Tribunal for polluting water bodies by "discharging untreated sewage in the sea and creeks". State's Environment and Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray talks to *The Hindu* virtually about the Mithi river, one of the oldest in the State, decarbonising public transport and Mumbai's carbon inventory. Edited excerpts:

You took a strong stand to save Aarey Colony. Why is it that only 323 hectares of the 1,250 hectares have been declared forest land?

■ There are two aspects to it – one is the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. It is a huge area, which is a forest and national park and has adequate protection. There is a committee to see if the non-Adivasi people, who have settled inside, can move to formal homes outside because we want to protect their rights and privileges. Once that is done, we can add to the forest area. On the other side is the Aarey Colony. Right from its inception, there is much more forest area than what has been de-

clared. We found that a lot of space has been turned into habitation. There are organisations that are non-governmental, settlements and buildings. So we want to start from the actual green area that has a large number of trees and biodiversity that can be called forest and has been declared as forest. If there are more areas, we will soon declare them as forest land.

After the floods in 2005, the Supreme Court directed IIT-Bombay and the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to come up with a plan to revive the Mithi river. What are the updates?

■ Mithi has two parts to it.



We have planted 2.1 million trees, cleaned 776 water bodies, installed solar pumps

■ Mumbai's settlement over the years has increased. There are areas where we need STPs and there was a delay because the classification of 30 biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) or 10 BOD went back to the Supreme Court and the NGT. Now we have gone into the tender process and as of today, Mumbai throws out almost 3,200 million litres of untreated water into the sea. We are looking at setting up six STPs and one is almost ready at Colaba. We will be treating almost 3,000 million litres per day and bringing it back to the city. This will be

as clean as potable water. We are also looking at setting up more STPs in Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities.

What steps are being taken to preserve the natural mangroves?

■ Only in the last 10 years, one has started realising its importance as we started losing them. In the last 11 months, we have protected 9,000 hectares of mangroves and last week, I was told it has increased to 11,000 hectares. Recently, we identified areas where there are mangroves. We are also revisiting and seeing if mangroves need exclusion from protection. We have mangroves along the coast of Mumbai so we are trying to bring in as much under the Forest Act to protect it.

Why does Mumbai rank a low 37 in the Swachh Surveykshan 2021?

■ Navi Mumbai has done very well and is ranked 4. There are some features of the Swachh survey where we need to work harder. What we are doing with Majhi Va-

sundara (an initiative that works with all the five elements of nature) has a part of Swachh Bharat in it, which is segregation and composting of waste. In Mumbai, we had almost 10,000 metric tonnes of emissions in 2017. By working closely with the resident associations, we have brought it down to about 6,000 metric tonnes a day. A small city like Sambhaji Nagar has 4,000 metric tonnes a day, these are the cities we really need to work on and get the residents, bulk generators, commercial establishments, restaurants and hotels to work together.

You talk about decarbonising energy and transport. What is the course of action?

■ Decarbonising energy and transport should be our priority as a country because they are the largest contributors to carbon footprints. Al-

so they are low hanging fruits that the country and State can achieve in a short term goal. In terms of energy it is largely to do with Centre-State relations and how we

move towards renewable energy and fossil fuel energy in the next few years. As far as transport is concerned, our electric vehicle policy is one of the most dynamic policies in the world. There are incentives to the purchasers and charging stations. We are looking at decarbonising our public sector so all new vehicles that are bought, including buses, will be electric. Mumbai has just got a 2,100 electric bus bid which will make 50% of our public trans-

port electric by 2023.

In the coming weeks, we are holding a conference with major bankers from India for Maharashtra. We keep talking about green financing at a macro level, but when it comes to moving towards a green transition, the banks need to look at micro finance and retail finance. This way we can support individuals rather than institutions.

Mumbai is looking at setting up a carbon inventory. Why do we need it and what are the advantages of having one?

■ When we want to move towards carbon neutrality, you

need to know where the carbon emissions are from and what you can do to offset it. With 43 cities committed to the Race to Zero (a UN campaign for zero carbon recovery) from Maharashtra, we will have a carbon inventory and a greenhouse gas inventory for all the cities. We are looking at ways to offset carbon emissions, this would be either through having a carbon sync as urban forest or direct air capture, or decarbonising transport and clean constrictions.

What can you say is tangibly achieved by the 43 cities you just mentioned?

■ Under Majhi Vasundara, not just in 43 cities, but all the other cities and nagar parishes, our officers have planted 2.1 million trees, cleaned 776 water bodies, installed solar pumps, changed lights to LED, moved towards electric vehicles and collated with all the five elements of nature.

We are now looking at working with NGOs, corporates and individuals, because it all comes down to awareness and habits.

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IN THE COURT OF THE HON'BLE SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE, ITINERARY COURT, AT JAGALUR M.V.C.NO.865/2018 Petitioner : Rajappa S/o Rajappa dead by L.R.S. 1(a): Smt. Suma W/o Late Rajappa Aged about 36 years, House Wife, 1(b): R. Pallavi D/o Late Rajappa Aged about 19 years, 1(c): R. Radhika D/o Late Rajappa. Aged about 16 years, 1(d): R. Nagaveni Aged about 14 years, 1(e): R. Ajith S/o Late Rajappa, Aged about 12 years, 1(f): R. Vijayakumar S/o Late Rajappa, Aged about 10 Years Petitioner No.1(c) to (f) are Minors, Represented by their natural Guardian Mother 1st Petitioner All are R/o Kanakatte Village Jagalur Taluk, Dandagaon District. V/s Respondents: Harising and Others.

NOTICE UNDER ORDER 5 RULE 20 OF C.P.C. R/W SEC.151 OF C.P.C.

To : Res. No. 1: Harising S/o Rungathgi, Aged about 40 Years. Driver of the Lorry bearing Regn. No. GG-06/AX-9791, Pineharkedi Village, Beur Taluk, Rajagad District, Madhya Pradesh State.

Res. No. 2: Gurukrupa Bulk Carrier, Represented by its Partner, Gurukrupa Singh, B. Multan Plot No. 13, GIDC, Ranoli, Vadodara, Gujarat State - 390003.

WHEREAS, the above named petitioner has filed a Petition seeking for sustained injuries in motor vehicle accident, you are respondents No.1 and 2 in the above case. Hence, you are hereby called upon you to appear before this Court in persons or through your Advocate duly instructed on 06/01/2022 at 11:00 A.M. failing which the petition will be decided ex-parte.

GIVEN UNDER MY SEAL OF THIS COURT ON THIS 03rd DAY OF DECEMBER 2021.

By Order of the Court
Sd/- Shrestedar
Senior Civil Judge and Intinerary Court, Jagalur.

Sri Pappuraj, B.A., B.L.

Sivakumar, B.A., B.L.

Advocates, MS No.240/1978

Krishnankovil Street, Kovilpatti - 628501.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MRS. Parvathy Gopu born on 23 Dec 1958 legally wedded Spouse of Cdr Gopu K.I.N (Retd) 40465-R, residing at A34, Jal Vayu Vinar, Shishir Thangal Road, Panampilly Nagar, Ernakulam, Kerala - 662036, as recorded in my Husband's Naval Service/Pension records; have changed my name from Parvathy Gopu to Palatty Palgat Venkateswari; both names pertain to One and the same person. Affidavit DA527740 was executed before the Judicial First Class Magistrate.

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See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused

Moinuddin S/o Samiuddin R/o No. 2385, Street

Chandiwali, Turkman Gate, New Delhi has Committed (or

is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No.

333/21, U.S. 419/420/406/467/468/471/34/120B IPC, P.S.

Patel Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of

arrest thereupon issued that the said Moinuddin cannot be

found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that

the said Moinuddin have absconded (or is concealing him

to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused

Moinuddin of FIR No. 333/21, U.S. 419/420/406/467/468/

471/34/120B IPC, P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi is required to

appear before this Court to answer the said complaint/case

on or before 07.01.2022.

IN BRIEF



Six, including toddler, killed in accident in A.P.

TIRUPATI
Six persons, including a toddler, died in a road accident at Ithepalle village on the Tirupati-Chittoor stretch on Sunday. The incident took place when the car in which they were travelling rammed into a culvert, overturned and went up in flames.

70 test positive for COVID-19 at Navodaya

HASSAN
As many as 70 people, including 63 students, in the Jawahar Navodaya School at Seegudu in Karnataka's Chikmagaluru district tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday. They have been isolated at the residential school. All are said to be asymptomatic. The district administration has ordered sealing of the school.

23 detained from rave party in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Excise officials on Sunday busted a rave party in a resort in Poovar in Kerala. Three persons were arrested. Nearly 20 people were also taken into custody. The law enforcers seized a wide array of narcotic substances including MDMA pills and crystals, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) stamp, hashish oil and ganja, as well as liquor.

J&K withdraws Class 7 textbook from schools

SRINAGAR
The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday withdrew a Class 7 textbook from schools and sought a First Information Report against the publisher for drawing a sketch of Prophet Muhammad, which is considered blasphemous by Muslims.

It's Centre's job to lift paddy, says TRS

Piyush Goyal spreading misinformation on paddy issue in Parliament, says Telangana Farm Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) has alleged that the BJP-led Union Government is conspiring against farmers of Telangana by dodging its responsibility on procurement of paddy and spreading misinformation on the issue in Parliament.

Criticising Union Minister of Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal for his statement on paddy procurement in Telangana, Minister for Agriculture S. Niranjan Reddy, along with legislators M. Anand, K. Venkatesh Yadav and S. Vanidevi, on Sunday alleged that Mr. Goyal had spoken lies on the supply of rice pertaining to the last rabi season by Telangana.

Mr. Reddy reminded the Union Minister that the responsibility of paddy procurement was on the Centre



No takers: Paddy spread out for drying at a procurement centre at Rejrala in Khammam district in Telangana. ■ G. N. RAO

and the Food Corporation of India, while the States cooperated with them and supported the exercise – the practice since Independence. However, the FCI was inordinately delaying shifting or lifting milled (parboiled) rice from the last rabi season lying with millers for want of railway rakes.

He even cited examples of

the State Civil Supplies Corporation writing to the FCI to lift the milled rice swiftly so that there was no storage problem for paddy and rice pertaining to the recent kharif season arriving at mills from procurement centres. However, no urgency was being shown by the FCI to clear the space with millers by lifting stocks pertaining to

the last rabi, citing shortage of railway rakes and storage space in its facilities, he noted.

On parboiled rice, the Minister said it was the Centre, not any State Government, that had introduced the system long ago, as milling raw rice was uneconomical in the southern States in the second crop (rabi) season due to high temperatures. Hence the paddy produced in rabi was processed only as parboiled rice.

Appeal to farmers

Even after the formation of Telangana, the percentage of parboiled rice procurement from the State was a minimum of 87% out of the total quantity lifted every year, Mr. Reddy said, and explained that in 2014-15, the percentage of raw rice in total rice supplied to the FCI was 93, and in 2015-16, it was

89. It was 97% in 2016-17, 94% in 2017-18, 100% in 2018-19, 93% in 2019-20 and 87% in 2020-21.

Mr. Reddy appealed to farmers again not to go in for paddy this rabi season unless they had any tie-up with millers, traders, trading companies and seed companies as there would not be any procurement in rabi. He urged them to cultivate alternative crops.

Meanwhile, official sources stated that millers were being pressured to slow down milling of paddy pertaining to the last rabi as against the requirement of 40 rakes every day, only 15 were being allotted to Telangana to shift the last rabi rice (parboiled) from mills to FCI storage facilities. Lorries carrying this type of rice were being made to wait for days together for unloading the stock at rake points.

Stolen Mirage tyre returned to Air Force

Thought it belonged to a truck: duo

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Two persons who had allegedly stolen a tyre of a Mirage fighter jet being transported in a truck to Jodhpur from Lucknow returned the tyre a few days later, police said on Saturday.

The two persons claimed they had taken the tyre with them thinking that it belonged to a truck, said Lucknow police.

An FIR had been lodged at Ashiana police station under Section 379 (punishment for theft) of Indian Penal Code on the complaint of the truck driver. He alleged that some unidentified persons had stolen one of the five Mirage fighter aircraft tyres that he was carrying in his truck.

The truck was transporting air force equipment from Bakshi Ka Talab Air force station.

to Jodhpur.

On December 4, two persons identified as Deepraj, a driver, and his nephew Hemanshu Bansal, arrived at the BKT Air force station and returned the tyre, said police, adding that the air force officials confirmed it was the stolen tyre.

During questioning the two persons said that on November 26, around 10:30-10:45 pm they had found a tyre on Shaheed Path Cinepolis lying between the main road and service road. They took it home thinking it was the tyre of a truck, said police.

On December 3, the two came across the news about the stolen jet tyre and after figuring out that the tyre in their possession looked unusual decided to return it, added police.

Police in Mathura conduct anti-riot drill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MATHURA (U.P.)

The police in Mathura conducted an anti-riot drill to check its preparedness against the threat by the right wing groups to place a Krishna idol in a mosque on December 6, an official said here on Sunday.

Even though the call was withdrawn last week by the group, the police are not taking any chances.

The drill was conducted on Saturday at Police Lines area, SSP Gaurav Grover said.

He said proper functioning of weapons was also checked in the presence of District Magistrate Navneet Singh Chahal.

The police had earlier en-

hanced the security in the city after the announcement by the right wing groups to install the idol inside the Shahi Idgah Masjid.

The police imposed section 144 in the city banning any public gatherings. Security checks including frisking was conducted at borders from Saturday evening, SP City Martand Prakash Singh said.

Para-military forces were deployed from Sunday morning at different points, officials said.

Traffic restrictions have been imposed till December 7, with complete suspension of any vehicle movement near the temple and mosque area, SP Traffic Harendra Kumar said.

Yediyurappa sought our support: Kumaraswamy

JD(S) to announce tie-up plan today

KARNATAKA BUREAU
MYSURU

Janata Dal (Secular) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy has ruled out any support to the Congress in the Karnataka Legislative Council elections scheduled for December 10.

He, however, admitted that BJP leader B.S. Yediyurappa had contacted him over phone seeking support.

Fielding reporters' queries in Mysuru on Sunday, Mr. Kumaraswamy said: "There have been no requests from the Congress for support either from the local level or the State level. Also, the party's State leadership has not treated us

respectably... I can't go after parties and offer support."

The JD(S) leader said the party would announce its stand on the issue at a press conference in Bengaluru on Monday.

While there is a triangular contest in six constituencies where JD(S) candidates are in the fray, the Congress and the BJP are pitted against each other in the remaining 14.

Mr. Yediyurappa later clarified that his party had not entered into any alliance with the JD(S), but had merely sought support in constituencies where the regional party had not fielded its candidates.

Karnataka ranks third in attacks on Christians: report

It documents calls received on Christian Forum's helpline

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Karnataka is ranked third among States with the highest number of attacks on Christians and their places of worship, according to a fact-finding report released on Sunday. The report, which is a joint initiative of the United Christian Forum, Association for Protection of Civil Rights, and United Against Hate, also revealed that Karnataka recorded the highest incidents among States in South India.

The report documented calls received on the United Christian Forum's helpline.

Till September this year, the helpline recorded 305 cases across India. Of these, 288 were mob attacks, and in 28 cases, places of worship had been damaged. In 85 cases, the police did not allow congregations. A total of 1,331 women, 588 tribespeople, and 513 Dalits were injured, the report said.

U.P. tops list

Of the 305 incidents, 66 were from Uttar Pradesh, 47 from Chhattisgarh, and 32 from Karnataka. The report noted a rise in attacks in Karnataka in October and November against the back-

drop of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party mulling over an anti-conversion law. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has announced that his Government would pass the Bill in the Belagavi legislature session starting on December 13.

Peter Machado, Archibishop, Archdiocese of Bangalore, who released the report, said he felt sad that Karnataka, known for its progressive politics and for being the IT hub of the country, had earned such a "dubious distinction". "We seem to have lost our humanity," he said.

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Re-imagine the classroom

With students back in the campus, schools and colleges must become a centre for mental gymnastics if we are to guide a generation of future leaders

K.ELANGO

While the nation lamented the 'brain drain' decades ago, I recall a professor saying, "It's better to have a brain drain rather than brains going down the drain." Learners reach educational institutions every morning for cognitive adventures, excitement, and surprises. But, as the day progresses, they feel their energy ebb. How many educators have come across students celebrating their Eureka moments?

Among the several factors for this are teachers. While it is not possible to have neat categorisations for a community of over 12 million, students tend to have their own labels for their teachers.

Unfortunately, the uninspiring classroom practices are responsible for draining the learner's

energy, frittering away class time, offering no scope for learner-centric approaches or inquiry-based experiential learning. As a result, the classroom space is just a hollow talk shop.

Innovation hub
Now that students have returned to schools and colleges, the classroom space needs to be reimagined. Teachers must veer away from their stereotypical style of explicating the textbook and look at using the space for multiple purposes and – as a forum for a clash of ideas, a laboratory for exploration, an incubation hub for innovation, a home

theatre, clubs for debating, reading, and other activities, and a centre for mental gymnastics.

Whatever is celebrated at home is stonewalled in classes – no more cajoling to speak, itching fingers to scribble on walls and floors are slapped; singing and dancing to their own rhythms is banned; the choice of what to wear is snatched away and students are tethered to their seats and commanded to maintain silence.

As one first-grader once observed: "I know the mother of my father is my grandmother and his father is my grandfather. I know 'a' for apple, 'b' for ball, 'c' for cat. I also know that 1+1 is 2 and 2 multiplied by 2 is 4. But why does the teacher want me to repeat them in every class?" This mindless practice exposes how innate qualities, such as curiosity, inquisitiveness,

playfulness, and imagination, are proscribed instead of being nurtured.

Higher levels
It is no different at higher levels of education. The same practices are perpetuated, but the operative terms are 'tuition' and 'coaching'. These terms, which once applied to "weak learners" and elicited jeers from fellow students, have now gained iconic status, thanks to professional courses and branded coaching centres.

Students pride themselves on learning from specific tuition masters and coaching centres capitalise on the entrance exam mania. The curricular focus has shifted towards preparing learners for JEE and NEET and true deeper learning has been unceremoniously buried.

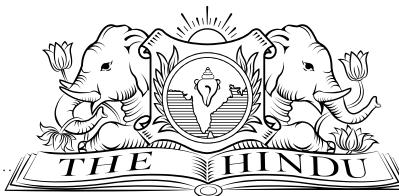
As the Chief Justice, N.V. Ramana, recently remarked, "Any change in the nation's trajectory always stems from its youth". This can be done by redefining the class space to channelise the youth power.

Efforts must be made to ensure that students' time and energies are not being depleted in class.

Otherwise, the rhetoric of creating future leaders will continue to remain a hollow slogan.

