



Air quality of Delhi-NCR				
Delhi	258	Gurugram	231	
Ghaziabad	291	Faridabad	246	
Noida	259	Greater Noida	313	
Good	51-100	Satisfactory	101-200	Moderate
Poor	201-300	Very poor	301-400	Severe
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)   SOURCE: CPCB				

## Elderly woman dies after son slaps her

The accused has been arrested, say police

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 76-year-old woman died after she was slapped by her son in Dwarka's Bindupur on Monday, the police said.

Her son Ranbir has been arrested, they added.

The police lodged a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder after a video of the incident surfaced online. DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said the police were not informed about the incident by any party, including the hospital where Avtar Kaur was declared brought dead.

### No MLC prepared

"No information regarding the Medico-Legal Certificate (MLC) was received. There was no MLC prepared. No PCR call was also made," Mr. Meena said. It is a matter of investigation why the MLC

was not prepared, whether the hospital was informed and if it was, why they did not inform the police.

The police said a PCR call was received at 12.07 p.m. on Monday regarding a quarrel after which a police team reached the spot.

They were informed that Ranbir, his mother and wife had an argument with the owner of a building in Sewa Park over parking of vehicles and the matter has been sorted out.

On Tuesday, a video surfaced in which Ranbir can be seen slapping his mother who fell to the floor. Ranbir's wife then tried to pick her up. Mr. Meena said it was revealed that after the matter with the building owner was closed, an argument between the trio ensued during which he slapped his mother.

## Road rage: minor among two held for stabbing duo to death

"The accused chased the victims for nearly 500 metres before cornering them"

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

In an alleged case of road rage, two youths were stabbed to death after being chased in outer Delhi's Paschim Vihar on Tuesday morning, the police said.

Two, including a minor, have been held.

### Minor mishap

The two sides got into an argument after their vehicles brushed past each other, said the police.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A. Koan said the victims have been identified as 23-year-old Rohit Aggarwal from Shiv Ram Park, and 20-year-old Ghanshyam from Bihar's Begusarai. The accused have been identified as Pradeep Kohli, a resident of



One of the accused in police custody. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Camp Number 4 Jwalaipur, and a 17-year-old boy.

An officer said the police received a call at 1.30 a.m. stating two persons were lying on the street near Udyog Vihar metro station. On reaching the spot, the police rushed the injured persons to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead.

A murder case under

Section 302 (punishment for murder) of the Indian Penal Code was registered.

During the probe, CCTV footage was obtained in which the accused could be seen thrashing the duo and then stabbing them multiple times.

A man can also be seen witnessing the incident but passing by in a hurry.

Further investigation re-

vealed that when the victims were crossing camp number 4 on their scooter, their vehicle brushed against the accused's bike after which an argument took place between them, which later turned violent.

The accused chased the victims for nearly half a kilometer before cornering them, said the police.

With the help of technical and human intelligence, the accused were identified and held within hours, said Mr. Koan.

Priyawrat is a close associate of gangster Sandeep alias Kala Jathedi, who is suspected to have left India.

The two accused were involved in the murder of a Civil Defence Volunteer on March 7. The victim was abducted while on duty and shot dead with over 25 bullets pumped in his body. They were also involved in the murder of a Chhawla financier on February 21 and double murder of their rival, and a passer-by in December last year in Narela.

The two had also allegedly killed a liquor baron in Sonipat in October last year. They were involved in 15 cases, including six cases of murder and attempt to murder, the police added.

## Why no women SHOs, DCW questions police

Commission seeks reply by Friday

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Tuesday issued notice to Delhi Police seeking reasons as to why there were no women Station House Officers in the force across the 178 police stations.

The women's panel said despite there being a 33% reservation for women in the force, according to reports, women participation in the force was "particularly low."

**Very shocking**  
DCW Chairperson Swati Malavi said: "We have been informed that there are no women SHOs in any of the 178 police stations in Delhi. This is very shocking and disappointing at the same

time. It is very important to ensure equal participation of women in the force. Further, areas like GB Road must have women SHOs. We are taking this issue very seriously and will try to bring about a change."

The Delhi police have been asked to respond to the queries by March 19.

"In order to ascertain the eligible women officers for the role, the women's commission has also sought details of male and female officers of rank of inspector, including their sanctioned and current number of posts. The Commission has also asked the Delhi police to submit a list of steps taken to increase the participation of women officers at a higher level," the DCW said.

## Water supply system likely to be under higher stress: DJB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The summer season this year is likely to be "much more challenging" compared to previous years as more areas are now under the piped water supply network, the Delhi Jal Board has told his officials.

According to the latest Delhi Economic Survey, about 93% of the households in the city now have

access to piped water supply. Water is supplied to about 20 million people in Delhi through the existing water supply network comprising 14,935 km long pipelines and around 117 underground reservoirs.

In its Summer Action Plan, the utility has said that the water supply infrastructure is expected to be under "higher stress" this year.

## Two wanted in murder cases nabbed

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old criminal and his accomplice have been arrested from Jaipur for their alleged involvement in several murder and attempt to murder cases, the police said on Tuesday.

DCP (Special Cell) Manishi Chandra said the accused have been identified as Priyawrat, a criminal, and Rohit (23), both from Katwada. A reward of ₹2 lakh was announced on the arrest of Priyawrat.

Priyawrat is a close associate of gangster Sandeep alias Kala Jathedi, who is suspected to have left India.

The two accused were involved in the murder of a Civil Defence Volunteer on March 7. The victim was abducted while on duty and shot dead with over 25 bullets pumped in his body. They were also involved in the murder of a Chhawla financier on February 21 and double murder of their rival, and a passer-by in December last year in Narela.

The two had also allegedly killed a liquor baron in Sonipat in October last year. They were involved in 15 cases, including six cases of murder and attempt to murder, the police added.

## One held for killing man in Adarsh Nagar

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old man was shot dead in north-west Delhi's Adarsh Nagar on Monday, the police said on Tuesday.

DCP (North West) Usha Rangnani said the accused, Rajnish (21), has been arrested. The victim has been identified as Suresh, a resident of Azadpur.

On Monday, the police received information that Suresh, who has sustained a bullet injury was rushed to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital where he was declared brought. A murder case was registered. During probe, with the help of technical surveillance, the accused was identified and arrested. Rajnish had an old enmity with Suresh and he along with his accomplices wanted to take revenge, the police said.

### Similar incident

In another incident, a chartered accountant was shot dead by unidentified men in Adarsh Nagar on Tuesday. The victim has been identified as Anil Aggarwal, resident of Majlis Park. Manhunt is on for the accused.

### IN BRIEF

#### Bhopuri actor among 2 held with fake currency

Two persons, including Bhopuri actor Mohammed Shahid, have been arrested, and 200 wads of fake currency notes have been recovered from their possession, the police said on Tuesday. The actor started committing crime after incurring losses during the COVID lockdown, they added.

Capital's air in 'poor' category

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida was in the "poor" category on Tuesday, said Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

"AQI is likely to stay in the 'moderate' to lower end of the 'poor' category for the next two days. An increase in dust contribution is expected in the coming days. Poor AQI is forecast for March 19," said government-run monitoring agency, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR).

## Campus reopening: Jamia to adopt 'holistic' approach

'In process of declaring exam schedule'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia on Tuesday said it is going to adopt a holistic approach to physical reopening of the campus so that it may arrive at a well-informed decision.

There have been demands from several sections of the student community to open the university.

"The university is committed to secure the interests and welfare of its students. To this end, it has initiated the exercise of taking all stakeholders into confidence. The university is closely monitoring the fast-changing pandemic situation in Delhi and rest of India as majority of our students come from different parts of the country," said Jamia Millia Islamia.

presence on the campus consistent with the mandated COVID-19 appropriate behaviour.

The quality-based online classes are in full swing and we are attempting to put the disrupted academic calendar on the track in terms of teaching and examinations, it said, and added that it was in the process of declaring the examination schedule for the first semester students that would be conducted through the Open Book Examination (OBE).

The duo got a ₹90,000 contract for paint at Badshahpur. Sandeep got a part of the payment, amounting ₹50,000, but hid it from

Roshan and kept lying to him about it, according to the First Information Report.

On March 5, Sandeep called Roshan and asked him to come to a flat to collect the money. When Roshan reached the flat, he was allegedly held hostage by Sandeep and his friend Ankush alias Monu and a woman who has not yet been identified.

In the video, a man can be seen repeatedly hitting Roshan, who is lying on the floor of the flat, with a plastic pipe asking him to stand up. The man also picks up a glass bottle to hit him, but the others stop him from doing so.

Another man behind the camera jeers: "Stand firm. We had told you that we will find you where ever you go on the earth", even as Roshan pleads for mercy. A woman

man can also be seen hitting Roshan with a plastic pipe.

**Injuries to hand, legs**  
Roshan, in the FIR, said that the three took turns to beat him up with sticks and he sustained injuries on his left hand and legs.

He, however, managed to make a phone call to his cousin Santosh, who rescued him on March 6 evening.

Roshan was then admitted to a hospital.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Preet Pal Sangwan, said the matter is under investigation, but no arrests have been made so far. A case was registered at the Palam Vihar police station on March 15 on charges of causing hurt, criminal intimidation and wrongful confinement under the Indian Penal Code.

## Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department

### Notice inviting tender

Sealed item rates tender on form 6 & 8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer HP, PWD, Karsog on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from the approved/eligible contractors enlisted in HP, PWD for the works so as to reach in this office on or before 07-04-2021 upto 11.00 AM and shall be opened on the same day at 12.00 AM in presence of the contractor or their authorized representatives who may like to be present. The tender form can be had from this office against cash payment (Non refundable) upto 4.00 PM on 05-04-2021 for which the application should reach in this office upto 1.00 PM 05-04-2021.