The writer is K. Elango, National Secretary, ELTAI, Prof and Head, Department of English (Formerly) Anna University

For more articles, columns, and news on education, visit www.thehindu.com/education



Boosters short

Availability, coverage, and scientific evidence should decide approval of booster shots

On November 22, the Director-General, ICMR, said that there was no scientific evidence thus far to administer a booster vaccine dose to fully vaccinated people. The priority instead was to increase the percentage of people who are vaccinated with two doses. The Health Minister too said the priority was on fully vaccinating all adults than on booster shot immunisation though adequate vaccines were available. Even when there was growing clamour from a few States for booster doses once the new variant with higher transmissibility causing a huge surge in cases in South Africa became known, the Government has reiterated that any decision on booster doses will be based solely on scientific recommendations. Although over 65 million people in the U.S. are unvaccinated, on October 21, a booster shot was approved for all above 65 years and certain categories of young adults. It was later expanded to include all adults. Many countries in Europe too have approved booster shots, having based their decision at least partially on vaccine effectiveness data. Such evidence has become available in India only very recently. One study found Covishield to be 85% protective against moderate or severe disease and 63% protective against symptomatic infection, while another found Covaxin to be 50% effective against symptomatic infection. Both studies were undertaken during the peak of the Delta variant-driven second wave.

The effectiveness of both vaccines against the Omicron variant is unknown. While this variant appears to be far more transmissible than the Delta variant, disease severity and the age groups most vulnerable to disease are not fully known. Despite these uncertainties, it might still be prudent to approve booster doses for people older than 60 years and young adults who are immunocompromised or have comorbidities. But administering booster doses cannot be at the cost of increased coverage of the first dose and full vaccination. Also, the need to begin immunising adolescents cannot be ignored. Over 1.26 billion doses have been administered as on December 4, with nearly 85% receiving one dose but only over 50% being fully vaccinated. Though the door-to-door vaccination campaign held last month witnessed 11.7% increase in second dose coverage, there is still a sizeable percentage of the population in the priority groups who are not fully vaccinated. Over 8% of health-care workers, 30% of those above 60 years and over 33% of people aged 45-59 years are yet to be fully vaccinated. The rapid global spread of the Omicron variant might also lead to increased vaccine uptake. While a sufficient supply of Covishield, which accounts for nearly 90% of vaccines administered, might be able to meet the demand, the priority should be to increase vaccine coverage and not boosters, particularly so as India will be under pressure to supply vaccines to the global South.

Party and power

Incidents of political violence in Kerala need a thorough investigation free of interference

The ruling CPI(M) finds itself entangled in two murder cases in Kerala. In one, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a charge sheet against 24 persons, including former CPI(M) MLA K.V. Kunhiraman, who is also a district secretariat member, in the Periyar double murder case. Congress workers Kripesh, 19, and Sarath Lal P.K., 24, were hacked to death at Periyar in Kasaragod district on February 17, 2019. The case was handed over to the CBI on September 30, 2019, after the Kerala High Court found the probe by the State Police as 'not trustworthy'. In an indefensible move, the Kerala government fought fiercely against a CBI inquiry, all the way to the Supreme Court, yet unsuccessfully after spending vast sums of public money. In the second, Sandeep Kumar, a local committee secretary of the party, was killed by a gang of five people led by a neighbour, who is associated with the BJP youth wing, last week, in Pathanamthitta district. The local police that had ruled out political rivalry initially, changed the script after being publicly chided by the CPI(M) State Secretary. In both cases, the ruling party allegedly attempted to influence the investigations by the State police – in the first to shield its workers, and in the second to add a political hue, which may or may not survive, to the gruesome murder of its activist.

The CPI(M)'s responsibility is twofold – as a cadre party that exercises immense control over its workers, and as the ruling party which is responsible for law and order. The party claims authority over the conduct of its cadres, including in their personal lives in many instances. The party must make it clear that it would not tolerate violence by its members; it must also allow the police to function independently and professionally. But the trend seems to be the opposite. Even convicted criminals linked to the party have been recipients of state favour when they serve prison terms. Mr. Kunhiraman and three others are charged by the CBI under the section of obstruction to lawful apprehension of accused persons. They forcefully released some of the accused who were taken into custody by the State police in the Periyar case, according to the CBI. The district unit of the party has questioned the CBI findings in the case and called it politically motivated. It is a specious argument. The origins of the CBI inquiry were due to a judicial process, that went through three stages. Irrespective of the merits of the CPI(M)'s claim of being a victim of violence by political opponents, it is the duty of the State government to protect the lives and liberty of citizens, and ensure speedy justice through due process in incidents of violence, whether or not these have political motivations.

The Omicron response is not making sense

The onus is on countries in the global south to show leadership and let rationality and science determine the course



CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA &
ANGELIQUE COETZEE

We noticed that towards the end of November 2021, when a new SARS-CoV-2 variant, B.1.1.529, was designated as a variant of concern (VOC) and named Omicron, by the World Health Organization, the response of many countries had an uncanny similarity to the initial pandemic response around February-March 2020. The flights to the countries which had reported the new variant were unilaterally halted. A few countries jumped into action to either expand or start COVID-19 booster dose vaccination for their population. The virus was often referred to as the South African and Botswana variant.

An irrational retreat

It appeared as if the world had barely learnt anything, while the reality is that the world of December 2021 is very different from that of March 2020. Back then, SARS-CoV-2 was a new virus and everything was unknown. In contrast, Omicron is just another variant of a virus we have known for nearly two years. Back then, nearly everyone was susceptible and now, with natural infection and/or vaccination, the pool of susceptible population has come down.

Currently, a little more than half of the world's population has received at least one shot. Also, there is reasonable testing and genome sequencing capacity, including the availability of some new drugs with greater evidence of effectiveness, which are widely used.

All of this should have brought some nuance and granularity in the response. The scientific developments should have assured all that the response ought to be cal-

mer, composed and evidence-informed. However, that seems to be missing, mostly if not always and all throughout. It is not making enough sense.

The South Africans, instead of being applauded for the work of their medical doctors, researchers and scientists in the identification and the reporting of the new variant in real time, have ended up as a nation that has been punished with a travel ban, which had even threatened essential COVID-19 lab supplies. Contrast this with the Netherlands, which had detected Omicron earlier than South Africa and did not report it.

Excessive reaction and why

It is true that Omicron has many mutations and some of those in the spike protein may have an impact on transmissibility, immune escape and sub-optimal response to the treatments. Clearly, this is enough to designate it as VOC, as it was. However, the response which followed should have been measured, evidence-based, derived from the experience earned in previous months and commensurate with the knowledge and understanding. However, it definitely has been excessive, in most cases if not all.

The problem is not solely with governments. A few researchers and scientists, bereft of the ground reality in South Africa and often not in touch with anyone at ground zero, must also take some of the blame for the superlatives and hyperbole, which have been used to describe the variant.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that some of the so-called 'experts' on social media and prime time television behave on what can be called the 'borderline of public health malpractice'; with most of their information from sources on the Internet, yet always speaking as if they have the definitive and final words; and as if that is the only true science – which might be an unfortunate reality of the social media era.

Then, there are the television debates where invited guests – of



ten the influential voices though not necessarily experts on the subject – conveniently take a position which echoes popular sentiment, and where the sense of rationality is drowned out. The impact of such misinformation is widely known to the people of India, where unsubstantiated claims that 'children would be affected in the third wave of COVID-19' could not be dispelled for long, and continue to affect learning of children where parents are still wary of sending children for in-person schooling.

From the ground

Both countries from where we writers belong, have responded to the emergence of Omicron largely with balanced, evidence-informed and measured responses, with occasional exceptions such as a demand from a few Chief Ministers in Indian States to ban all international flights. The last part raises serious doubts about their advisors on the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how there is a continuous need for science, and not merely political wisdom, to guide the pandemic response.

With the emergence of new variants, the next natural step has to be that countries should become more alert about the need for tackling vaccine inequities; in reality, a few high income countries have rather started looking inwards and focusing on administering boosters. Another reality is that many 'experts' seem to have taken a rigid stand on how the new variant is more transmissible, has immune escape, and has a high probability of re-infections.

Thereafter, as an example, even when the ground report from

South Africa indicates that most cases are mild, some experts seem to be unwilling to budge from their position.

Similarly, the point that a majority of cases were detected in the travelling vaccinated individual is being argued as evidence of immune escape or re-infections, while missing the point of confounding or the ascertain bias, as international travellers are required to be mandatorily vaccinated and tested. Therefore, it is not enough to argue that these cases are being reported more commonly amongst the vaccinated individuals, thus having higher vaccine breakthrough infections than the previous variants.

Most importantly, the role of current COVID-19 vaccines in preventing infections is limited. Therefore, as the global pool of vaccinated individuals is increasing, the absolute number of infections in this subgroup is likely to rise proportionately, especially when the practice of mask wearing is anything but universal and is going down.

The 'experts'

The world seems to be divided into two groups of 'experts'. One which is in a feverish rush and in competition to arrive at a certain conclusion before anyone else. Here there is a sub-trIBE which argues that even though it may take many weeks or months before anything can be conclusively known, 'let us assume that everything is worse with the variant'. This is not the right approach. However, this gets the first group more public attention than the second group which is talking about rationality and evidence-guided response. The approach of this group (the second group) is to look at the entire set of cumulative evidence and not the isolated one which best suits the argument one wishes to make.

One needs to remember that the impact of the Omicron variant, no matter what new characteristics it has, will be dependent upon the context and the settings. A

highly transmissible variant in a well-vaccinated population is unlikely to change scenarios, while it might pose a real threat to populations with low vaccination uptake. An immune escape alone may have limited relevance if not accompanied by high transmission and severity. Re-infection or breakthrough infections are common with all vaccines and all variants. Therefore, the solution is not a booster dose (which in the case of most vaccines is not helpful in reducing the transmission); the approach must be to increase coverage with the first two shots of vaccines and focus on improving adherence to COVID-19 appropriate behaviours.

Lost voices

However, political leaders may resort to doing the easiest thing which echoes the sentiments of the people. The flight restrictions and the booster shots are reflections of that challenge. It is here where the voice of technical advisers, independent experts providing data on COVID-19 and the epidemiologists who are trained to make inferences based on limited information should be heard more frequently.

The rich countries have mostly disappointed the rest of the world in terms of global solidarity in the pandemic response, which includes vaccine inequity. There seems to be no end in sight to this tragic tale. Now, the onus is on countries such as India, South Africa and many others in the global south to show leadership, and let rationality and science determine the course of the pandemic response. Along with this, it is time for a dynamic pandemic response and not that of a worst case scenario. All of this is very much doable.

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya is a physician with advanced training in epidemiology and public health, based in New Delhi, India. Dr. Angelique Coetzee is a physician in general practice and the Chair of the South African Medical Association, based in Pretoria, South Africa

Cooperation awaits its 'finding Raiffeisen' moment

In India, government control has only increased, violating a core cooperative principle of political neutrality



G. SREEKUMAR

Cooperation has failed, but cooperation must succeed,' wrote the All India Rural Credit Survey Committee in 1954. These were the words of Venkatappiah, first Executive Director of Reserve Bank of India and member of the Committee. He later became Deputy Governor, and Chairman of State Bank of India, before chairing the Agricultural Credit Review Committee in 1969.

This verdict came five decades after the first cooperative legislation of 1904. The Governor of the Madras Presidency, Lord Wenlock, was the first to seriously attempt replicating European cooperatives in India. Madras was ideal for this experimentation as it had similar institutions in its Nidhis. Nicholson, appointed by Wenlock in 1892 to report on the possibility of their implementation, summed up his 1895 report in two words: 'Find Raiffeisen'.

Pioneers in Europe

Nicholson was referring to Friedrich Raiffeisen, who along with compatriot Schulze-Delitzsch in Germany, and Luzzatti of Italy, pioneered cooperatives in Europe. Raiffeisen based them on the principles of self-help, self-governance, and self-responsibility. Known for their trustworthiness and resilience against financial crises, most were known as Raiffeisenbanks, spreading to other parts of Europe and America. Ra-

bobank, the Dutch cooperative whose first two letters come from Raiffeisen, was the last triple A-rated bank.

Nicholson wrote that the 'future of rural credit lies with those who are of the people, live among the people, and yet by their intelligence, prescience and energy, are above the people'. He used Raiffeisen 'not as indicative of a particular person or system, but of the zeal, energy, patience and continuous devotion so thoroughly exemplified in that great reformer, and of the spirit of co-operation, thrift, self and mutual help so thoroughly developed in the above and similar systems...'

The story in India

Gilbert Slater, after joining Madras

University in 1915 as its first Professor of Economics, went looking for the Raiffeisen that Nicholson's province had. At the office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS), he found the clerks sleeping, turbans placed next to inkpots, and no clue about the whereabouts of their boss, whose expertise was in the Tamil almanac.

Better days came with his successor, F.R. Hemingway, ICS, who brought in Dr. John Matthai as Officer on Special Duty. The first Indian with a doctorate in Economics from the London School of Economics, Matthai worked for a year in Ireland with Sir Horace Plunkett, an expert in cooperation. He later became Slater's colleague, and India's Finance Minister.

Sir Denzil Ibbetson, moving the Cooperative Societies Bill on October 23, 1903, had said that the Bill sought to create 'small and simple credit societies for small and simple folk with simple needs



and requiring small sums only'. He added that 'co-operation must be built up from the bottom, and not from the top'. Plunkett, in his foreword to Eleanor Hough's *The Cooperative Movement in India* (1932), commented that what India had was not a movement, but a policy. It was 'created by resolutions of the Central Government' unlike Europe.

Matthai wrote in 1925 that the challenge was to loosen government grip on cooperation over the years. But, government control has only increased, violating a core cooperative principle of political neutrality. This reflects a collective failure of the political class.

After Independence, cooperative institutions became an instrument of planning and state action. Not surprisingly, the most successful Indian cooperatives such as the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF)/Amul, where Matthai's nephew, Verghese Kurien, became a Raiffeisen, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) and Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO), are outside government control. Globally, seven of the top 10 cooperatives by asset size are from the financial sector.

The Indian financial sector is nowhere in the picture going by asset size. A few make it in the top 300 by turnover/GDP per capita, aided by a low denominator. Better days came with his successor, F.R. Hemingway, ICS, who brought in Dr. John Matthai as Officer on Special Duty. The first Indian with a doctorate in Economics from the London School of Economics, Matthai worked for a year in Ireland with Sir Horace Plunkett, an expert in cooperation. He later became Slater's colleague, and India's Finance Minister.

Sir Denzil Ibbetson, moving the Cooperative Societies Bill on October 23, 1903, had said that the Bill sought to create 'small and simple credit societies for small and simple folk with simple needs

When a cooperative bank scales up, maintaining its cooperativeness is a challenge. Cooperatives have also become avenues for regulatory arbitrage, circumventing lending and anti-money laundering regulations. The committees which examined cooperative banking suffered from the top-down quality that Plunkett and others frowned upon. Recent initiatives such as an umbrella organisation for urban cooperatives and a new Ministry of Cooperation at the Centre threaten to further this approach in the absence of safeguards.

A check on RCS

First, the powers of the RCS need to be scaled back. A British Indian innovation, it failed to stick to its original role of a facilitator: a friend, philosopher, and guide to cooperative societies. In almost all States, the RCS has become an instrument of inspection and domination, one which imposes uniform by-laws, and amends them when individual societies do not fall in line.

Early pieces of legislation gave wide powers to the RCS as the laws were in an experimental stage. Moreover, the laws were simple and elastic so that they could cater to a region extending from present-day Pakistan to Myanmar. The RCS was empowered to grant exemptions considering local conditions. But, the position continued even after the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms placed cooperation under the provinces in 1919. The RCS continued to hold sway after Independence. Some States even provide for across-the-board takeover of cooperative boards. There is a need to transfer work from the RCS to cooperative federations – as in Singapore.

■ There is no doubt that K. Rosaiah was a sincere Congressman. What is remarkable is that he did not shift his loyalties at any point in time and sailed with the Congress party through all its ups and downs – a quality that is certainly rare in today's politics.

The Netherlands experience Fourth, lessons from the Netherlands, where cooperative banks owe their success to a segmented market, are pertinent. In India, adopting a multi-agency approach, especially after bank nationalisation, has affected the efficiency of both commercial and cooperative banks. Commercial bank-cooperative sector linkages at various levels could alternatively provide better synergies.

Venkatappiah's words still ring true. So do the words of Nicholson, nearly 13 decades after his report: "Find Raiffeisen."

G. Sreekumar is a former central banker

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Be vigilant

The highly infectious Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus has the potential to play spoilsport at a time when the world is slowly trying to recover from the initial waves of COVID-19. As such, it is important to protect one and all by taking all the necessary precautions which includes strict

implementation of the pandemic protocol. There seem to be a few countries pursuing the step of administering the booster dose to their citizens just in case Omicron proves to be more virulent. Therefore, it is all the more important for the world's second most populous country to adopt the safest possible measures to

protect its citizens.
GOVARDHANA MYNEEDU,
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

K. Rosaiah

An era has ended with the passing of the former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Tamil Nadu Governor, Konijeti Rosaiah, who was known for his commitment to ethics and values in public life. He was

often called as an encyclopedia of finance with his record of presenting the Budget for Andhra Pradesh.
PRATAPA REDDY YARAMALA,
Tiruvuru, Krishna, Andhra Pradesh

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: In a report, "Longest migration route of lesser florican from Rajasthan tracked" (Dec. 4, 2021), the I

The remarkable progress of Emirati women

In the golden jubilee year of its founding, the UAE sends a message of gender equality to the world



K.P. NAYAR

In the national capital's diplomatic enclave of Chanakyapuri, a stiff competition has been under way not only to be politically most correct, but also to be 'cool.' In the golden jubilee year of its founding, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has done exceptionally well among the diplomatic missions in New Delhi in this notional contest.

On the occasion of this 50th anniversary, the UAE Ambassador to India, Dr. Ahmed Al Banna, revealed last week that 50% of his embassy staff is now women. Not just that. Women comprise 30% of UAE ambassadors worldwide. Thirty per cent of members of the country's Federal National Council, its part-elected, part-nominated Parliament, are women. And 30% of the UAE Cabinet too is women.

Driving force

On January 1, 2022, when the UAE begins its two-year, elected term as a member of the United Nations Security Council, its seat will be taken by a woman Permanent Representative, Lana Nusseibeh. The Managing Director of Expo 2020 Dubai, the biggest business and entertainment event in the world since the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, is Reem Al Hashimy, the country's woman Minister of State for International Cooperation.

In Scandinavia, no one would take a second look at such facts or figures. They would be taken for granted. But the UAE is a young country, it is also an Islamic country, which turned out its first woman graduate only four decades ago. A remarkable aspect of such advancement by women in the Trucial States, which were clusters of nomadic Bedouin hamlets when they coalesced into a state in 1971, is that the driving force behind putting qualified Emirati women in positions of responsibility is an elderly Sheikha who had no formal education in the modern sense.

Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak is known as "Mother of the Nation." As India's relations with the UAE were



A steady advancement: "The driving force behind putting qualified Emirati women in positions of responsibility is an elderly Sheikha who had no formal education in the modern sense." Picture is of an artistic form at the Dubai Expo. ■AFP

catapulted into one of its most important foreign policy priorities in the last five years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, impressed by women's advancement in the UAE, invited Sheikha Fatima for a state visit although she holds no official government post in the conventional sense. Unfortunately, the pandemic interfered with those plans.