The earnest money in shape of National saving certificate/time deposit account/saving account in any Nationalized Bank in H.P duly pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer Karsog Division, HPPWD, Karsog will be released alongwith application for obtaining tenders form. The general tenders will summarily be rejected. The offer of the tenders shall be kept open for 51 days from the date of opening of tender. The Executive Engineer, HP, PWD, Karsog reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason. The contractors should append their enlistment/renewed certificates/sale Tax registration Numbers with the application for issue of tender form. If any of the date mentioned above happens to be holiday the same shall be processed on next working day.

Estimated Cost Earnest Money Time allowed Cost of Form

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time allowed	Cost of Form
1.	C/o Alsindi Bedogn road Dhundhan Km. 0/0 to 7/0 (SH- 5/7 mtrs wide road in Km. 5/07 to 5/245)	4,96,504/-	10,000/-	Two Month	350/-
2.	Black spot on Chamu Nalla to Baghsar road Km. 0/0 to 3/0 (SH- Improvement of narrow curves at RD. 2/415 to 2/495)	1,16,674/-	2350/-	One month	350/-
3.	Improvement of Black spot on Shimla mandi Tattapani road (Portion Churgo to Tattapani) km. (5/2250 to 88/00 (SH- widening of road in Km. 7/2065 to 8/210 & 7/2/180 to 7/2/285)	4,45,900/-	8950/-	Three month	350/-
4.	Improvement of Black spot on Shimla mandi Tattapani road (Portion Churgo to Tattapani) km. (5/2250 to 6/0/0 (SH- widening of narrow curves at Rd. 5/7220 to 5/7265 & 5/7265 to 5/7280 to 5/7285)	3,96,417/-	7950/-	Three month	350/-
5.	Channelling of Nalah & C/o approach road to hot spring Bathroom at Tattapani (SH- C/o stone masonry B/w Rd. 0/055 to 0/071, 0/076 to 0/109, 0/109 to 0/170, 0/170 to 0/218)	1,44,950/-	3000/-	Three month	350/-
6.	C/o link road Harian Basli Randol Km.0/0 to 0/500 (SH- P/L WBM grading in km. 0/0 to 0/500)	1,19,985/-	2400/-	One month	350/-
7.	A/R & M/O Bhand Kufli koli Kot road km. 0/0 to 6/120 (SH- P/L WBM G-II in				

Timings

DELHI

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 17
RISE 06:29 SET 18:31
RISE 08:44 SET 22:02
THURSDAY, MAR. 18
RISE 06:28 SET 18:31
RISE 09:16 SET 22:55
FRIDAY, MAR. 19
RISE 06:26 SET 18:32
RISE 09:51 SET 23:50

Delhi Weather max min

Delhi City 32 17

Safdarjung 32 17

Palam 31 18

**Delhi Palam Today**  
34°C A pleasant hazy morning and warm day. Thunderstorm and rain with gusty winds may occur at some places.

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IN BRIEF

Old Delhi's markets to become plastic-free

NEW DELHI

Markets of Old Delhi's Shahjahanabad will be tapped to turn plastic-free, beginning this week. Over 21 markets falling in the Sadar Paharganj zone under the North Corporation will have designated kiosks which will collect one kg of plastic in return for one jute or cloth bag before it lands up as waste in the streets or at landfills. Chandni Chowk and Sadar Bazar markets are among the markets which will become plastic-free by June.

Senior advocate at the Supreme Court Rebecca John said the Bill would snatch away from the residents of Delhi the accountability and answerability they sought from the elected representatives and hand them to a nominated official.

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI

Three decades after it was enacted, significant amendments have been proposed to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, bringing contradictions between the Central and Delhi governments to the fore once again.

The Hindu spoke to a cross-section of legislative officials, constitutional experts and political analysts on the impact and import of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

While some were of the opinion that the new Bill will seek to render the office of the Chief Minister a vestigial organ in the name of simplifying administration, others argued that the amendments will iron out "needless" issues arising out of politics in a city where the Lieutenant-Governor had "always been the government".

Senior advocate at the Supreme Court Rebecca John said the Bill would snatch away from the residents of Delhi the accountability and answerability they sought from the elected representatives and hand them to a nominated official.

"It [the Bill] would be a tragedy since Delhi has long sought statehood; that the longstanding wish of the ci-

New rules of the game

Salient provisions in the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The expression "Government" referred to in any law to be made by the Legislative Assembly shall mean the Lieutenant-Governor
- The Assembly shall not make any rule to enable itself or its committees to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to administrative decisions
- Before taking any executive action in pursuance of the decision of the Council of Ministers or a Minister, to exercise powers of government, State government, appropriate government, Lieutenant-Governor, administrator or Chief Commissioner, as the case may be, under any law in force in the Capital, the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor in term of proviso to Clause (4) of Article 239AA of the Constitution shall be obtained on all such matters as may be specified, by a general or special order, by the Lieutenant-Governor

SOURCE: THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

ty's residents should fructify in this way is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution," she said. "The will of the people cannot be thwarted in this way," she added.