In Chanakyapuri, diplomatic missions have been doing a lot for gender equality. Canada recently put an Indian girl in its High Commissioner's shoes for a day. Other embassies or high commissions have been funding programmes or offering training for women and girls on occasions like the International Day of the Girl Child. But there are only a few missions like the UAE, which can boast that half their staff is women.

Turning point

A visit by Pope Francis in 2019 was a turning point for the UAE. It was the first ever visit by any Pope to the Arabian peninsula. About a million Catholics live and work in the UAE. Next in number to Filipino expatriates, Indians account for the bulk of them. In Abu Dhabi, Pope Francis met Sheikh Ahmed Al Tayeb, the Grand

Imam of Cairo's Al Azhar Mosque, the fountainhead of theological learning for Sunni Muslims. Together, they signed "A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together."

The document inspired the construction of an Abrahamic Family House, which will have a Muslim mosque, a Jewish synagogue and a Christian church within a single complex on Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island. The House is due to welcome worshippers of all three faiths next year. There will be no temple in the complex because Hinduism is not an Abrahamic religion, native to West Asia. Elsewhere in Abu Dhabi, though, the foundation stone of a Hindu temple was laid in Mr. Modi's presence during his visit to the UAE in 2018. There were murmurs of reservation in the run-up to that ceremony about the publicity, official patronage and the high profile accorded to the construction of a non-Abrahamic place of worship in the federal capital. The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is the driving force behind resurgent relations with India, is said to have countered those reservations with the rationale

K.P. Nayar is a journalist, who has written about the United Arab Emirates since 1978, when he and seven others launched Dubai's first newspaper, the Khaleej Times

that allowing a Hindu temple strengthened the UAE's claim that it is the most tolerant nation in the entire Arabian peninsula. Soon thereafter, the country's leadership declared that 2019 would be observed as the "Year of Tolerance" with the aim of making the UAE the "the global capital for tolerance, co-existence and cooperation."

It has become *de rigueur* nowadays to recall that India's links with the Trucial States go back more than 4,000 years. Between extolling the distant past and praising the new strides in India-UAE relations, precious nuggets in high-level engagements, which serve as milestones in preserving the very special bond between the two peoples are apt to be forgotten.

Gift of langra mangoes

For instance, India's "mango diplomacy," which hits headlines periodically, owes its beginning to a visit to New Delhi by the UAE's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, in 1975. At the state banquet hosted by then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the dessert was made up of varieties of mangoes. The UAE's first President became openly curious about one item in the cluster of mangoes. He was told by the Rashtrapati Bhavan chef that it was the langra strain of the fruit. Sheikh Zayed asked for a second helping. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi did not miss this. Six years later, on her visit to Abu Dhabi, she took several cartons of langra mangoes as a gift to Sheikh Zayed.

When A.P.J. Abdul Kalam became the President of India in 2002, he travelled to the UAE on his first foreign visit. In a speech at the Abu Dhabi Men's College, he spoke about tele-education, which later became his favourite initiative. The response to that speech helped concretise what has become one of Africa's most successful humanitarian missions: the Pan African E-Network which has saved lives and spread vocational instruction. It is an Indian mission which deserves the Nobel Peace Prize someday. As the UAE celebrates its golden jubilee, India's relations with this Gulf state now encompass virtually every sphere.

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The need to reopen anganwadis

India must invest robustly in the world's largest social programme on early childhood services



DIVYA NAIR & NINA BADGAIYAN

with anganwadi workers, knowledge about key health behaviour such as complementary feeding and handwashing was low, at 54% and 49%. Anganwadi workers often do not have the support or training to provide ECCE. Administrative responsibilities take up significant time, and core services like pre-school education are deprioritised. A typical worker spends an estimated 10% of their time – 28 minutes per day – on pre-school education, compared to the recommended daily 120 minutes. Anganwadis often lack adequate infrastructure. NITI Aayog found that only 59% of anganwadis had adequate seating for children and workers, and more than half were unhygienic. These issues worsened in an urban context, with the utilisation of early childcare services at anganwadis at only 28%, compared to 42% for rural areas, according to NFHS-4 data.

Deepening impact

As anganwadis reopen, we must prioritise interventions with a demonstrated history of success, and evaluate new ones. Studies in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh (and globally) have found that home visits, where volunteers work with children and caregivers, significantly improved cognition, language, motor development and nutritional intake while also reducing stunting. Recent initiatives around home-based newborn and young child care are promising, but they need to extend beyond the first few months of a child's life, with seamless coordination with anganwadi workers.

Many States will have to improve career incentives and remuneration for anganwadi workers. One way to ensure they have more time is to hire additional workers at anganwadis. A recent study in Tamil Nadu found that an additional worker devoted to pre-school education led to cost effective gains in both learning and nutrition.

Policymakers have tried linking anganwadis and primary schools to strengthen convergence, as well as expanding the duration of daycare at anganwadis. Reaching out to women during pregnancy can increase the likelihood that their children use ICDs services – as tried in Tamil Nadu. In order to boost coverage as they reopen, large scale enrolment drives, that worked in Gujarat, may help mobilise eligible children.

As the world's largest provider of early childhood services, anganwadis perform a crucial role in contributing to life outcomes of children across India. To improve these outcomes, we need to invest more significantly in anganwadis, and roll out proven innovative interventions.

Divya Nair is Director at IDinsight. Nina Badgaiyan is a former senior consultant at NITI Aayog. The views expressed are personal

DATA POINT



Anaemia among children on the rise

The progress made in reducing the prevalence of anaemia among children between 2005 and 2015 has been derailed as a higher proportion of children aged 6-59 months have been found to be anaemic in India, according to the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) compared to NFHS-4 (2015-16). In 30 out of the 36 States/UTs, over half the children in the age group were found to be anaemic in 2019-20. More worryingly, the proportion of anaemic children increased in 29 States/UTs in NFHS-5 compared to NFHS-4. A relatively higher share of children were found to be anaemic in several northern and western States in rural and urban areas. By Sumanth Sen



Gujarat had the highest share of children (79.7%) aged 6-59 months who were anaemic in NFHS-5



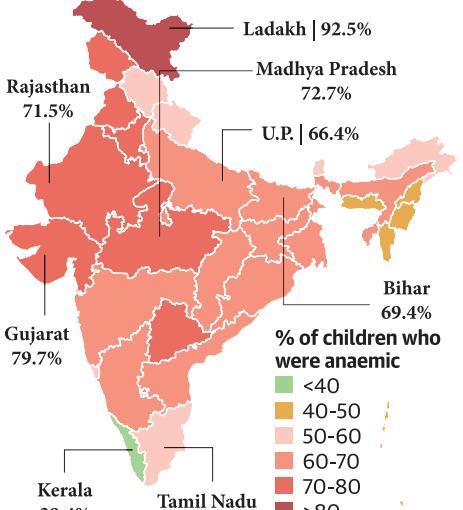
Among the major States, Chhattisgarh recorded the highest increase in the share of anaemic children in NFHS-5 compared to NFHS-4



More than 60% of children were anaemic in rural and urban areas

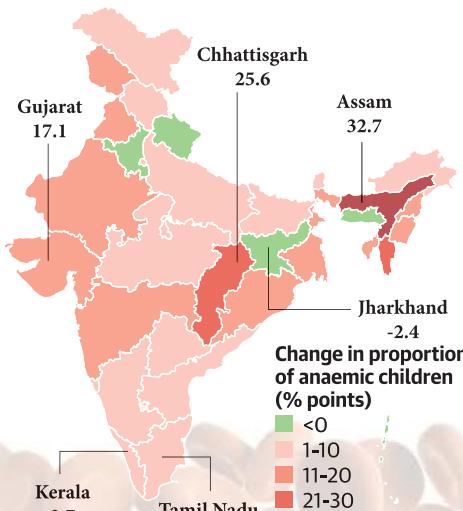
State-wise prevalence

The map shows the State-wise percentage of children aged 6-59 months who were anaemic, according to NFHS-5. The share of anaemic children was more than 70% in nine out of the 36 States/UTs. Kerala was the only State where the share was less than 40%



Change from NFHS-4

The map shows the State-wise change in the share of children aged 6-59 months who were anaemic in NFHS-5 compared to NFHS-4. Assam, Mizoram and Chhattisgarh recorded the highest increases. The share of anaemic children fell in only four States



STATE OF PLAY

Distanced from political reality

The tenuous relationship between top leaders has harmed the AIADMK's prospects in Tamil Nadu

T. RAMAKRISHNAN

When a political party loses power after a long innings, internal churning is inevitable. But, in the case of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the process began exactly five years ago even when it was in power, following the death of the then Chief Minister Jayalalithaa. Since then, there have been many dramatic turns, including former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam's revolt against former interim General Secretary of the party, V.K. Sasikala, in February 2017, the subsequent split in the party, and the merger of the groups, led by Mr. Panneerselvam and the then Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in August 2017. The merger, coupled with the support of the BJP-led government at the Centre, ensured that the AIADMK government led by Mr. Palaniswami completed its term. But whether the party has remained a cohesive force post-Jayalalithaa is anybody's guess.

Lack of cohesion

The party's alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2021 Assembly polls also aggravated the problem of lack of cohesion in the light of the BJP's adherence to Hindutva, a line of thinking not compatible with the political reality of Tamil Nadu. It was for this reason that Jayalalithaa had consciously avoided the BJP for seat sharing during the 2014 Lok Sabha and 2016 Assembly polls after drawing a blank in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

In contrast, the party's principal adversary, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which also witnessed the transition of power from M. Karunanidhi to his son and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin more or less around the same time, has managed to remain a well-knit organisation. So much so that the DMK and its allies such as the Congress and the Left, won a landslide victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and bagged two-thirds (159) of the seats in the 2021 Assembly election.



Tamil Nadu

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, the AIADMK has several strengths such as the presence of an extensive grassroots-level network and the sense of the image of a chauvinistic entity. In the Assembly election, the party got 33.29% of the total votes polled which was short by 4.41% compared to the DMK. Moreover, Mr. Panneerselvam and Mr. Palaniswami seem to have patched up for the time being as they are contesting together for the party posts of coordinator and co-coordinator, the positions being held by them respectively. When a seasoned leader like three-time Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Chandrababu Naidu is struggling to stay relevant in the Opposition, one can understand the plight of the two AIADMK leaders, but what they and others in the party have to realise is that it is in their own interest that they remain united and keep the party a force to reckon with in Tamil Nadu politics.

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The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 6, 1971

Crushing blow on Pakistan Navy

From Our Correspondent
Bombay, Dec. 5. An Indian Navy task force, in a surprise and daring attack on the Pakistan Navy in the early hours of to-day, sank two Pakistani destroyers and another vessel, believed to be a merchant ship and inflicted damage on a merchant vessel. One Pakistani vessel ran away in the confusion which ensued, following the well-timed attack by the Indian Navy. The historic battle took place near the Karachi harbour. A spokesman of the Indian Navy said that besides inflicting a crushing blow on the Pakistani's Navy in their own waters, the fighter aircraft of the Indian Navy bombed successfully strategic naval establishments in Karachi. The spokesman said that the attack was carried out in perfect timing and it took the enemy vessels by surprise. There was so much panic and confusion among the Pakistani sailors that the Indian sailors could hear their cries of panic when they shouted in Urdu "Save Khaibar" and "Save Shah Jehan". The Karachi harbour was a well defended and protected one. It has the latest sophisticated weapons in defence, besides, radar, missiles, etc. A number of vessels patrol the harbour constantly. Amidst this "backdrop" of solid defence, the Indian naval task force intelligently carried out its task.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 6, 1921
Malabar operations
Remarkable surrenders (Associated Press of India.)
Calicut, December 5 – A Press Communiqué issued to-day states that the special Police operating about Kalpancherry killed four and captured nine rebels. Another company killed 8 near Chelambra. The 2-S Gurkhas killed 8, captured one fire arm and four swords near Tuvan. The Moplahs from eight Amshoms with Melattur as centre, and Vettatur as the most southerly point are surrendering in large numbers. The total surrendered yesterday and to-day comes to 1,804 men with one firearm and 764 knives. 310 surrendered round Perinthalmanna. Chin Kachins reconnoitered from Nilambur and Kallikavu towards each other and sent a detachment to Wandur via Annarampalam resulting in four rebels killed, 13 swords captured and 50,000 lbs of paddy brought in. 1,500 rebels have surrendered at Aryakode handing in 3 swords. Rebels desirous of submitting are reported along the south bank of the Beyapore river between Arikod and Edavanna. 525 with nine swords submitted at Mannarghat yesterday.

CM YK

A ND-NDE

FROM PAGE ONE

Army operation in Nagaland goes awry

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said he was "anguished" by the ambush blunder, and promised to investigate the incident by a high-level special investigation team (SIT) and ensure justice to the bereaved families.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, who was in Delhi, condemned the incident before returning to Nagaland. He chaired a Cabinet meeting in the State capital, Kohima, in the evening.

The Chief Minister's Office said he would visit Mon on Monday to attend the funeral of the civilians killed.

Organisations such as the Naga Hoho, the apex Naga tribal body and the Naga Mothers' Association condemned the incident. The Naga Students' Federation unfurled its flag at half-mast to protest the killings.

The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, the key player in the Naga peace talks, described it as a "black day" for the Nagas.

"It is learned the killing was the work of the trigger-happy 21st Para Commandos/Assam Rifles. The Nagas had in the past faced trigger-happy Indian security forces, acting with impunity under the Government of India's AFSPA which is mainly used against the Naga political movement," the outfit

said in a statement.

Nagaland's Mon district borders Myanmar from where members of the NSCN (Khaplang-Yung Aung) are said to carry out hit-and-run operations.

An Army officer said there was specific input of the movement of NSCN (KYA) cadres in a vehicle of specific colour and type following which the Tiru-Oting area was cordoned off. The coal miners approached in a similar vehicle and "did not cooperate" when asked to stop, he added. The shooting ensued, apparently instinctively.

Local organisations have demanded action against the guilty personnel and threatened to approach national and international human rights organisations.

Members of the victims' families refused to receive their bodies if justice is not delivered fast.

Reacting to the incident, the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) announced the withdrawal of six tribes it represents from the annual Hornbill Festival ongoing at Kisama near Kohima. The ENPO had a few months ago adopted a resolution against bloodshed in its area.

People in Dimapur, Kohima and other towns carried out a candlelight march on Sunday evening to mourn the death of the civilians.

Bihar, Kerala update COVID-19 death toll

It has remained below 1% for the last 21 days, according to the health ministry. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has surged to 3,40,60,774 while the case fatality rate has increased to 1.37%.

The cumulative COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country so far has exceeded 127.61 crore.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28,

70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of two crore COVID-19 cases on May 4 this year and three crore on June 23. The 2,796 new fatalities include 2,426 from Bihar, 315 from Kerala and 14 from Maharashtra. Kerala has been reconciling deaths for the past few days, hence the death tally of the State is high. The Health Ministry stressed that more than 70% of the deaths occurred due to co-morbidities.

Mr. Shah was speaking at the 56th Raising Day Parade of the Border Security Force (BSF) in Jaisalmer on Sunday. This is the first time that the Raising Day Parade of the border guarding force has been held outside Delhi.

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Director-General of Border Guard Bangladesh Shafeenul Islam was among the special invitees present on the occasion. Earlier, BSF Director General Pankaj Kumar Singh had said that this year, at least 67 drones had

been sighted along the Pakistan border.

The BSF is deployed along 6,386.36 km of the International Border with Pakistan and Bangladesh. Mr. Shah asked the force personnel to ensure that people living in border areas had access to electricity, gas connections and other amenities.

He said that the Government would leave no stone unturned to provide the best technological equipment and infrastructure facilities to ensure that the operational challenges arising due to the present day geopolitical scenario are fully met.

Stating that all welfare requirements of troops will be accorded top priority, he elucidated the various programmes initiated by the Government to ensure that all force personnel and their families are cared for.

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Stating that all welfare requirements of troops will be accorded top priority, he elucidated the various programmes initiated by the Government to ensure that all force personnel and their families are cared for.

He added that 50,000 personnel had been recruited and their training was under way.

Mr. Shah was speaking at the 56th Raising Day Parade of the Border Security Force (BSF) in Jaisalmer on Sunday. This is the first time that the Raising Day Parade of the border guarding force has been held outside Delhi.

Mr. Shah also invoked the surgical strike operation after the 2016 Uri terror attack and the Balakot air strike post Pulwama attack in 2019 to drive the point that the Government was serious about national security.

Director-General of Border Guard Bangladesh Shafeenul Islam was among the special invitees present on the occasion. Earlier, BSF Director General Pankaj Kumar Singh had said that this year, at least 67 drones had

been sighted along the Pakistan border.

The BSF is deployed along 6,386.36 km of the International Border with Pakistan and Bangladesh. Mr. Shah asked the force personnel to ensure that people living in border areas had access to electricity, gas connections and other amenities.

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INTERVIEW | ANAND SHARMA

'No non-BJP Government is ever possible without the Congress'

Electoral politics in a multiparty democracy is a contested space and it is always a dynamic scenario, says Rajya Sabha member and senior Congress leader

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

As the war of words between the Congress and the Trinamool Congress intensifies, the Deputy Leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha, Anand Sharma, says a non-BJP Government can never be formed without the Congress. Asked about the Opposition's face for the 2024 Lok Sabha election, Mr. Sharma, who is part of the group of 23 leaders seeking internal reforms, says the Congress Working Committee will deliberate on the issue at an appropriate time. Edited excerpts:

Divisions within the Opposition have been the dominant feature in the winter session of Parliament. The Trinamool Congress has refused to be part of any Congress-led initiative in Parliament, and there is a bitter war of words outside Parliament.

■ The Opposition, by and large, has stayed united. It has stood together on issues and also in prioritising what we have to raise in the House. Meetings convened by the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) have been attended by 14 or 15 political parties. So it may not be the right thing to say that the Opposition has split, but yes, it is true that the Trinamool has drifted away. But on issues, all the parties

stand together. That is what matters in parliamentary democracy. Whether it is the Congress, the Samajwadi Party (SP) or the Trinamool, we all say the same thing on the same subject.

But the Opposition parties are fighting among themselves. Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee has reached out to NCP chief Sharad Pawar, denied the UPA's existence, and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav has backed her.

■ Electoral politics in a multiparty democracy is a contested space and it is always a dynamic scenario. There have been times when political parties have been together in government or in larger coalitions and have

then moved their own respective ways. Political rhetoric and positioning during elections or prior to elections should not be treated as something, stated with finality. In politics, nothing is frozen, nothing is sealed and there has to be inbuilt flexibility.

You cannot have a democracy which has only one view, one approach, one party. There are aspirations of the regional parties but the role of the national parties is important. We are in power in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and are in coalition with the Shiv Sena and the NCP in Maharashtra, the JMM in Jharkhand. Our alliance is there with the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the United Democratic Front in Kerala.

We may speak in different voices, can express our strong disagreement with an approach or have our own observations on leadership, but personal bitterness must never be injected.

But leadership is the main issue. Trinamool wants Mamata Banerjee to be the Opposition's face for the



You cannot put the post electoral menu of 2024 on the table in 2021.

2024 Lok Sabha election, while many in the Congress believe it should be Rahul Gandhi. Many also argue that senior leaders like Mr. Pawar or Ms. Banerjee will not accept his leadership.

■ Don't you think that this is a big distraction? Has the Congress brought up the issue of leadership for 2024 at the stage? I feel it is both premature and speculative. The priority at this stage is to look at one clear objective: how to oppose and defeat the BJP. You cannot put the post-electoral menu of 2024 on the table in 2021. For any non-BJP Government, the Congress

party remains central and without the Congress, such a thing is just not possible.

We can't say that Congress alone can do it but nobody should say that we can do it without the Congress. The Congress has a national footprint and 20% of the national vote.

No doubt, we have lost two national elections [2014, 2019 Lok Sabha poll] and no party or leadership can be comfortable with it. But look at the recent bypolls in Himachal Pradesh, the BJP lost their security deposits on some seats.

Elections are presidential in nature these days and people want to know who is the Opposition's face against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Trinamool says it is Mamata Banerjee.

■ Trinamool has every right to say so, but as a Congressman, I have not been authorised to make that determination. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) and the Congress president will take a call at the appropriate time. What would be the permutation and combination after the 2024 election cannot be dissected today as things will keep changing and evolving.

tions and combinations after the 2024 election cannot be dissected today as things will keep changing and evolving.

Election strategist Prashant Kishor too said there is space for the Congress, but leadership is not someone's divine right if the party loses 90% of the elections in the past 10 years, hitting out at Rahul Gandhi without naming him.

■ The results are also very well recorded with the Election Commission of India and it is really no nuclear science.

True, we have lost elections but when he [Mr. Gandhi] was the party president, we won Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and gave the BJP a run for their money in Gujarat. So I am not getting there.

Whatever observations I make is after having half a century of experience as a political activist, as an ideologue and as a parliamentarian for long. I do not come from the understanding or perspective of a consultant or strategist.

Didn't the G-23 also raise the leadership issue with regard to Mr. Gandhi?

■ That is not a correct perception. We gave suggestions for wide-ranging reforms in the party and also talked about leadership at various levels, right from the District Congress Committees to the Pradesh Congress Committees and to the CWC and the Parliamentary Board. It is purely an internal issue.

It would be injustice if reformists are labelled as rebels. That wouldn't be fair. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi is the Congress president and we have never had a vacancy. The membership drive is on nationally and the CWC has decided on a schedule of elections.

Finally, one week of winter session is over, and the Rajya Sabha has been paralysed over the suspension of the 12 Opposition MPs. Are we going to see another washout?

■ The Congress party and all the like-minded parties which are together with us

are clear that the session should be productive. This is the only time we can hold the Government to account. The Government will be interested just to rush through its legislative agenda without any parliamentary scrutiny and give no space to the Opposition.

The logjam in the House is most unfortunate, and it is the duty of the ruling party/ruling alliance to ensure that Parliament functions. What happened in the last session should have never happened.

We all believe in the dignity of Parliament, which is the highest forum for discussion and debate. But the Government was not willing to allow a discussion on the farm laws and Pegasus.

That was the monsoon session and the session was prorogued on August 31 by the Honourable President of India.

The winter session of Parliament following the prorogation of the monsoon session is neither an extension nor a continuity. So, I feel strongly that it is a miscarriage of justice.

Be ready to emulate farmers' stir, Farooq tells party workers

Similar sacrifices are needed to get back rights snatched by Centre, says NC chief

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

National Conference (NC) president and former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Farooq Abdullah on Sunday asked party workers "to remain steadfast and be ready for sacrifices on the lines of the farmers' agitation".

"We may also have to offer similar sacrifices [like farmers] to get back those rights snatched from us by the Centre. All of you have to be steadfast," Dr. Abdullah said.

He was speaking at the memorial to Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the founder of the party, on his 116th birth anniversary.

Dr. Abdullah said the



Mark of respect: NC chief Farooq Abdullah paying tribute at the memorial of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Centre repealed the farm laws due to the sacrifices made by 700 farmers. "NC leaders and workers have to stay connected with people

killed in the Hyderpora encounter forced the administration to exhume the bodies of two and return them to the families.

"The body of the third innocent is yet to be handed over to his family in Ramban," Dr. Abdullah said.

Slams Shah He also questioned Union Home Minister Amit Shah's comparison between tourism and the return of normalcy in Kashmir.

"What does it mean that tourism is picking up in Kashmir. Is tourism everything [to reflect the ground situation]," the NC chief questioned.

DIPR/3862/TENDER/2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Days after the "no UPA" jibe by Mamata Banerjee, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday attacked the Trinamool

Congress chief, saying she must clarify whether she wanted to make the Trinamool the main Opposition party by fighting those in power or by taking on fellow

Opposition parties. He said no Opposition alliance was possible at the national level without the Congress.

Mr. Baghel said a decision on who would be the face of the Opposition in the 2024 general election would be taken collectively by the constituents of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), headed by Sonia Gandhi.

On the Trinamool enter-

ing the poll fray suddenly in some poll-bound States such as Goa, Mr. Baghel said it seemed that they wanted to help the BJP in those States.

"They don't have anything in Goa but want to fight. So they want to divide the Opposition vote," he alleged.

Mr. Baghel also hit out at poll strategist Prashant Kishor for his remarks that the space represented by the

Congress was vital but its leadership was not the "divine right of an individual", an apparent swipe at Rahul Gandhi.

"Prashant Kishor works for money, be it for the BJP, Congress, Trinamool or JD (U), for poll campaigns. He is a professional person, so he should say who he is working for now," the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister said.

After RS suspension, Shiv Sena MP quits Sansad TV show

I believe injustice has been done, says Priyanka Chaturvedi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday named Lalsawta as the chief of its Mizoram unit after Sonia Gandhi accepted the resignation of former Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla from the post, the party said in a statement.

The Congress also appointed Mr. Thanhawla a member of the Congress Working Committee. Ms. Gandhi on Saturday accepted the resignation of Mr. Thanhawla as Mizoram Congress chief and invited him to join the CWC as a member. In a letter, Ms. Gandhi hoped that the rich legacy he bequeathed will be carried forward by his successor.



Priyanka Chaturvedi

"That this suspension also chose to disregard my parliamentary track record and my contribution beyond the call of duty so as to give a platform to women parliamentarians to share their journey, I believe injustice has been done but as it is considered valid in the eyes of the Chair, I must respect it," she added.

The Opposition MPs have been protesting against the suspension, with the 12 members staging a sit-in on Parliament premises.

The Opposition parties have appealed to Mr. Naidu to revoke the suspension of the members.

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN
DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND GEOLOGY
Email: biddingcell@rajasthan.gov.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 108 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, its subsequent amendments and in accordance with the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 as amended from time to time notified thereunder, the Government of Rajasthan has notified the following mineral block for the purpose of grant of Mining Lease for mineral limestone and hereby invites bids in digital format only from eligible bidders through electronic auction.

The details of mineral block and last date of submission of bid is as summarized below:

S No	Block	Lease	Start Date of Submission of Tender Document on MSTC website	Last Date of Submission of Tender Document on MSTC website	Bid Due date and time
1	Gothra-Parasarampura West Block Tehsil Nawalganj, District Jhunjhunu	Mining Lease	03-12-2021	20-12-2021 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)	07-01-2022 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)

The block is being put up for first attempt of auction. The interested and eligible bidders, upon registration on MSTC website <http://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/mld/index.jsp>, will obtain login ID and Password. After successful registration, the eligible bidder can purchase the Tender Document online on payment of the tender fee of Rs. 2,00,000/- + GST and can participate in the e-auction process.

The GST at the rate of 18% is applicable on the purchase of tender document. The GST applicable is to be submitted by the prospective bidder itself and the copy of receipt is to be attached with the technical bid. The prospective bidder shall be solely responsible for remitting the GST as per applicable law/statutory liability in this regard will be responsibility of prospective bidder and no liability whatsoever shall be borne by the DMGR/MSTC.

Detailed terms and conditions, deadlines etc. for participation in the electronic auction are provided in the Tender Document. The Model Tender Document and the Mineral Block Summary is available free of cost in electronic form and can be downloaded from the website of MSTC Ltd. <https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/mld/index.jsp> for the purpose of information only. Timelines, notifications, updates and other details for the e-auction process are available on the website of <https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/mld/index.jsp>.

Any revision, clarification, addendum, corrigendum, time extensions, etc. to the above tender documents will be hosted on websites <https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/mld/index.jsp> and <https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/mld/index.jsp>. For any queries regarding submission of documents in SRM Portal, Manual is available in ERP, SRM portal. You can go through the Manual. SRM portal is at <https://srm.vizagsteel.com>.

Director
Department of Mines & Geology
Rajasthan, Udaipur

ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)
Regd. Office: Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022
CIN:U40102OR2004SCG007553

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

OPTCL invites expression of interest from reputed/experienced persons/firm for 3rd party Quality Audit for ongoing power transmission projects in the State of Odisha.

The Audit shall be carried out in accordance with the technical specifications/standards adopted by reputed Power Transmission Company across India or abroad. The Firm may also suggest the adoption of technical innovation in construction activities of Extra High Voltage Power Transmission Project. The Firm shall physically visit the various construction sites and list out the general observations on quality and workmanship.

The proposal along with standard terms & conditions for 3rd party quality audit may be sent along with EOI to the Director (Projects), OPTCL Hqrs. Office, Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda (Odisha).

Last date for submission is 20th December, 2021.

HIPR-34/2021-22 CAD-2158 OIPR-04011/10/107/2122 Sd/- Director (Projects)

ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)
Regd. Office: Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022
CIN:U40102OR2004SCG007553

TENDER ALERT

01) E-Tender Notice No. TW-IT/OT/06/2021-22: Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited, Janpath, Bhubaneswar, invites request for proposals (RFP) (in e-tendering mode only) under Single Stage-two part system from reputed firms for Selection of Implementation Agency (IA) for implementation of SAP based ERP software in OPTCL and SLDC with an estimated cost of Rs.20 Crore.

02) E-Tender Notice No. TW-IT/OT/05/2021-22: OPTCL also invites bids in e-tendering mode only from eligible bidders for Supply, implementation, training of Microsoft Project Plan 3 (Cloud) Software with an estimated cost of Rs.8,14,000/- (Rupees Eight Lakhs Fourteen Thousand only).

For details please visit: www.optcl.co.in & www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL.

HIPR-33/2021-22 OIPR-04011/10/08/2122

CAD-2159

RASHTRIYA ISPAT NIGAM LIMITED
(A Government of India Enterprise)
VISAKHAPATNAM STEEL PLANT

WORKS CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

RINL-Visakhapatnam Steel Plant invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from prospective bidders having expertise, experience, resources and interest to take up the following job. Interested firms are requested to

India reports 17 more Omicron cases

Delhi records first case, Jaipur nine cases and Maharashtra seven more, taking the total tally to 21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI With 17 more cases of Omicron being reported across the country – nine persons in Jaipur, seven in Pune and a 37-year-old fully vaccinated man who arrived in Delhi from Tanzania – the total number of cases has increased to 21.

Most of those who tested positive for the new variant had either recently arrived from African countries or were in contact with such people. With this, four States and the national capital have now reported cases of the potentially more contagious variant.

The nine people who tested positive in Jaipur include four members of a family who returned from South Africa recently.

"Genome sequencing has confirmed that nine persons are infected with the omicron variant," Rajasthan Health Secretary Vaibhav Galiya said.

The new cases in Maharashtra include a woman who along with her two daughters came from Nigeria, and her brother and a



High alert: A dedicated ward has been set up at LNJP Hospital in Delhi for treatment of international travellers. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

man who returned from Finland in the last week of November, officials said. The number of cases in the State now stands at eight.

Delhi Health Minister Satyender Jain said the national capital's first patient has been admitted to the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital.

Mr. Jain said, "People of Delhi should not panic. Omicron is not a new disease but a variant of the coronavirus itself. Its symptoms are also

similar to almost all the last variants."

The Minister said the protocol for treatment and prevention is same as before.

"Seeing the cases of corona decreasing, people were not following COVID-19 appropriate behaviour but now is the time when you need to be more careful. People who have not yet taken the vaccine should get vaccinated as soon as possible," he said.

On the Centre's decision not to halt flights from all

countries affected by the Omicron variant, Mr. Jain said, "It is very unfortunate. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had written a letter to the Centre and appealed to stop the flights coming from these countries for some time. But the Central Government did not do so".

He further added that "Delhi receives the maximum number of flights from abroad, so Delhi is most at risk from this... flights coming from all the countries af-

fected by the Omicron variant should be banned at the earliest."

Mild symptoms

In Maharashtra, the Indian-origin woman from Nigeria has mild symptoms and other five have no symptoms at all. Out of the six people, three are under 18 years of age and therefore, have not taken any vaccine.

The three adults have taken both doses of vaccine. All these patients are being treated at the JJJ Hospital in Pimpri-Chinchwad and are stable.

Meanwhile, 28,221 international passengers have arrived at Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur airports since December 1, of whom 4,901 were from at-risk countries and underwent RT-PCR testing. Around 543 passengers from other countries were also tested. Nine from at-risk countries have tested positive. Through airport and field surveillance, 30 samples have been sent for genomic sequencing.

(With inputs from Alok Deshpande and PTI)

Omicron leads to flood of enquiries on booster dose

Union Govt. is 'in no hurry' to give the green signal

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

While Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in the Lok Sabha earlier this week that the Central Government was in no hurry to give the green signal for the booster dose and that it would wait for proper scientific analyses, private hospitals have confirmed that they are flooded with requests for booster dose.

Several individuals also confirmed that they were getting the "additional vaccine protection."

"With this new strain Omicron spreading rapidly, there have been a lot of queries related to third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine," said Dr. Ankita Baidya, consultant-Infectious Disease, HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Dwarika, Delhi.

Dr. Baidya added that while about 50% of the eligible population in India had the full vaccine coverage of two doses, hospitals were creating an awareness of the need for getting fully vacci-



Seeking protection: People getting COVID-19 vaccination in Navi Mumbai amid concern over Omicron. ■ PTI

K. Preetam, Medical Superintendent, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, said that till there was an official green signal, hospitals should avoid giving booster dose.

"People should wait for the guideline as this is a dynamic virus and we are still learning about several aspects of this," he said.

"There is no clarity regarding third dose interval," cautioned Sundari Shrikant, Director Internal Medicine QRG Super Specialty Hospital, Faridabad, stating that they were currently asking people to wait for Government recommendations.

'No crowding at Chaitya Bhoomi'

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic and the Omicron variant, the Maharashtra Government has issued guidelines appealing to people not to crowd at Chaitya Bhoomi to pay respects to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on his death anniversary on Monday.

No book stalls and food will be allowed and permission to hold meetings and protests will not be given. "There will be live telecast of the programme at the Chaitya Bhoomi."

Neelam Rao appointed PF Commissioner

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Government on Saturday appointed Madhya Pradesh cadre IAS officer Neelam Shammi Rao as the Central Provident Fund Commissioner in the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

The ACC approved Ms. Rao's transfer from her current post, Director General (Training) in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, to the top post of the retirement fund body in the rank of Additional Secretary.

States told to adopt Delhi Police model

To prevent crimes against women

S. VIJAY KUMAR

CHENNAI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has urged the State Governments to follow the crime analytics model of Delhi Police in preventing street crimes against women through crime mapping and identification of hotspots for reinforced action.

Communicating this to the Chief Secretaries of the States and Union Territories, the Union Home Minister said the Crime Mapping Analytics and Productive System and related tools were deployed on the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS).

As part of the initiatives to strengthen the capacity to deal with cases of crimes against women, it was recommended that the SOP on registration of FIRs should include guidelines to police to record reasons for delay in reporting of crimes by the complainants to the police. A provision was made for recording this statement in the FIRs on the CCTNS.

The States and Union Territories were told to widely circulate the BPR&D's handbooks on 'Women's Safety & Security' and 'First respondents and Investigators' to police personnel, and include the guidelines in the training modules.

G The pattern of crimes against women reported in Delhi could not be compared with that of Chennai

SHANKAR JIWAL
Chennai Police Commissioner

In Tamil Nadu, which leads the nation in the concept of all-woman police station, Director-General of Police/Chennai Police Commissioner Shankar Jiwal says police were sensitised to the need for taking proactive measures to avert crime against women and children and also to prosecute offenders in such cases expeditiously.

"Chennai Police have a woman officer in the rank of a Deputy Commissioner of Police to exclusively deal with crimes against women and children. An analysis of crimes against women by taking into account the nature of offence, hotspots, age vulnerabilities, etc., was done to devise an effective strategy. We have a zero tolerance policy towards such crimes...the number of cases has gone up in the recent past owing to the proactive measures," Mr. Jiwal said. He said the pattern of crimes against women reported in Delhi could not be compared with that of Chennai.

Ruing the loss of a moment on stage

At awards function, winners in wheelchair were given honour at audience side

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind's decision to step down from the stage to hand over awards to wheelchair users during the national awards for the disability sector on December 3 has left some awardees and activists crying foul.

The annual awards ceremony, organised by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, was held on the International Day of PwD at the Vigyan Bhawan here. Individuals, institutions, Government departments and States are honoured for their work of empowering PwD at the annual awards. While other PwD awardees were invited on stage to receive their awards from the President, Mr. Kovind walked



President Ram Nath Kovind giving away the award to Mohammad Shams Aalam Shaikh. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

down from the stage to award the wheelchair users.

Para-swimmer Mohammad Shams Aalam Shaikh, who won the award for best sportsperson with disability, said the awardees had gone through several dress rehearsals where a hydraulic lift was used for wheelchairs.

"If we can do the dress rehearsals, we can do the final take as well. I'm not blaming

the Ministry, but don't make us feel like we are disabled again," he said, adding that because of the last-minute change of plans, he was handed over the medal of another awardee.

2003 experience
For rights activist and wheelchair user Anjlee Agarwal, who received the national award from the then Presi-

turdy. "Records ageing more than two centuries are preserved there and there is a proposal for consulting historians and facilitating them to study such records and research on the evolution of the State Judiciary," it said.

The work of scanning and digitisation of the legacy records is going on at court's Record Room Digitisation

dent A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2003 at the Vigyan Bhawan, this year's ceremony brought back memories of her own experience. She said the wheelchair users were told that the President would walk to them to hand over the awards, but she had insisted on going on the stage.

"Two bodyguards assigned to me then pushed my wheelchair up a very steep ramp and I received a standing ovation for breaking the rules. But I wanted equality and the sense of grace and dignity of going up on stage to receive the award. I feel bad for the awardees that they were not given that few moments of dignity that they would have remembered all their lives," Ms. Agarwal said. She said there was a need to change the mindset and to lead with "actions, not words".

Kitex Garments, represented by advocate Haris Beeran, has argued that companies are anxious for the welfare of their employees and the safety of their work environment.

The company has filed its appeal against a decision of a Division Bench of the Kerala High Court in December. The Division Bench had set aside an order of the Single Judge Bench, which allowed the administration of the second dose of Covishield vaccine after four weeks, for those willing to take it.

Odisha historians to study legal records

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

The Orissa High Court is considering roping in historians to study centuries-old legal records and carry out research on the evolution of the State judiciary.