Against federal principles Professor Pradip Kumar Datta, an independent academic formerly associated with JNU, said the Bill seemed to go against the federal principles and was a setback for popular representation.

"Centralisation has been increasing in both formal and informal ways after this government came to power at the Centre. This [Bill] will



GOVERNOR

Arvind Kejriwal and Anil Bajaj

kindly to losing such significant aspects of living in Delhi," she said, adding: "A majority of residents have tenuous lifestyles and administration here would be better handled with the deepening of democracy, not by weakening it."

K.S. Mehra, a former bureaucrat who led the unified Municipal Corporations of Delhi as Commissioner, saw the step as one in the right direction.

"In the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, it is already clear that the Lieutenant-Governor is the government. This [amendments] seems to be a positive step for the welfare of the people of Delhi," he said.

S.K. Sharma, a constitutional expert said the two governments – the Centre and the Delhi government – were not concurrent. The first one is the actual government while the other falls under the definition of what B.R. Ambedkar called local administration.

"The Delhi Assembly, as far as the larger constitutional picture is concerned, is not comparable to other legislatures because Delhi is not a State. It [the Assembly] is just a small set-up of elected representatives whom the L-G can consult from time to time," he said.

Manisha Priyam, political analyst and researcher, said the Bill may seek to clarify who or what the term "government" meant in the city, but residents may not take kindly to the exercise.

Taste of democracy

Governance in a city like Delhi presents many challenges which could be confronted better through synchronised efforts at helping those among its lowest strata.

"Over the last several decades, this city has tasted democracy and witnessed a robust democratic process. People may not take very

## Capital witnesses 425 new infections

One tested for S. African virus strain

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Capital witnessed 425 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,44,489, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Tuesday.

One death was reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,945. A total of 70,049 tests were done in a day. Of the total cases, 6,31,056 people have recovered and there are 2,488 active cases.

In another development, a person has been tested for the South African variant of the virus and he is admitted to a special ward in the Delhi government-run Lok

Nayak Hospital, according to officials. He is stable and there are no symptoms, according to hospital sources.

Speaker gets jab

Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel was administered the COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday, a statement issued by his office said.

Mr. Goel appealed to all eligible people to get vaccinated after receiving the first dose of vaccine at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital.

A total of 38,437 beneficiaries took the vaccination in the city on Tuesday and there were two minor adverse events. Following immunisation, said a government spokesperson.

## Plea seeks to bring back body from Saudi Arabia

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday ordered the presence of an officer from the Ministry of External Affairs on the next hearing of a petition by a woman seeking to retrieve the mortal remains of her husband, belonging to Hindu community, who was buried in Saudi Arabia as per Muslim rites.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said adequate steps ought to have been taken to bring back the body of the deceased to India to conduct the last rites as the woman has been running from pillar to post since her husband's death in January this year.

Anju Sharma, in her petition, stated that she is the wife of deceased Sanjeev Kumar, who passed away on January 24, 2021 at his workplace in Saudi Arabia. On getting the information, Ms. Sharma and other family members requested to repatriate the mortal remains.

"Shockingly, on February 18, the petitioner was informed that the body of her husband has been buried in Saudi Arabia," said the petition.

## OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

### DEATH



**S.N. Narasimhan**

3RD MAY 1932 - 15TH MARCH 2021

With profound grief, we inform of the demise of our beloved S.N. Narasimhan. The gentlest of folks, who never ever raised his voice or hurt a fly. He learnt trading stocks after retiring from a long career as a geologist with ONGC, he and his computer were inseparable, his long hand-written letters were legendary, and his morning WhatsApp goodwill messages are what most of us woke up to everyday. A devoted husband, loving father, doting grandfather, and favourite uncle to the world, he will always be remembered for his warmth, humility, and respect for all.

In Grief:  
Seetha Narasimhan  
Vasudha & Ashwin, Anu & Ashish, Shoma & Arun  
Adi, Priya, Anyrah, Parul  
Mobile: 9884837900

### BIRTH CENTENARY



**T.R. Sundaram      S. Kamala**

17-3-1921 - 14-6-1977      26-3-1931 - 24-10-2002

Station Engineer AIR Pondicherry

D/o Late Dr. S. Subramanian & Rajalakshmi of Karukulai

Fondly remembered by their children and families

Ganesan, Suresh, Hemavathy, Usha, Kamakshi and Rajeswari

Contact: 8754555099, 9958955011  
<https://tganesan.wixsite.com/sundaramandkamala>

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

### Loving Remembrance



**Mrs. Vinolia Vincent**

Rtd., Asst. Headmistress,  
Bentinck Hr. Sec. School

W/o: Late Vincent Samuel

Inserted by Children. M: 9789709790

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## BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Mahalakshmiapuram Division, 12th Main, 11th Cross, West of Chord Road, BBMP, Bengaluru

No.: EE/MLP/TEND/E-PROC/16/2020-21 Date: 08.03.2021

## INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Short Term Tender Notification: two Tender Document Systems) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

The Executive Engineer, Mahalakshmiapuram Division, BBMP, invites tenders from eligible contractor registered in KPWD / CPWD / Railways / MES / National Highway or any State Government Organizations Class-1 contractor for the work mentioned in the statement below.