Even as the digitisation of case records and other legal documents is going on at a very fast pace and massive

scale, some records are stated to be beyond the scope of digitisation.

"There are records which are in such fragile condition that those cannot undergo the process of scanning. Such records are permanently preserved in a separate room called the Fragile Record Room," said the State Law Department here on Sa-

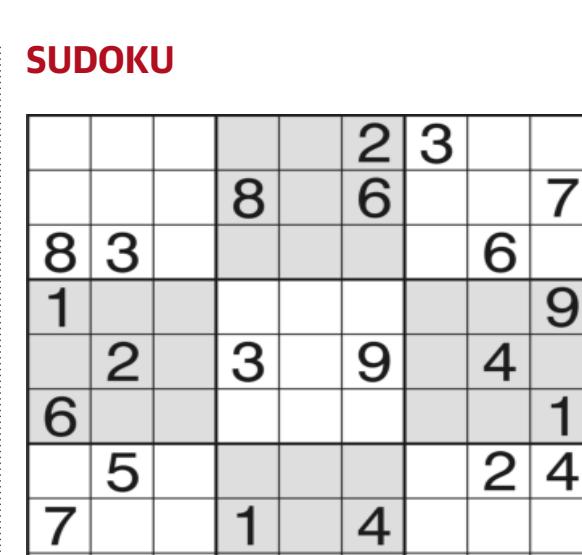
turday. "Records ageing more than two centuries are preserved there and there is a proposal for consulting historians and facilitating them to study such records and research on the evolution of the State Judiciary," it said.

The work of scanning and digitisation of the legacy records is going on at court's Record Room Digitisation

Centre (RRDC) through National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICSI).

The Orissa High Court was established in 1948. Legacy records (disposed of records) were stored and preserved securely and that accessibility to such records remained convenient and less time consuming for posterity.

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13419

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Hard-hearted Putana

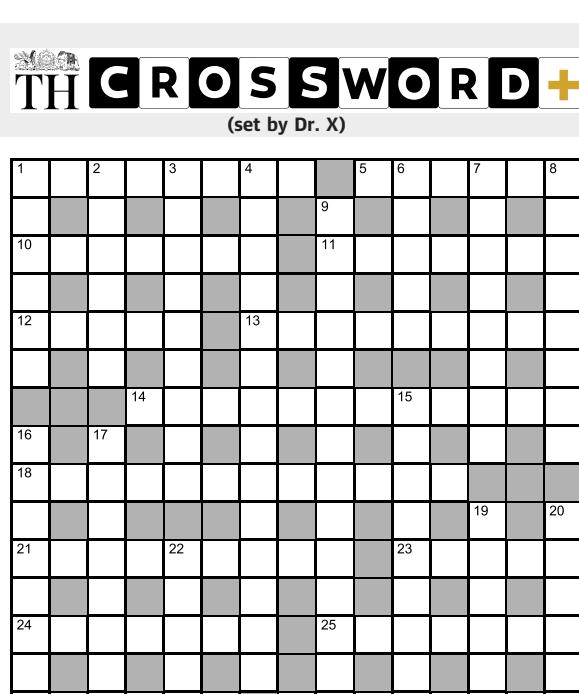
Putana reduced her size to that of a normal woman and came neatly dressed to give poisoned milk to Krishna. As she entered Gokula she was seen talking to herself. The Tamil word used to describe her is "alavalai," which means a talkative person. In this respect she was like Krishna, whose life she wanted to take. Krishna too spoke a lot, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan, in a discourse.

On the battlefield, all that Arjuna wanted to know was why he had to fight. Krishna could just have told him that it was his duty to fight, no matter who the opponent was. But instead He gave him elaborate advice, detailing three paths to reach Him. Putana had donned the garb of a loving mother and picked up Krishna to feed Him. Usually, when one dresses up like a person, it is likely that one begins to behave like that person. This is what happened in the case of Ravana. Ravana had been cursed that if he tried to touch any woman without her permission, he would die. So he tried to reason with Sita, who paid no heed to him. So Ravana asked Mareecha for advice. Mareecha said Sita would not look at anyone but her husband Rama. So Ravana disguised himself as Rama and approached Sita. But his plan failed, because the moment he took on the role of Rama, his characteristics changed. He no longer lusted after Sita. His heart was full of thoughts of his wife Mandodari. So even if we change our garb for the sake of playacting, we become a little like the person we try to impersonate. But this did not happen in the case of Putana. She was dressed like a loving mother, but there was no love in her heart. Even her attire did not soften her heart. And she went ahead with the task entrusted to her by Kamsa. She fed Krishna her milk and lost her life in the process.

TH CROSSWORD

13420

(set by Dr. X)



ACROSS

- Ordinary soldier's tragic end, protecting queen (8)
- Muslim ruler in fresh mess over termination of Khashoggi (6)
- Drunkard outside pub shot student in side story (7)
- Injured over track, getting back pain (7)
- Establishing the identity of one girl stealing racket (5)
- Fellows in rustic hamlet making Swiss cheese (9)

- Where air hostesses might be busy escaping as fast as possible (2,4,6)
- Bright side is, primarily nice-looking girls live in building (6,6)
- Chewing slice of salami, bacon and ham in horse-drawn carriage (6,3)
- Grant referendum? Britain exits (5)
- Most frightful drunk's back, starting to yell bawdily (7)
- Most desirable set, endlessly enthralled by precious stone (7)
- Joint after ale, turning sluggish (6)
- Avoiding silly risk, good to save money (8)
- Bird in woods is kingfisher (6)
- One possessed by ghost in mountainous region of Italy (6)
- Industry covering up facts in murder (9)
- Where drinkers might be nicely high after scoring new drug is well-known (2,3,6,3)
- Celebrity in front of national bird (5)
- Fume about missing diamonds, cash – it's hard to digest (8)
- Pay studs to maintain large plots where livestock are fattened (8)
- Hit around, top bowler left after dropping catch (9,5)
- Honest review about northern troupe in English city (9)
- Snake hole discovered around dead plant (8)
- Arrange a broadcast about regenerative flatworms (8)
- Former students from university in Milan reassembled (6)
- Depression about many killed in big German camp for POWs (6)
- Colour I love – blue (5)

U.S. slams 'summary killings' of ex-security forces by Taliban

Washington, allies demand probe into cases reported by Human Rights Watch

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The United States on Saturday led a group of Western nations and allies in condemnation of the Taliban over the "summary killings" of former members of the Afghan security forces reported by rights groups, demanding quick investigations.

"We are deeply concerned by reports of summary killings and enforced disappearances of former members of the Afghan security forces as documented by Human Rights Watch and others," read a statement by the United States, the European Union, Australia, Britain, Japan and others, which was released by the State Department.

"We underline that the alleged actions constitute serious human rights abuses and contradict the Taliban's announced amnesty," the group of nations said, as it called on Afghanistan's new rulers to ensure the amnesty is enforced and "upheld across the country and throughout their ranks."



Reneging on promise: The Taliban have carried out reprisal killings, despite their offer for amnesty. • AP

Early this week Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report that it says documents the summary execution or enforced disappearance of 47 former members of the Afghan National Security Forces, other military personnel, police and intelligence agents "who had surrendered to or were apprehended by Taliban forces" from mid-August through October.

Setting a deterrent

"Reported cases must be investigated promptly and in a transparent manner, those responsible must be held accountable, and these steps

pressed concern about "credible allegations" that the Taliban has carried out reprisal killings since their victory, despite the promises of amnesty for the fallen government's troops.

Taliban's response

But the Taliban's Interior Ministry on Sunday rejected both the Western rebuke and rights groups' allegations.

"These reports and claims are not based on evidence," spokesman Qari Sayed Khoshti said in a video statement. "We reject such claims."

"We have some cases where some former ANSF members were killed but they have been killed because of personal rivalries and enmities," he said, referring to the now-defunct Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

Many ex-regime security personnel "who had martyred hundreds of mujahideen and civilians are living peacefully" in the country on the basis of the general amnesty the Taliban granted, he added.

Myanmar junta chief meets Suu Kyi party stalwart

Experts say the move is aimed at sidelining the NLD chief

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

Myanmar's junta chief sat down with a prominent senior figure of Aung San Suu Kyi's ousted party on Sunday, the first significant meeting since the February coup.

The military deposed Ms. Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy party from power, pushing many of her closest political allies into hiding while others have been arrested.

The junta has alleged electoral fraud in last year's poll as a justification for the putsch, but much of the country is in open revolt calling for a return to democracy.

Help extended

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing on Sunday met with long-time politician and NLD stalwart Tin Oo, who has in recent years receded from the political landscape due to old age and poor health.

"Min Aung Hlaing told U Tin Oo that health treatment could be provided if necessary, and his army hospital will help," the junta's information team announced.

The junta chief also met with Khin Nyunt, former spy chief-turned-Prime Minister



Ceremonial gesture: Khin Nyunt, right, shaking hands with General Min Aung Hlaing in Yangon. • AFP

before he was arrested under the former junta.

"Min Aung Hlaing also went to meet U Khin Nyunt... and asked about his health condition."

While some in the West saw him as a potential reformer, Khin Nyunt's reign as spy chief saw activists harassed, arrested and tortured en masse.

Khin Nyunt's intelligence apparatus – which once infiltrated every neighbourhood across Myanmar – was purged after his ouster, while Tin Oo no longer plays an active role in NLD party affairs, said Richard Horsey, International Crisis Group's Myanmar senior advisor.

"It seems unlikely this meeting was sanctioned by the NLD," Mr. Horsey said.

"Given that Min Aung Hla-

ing seems determined to sideline Aung San Suu Kyi and won't meet with her, perhaps he's looking for other meetings that will be politically cost-free."

A former NLD MP – who is now part of a group of ousted lawmakers working underground to undermine the junta – criticised the meeting Sunday.

The intention of this meeting is dishonest. Min Aung Hlaing wants to take political advantage out of this meeting," said Htun Myint, who is currently on the run.

Sunday's meeting came on the eve of a junta court verdict on Ms. Suu Kyi's charges of incitement and breaching coronavirus restrictions.

Chris Cuomo fired for aiding Governor brother

CNN had suspended him days back

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

CNN fired veteran anchor and correspondent Chris Cuomo, the cable news channel said on Saturday, amid an investigation into his involvement with helping defend brother Andrew Cuomo, the former New York Governor, against sexual misconduct allegations.

Chris Cuomo had been suspended from CNN over the matter just days before his termination.

"We retained a respected law firm to conduct the review, and have terminated him, effective immediately," a statement posted to CNN's official communications Twitter account said.

"While in the process of that review, additional information has come to light."



vice to his politician brother that was deemed too close for comfort by his employer. "The documents, which we were not privy to before their public release, raise serious questions," a CNN spokesperson said on Tuesday, adding they "point to a greater level of involvement in his brother's efforts than we previously knew."

Israeli police questioned after attacker shot dead

Palestinian was killed in Jerusalem

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEL AVIV

Israel's Justice Ministry said on Sunday that two police officers were brought in for questioning following the shooting death of a Palestinian man who had stabbed an Israeli man in east Jerusalem.

Israeli police released surveillance video in which the attacker can be seen on Saturday stabbing the ultra-Orthodox Jewish man and then trying to stab a Border Police officer before being shot and falling to the ground. Police identified the attacker as a 25-year-old from Salfit, in the occupied West Bank.

A widely circulated video shot by a bystander appeared to show an officer from Israel's paramilitary Border Police shooting the attacker when he was lying on the ground, and another appeared to show police with guns drawn preventing medics from reaching him.

The shooting drew comparisons to a 2016 incident in which an Israeli soldier was caught on camera shooting a wounded Palestinian attacker who was lying on the ground.

The Justice Ministry's police investigations unit said the police officers were questioned shortly after the incident and released without conditions.

Bennett's support Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett reiterated his support for the officers' actions at a meeting of his Cabinet on Sunday.

"The officers acted outstandingly, exactly as is required from fighters in an operational situation like this," he said. "They deserve all of our support and appreciation for preventing murder and acting with operational quick-wittedness within fractions of a second."

Indonesia volcano eruption kills 14, damages 11 villages

1,300 evacuees seek shelter in mosques, schools and halls

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LUMAJANG

Rescuers in Indonesia raced to find survivors in villages blanketed by molten ash on Sunday after the eruption of Mount Semeru killed at least 14 persons and left dozens injured.

The eruption of the biggest mountain on the island of Java caught locals by surprise on Saturday, sending thousands fleeing and forcing hundreds of families into makeshift shelters.



Seared earth: Trees covered in volcanic ash following the eruption of Mount Semeru on Sunday. • REUTERS

they fled their localities.

At least 56 people, including two pregnant women, were injured in the eruption, health officials said, and most suffered serious burns.

President Joko Widodo on Sunday ordered a rapid emergency response to find victims after the scale of the disaster became clear, said state secretary Pratikno.

The country's geological agency said rain is expected in the next three days that could further hinder rescue work.

Dramatic footage showed Semeru pumping a mushroom cloud into the sky that loomed over screaming residents of a nearby village as lava mixed with debris and heavy rain destroyed at least one bridge in Lumajang, preventing rescuers from accessing the area.

"We believe that a deal is within reach if the U.S. government gives up its campaign of maximum pressure and the European parties show serious flexibility and political will in the talks."

U.S. reluctance behind stalled pact, says Iran

REUTERS

DUBAI

The reluctance of the United States to lift all sanctions on Iran is the main challenge to reviving a 2015 nuclear pact, a senior Iranian official said on Sunday, as Western powers questioned Tehran's determination to salvage the agreement.

Indirect talks between Washington and Tehran on reinstating their nuclear pact broke off on Friday, with both sides saying they would resume the following week, as Western officials voiced dismay at sweeping demands by the Islamic Republic.

'Give up sanctions'

"It is now clear that Washington's reluctance to give up sanctions altogether is the main challenge to the progress of the talks," the unnamed official was quoted as saying by Iran's Tasnim news agency.

"We believe that a deal is within reach if the U.S. government gives up its campaign of maximum pressure and the European parties show serious flexibility and political will in the talks."

"If now a catastrophe in the airspace over the open waters of the Black Sea has been averted, this does not mean that the United States and NATO can continue to risk people's lives with impunity."

The Federal Air Transport Agency said it would lodge a diplomatic protest.

U.S. spy plane nearly caused mid-air 'catastrophe': Moscow

Russian passenger plane with 142 people on board had to drop 500 metres to maintain safe distance

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

Moscow has said that a U.S. plane threatened civilian aircraft but "catastrophe" was avoided when a Russian passenger plane dived to avoid the NATO reconnaissance aircraft that crossed its path above the Black Sea.

On Friday morning, a NATO CL600 reconnaissance aircraft descended rapidly

across the planned route for a Tel Aviv to Moscow Aeroflot service with 142 people on board, Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency said in a statement.

The Aeroflot flight reportedly had to drop 500 metres (1,600 feet) to keep its distance from the reconnaissance aircraft, which the pilots saw from the cockpit with the naked eye.

A second plane, a smaller CL650 aircraft, flying from the Black Sea resort Sochi to Skopje, also had to divert to avoid the spy plane, the Russian air transport authority said on Saturday.

"The direction and altitude of the commercial flights were immediately altered" to avoid a collision, the agency said, adding that the unknown plane did not

respond to radio hails from air traffic control.

While the Federal Air Transport Agency did not say which nation had operated the spy plane, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova indicated on Sunday that the reconnaissance aircraft belonged to the United States.

"The actions of the US Air Force have created a threat

to civil aviation," Ms. Zakharova said.

"If now a catastrophe in the airspace over the open waters of the Black Sea has been averted, this does not mean that the United States and NATO can continue to risk people's lives with impunity."

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Chris Cuomo



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ASK US



BHAVANA ACHARYA

Q. I am retired with no pension. So far, I had invested only in bank FDs. Is it safe to invest in FDs with a cooperative bank as their interest rates are high? How safe is it to invest in a bond with a company with A+ rating? Can I also invest in SCSS?

P.M. ARYAN

A. Cooperative banks are best avoided, given the risks involved in such entities. There has been a string of closures in these entities, lax governance and they are not as tightly regulated by the RBI as other banks are. If you intend to invest in corporate bonds, stick to those with an AAA rating. Any rating below this involves higher risk, which in your case can be avoided as you will be entirely relying only on these instruments for income.

For better rates, consider the following options in addition to bank FDs: one, as you mentioned, the Senior Citizens Savings Scheme; two, RBI Taxable Floating Rate Bonds – these have floating interest rates that are 35 basis points above the NSC rate and therefore offer better rates; three, the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana which currently offers 7.4% annually; four, higher-rate deposits from Small Finance Banks – take care to avoid concentrating on these banks alone and try to cap investments per bank at ₹5,00,000 to stay within the deposit insurance limits.

There are other options, but these options need understanding on your part as to which investment to go for. These are government bonds of various tenures, which is now allowed on RBI's Retail Direct scheme. Finally, debt mutual funds that do not take risks, in order to keep pace with interest rate movements and avoid locking into FD/bond rates. However, use this option only if you understand such funds and have the necessary help to choose them correctly.

Q. I am working in a start-up and earn ₹38,000 per month. Every month after expenses, I am left with about ₹20-25,000. I have medical insurance for my parents. My goals are: wedding in 2-3 years, for which I would like to incur all expenses on my own; I estimate it would come to ₹12-15 lakh. I would like to buy a house in 7-8 years. I am interested in travelling as well.

NIVYA THOMAS

A. It's commendable that you have such clearly-defined goals. Now, you have two goals for which you need to accumulate a targeted amount. A monthly investment of ₹25,000 for 3 years at annual return of 7-8% (assuming lower returns as one cannot invest in high-risk instruments for the short term) will get you about ₹10 lakh. As you can see, this amount will be short of the ₹12-15 lakh you aim for your wedding. If you invest for, say, 5-7 years, you may be able to earn better returns – at an assumed 10% return, you may have about ₹20-30 lakh in 5 years.

Therefore, your current investments will help you accumulate the majority of the corpus you're aiming for in your two key goals, but not fully. If you intend to fully meet both goals, step up investments when you can – you can do this for the longer-term home-buying goal as you may be able to earn and save better a few years down the line and you will also have the time to allow your investments to compound.

For now, invest 60% of the amount in short-duration debt mutual funds, aiming for managing a chunk of the short-term wedding goal. You can also consider high-interest rate deposits (less than 3-year FD maturity) from Small Finance Banks for some part of your wedding goal. Invest 25% of the remaining in large-cap equity index funds and the remaining 15% in equity funds that take some mid-cap allocation. This will help towards the longer-term home-buying goal.

Q. My 34-year-old brother earns a salary of about ₹30,000 per month. He has opened an NPS account. How much should he invest per month in order to get a monthly pension of ₹20,000-₹30,000 per month when he retires at 60?

SUPONGLA

A. Inflation plays a key role in determining how much monthly income you will need at the time of retirement. While ₹30,000 may seem reasonable now, assuming a modest 5% inflation, this same amount will be equivalent to ₹1,06,000 in 26 years. Use any of the retirement calculators available online to understand what monthly expenses will be at the time of retirement.

Based on a current monthly expense of ₹30,000, a 5% inflation and a 10% return, your brother will need to invest about ₹16,000 per month in order to fund retirement. Any change in expenses will increase this amount. If this monthly amount is not manageable at this time, start with what is possible and aim at increasing it over time in a disciplined manner.

The NPS is a good vehicle for building a retirement corpus. However, do not rely on the NPS alone for retirement. As per current rules, 40% of the accumulated corpus needs to be invested only in annuity plans, which typically offer low-to-moderate returns. This apart, the equity asset class of the NPS does not perform as well as equity mutual funds do. When the investible surplus increases, try investing in equity mutual funds in addition to the NPS to build a diversified retirement corpus.

(The adviser is Co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)

Be aware of bitcoin, other cryptocurrencies

Before debating whether to ban private cryptocurrencies, it is prudent first to understand what cryptocurrencies are

ANAND SRINIVASAN
SASHWATH SWAMINATHAN

Virtual currencies created using blockchain technology have been the subject of great speculation and discussion in recent times.

Legendary investors Charlie Munger and Warren Buffet have gone as far as to call Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies 'rat poison.'

Before debating on whether to ban private cryptocurrency, it is prudent first to understand what cryptocurrencies are.

Cryptocurrencies are digital encrypted tokens that can be transferred between two parties without the need for a centralised regulator.

The facilitators of the transaction work to verify a transaction individually and maintain a public ledger open for anyone to see.

No intrinsic value

The elimination of a centralised entity is why we see the word 'decentralisation' being thrown around very often. Cryptocurrencies are not 'untraceable' as most believe; in fact, it happens to be more traceable than currency notes due to the public

ledger leaving a clear trail.

In addition, when discussing the merits of cryptocurrencies, one must understand that it possesses no intrinsic value. Stocks provide partial ownership of a firm that produces goods and services, bonds provide a steady source of income, and gold has inherent metal value. Cryptocurrencies are non-productive assets that are merely traded because there is demand.

Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan had stated recently in a TV interview that "a lot of cryptos have value only because there is a greater fool out there willing to buy".

Cryptocurrencies are eerily similar to the tulip mania of 1636, when tulips were being traded for the sake of turning a profit. Another essential point to note is that although theoretically there is a scarcity of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, that does not mean anything in terms of economics because there needs to be a particular purpose that will sustain demand for the asset.

Some claim that Bitcoin and other private cryptocurrencies are a new revolution in current

and the monetary system. No central bank or government around the world would be interested in relinquishing power over the money supply. Private cryptocurrencies being adopted as a legitimate currency in the nation will spell the end of regulation and economic intervention by the central bank. This is because central banks require the ability to manipulate the money supply to intervene during a crisis. Private cryptocurrencies strip the central bank of this power, leaving the central bank effectively unable to set interest rates and control the money supply efficiently.

In a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it would become challenging for monetary regulators to step in and aid a wounded economy.

Therefore, it is improbable for any notable government to favour and encourage private cryptocurrencies for these reasons. Moreover, due to speculation, cryptocurrencies ensure that they can never act as a measure of the value of goods and services. For a cryptocurrency such as Bitcoin to be accepted as a currency, it has to price goods. Bitcoin, an ex-



growing technology and equip themselves accordingly.

The longer it takes for regulators to implement a plan, the greater there is to lose as the amount of money being channelled into the asset grows further. Unfortunately, all bubbles come to an abrupt end leaving many financially distraught.

Those who invest in cryptocurrencies need to understand that they are speculating rather than investing. It follows that while speculating, one takes comprehensive care to know what they are getting into.

B. Those who invest in cryptocurrencies need to understand that they are speculating rather than investing. It follows that while speculating, one takes comprehensive care to know what they are getting into

tion to take down cryptocurrencies would leave a considerable dent in the price. Additionally, cryptocurrency mining takes up a substantial amount of a country's resources which could be put to more productive uses.

It is crucial for governments worldwide to decide on a course of action regarding this

THINK INVESTOR: CLOSE TO HEART

Investing in collectibles

Passion assets can fetch emotional as well as tangible returns

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

The pandemic is far from over even as the year draws to a close. Small wonder that our emotional well-being is fragile.

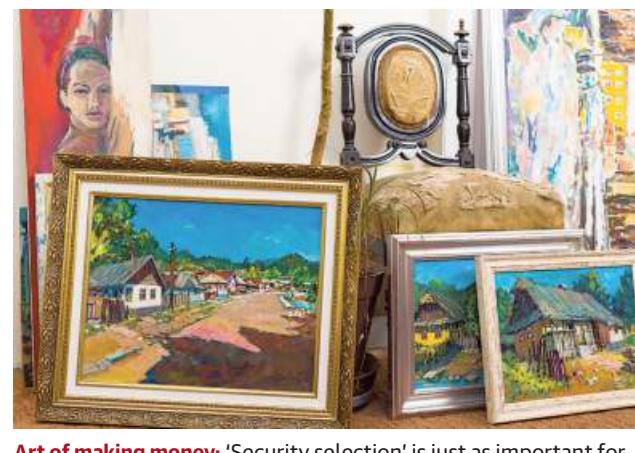
It is in this context that you should consider real assets. Early this year, we discussed passion assets, which you can touch and feel, as opposed to financial assets that are intangible. Here, we discuss why you must mull allocating some of your savings to real assets now.

We typically strive to improve our emotional well-being through retail therapy, whether it is spending on wellness or home-improvement products. Such spending has a temporary improvement on our emotional well-being. Given that most of these are consumption products, you can derive satisfaction till the products last. Others such as home-improvement products are mass-produced.

Therefore, these may stop stimulating your emotional well-being after a while as you get used to owning them.

You need products that carry a story; for it is the story that contributes continually to your emotional well-being. For instance, owning a high-value mahogany sideboard may feel good but may not continually contribute to your emotional well-being.

These assets are commonly called as passion assets. The popular passion assets are wine, arts and rare artefacts.



Art of making money: 'Security selection' is just as important for collectible assets as it is for stocks. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

a 19th century Georgian country house, you have a story to share with your friends. And each time you dwell on the uniqueness of the product, you improve your emotional well-being. It is in this context that you should consider investing in collectible assets. We define collectible assets as artefacts, paintings, vintage, and antique items including rare books.

These assets are commonly called as passion assets. The popular passion assets are wine, arts and rare artefacts.

Risk-return trade off
Buying collectible assets is just as difficult as choosing a mutual fund. With the latter, your ob-

jective is to choose a fund that can help you achieve your life goal (such as buying a house) with minimal risk of goal failure. With collectible assets, you should buy an artefact that you like, and importantly, one that you believe will increase in value in the future. So, foresight is just as important for 'investing' in collectible assets as it is for financial assets.

The biggest risk comes from the genuineness of the artefact.

With unscrupulous vendors describing all dark-wood furniture as rose wood and any artefact that is rusted and patinated as antique, it is easy to buy fake products. So, 'security selection' is just as important for col-

lectible assets as it is for stocks in your trading portfolio.

An additional risk is storage. While vintage glass and brass may not have major storage issues, art and coins do. You must ensure that they are not exposed to the elements of nature; for the fading of a painting or oxidation of a rare coin can affect their value. The return on these assets can be attractive.

Traditional assets such as stocks and bonds provide two sources of returns – income and capital appreciation. Collectible assets also provide two sources of returns – emotional returns and tangible returns in the form of capital appreciation when you eventually sell them.

Buying collectibles can be fulfilling but be mindful of the associated risks. The biggest advantage is that, unlike financial assets, you do not have to sell your collectibles at distress price to raise cash at short notice. The reason is that you do not typically invest in collectibles to achieve a life goal.

So, till your collectibles fetch a good price or till you are ready to part with them, you can share stories about them with friends for emotional returns.

(The writer offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

TECH TRAIL: PRECIOUS METALS

Gold, silver lose lustre

B. KRISHNAKUMAR

Precious metals remained range bound and volatile in November. After a rise in the early part of the month, gold and silver receded sharply in the second half to close marginally lower at the end of November.

The strengthening of the U.S. dollar and the firming up of U.S. bond yields played a key role in pulling down the prices. Comex gold closed 0.4% lower at \$1,776.5 an ounce at end-November. Comex silver fell 4.7% to settle at \$22.85 an once. In the domestic market, MCX gold futures gained 0.3% to close at ₹47,805 per 10 gm. MCX silver futures too closed on a weak note, falling 4.6% to settle at ₹62,287 per kilogram.

Traditional assets such as stocks and bonds provide two sources of returns – income and capital appreciation. Collectible assets also provide two sources of returns – emotional returns and tangible returns in the form of capital appreciation when you eventually sell them. Buying collectibles can be fulfilling but be mindful of the associated risks. The biggest advantage is that, unlike financial assets, you do not have to sell your collectibles at distress price to raise cash at short notice. The reason is that you do not typically invest in collectibles to achieve a life goal.

So, till your collectibles fetch a good price or till you are ready to part with them, you can share stories about them with friends for emotional returns.

Comex silver dropped below the support level of \$22.8 mentioned last month. This is a sign of weakness and could push the price lower to the next support at \$20.5-21. A fall

November blues

MCX GOLD: ₹/10 GM



below \$20.5 could impart further weakness. The short-term outlook negative unless the price moves above \$25.50.

The MCX gold price has been consolidating in a range and the price has to move either above ₹48,650 or drop below ₹47,000 to trigger a significant directional move. Until either of these levels is breached, expect volatile and range-bound action to persist. Above ₹48,650, expect a rise to ₹50,500-51,000. Below ₹47,000, MCX gold could slide to ₹46,000-46,500.

The short-term outlook for MCX silver is not positive; a fall below ₹58,300 could trigger a sharp fall in price. Unless the price moves above ₹65,000, expect silver price to remain weak. Below ₹58,300, the price could drop further to the ₹54,300-55,100 range.

(The author is a Chennai-based analyst and trader. This is not meant to be trading or investment advice)

PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES					
Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs 5 lakh)	EMI (Rs 1 lakh)	Processing fee (% of loan amount)	
HDFC Bank	10.25-21.00	10,685-13,527	2,149-2,705	Upto 2.5% (Max Rs 25,000)	
Citi Bank	9.99-16.49	10,621-12,290	2,124-2,458	Upto 3%	
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Upto 2.75%	
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Upto 2.50%	
Bank of Baroda	9.35-15.60	10,464-12,053	2,081-2,397	2% (Min Rs 1,000 and Max 10,000)	
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Upto 1.5% (Max Rs 15,000)	
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.25 onwards	10,685 onwards	2,137 onwards	Upto 2.5%	
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Upto 1%	
Punjab National Bank	7.90-14.45	10,367-11,764	2,025-2,353	Upto 1%	
HSBC Bank	9.50-14.50	10,501-11,895	2,100-2,379	Upto 1%	
Federal Bank	10.49-17.99	10,744-12,694	2,149-2,539	Upto 3%	
South Indian Bank	10.15-14.45	10,660-11,751	2,137-2,350	2%	

India on the cusp of another home series win

Ashwin has the Kiwis in knots again to leave them struggling at 140 for five, chasing a mammoth target of 540

NZ IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Batters are expected to make merry on the third day of a Test match, especially in the subcontinent. While Sunday saw the highest daily tally of the game, spinners continued to make inroads as India ended on the cusp of a facile win versus New Zealand.

Spinners on a roll

A whopping 347 runs were scored at the Wankhede Stadium to entertain a vocal Sunday crowd. But tweakers snared 11 of the 12 wickets as India was five wickets short of extending its eight-year unbeaten series run at home.

After setting New Zealand a gargantuan target of 540 runs, India's spinners continued to pile on New Zealand's misery as the visiting side finished day three at 140 for five.

New Zealand will be hoping for Henry Nicholls, who survived almost two hours, and Rachin Ravindra, whose blockathon was instrumental in the Black Caps pulling off a draw in the series-opener, to stretch the game deep on the penultimate day.

But their task will be easier said than done as R. Ashwin and Axar Patel continued their dominance against a largely clueless batting unit against spin. It



Pinned down: Ashwin has Latham plumb in front in the second innings. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

didn't come as a surprise that Ashwin was handed the new ball with India declaring its second essay at 276 for seven with half an hour remaining for tea.

While a spidercam malfunction resulted in the umptires being forced to call tea earlier than scheduled, the ball prior to it from Ashwin saw Tom Latham, the stand-in skipper, fail to read the

line of one that came in with the angle to be trapped in front.

Soon after the break, with Shubman Gill and Mayank Agarwal not taking the field as precautionary measure due to minor injuries, one of the two substitute fielders was in action. Will Young couldn't negotiate the turn and bounce extracted by Ashwin and offered a bat-pad

catch to Suryakumar Yadav at short-leg.

Ross Taylor then committed harakiri as his slog-sweep resulted in a top-edge that was latched onto by Cheteshwar Pujara running backward from leg-slip to take Ashwin's home Test-wicket tally to 299.

Taylor's wasn't the only brain-fade moment for the Kiwis. Daryl Mitchell, who

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

325 in 109.5 overs
NZ – 1ST INNINGS

62 in 28.1 overs

INDIA – 2ND INNINGS

Mayank Agarwal c Young b Ajaz 62 (108b, 9x4, 1x6), Cheteshwar Pujara c Taylor b Ajaz 47 (97b, 6x4, 1x6), Shubman Gill c Latham b Ravindra 47 (75b, 4x4, 1x6), Virat Kohli b Ravindra 36 (84b, 1x4, 1x6), Shreyas Iyer st. Blundell b Ajaz 14 (8b, 2x6), Wridhiman Saha c Jamieson b Ravindra 13 (12b, 2x4), Axar Patel (not out) 41 (26b, 3x4, 4x6), Jayant Yadav c & b Ajaz 6 (11b, 1x6); Extras (b-6, lb-3, nb-1): 10; Total (for seven wkts. decl., in 70 overs): 140.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-107 (Mayank, 31.2 overs), 2-115 (Pujara, 35.5), 3-197 (Gill, 59.4), 4-211 (Shreyas, 61.2), 5-217 (Kohli, 62.1), 6-238 (Saha, 66.2), 7-276 (Jayant, 69.6).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Southee 13-1-31-0, Ajaz 26-3-106-4, Jamieson 8-2-15-0, Somerville 10-0-59-0, Ravindra 13-2-56-3.

NZ – 2ND INNINGS

Tom Latham lbw b Ashwin 6 (15b, 1x4), Will Young c sub (Suryakumar) b Ashwin 20 (41b, 4x4), Daryl Mitchell c Jayant b Axar 60 (92b, 7x4, 2x6), Ross Taylor c Pujara b Ashwin 6 (8b, 1x4), Henry Nicholls (batting) 36 (86b, 7x4), Tom Blundell run out 0 (6b), Rachin Ravindra (batting) 2 (23b); Extras (b-8, lb-1, nb-1): 10; Total (for five wkts. in 45 overs): 140.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-13 (Latham, 3.6), 2-45 (Young, 14.3), 3-55 (Taylor, 16.1), 4-128 (Mitchell, 34.3), 5-129 (Blundell, 36.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Siraj 5-2-13-0, Ashwin 17-7-27-3, Axar 10-2-42-1, Jayant 8-2-30-0, Umesh 5-1-19-0.

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Justified his inclusion as Kane Williamson's replacement with a sublime fifty, holed out to Jayant Yadav at deep cover off Axar Patel before Tom Blundell ran himself out to put the Kiwis in a deeper hole.

Best figures

Earlier in the day, the two Pataels – Ajaz and Axar – continued to sizzle. Ajaz added four more scalps, including that of half-centurion Mayank Agarwal, to his 'Perfect-10' to register the best figures by a bowler against India. Axar then showed his prowess with the willow with a cameo to help India declare at 276 for seven.

But one of the main objectives of India's decision to bat instead of imposing the follow-on wasn't really achieved. Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli, in need of a big score ahead of the South Africa tour, couldn't convert their starts. But their dismissals – Pujara edging Ajaz to slip and Kohli playing left-arm spinner Rachin Ravindra on to the stumps – didn't hurt India on the day.

nals as the 279th-ranked player but had won all his three matches.

It was the third consecutive victory for the fifth-ranked Rublev after a loss against Spain's Feliciano López in the group stage.

Gojo had no break opportunities throughout the match against Rublev, who converted one of his eight to grab the first set and eventually clinch the win in the second-set tiebreaker.

Russia's other Davis Cup title was in 2002. Croatia also was seeking its third title after triumphs in 2005 and 2018.

The results:

Russia bt Croatia 2-0 [Andrey Rublev bt Borna Gojo 6-4, 7-6 (5); Daniil Medvedev bt Marin Cilic 7-6(7), 6-2].

Russia on top of the world

Ends 15-year wait, bags third title

DAVIS CUP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID

Russia's 15-year wait for a Davis Cup title ended on Sunday after another clutch performance by Daniil Medvedev.

Medvedev defeated Marin Cilic 7-6(7), 6-2 in the second singles match to give Russia an insurmountable 2-0 lead over Croatia in the final. It was Russia's third Davis Cup title and its first since 2006.

Andrej Rublev had earlier beaten Borna Gojo in straight sets to put the Russians ahead at the Madrid Arena.

Rublev converted his first match point to clinch a 6-4, 7-6(5) win over Gojo, who arrived at the Davis Cup fi-



Sealing it: Medvedev's win over Cilic in the second singles settled the issue in Russia's favour. ■ REUTERS

Meghana on song



S. Meghana (India-D, 102). ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

VIJAYAWADA: S. Meghana scored a century (102, 86b, 13x4, 2x6) to help India-D record a 46-run win over India-C in the second round of the BCCI senior women's Challenger Trophy one-day cricket championship at Mulapadu Cricket Complex here on Sunday.

As Cyclone Jawad weakened, the Argentines – who overcame COVID-related curbs and other issues back home – rode on penalty corner specialist Lautaro Domene's hat-trick to seal victory in a well-contested final.

Coached by Olympic gold medallist Lucas Rey, Argentina smartly controlled the game. It relied on sound basics, strong structure and timely tackles to nip most of the German moves in the bud.

Argentina, cashing in on some good moves, took a 2-0 lead. Lautaro Domene flicked high in the opening quarter and scored off a variation in the second.

Argentina quells Germany's challenge

JUNIOR WC

Y.B. SARANGI

BHUABANESWAR

A well-organised Argentina defeated six-time champion Germany 4-2 and won the title after a 16-year gap in the men's Junior hockey World Cup at the Kalinga Stadium here on Sunday.



Champs again! Argentina ended a 16-year wait for the coveted trophy. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

hard hits and quick passes from outside the circle after half-time. One such move reduced the gap as Julius Hayner tapped in a loose ball.

Germany got three straight short corners early in the final quarter before Masi Pfandt converted to restore parity.

However, Domene completed a hat-trick and Franco Agostini struck in the final minute to seal the win.

Earlier, an error-prone In-

dia lost to a better-prepared France 1-3 to finish fourth for the second time. It was the 2016 champion's second loss to France in this edition.

Clement's hat-trick

The host conceded as many as 14 penalty corners and trailed 0-1 after the second quarter as French captain Timothee Clement converted his team's fifth short corner.

Clement went on to complete a hat-trick.