SI. No. Name of the Work Approx. Value of Work (Rs. in Lakhs)

1	Providing asphalting in 1st N Block, Rajajinagar in Ward No. 67.	200.00
2	Construction of drain culverts and Improvements to roads in Sakamma Layout in Ward No. 43, Nandini Layout.	175.00
3	Improvements to roads and drain and other improvements works in Gelayara balaga and surrounding roads in Ward No. 68.	200.00
4	Improvements of drain and roads at J.C. Nagar surrounding area in Ward No. 75, Shankarmutt.	106.50
5	Providing CC TV Camera Rajajinagara 1st K block Surrounding area in Ward No. 67.	200.00
6	Installation of Dr. Rajakumar Statue opp. Jetlag Near Sandal Soap Factory in Ward No. 67.	75.00

EMD (In Rs.): Instead of EMD the tenderer must submit the Declaration as per the Government Order No. 47/675 dated 12/2/2020, dated 22.12.2020.

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender Document can be downloaded from the GOK-e-Procurement website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. (2) Pre-Bid meeting will be held on 20.03.2021 at 11:30 a.m. in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Mahalakshmiapuram Division. (3) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 3:00 p.m. on 29.03.2021 and

# ASSEMBLY POLLS

THE HINDU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2021

## No cakewalk for celeb candidates this time in Bengal

Both TMC and BJP have mostly fielded them in the opponent's strongholds

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA



Trinamool Congress candidate from Asansol Dakshin, actor Sayoni Ghosh, doing door-to-door campaigning. ■ TWITTER

Among the many changes that Trinamool Congress (TMC) chairperson and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ushered in in West Bengal politics was introducing actors and celebrities from the field of culture into politics. From yesteryear stars such as Moon Moon Sen to present-day actors like Dev, Ms. Banerjee successfully used their star appeal and reaped political dividends. Even in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, she sprang a surprise by nominating Nusrat Jahan and Mi-mi Chakraborty, who went on to become Lok Sabha MPs from Basirhat and Jadavpur respectively.

However, in the bitterly contested 2021 Assembly polls in West Bengal, the situation is slightly different. Both the TMC and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have fielded a number of actors and celebrities but it is not going to be a cakewalk for them.

The TMC has fielded actor Sayoni Ghosh from Asansol Dakshin, a constituency that the BJP has maintained a lead in in the past few elections. Union Minister Babul Supriyo had won the Asansol seat twice, in 2014 and 2019.

The same is the case for filmmaker and well-known director Raj Chakraborty who has been nominated from Barrackpore Assembly seat. Not only will Mr. Chakraborty have to grapple with discontent in the party but he is also pitted against BJP MP Arjun Singh, who maintains his sway in this seat. Similarly, another actor, Sayantika Ghosh, has been

fielded by the ruling party in West Bengal from Bankura, an Assembly constituency where the BJP had a lead of over 40,000 votes in 2019.

A look at the BJP actor candidates also shows a similar predicament. Among the actors who joined the BJP, the party has nominated them in seats where the TMC is strong. Payel Sarkar has been picked for Behala Purba and Anjana Basu in Sonarpur South - both the seats are Trinamool bastions. Even for Mr. Supriyo, who has been nominated to contest elections from Tollygunj Assembly seat, it is going to be tough. The seat is a TMC stronghold where the party has nominated Minister Aroop Biswas and the Samyukta Morcha candidate is Communist Party of India (CPI) nominee, actor Debdoott Ghosh. Even in the Chanditala seat in Hooghly, where the BJP has nominated Yash Dasgupta, he is up against CPI(M) veteran Md. Salim.

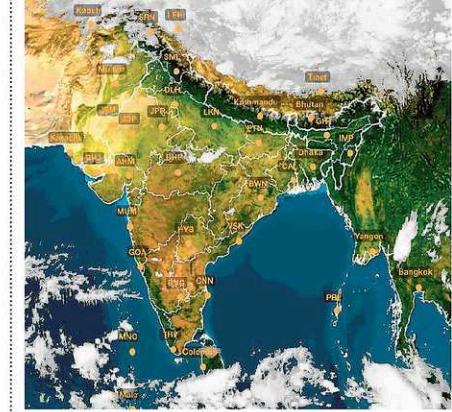
### 'Not going to be easy'

Well-known political commentator and professor of political science at Rabindra Bharati University Biswanath Chakraborty pointed out that it is not going to be easy for stars and actors in these high-stakes polls.