Earlier, an error-prone In-

Sudeep Chirmako's 42nd-minute goal gave some hope but the host could not capitalise on several chances.

The results:

Final: Argentina 4 (Lautaro Domene 10, 25, 50, Franco Agostini 60) bt Germany 2 (Julius Hayner 36, Masi Pfandt 47).

3rd-4th places: France 3 (Timothee Clement 26, 34, 47) bt India 1 (Sudeep Chirmako 42);

5th-6th: Netherlands bt Belgium 6-4; **7th-8th:** Spain bt Malaysia 4-1.

Morikawa leaves field far behind

Moves within striking distance of title and No. 1 ranking

ASHWIN ACHAL

NASSAU

Collin Morikawa carded a brilliant eight-under 64 third round to grab a five-shot lead in the Hero World Challenge at the Albany Golf Course here on Saturday.

Morikawa shot a bogey-free round after having started in grand fashion, chipping in on the par-5 third hole to make eagle.

The 24-year-old American is on the verge of winning his third title of the year, to go with The Open and the World Tour Championship.

"I'm just piggybacking off a couple of weeks ago in Dubai (DP championship). I'm dissecting my game and figuring out what I need to do consistently to be a better player, and to be in contention a lot more. Chipping and putting has put me in a good spot. I feel great, and I've just got to keep doing that," Morikawa said.

Brooks Koepka returned a three-under 69 to lie second.



Sitting pretty: Collin Morikawa was just brilliant in the third round, grabbing a five-shot lead. ■ AFP

He was forced to play catch-up after a double bogey on the par-3 eighth hole.

Overnight leader Bryson DeChambeau shot a one-over 73 to fall to ninth place. Daniel Berger recovered from a lost ball and double bogey on the par-5 third to sit joint third alongside Sam Burns, Viktor Hovland, Patrick Reed and Tony Finau.

Tournament host Tiger Woods hit some balls on the practice range, suggesting he could soon return.

The scores (top three): 198: Collin Morikawa (68, 66, 64); 203: Brooks Koepka (67, 67, 69); 204: Daniel Berger (66, 69, 69), Sam Burns (71, 65, 68), Patrick Reed (68, 69, 67), Viktor Hovland (68, 69, 67), Tony Finau (68, 66, 70).

(The writer is in Nassau at the invitation of Hero MotoCorp).

India to host Denmark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

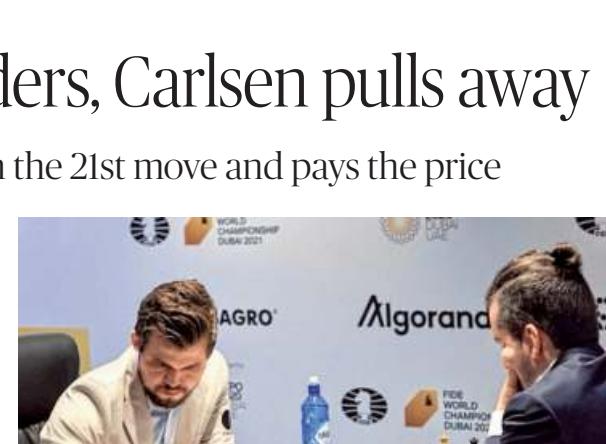
NEW DELHI

India has been seeded and will play at home against Denmark in the World Group-I playoff Davis Cup tie on March 4 and 5. The winner of the tie will compete in World Group-I while the loser will be relegated to Group-2.

Denmark has the 18-year-old Holger Rune, ranked 104, as the leading player. Mikael Torpegaard is the second best, ranked 227. The best doubles player for Denmark is the 38-year-old Frederik Nielsen, ranked 94 in doubles.

Ramkumar Ramanathan (186), Prajesh Gunnswaran (215) and Sumit Nagal (218) are the three leading Indian players. Rohan Bopanna is the best-ranked Indian in doubles at 43, while Divij Sharan (120) is the second-best doubles player, followed by Ramkumar (146) and Purav Raja (150).

"I think, this game is going to haunt Neko for the rest of his life," said Viswa-



Striking again: Carlsen won for the second successive time with the white pieces. ■ FILE PHOTO: AFP

nathan Anand once Neko reached a completely lost position and Carlsen continued to make his rival suffer. The Norwegian continued to torture Neko by taking time for the moves while the Russian could do very little to improve his dead-lost position. Eventually, Neko resigned on the 46th move.

The moves: Game 8: White: Carlsen; Black: Nepo

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. d4

Nxe4 4. Bd3 d5 5. Nxe5 Nd7 6.

Nxd7 Bxd7 7. Nd2 Nxd8 2. Bxd2

Bd6 9. O-O h5 10. Qe1 Kf8 11.

TV PICKS

India vs New Zealand: 2nd Test, day 4, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.

ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

IN BRIEF

MVP Jokic on song as Nuggets rout Knicks

NEW YORK

Reigning NBA MVP Nikola Jokic scored 32 points and pulled down 11 rebounds as Denver Nuggets drubbed New York Knicks 113-99 on Saturday.

The results: Knicks 99 lost to Nuggets 113; Nets 107 lost to Bulls 111; Bucks 124 bt Heat 102; Mavericks 90 lost to Grizzlies 97; Warriors 107 lost to Spurs 112; Kings 104 bt Clippers 99; Trail Blazers 117 lost to Celtics 145. **APF**

Play called off due to rain in Dhaka Test

DHAKA

Play on the second day of the second Test between Bangladesh and Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium here was called off due to rain on Sunday. Only 6.2 overs were possible with a short resumption after lunch before the rain returned.

The scores: Pakistan 188/2 in 63.2 overs (Abid Ali 39, Abdullah Shafique 25, Babar Azam 71 batting, Azhar Ali 52 bowling). **APF**

Head gets the nod for first Ashes Test

Brisbane

Australia confirmed its line-up for the first Ashes Test on Sunday, recalling Travis Head for the No. 5 spot while retaining Mitchell Starc in bowling attack.

The team: Marcus Harris, David Warner, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (Capt.), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Josh Hazlewood. **APF**

Sindhu falls at final hurdle, takes silver

Se-young, Axelsen emerge champions

BWF FINALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BALI

Reigning World champion P.V. Sindhu returns with a silver medal after losing to Korean teen sensation An Se-young in the summit clash of the, BWF World Tour Finals

of the, BWF World Tour Finals on Sunday.

"It was a good game. An Se-young is a good player so I don't think it was going to be easy. I was prepared for a good match," Sindhu said. **AFP reports**

In the men's singles, Viktor Axelsen of Denmark beat Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn 21-12, 21-8 in the final.

The results: Men: Viktor Axelsen (Den) bt Kunlavut Vitidsarn 21-12, 21-8 (Tha). **Doubles:** Taikuro Hoki & Yugo Kobayashi (Jpn) bt Kevin Sanjaya & Marcus Gideon (Ind) 21-16, 13-21, 21-17. **Women:** An Se-young (Kor) bt P.V. Sindhu 21-16, 21-12. **Doubles:** Kim So-young & Kong Hee-yong (Kor) bt Nami Matsuyama & Chiharu Shida (Jpn) 21-14, 21-14.



Losing run: Sindhu could neither match the pace nor breach the defence of An Se-young for her third straight loss to the Korean. **AFP**

13 International Opens proposed

Two women's round-robin events to be held

CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

the profile of chess continues," said the AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan.

Financial health

"We have decided to help the financial health of host associations of the Nationals to keep 75% of the entry-free collection and the rest will come to the AICF. Earlier, it was shared equally."

The schedule: National championships: Jan. 9-14: Junior (u-20) in Delhi (prize-money ₹10 lakh); 17-21: Schools (Bhubaneswar, ₹5 lakh); 23-31: Sub-junior (u-16) (Visakhapatnam, ₹9 lakh).

Feb. 2-7: Amateur (Rajasthan*, ₹3 lakh); 9-17: Women (Bheemavaram, ₹25 lakh); 9-21: Se-

nior (Kanpur, ₹30 lakh).

April 1-7: U-10 (Jammu, ₹5 lakh); 2-5: Rapid and Blitz (Maharashtra*, ₹6.50 lakh); 9-16: U-8 (Gurugram, ₹5 lakh); 9-16: Team (Open and women) (Maharashtra*, ₹10 lakh); 18-25: U-18 (Coimbatore, ₹9 lakh).

May 2-9: U-12 (Mandya, ₹8 lakh); 11-18: U-14 (Ahmedabad, ₹8 lakh).

Proposed International Opens: Feb. 23 to Mar. 2 (Ahmedabad); Mar. 4-11 (Pune); Mar. 13-20 (Guwahati); Mar. 22-29 (Delhi); May 21-29 (Kolkata); May 31-June 18 (Odisha*); June 10-18 (Visakhapatnam); June 20-28 (Bangalore); Aug. 22-30 (Punjab*); Sept. 1-9 (Bikaner); Sept. 11-19 (Indore); Sept. 21-29 (Chhattisgarh*); Oct. 1-9 (UP*).

*host city to be decided.

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the profile of chess continues," said the AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan.

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"Our endeavour to raise

Esha recovers her winning streak

Thrilled with her three medals in the national championship

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Esha Singh was a pistol prodigy when she won the women's, junior and youth sections air pistol gold in the National championship in 2018, at a tender age of 13.

After slipping in performance the following year in Bhopal, when she failed to make any of the three finals, the 11th standard student from Hyderabad, has been able to recover her golden touch.

In the ongoing national championship in Delhi, Esha topped qualification with 582 before winning the ju-



Esha Singh. **KAMESH SRINIVASAN**

nior and youth golds apart from a bronze in the women's section.

Trained by national high performance coach Ved Prakash Pilaniya, Esha - who spends about eight hours ev-

ery day at her home range -

has been able to gain a firm grip on air pistol.

It was evident earlier this season when she finished runner-up by 1.3 points to Manu Bhaker in the Junior World Championship in Lima, Peru.

"Esha is well guided by coach Ved Prakash with his vast experience and expertise. Olympic Gold Quest (OGQ) is supporting her," said Sachin Singh, Esha's father.

"She changed her technique a bit in 2019 and it took her time to adapt to it. Now she has been able to come back with a bang," said Sachin.

"As parents, we need to allow time for the kids to settle

in their sport. Just keep telling them to give their best, and encourage them all the time with a good atmosphere irrespective of bad or good scores," he added.

Esha is understandably thrilled with her three medals in the national championship. They provide a solid platform for her to excel in the season ahead and march with confidence towards the Paris Olympics.

As a junior, Esha has been winning international medals in World Cups and Asian Championships. She is now ready to be a regular in the national women's team and work her way to win the best of medals around the world.

Supriya fires Railways in to semis

Manipur, Mizoram and Odisha complete the line-up

FOOTBALL

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

An old-fashioned hat-trick from Supriya Routray put Railways firmly on track to the semifinals of the National senior women's football championship at the Govt. Medical College Ground here on Sunday. Riding on Supriya's splendid effort, the Railway women won 4-2 against Goa.

It was, however, the Goans who drew first blood as Sushmita Jadhav put them ahead in the 33rd minute. Before long, though, the Supriya show began.

She found the equaliser for Railways, the runner-up in the last edition, in first half injury time. Then she scored 11 minutes into the second half to give her side the lead. Two minutes later she completed her hat-trick as Railways went 3-1 up.

In the 69th minute, Mam-



On a roll: Supriya Routray scoring the first of her three goals for Railways against Goa. **K. RAGESH**

ta made it 4-1 before Sushmita reduced the margin for Goa in the dying minutes.

Earlier at Koothuparamba, holder Manipur moved into the semifinals with a 2-0 win against Assam, through goals from Yangojiam Kiranbala Chanu 9, Thingbajam Babysana Devi 65) bt Assam 0.

Railways 4 (Supriya Routray 45+1, 56 & 58, Mamta 69) bt Goa 2 (Sushmita Jadhav 33 & 90+1).

Mizoram 4 (Elizabeth Vanlalmawii 10 & 87, Lalnunsiama 24 & 66) bt Maharashtra 1 (Karen Pais 47).

Odisha 2 (Karishma Oram 27, Satyabati Khadia 37) bt Tamil Nadu 0.

After a day's rest, the semi-

CCFC set to miss I-League this year

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

The All India Football Federation on Saturday announced that former I-League champion Chennai City FC will not be allowed to play in the upcoming season of the league for failing to comply with Club Licensing Regulations. The new season is set to start on Dec. 26 and CCFC's place will be taken by Kenkre FC, which finished second in the Hero I-League Qualifiers held in Bengaluru earlier this year.

However, CCFC owner Rohit Ramesh said that it had informed the federation that it was not in a position to play in the upcoming season anyway due to the impact of COVID-19 on club revenues and the recent rains in Chennai impacting its preparations as well.

In a statement, the federation said, "The AIFF Club Licensing Committee has taken strong exception to

Chennai City FC (the "Club") for failing to comply with most of the mandatory AIFF Club Licensing Regulations for the forthcoming Hero I-League 2021-22 despite giving additional opportunity after assurances from the Club including a detailed conference call."

Explaining the reasons for not wanting to play this year, Rohit said, "Due to the pandemic, all the clubs have taken a big financial hit and we just managed to field a team last year. We were unable to even commence the club licensing process due to a delay in obtaining the affiliation letter from the Tamil Nadu Football Association which put us at a disadvantage.

"While it is unfortunate that we can't play this year, we are hopeful of making a strong comeback next year and continue to promote football in the State and the country," he added.

"It is hard to put a number on how many people will come

'India has become a huge market'

Qatar 2022 CEO Al-Khater credits ISL for the change

QATAR 2022

SANTADEEP DEY
DOHA

Qatar 2022 CEO Nasser Al-Khater on Thursday said Indian sports aficionados are slowly looking beyond cricket and have developed an interest in football, thanks to the Indian Super League (ISL).

"India has become a huge football market with the coming of the [Indian] Super League. They were a lot more interested in cricket but there is a growing liking for football now," Al-Khater told select media.

Al-Khater, also the Assistant Secretary General, Tournament Operations with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, is confident the West Asian nation will see a massive influx from India during the FIFA World Cup next year. "It is hard to put a number on how many people will come

to the World Cup from India. But having attended the U-17 World Cup in 2017 and seen the popularity of football among people there, I can assure you the interest will be huge," he said.

Qatar -since it secured hosting rights for the quadrennial showpiece on December 2, 2010 -has drawn flak from multiple media organisations and human rights groups, for the country's limited football history, expenditure, local climate,

criminalisation of homosexuality and labour laws.

However, Al-Khater feels the nation has often been treated unfairly. He said, "Yes (feel Qatar has been an easy target sometimes). Being the first World Cup in the Middle East, it was easy to complain about it being too small a country, lacking football history. But we also see the advantages of holding a WC in a small country like ours. The fact that they say Qatar doesn't have a football history, it is not true.

"However, we do need to answer these questions, because it our duty and job to clarify misconceptions. It's also important for us to admit that there is a lot of work to be done in certain areas and at the same time make sure what is reflected by the media is factually correct."

(The writer is in Qatar at the invitation of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy)

JFC will look to exploit ATKMB's vulnerability

Latter still licking its wounds after suffering one of its worst defeats

ISL 2021

Jamshedpur FC (JFC) will look to exploit the psychological vulnerability of last year's runner-up ATK Mohun Bagan when it hosts the latter in the ISL at Bambolim on Monday.

ATKMB is still licking its wounds after suffering one of its worst defeats when it went down 1-5 to reigning champion Mumbai City FC in its last outing. JFC head coach Owen Coyle

Text & Context

NEWS IN NUMBERS



Lives lost

13

The number of civilians killed in an armed forces' operation against extremists gone wrong in Nagaland's Mon district on Saturday evening. In a statement, the Army said the cause of the "unfortunate" loss of lives is being investigated by the Court of Inquiry at the "highest level" and appropriate action will be taken. Army officials said the operation in Mon district that borders Myanmar was carried out based on credible intelligence inputs. One soldier was killed in this attack during which the troops fired at the locals in self-defence, officials said. PTI

Rising count

17

The number of new COVID-19 cases of the Omicron variant detected in India on Sunday. Nine of them were from Rajasthan, seven from Maharashtra and one from Delhi. The country's tally of confirmed cases attributed to the variant is now 19. Previously, two cases were detected in Karnataka and one each was found in Gujarat and Maharashtra. As many as 542 confirmed cases of the variant have been detected in 34 countries. South Africa (227), United Kingdom (83) and Ghana (33) have detected the most cases. PTI

Volcanic disruption

14

The death toll after Mount Semeru, the biggest mountain on the island of Java in Indonesia, erupted on Sunday. At least 11 villages of Lumajang district in East Java were coated in volcanic ash smothering livestock and leaving at least 1,300 evacuees seeking shelter in mosques, schools and village halls. At least 56 people including two pregnant women were injured in the eruption, health officials said, and most suffered serious burns. The country's geological agency said rain is expected in the next three days that could hinder rescue work. AFP

Improved health

0.05

In percent, the net non-performing asset (NPA) of the Life Insurance Corporation of India at the end of FY21. The insurance behemoth is proposed for initial public offering. The NPAs as of March 31, 2021, are ₹35,129.89 cr out of a total portfolio of ₹4,51,303.30 cr, according to the latest Annual Report of the LIC. In absolute terms, the NPA was ₹36,694.20 cr out of a total debt of ₹4,49,364.87 cr in 2019-20. The Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956, was amended to facilitate the listing of the LIC. PTI

Special feat

14

The number of wickets picked up by New Zealand spinner Ajaz Patel against India in both innings in the second Test at Mumbai. This is the best-ever match figures by a bowler against India in Tests. The previous best was England fast bowler Ian Botham's 13-106 in Mumbai in 1980. Earlier in the first innings, the Mumbai-born Patel had picked up all the 10 Indian wickets surpassing Richard Hadlee's record. He became only the third bowler after England's Jim Laker and former Indian skipper Anil Kumble to pick up 10 wickets in an innings.

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

EXPLAINER

The arms race towards hypersonic weapons

How are hypersonic weapons different from traditional weaponry? Where does India stand vis-a-vis the technology?

DINAKAR PERI

■ Hypersonic weapons are manoeuvrable weapons that can fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, five times the speed of sound. They travel within the atmosphere and can manoeuvre midway which combined with their high speeds makes their detection and interception extremely difficult.

■ China tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile in August while Russia announced that it had successfully test launched a Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile in early October. While the U.S. has active hypersonic development programmes, it was lagging behind because most U.S. hypersonic weapons are not being designed for use with a nuclear warhead.

■ India operates approximately 12 hypersonic wind tunnels and is capable of testing speeds of up to Mach 13. India is also developing an indigenous, dual-capable hypersonic cruise missile as part of its Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) program.

What are hypersonic weapons? They are manoeuvrable weapons that can fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, five times the speed of sound. The speed of sound is Mach 1, and speeds upto Mach 5 are supersonic and speeds above Mach 5 are hypersonic. Ballistic missiles, though much faster, follow a fixed trajectory and travel outside the atmosphere to re-enter only near impact. On the contrary, hypersonic weapons travel within the atmosphere and can manoeuvre midway which combined with their high speeds makes their detection and interception extremely difficult. This means that radars and air defences cannot detect them till they are very close and little time to react.