"In difficult situations these actors can appeal across political lines and both the BJP and the TMC are experimenting this time. They want to see if their individual charisma can tide over the political divide," said Prof. Chakraborty.

### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE &amp; AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Wednesday:** Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam. Heat wave conditions likely at isolated places over Saurashtra and Kutch

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	33.6	18.5	Kozhikode	—	34.0	25.6
Ahmedabad	—	38.7	21.4	Kurnool	—	39.1	21.9
Aizawl	—	26.7	10.7	Lucknow	—	34.0	18.7
Allahabad	—	35.2	17.0	Madurai	—	36.7	22.3
Bengaluru	—	34.4	19.8	Mangaluru	—	35.7	26.2
Bhopal	—	34.3	20.0	Mumbai	—	35.5	22.0
Bhubaneswar	—	39.3	21.2	Mysuru	—	34.0	18.0
Chandigarh	—	32.0	17.5	New Delhi	—	32.1	17.2
Chennai	—	33.5	23.6	Patna	—	34.0	18.0
Coimbatore	—	35.8	21.0	Port Blair	—	31.8	25.2
Dibrugarh	—	30.8	14.5	Puducherry	—	32.6	22.2
Gangtok	0.7	18.7	11.9	Pune	—	36.6	19.4
Goa	—	33.4	24.2	Raipur	—	36.5	21.8
Guwahati	—	33.5	18.3	Ranchi	—	33.0	16.3
Hubballi	—	35.0	20.0	Shillong	—	22.3	10.5
Hyderabad	—	36.6	20.0	Shimla	—	20.0	10.6
Imphal	—	30.1	12.5	Srinagar	—	15.4	6.1
Jaipur	—	35.0	20.2	Thiruvananthapuram	—	31.5	22.1
Kochi	—	32.6	25.6	Tiruchi	—	35.9	22.8
Kohima	—	21.6	10.4	Vijayawada	—	35.0	24.6
Kolkata	—	35.5	23.4	Visakhapatnam	—	32.6	24.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

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Yesterday

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	30	72	.46	96	144	■■■■■
Bengaluru	7	.41	192	.82	—	■■■■■
Chennai	.9	17	.49	.58	.73	■■■■■
Delhi	43	.45	.25	.299	.345	■■■■■
Hyderabad	2	.57	.29	.86	.101	■■■■■
Kolkata	30	.21	.28	.208	.151	■■■■■
Lucknow	23	.68	.44	.328	.235	■■■■■
Mumbai	22	.99	.50	.304	.270	■■■■■
Pune	—	.98	.43	.142	.107	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	—	.23	—	—	—	—

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Greater Noida, indicating an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 313, indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry has an AQI score of 33.

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

SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO<sub>x</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

## Clear stand on CAA, Assam students' body asks parties

AASU to take out State-wide bike rally for repeal of the Act

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has asked all political parties in the poll-bound State to clear their latest position on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The students' body has also decided to take out a two-wheeler rally across the State on March 20 to press for the scrapping of the controversial law and drum up support for its anti-CAA campaign.

The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) ignored the Assam Accord and prepared a blueprint to destroy Assam by dumping illegal immigrants

on the State. Assam's indigenous people and AASU had and will continue to resist it," AASU president Dipankar Kumar Nath said.

"Five people died in the anti-CAA [protests] but that did not dissuade people from protesting. AASU and the people of Assam have rejected this law and will never accept it," he added.

### In conflict with accord

The AASU says that the CAA, which seeks to protect non-Muslim immigrants who entered India from three neighbouring countries till December 31, 2014, is in conflict with the Assam Accord. This accord was

signed by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1985 and it prescribes detection and deportation of all immigrants, irrespective of faith, who entered Assam after the midnight of March 24, 1971.

This was also the cut-off date for updating the National Register of Citizens of 1951.

"We have not wavered from what the Assam Accord says. Accepting a set of immigrants who came post-1971 will destroy Assam's language, culture and literature and reduce the indigenous communities to minority," Mr. Nath said, appealing to all indigenous communities to be wary.

The BTR has 12 Assembly seats in four districts - Bak-

sa, Chirang, Kokrajhar and Udalguri - administered by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

On Tuesday, UPPL president and BTC chief Pramod Boro announced the names of eight candidates. He had earlier announced the names of candidates for three other seats.

It has now transpired that the BJP and UPPL will have friendly contests in three of these seats - Bijni, Kalaigaon and Majbat.

The candidates are Phanin Boro, Kamal Azad and Ratendra Daimary respectively.

The BJP has fielded Ajay Kumar Roy from Bijni, Madhu Ram Deka from Kalai-

gaon and Jitu Kisan from Majbat.

### Paneri seat

The only seat in BTR that the UPPL is not contesting is Paneri, where the BJP has fielded Rajya Sabha member Biswajit Daimary, an import from the saffron party's former ally Bodoland People's Front (BPFF).

The UPPL has fielded Urkha Gwra Brahma, a former MP and Sahitya Academy award winner, from the Chagpuri seat.

The Congress and ally All-India United Democratic Front had earlier named candidates against each other for a "friendly fight" in five constituencies.

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## Uproar in Rajasthan House over phone taps

Speaker rejected adjournment motions

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

The Opposition BJP members on Tuesday staged a demonstration in the well of the Rajasthan Assembly after Speaker C.P. Joshi rejected two adjournment motions seeking a debate on the phone tapping of some political leaders, which was admitted by the State government in reply to a question asked by an MLA.

The House was adjourned four times amid the ruckus.



Ashok Gehlot. FILE PHOTO

on August 14, 2020. "The way the BJP is disturbing the Assembly proceedings shows that it is a fight for dominance. This is their internal tussle..."

### 'Breach of privacy'

The adjournment motions, moved by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Rajendra Rathore and BJP MLA Kalicharan Saraf during the Zero Hour, referred to the "breach of privacy" caused by the phone tapping of elected public representatives, MLAs, MPs and Union Ministers. The two members sought a debate on the subject in view of "seriousness of the matter".

The BJP had on Monday demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on moral grounds, while alleging that he had told a lie and misled the Assembly on the issue. The State government had said that it had tapped the phones in the interest of public safety and order.

Separately, Mr. Gehlot said in a Facebook post that no illegal surveillance of phone conversations was done by the State government and he had already clarified it in the Assembly

Mr. Joshi added that the Speaker's ruling could not be challenged.

When he did not allow the BJP MLAs to speak, they created an uproar and trooped into the well of the House.

Leader of the Opposition Gulab Chand Kataria said the adjournment motions had some substance because the ruling party's chief whip had lodged FIRs on the basis of recordings of telephone conversations, after which some persons were arrested.

BJP MLA Madan Dilawar was suspended from the Assembly for seven days.

## HC orders probe into 'illegal' arrest of labour rights activist

Shiv Kumar was nabbed by the Haryana police in January this year

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Tuesday marked an inquiry into allegations of illegal detention and custodial torture of labour rights activist Shiv Kumar, who was arrested by the Haryana police in January this year.

The court asked the District and Sessions Judge at Faridabad to hold the inquiry after hearing a petition that sought transfer of the investigation of cases registered under the section 307 of the IPC and other sections at the Kundli police station in Sonipat to an independent agency. The petition also sought an independent inquiry into the illegal detention and torture of Mr. Kumar.

Mr. Kumar, 24, district



AISA members demanding the release of labour rights activist Shiv Kumar. PTI

president of the Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan – a workers' rights' group, is facing charges of attempt to murder, rioting and extortion under different FIRs registered in Sonipat in Haryana.

Justice Avneesh Jhingan in an interim order said, "At this stage, there is nothing before this court to doubt the investigation by the Spe-

cial Investigation Team. However, as there could be an occasion that the conclusion arrived at by the SIT and inquiry report with regard to two sets of medical reports may cast shadow on each other. Considering the facts and circumstances in entirety, let the District and Sessions Judge, Faridabad, hold an inquiry...."

In the meantime, the court said the SIT may continue with the investigation but shall not submit its final report without seeking permission from this court.

### 'Medical reports differ'

The petitioner's counsel, Arshdeep Singh Cheema, pleaded that the comparison of the initial medical reports and the subsequent medical report, following the court's order, was different, and hence a request for an inquiry. "Four medicals were conducted when the petitioner was in police custody and none of them showed any injuries on him. But the report of the medical conducted after the HC's direction shows at least four fractures and grievous injuries on Shiv Kumar's body," said Mr. Cheema.

## IIT-Guwahati suspends research scholar for 'defaming institution'

Vikrant Singh had questioned the credibility of JEE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati has suspended a research scholar for "defaming the institution" four months after he took to social media to question the credibility of the Joint Entrance Examination.

Vikrant Singh had on October 29, 2020, posted on Facebook his reaction to the arrest of a JEE (Mains) topper from Assam for using a proxy to write the exam. He had said the "problem of proxy isn't a new thing" and that the IITs have "acted in vague and sad manner" against teachers who have called out instances of corruption earlier.

He mentioned former IIT-

Kharagpur teacher Rajeev Kumar who had campaigned to reform the JEE process and Brijesh Rai of IIT-G who was given "compulsory retirement" for alleging corruption in the entry process.

The IIT-G said Mr. Singh had collaborated with Dr. Rai, his former supervisor, in twisting facts "to disrupt the academic activities of the institute". It said Mr. Singh has been kept in "suspended academic expulsion" from March 10 until Ju-

ly 27. The IIT-G said the students' disciplinary committee took the decision on Mr. Singh after deliberations. The institute also found fault with Mr. Singh for sharing his suspension notice with the media. Mr. Singh accused the IIT-G authorities of lying and said the suspension was an assault on his freedom of expression.