According to the latest memo of the Congressional Research Service (CRS), 'Hypersonic Weapons: Background and Issues for Congress' of October 2021, there are two classes of hypersonic weapons, hypersonic glide vehicles (HGV) and hypersonic cruise missiles (HCM). HGVs are launched from a rocket before gliding to a target while HCMs are powered by high-speed, air-breathing engines, or scramjets, after acquiring their target.

Hypersonic missiles are a new class of threat because they are capable both of manoeuvring and of flying faster than 5,000 kms per hour, which would enable such missiles to penetrate most missile defences and to further compress the timelines for response by a nation under attack, says a 2017 book *Hypersonic Missile Nonproliferation* published by the RAND Corporation.

What is the status of Chinese and Russian programmes and where does



the U.S. stand?

In addition to the Chinese test, early October, Russia announced that it had successfully test launched a Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile from a Severodvinsk submarine deployed in the Barents Sea which hit a target 350 kms away.

Talking of the test in November, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the tests were almost complete and the Russian Navy would start receiving them in 2022. "Now, it is especially important to develop and implement the technologies necessary to create new hypersonic weapons systems, high-powered lasers and robotic systems that will be able to effectively counter potential military threats," he said.

While the U.S. has active hypersonic development programmes, the CRS memo said it was lagging behind China and Russia because "most U.S. hypersonic weapons, in contrast to those in Russia and China, are not being designed for use with a nuclear warhead." As a result, U.S. hypersonic weapons will likely require greater accuracy and will be more technically challenging to develop than nuclear-armed Chinese and Russian systems," it stated.

The U.S. is now looking to accelerate its own programmes, though it is unlikely to field an operational system before 2023. The Pentagon's budget request for hypersonic research for financial year 2022 is \$3.8 billion, up from the \$3.2 billion it requested

a year earlier. The Missile Defence Agency additionally requested \$247.9 million for hypersonic defence.

However, as stated by the U.S. Principal Director for Hypersonics Mike White, the Department of Defence has not yet made a decision to acquire hypersonic weapons and is instead developing prototypes to assist in the evaluation of potential weapon system concepts and mission sets.

Debunking some of the claims surrounding hypersonic weapons, Physicists David Wright and Cameron Tracy wrote in the *Scientific American* dated August 1, 2021 that their studies indicate that hypersonic weapons "may have advantages in certain scenarios, but by no means do they constitute a revolution." "Many of the claims about them are exaggerated or simply false. And yet the widespread perception that hypersonic weapons are a game-changer has increased tensions among the U.S., Russia and China, driving a new arms race and escalating the chances of conflict," they wrote in the article 'The Physics and Hype of Hypersonic Weapons'.

What is the status of development by other countries?

The CRS Memo noted that a number of other countries - including Australia, India, France, Germany, and Japan - are also developing hypersonic weapons technology.

India operates approximately 12

hypersonic wind tunnels and is capable of testing speeds of up to Mach 13, according to CRS.

"Reportedly, India is also developing an indigenous, dual-capable hypersonic cruise missile as part of its Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) program and successfully tested a Mach 6 scramjet in June 2019 and September 2020," the memo stated.

This test was carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and demonstrated the scramjet engine technology, a major breakthrough. In a scramjet engine, air goes inside the engine at supersonic speed and comes out at hypersonic speeds.

DRDO had said after the test in 2020, many critical technologies such as aerodynamic configuration for hypersonic manoeuvres, use of scramjet propulsion for ignition and sustained combustion at hypersonic flow, thermo-structural characterisation of high temperature materials, separation mechanism at hypersonic velocities have been validated.

Given the rising tensions between the U.S., China and Russia as also the worsening geopolitical situation worldwide, the focus for hypersonic weapons is only set to accelerate more countries to invest significant resources in their design and development.

Take-off: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully demonstrated the hypersonic air-breathing scramjet technology with the flight test of Hypersonic Technology Demonstration Vehicle (HSTDV) from DR APJ Abdul Kalam Launch Complex in Odisha on September 7, 2020.

PTI

THE GIST

■ Hypersonic weapons are manoeuvrable weapons that can fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, five times the speed of sound. They travel within the atmosphere and can manoeuvre midway which combined with their high speeds makes their detection and interception extremely difficult.

■ China tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile in August while Russia announced that it had successfully test launched a Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile in early October. While the U.S. has active hypersonic development programmes, it was lagging behind because most U.S. hypersonic weapons are not being designed for use with a nuclear warhead.

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What is the status of Chinese and Russian programmes and where does

EXPLAINER

Clearing the mounting debt of Air India

How soon will Air India clear its dues? What does the airline, bought over by the Tatas, owe banks, oil companies and others?

MURALI N. KRISHNASWAMY

The story so far: On Friday (December 3), the Government sought Parliament's approval for infusion of ₹62,057 crore into Air India Assets Holding Limited (IAHL) or the special purpose vehicle that hosts Air India's residual debt, liabilities and some assets. Two months back, on October 8, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey announced at a press conference that the Tata Sons subsidiary, Talace Pvt. Ltd., had won the bid for the national carrier, Air India. He said that after the setting of a reserve price of ₹12,906 crore the Tata Sons subsidiary had emerged the winner, quoting a figure of ₹18,000 crore. The other shortlisted bidder, Ajay Singh of SpiceJet, had quoted ₹15,100 crore.

What will the Government do with the infusion?

A senior Government official said Air India will pay back all its debt and dues owed to banks, oil companies, airports and aircraft lessors by the end of this financial year. Explaining the break-up of the equity infusion sought from Parliament, the official said: "₹61,562



crore is Air India's debt as of August 31, 2021. In addition to this there are excess current liabilities of ₹15,834 crore, which gives us a figure of ₹77,396 crore. Out of this if we remove the debt amount of ₹15,300 crore to be taken on by the Tatas, we get an amount of ₹62,096 crore. This was an estimate at the time and has now been determined as ₹62,057 crore."

What did Tata Sons get when it bought Air India?

The Air India group is made up of these

components: Air India; Air India Express, Air India Engineering Services Limited (AIESL), Air India Air Transport Services Limited (AIATSL); ground handling services to the Air India group and other airlines, Airline Allied Services Limited, or AASL (Alliance Air); the Hotel Corporation of India (Centaur hotels and the Chefair flight kitchens) and Air India SATS Airport Services Private Limited (AISATS is a 50:50 joint venture between Air India Limited and Singapore Airport Terminal Services Limited (SATS)).

The Air India sale was the third attempt by the Government of India (incidentally, all under the National Democratic Alliance), the earlier bids having been in the early 2000s and 2017-2018. This time round, the Government offered management control and sale of 100% equity share capital, each, of Air India and Air India Express and a 50% equity share capital of Air India SATS Airport Services Private Limited - which the Tatas have won.

What is the amount of debt the Tatas took on?

The airline's total debt at the end of August this year was ₹61,562 crore. Of this, Tata Sons (its holding company Talace Pvt. Ltd.) would be taking over ₹15,300 crore, with a cash payment of ₹2,700 crore.

Much of the debt is related to the merger between Air India and the other state-owned carrier, Indian Airlines, which was cleared by the Cabinet on March 1, 2007 to form the National Aviation Company of India Limited (NACIL). Preceding this development - i.e. of the merger - the then United Progressive Alliance government, had in 2005, approved the purchase of 68

aircraft by Air India (from Boeing) - and also the largest commercial aircraft deal in India's civil aviation history - and a year later, 43 planes for Indian Airlines (from the Airbus 320 family, for \$2.2 billion). The Boeing deal was for 23 777s, 27 787s and 18 737s (for low cost carrier Air India Express). Boeing has also built and transferred a state-of-the-art maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility at Nagpur. Following mounting losses, there was an investigation into allegations about the nearly ₹70,000 crore deal that had caused a financial loss to the "already stressed national carrier". It also inducted A320Ns on lease from the ALAFCO Aviation Lease and Finance Company in 2017.

According to Mr. Pandey, the airline loses ₹2 crore a day. And, from 2009-10 to date, the Government has infused over ₹10,276 crore into the airline; ₹54,584 crore as cash support and ₹55,692 crore as loan guarantees. The four Air India subsidiaries, AIATSL, AASL, AIESL, the Hotel Corporation of India Ltd., and non-core assets, that also include the fabled collection of art work, paintings and artefacts, and other non-operational assets have been transferred to the IAHL.

With inputs by Jagriti Chandra

THE GIST

Following the acquisition of Air India by Tata sons two months back, the Government sought Parliament's approval for infusion of ₹62,057 cr into the IAHL that hosts Air India's residual debt.

The Air India is approximately ₹77,396 cr in debt. Out of this Tata sons will bear the debt amount of ₹15,300 cr while the rest has to be borne by the Government itself, which is why the infusion is being sought in Parliament.

Much of the debt is related to the merger between Air India and the other state-owned carrier, Indian Airlines, which was cleared by the Cabinet on March 1, 2007 to form the NACIL.



Against the machine: South Korean professional Go player Lee Sedol puts his first stone against Google's artificial intelligence program, AlphaGo, during the third Google DeepMind Challenge Match on March 12, 2016 in Seoul, South Korea. Lee Sedol played a five-match series against AlphaGo. ■ GETTY IMAGES

CACHE

The changing AI landscape

The question of whether machines can think is centuries old. Alan Turing reframed it, and broke down intelligence into specialised tasks with his famous 'imitation game' experiment. Now, Google's DeepMind is pushing the frontiers on what machines can do

JOHN XAVIER

French philosopher René Descartes, in his Discourse on Method, made the famous philosophical statement: *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). The inventor of analytic geometry was the first person to link thought and intelligence to living. But machines, he said, can't think the same way as humans can.

To find out, nearly four centuries later, British mathematician and computer scientist Alan Turing proposed a way. In his seminal paper, titled 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' (1950), Turing redefined the meaning of "think" and "machine" with a thought experiment, called "imitation game".

The imitation game is played with three players: A, B, and C, an interrogator. C stays in a separate room, and puts questions to A and B. Their responses come in as type-written messages. C only knows players A and B by labels X and Y, and at the end of the game he has to say either "X is A and Y is B" or "X is B and Y is A". B's goal is to help the interrogator with truthful answer.

In his paper, Turing suggests player 'B' be replaced with a computer algorithm that will imitate the human, and asks, what would happen if a human interrogator failed to identify the algorithm based on the answers it gives out? Can the machine be considered intelligent?

His idea reframed the 'Can machines think?' question, and broke down human intelligence into specialised units. For instance, the intellectual capacities of an engineer are different from a doctor's. So, the two can't be compared based on the same knowledge parameter.

Turing's prediction and Deep Blue

After reframing the question, Turing predicted that within half a century a computer can perform better than humans.

"I believe that in about fifty years' time it will be possible to programme computers, with a

storage capacity of about 10⁹, to make them play the imitation game so well, that an average interrogator will not have more than 70% chance of making the right identification after five minutes of questioning," Turing predicted in the paper.

"I believe that at the end of the century the use of words and general educated opinion will have altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted."

In his seminal paper, titled 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' (1950), Turing redefined the meaning of "think" and "machine" with a thought experiment, called "imitation game".

His prediction came to pass in just under fifty years, albeit through another machine in a different game.

In 1997, Deep Blue, IBM's chess-playing supercomputer, defeated the reigning world champion Garry Kasparov in a six-match game in New York City. The victory showed that computers were fast catching up with human intelligence.

Deep Blue won using brute force search, an algorithmic method of examining all possible options before making the move. This method helps machines find answers to a finite set of solutions. That means, in a game like chess, in which each piece is confined to its next step, there are about $(8 \times 8)^{16}$ possible combinations for a computer programme to learn.

The DeepMind paradigm

While IBM's supercomputer mastered chess, another board game had long baffled AI scientists. The ancient game of Go's rules are simple, but the game play's complexity is prohibitively high. It is played on a 19 × 19 board, and has theoretically

361! possible combinations to get started. That means brute-force computing alone won't help.

In 2016, DeepMind, a London-based offshoot of Alphabet Inc., made a breakthrough after its AlphaGo programme defeated Lee Sedol, the Garry Kasparov of Go, in a five-match game.

And unlike other Go algorithms, AlphaGo used the concept of neural network to train itself. It combined smart algorithm and brute-force computing to accomplish specialised tasks that have known rules and clear criteria for success.

To learn the game and improve its odds, the programme played against itself over a million times - an exercise referred to as reinforcement learning.

"The AlphaGo is unique in its ability of relating the immediate action with the final outcome of the game through its value network, providing a mechanism for closed-loop feedback in decision-making," according to a research paper titled 'Where Does AlphaGo Go: From Church-Turing Thesis to AlphaGo Thesis and Beyond'.

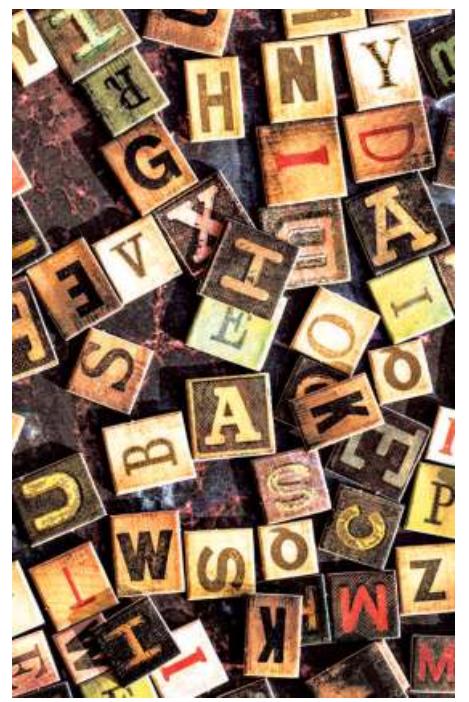
DeepMind's venture into science

More importantly, what AlphaGo accomplished isn't confined to a single game. In November 2020, DeepMind's AlphaFold2, predicted the 3D structure of proteins (protein folding) which is an important problem in biology.

"AlphaFold2 has taken structure-prediction strategies to the next level," *Nature* said about the discovery in its blog.

The algorithm's predictions had reduced the number of human proteins for which no structural data was available from 4,800 to just 29.

Just like how Descartes combined algebra and geometry to create a coordinate system, DeepMind's AI has fused diverse fields of study into a single algorithmic system to solve sector-agnostic problems. Its influence has grown beyond the traditional board games, and spread into fundamental science research.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Words which sound the same may not mean the same

S UPENDRAN

What is the difference between 'homophone' and 'homonym'?

(J Nitya, Bengaluru)

The first syllable in both words rhymes with 'bomb' and 'mom', while the 'o' in the second syllable sounds like the 'a' in 'china'. The stress in both words is on the first syllable - HOM-e-phone, HOM-e-nim. This is one way of pronouncing the two words. 'Homophone' comes from the Greek 'homo' meaning same or similar, and 'phone' meaning sound. A homophone, therefore, is a word that sounds like another word, but the two are spelt differently, and have very different meanings. Weather/weather, due/dew and right/write are examples of homophones. The 'nym' in homonym, comes from the Greek 'onoma' meaning 'name'. The term is used to refer to words which have the same spelling and pronunciation, but have a different meaning. Here are a few examples of homonyms: right (opposite of left), right (correct); mean (average), mean (not nice); and bark (tree), bark (dog). In everyday conversation, however, people do not always maintain this subtle distinction between the two words. They tend to use them interchangeably.

What is the origin of the word 'honeymoon'?

(GV Ganeshan, Chennai)

'Honeymoon' consists of two words - honey and moon - and it has been part of the English language for several hundred years. Nowadays, whenever we hear the word 'honeymoon', places like Switzerland, Maldives, Paris, etc. come to mind. The word is mostly used now to refer to the holiday that a newly married couple go on immediately after the wedding. This holiday could be within or outside the country. This meaning of the word, however, came into existence only in the late 18th century. For several hundred years before that, 'honeymoon' was used to refer to the first month after marriage; it had nothing to do with the newly married couple having a good time in another town, city or country. In the old days, when a man got married, he received a bottle of mead - an alcoholic drink made from honey - as part of his dowry. Both the groom and the bride were expected to drink a glassful every day for the first thirty days. The honey gave them a taste of how 'sweet' marriage could be - at least during the initial stages - and the 'moon' was an indication of how the affection between the couple would wax and wane during the course of their marriage. Nowadays, the word has taken on an additional meaning; it is being used to refer to the early stages of any relationship - not just between a husband and wife - where both parties are exceedingly happy with each other. This is often referred to as the 'honeymoon period'.

The honeymoon period between the coach and captain lasted a month.

What is the correct pronunciation of the word 'stove'?

(R Mythili, Hyderabad)

Many people in our country make the word rhyme with 'love', 'dove' (the bird) and 'glove'. Neither the Americans nor the British, however, pronounce the word in this manner. Native speakers of English pronounce the first vowel like the 'o' in 'post', 'host' and 'ghost'.

"The honeymoon is over when he phones he'll be late again for dinner, and she has already left a note that it's in the refrigerator."

-Evan Esar

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE GIST

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■ In 1997, Deep Blue, IBM's chess-playing supercomputer used brute force search, an algorithmic method of examining all possible options before making the move, to defeat the reigning world champion Garry Kasparov in a six-match game in New York City.

■ In 2016, DeepMind, a London-based offshoot of Alphabet Inc., made a breakthrough after its AlphaGo programme defeated Lee Sedol in a five-match game. However, the application of AlphaGo isn't confined to just games. In November 2020, DeepMind's AlphaFold2, predicted protein structures marking its entry into fundamental science research.

THE DAILY QUIZ

On December 6, 104 years ago, Finland declared its independence. A quiz on the Nordic nation.

1 From which country did Finland declare its independence after being annexed by the former in 1809?

from the country, two are Keke Rosberg (1982) and Kimi Raikkonen (2007). Name the third who won back-to-back titles in 1998 and 1999.

2 Because of more than 1,88,000 of these natural formations, Finland has the sobriquet 'Land of a Thousand Lakes'. Fill in the blank.

India won its fifth Olympic hockey gold at the Games of the XV Olympiad in the Finnish capital. Which year?

3 Name the national epic of the country compiled by Elias Lonnrot from old Finnish ballads, lyrical songs, and incantations.

Since 2018, Finland has finished on top for four straight years in this report published by United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and released on March 20 every year. Name the publication.

4 Name the Finnish entertainment company formed in 2003 that is behind the famous 'Angry Birds' video game franchise.

5 Finland has a great history of racing car drivers. Of the Three Formula One champions

Compiled by: V.V. Ramanan



◀ Name the famous Finn in this 1945 postage stamp and the native name of the country that has been masked.

Please send your answers to the dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Answers to the December 3rd edition of the daily quiz: 1. Methyl isocyanate, 2. Southampton and New York City, 3. Heysel Stadium, Brussels. The teams were Juventus and Liverpool, 4. Little Boy and Fat Man, 5. Kanishka, 6. Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan, 7. Airship Hindenburg bursting into flames while docking at Lakehurst, New Jersey, on May 6, 1937.

Early Birds: Ishan Verma| Mohd. Kiron Karim| Srivatsan Ranganathan| Sriraam Kalingarayar| Justin Jose

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'