## Mamata must apologise for Batla House statement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

2020 but lifted it on the day of Muharram. He also alleged that Ms. Banerjee called Batla House encounter "fake". "She should apologise after the court gave death penalty to the convict. Ms. Banerjee had said she will quit politics if the encounter is found to be true."

U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also addressed rallies.

## Akali MLAs booked for accosting Lal

FIR states 9 Punjab lawmakers 'wrongfully restrained' Haryana Chief Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Nine MLAs of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) were on Tuesday booked by the Chandigarh police allegedly for attempting to wrongfully restrain Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal outside the Punjab and Haryana State Assembly complex last week.

On a complaint from the

Haryana Assembly secretariat, the police have filed an FIR under sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint) among other sections of the IPC.

According to the FIR, nine MLAs of the Shiromani Akali Dal from Punjab on March 13

misbehaved and interrupted the official press briefing of Mr. Lal and made an attempt to attack him.

The MLAs named in the FIR are Sharanjit Singh Dhillion, Bikram Singh Majithia, Baldev Singh Khaira, Sukhwinder Kumar, Harinder Pal Singh Chandumajra, Kanwarjit Singh Barkandi, Manpreet Singh Ayali, Gurpartap Singh Wadala and Narinder

Kumar Sharma.

Haryana Speaker Gian Chand Gupta had on Monday condemned the incident and informed the Assembly that a complaint was given to the police.

SAD MLAs had allegedly shouted slogans during the press briefing, demanding the passage of a resolution by the Assembly against the Centre's farm laws.

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## A battle in the same vein

Freebies form the core of the promises made by the main parties in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu, which has seen tumultuous political changes in the last five years, is set for one more round of a familiar battle in the Assembly election on April 6. Its two principal parties, the DMK and the ruling AIADMK, have stitched up pre-poll alliances and taken the lion's share of the 234 seats to be contested. Both parties have, by and large, retained their allies of the 2019 Lok Sabha election. While the Congress, which appears to be enthused by the visits of its leader Rahul Gandhi to the State, occupies the second slot in the DMK-led alliance with 25 seats, its national-level adversary, the BJP, after aggressive posturing, has had to be content with the 20 seats allotted to it in the AIADMK-led coalition. As this is the first Assembly election after the passing of Jayalalithaa and M. Karunanidhi, the AIADMK, in power for the last 10 years, and the DMK, both shorn of charismatic leaders, have thrown in offers of an unusually large number of freebies. The DMK, apart from making, in the run-up to its manifesto release, an offer of ₹1,000 a month to the woman-head of every family, has promised ₹4,000 to each pandemic-hit ration cardholder (around two crores totally); a subsidy of ₹100 per cooking gas cylinder and a reduction in petrol and diesel prices. The AIADMK's assurances include ₹1,500 a month to the woman-head of each family, six cooking gas cylinders annually, a washing machine and solar-powered cook stove and a 50% subsidy in city bus fares for women. It is debatable how these promises will be kept as the State's fiscal indicators, according to the Fifteenth Finance Commission's report, have plunged, from 2012-13 to 2018-19. The parties and their allies should concentrate on substantive issues such as public health. The Commission has pointed out that the prevalence of anaemia among women and children is 55% and 50.7%, against the national average of 53.1% and 58.6%. Neither party has addressed such issues satisfactorily in their manifestos.

There are other parties such as the MNM, led by veteran actor Kamal Haasan, the AMMK of T.T.V. Dhinakaran and the NTK of actor-director Seeman. Heterogeneous in character, the first two are apparently positioning themselves as serious contenders, with the NTK seeking to don the role of a neo-Tamil nationalist party. Opinion polls point to the likelihood of the DMK-led front securing a comfortable majority, while the ruling party is trying to play catch-up using the governance track record of CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami. As of now, the campaign has been devoid of personal attacks. But, it would take a lot more doing on the part of the principal players to keep at bay forces thriving on parochialism, divisive politics and hate culture.

## Bridging the gap

Govt. should sponsor preparatory plans to help fill faculty posts in Central institutions

A severe deficit in the number of OBC, SC, ST candidates recruited as faculty in Central institutes of higher education has been revealed by Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal in Parliament, drawing attention once again to the pallid state of reservation in some of India's elite institutions. Some of the striking data show 62% unfilled vacancies for SC in the IIMs and 90% for OBC in the IISc, while vacant positions are on average about 38% to 52%, taking Central Universities, IISERs, IIT (non-faculty), IGNOU, and Sanskrit Central Universities into account. The data confirm that the trend seen earlier in the IIT system extends to many more institutions, highlighting a serious mismatch between the government's equity-building goals and actual recruitment outcomes. In the case of the IITs, an official committee suggested that the way out would be to exempt these institutions from reservation, as provided for under the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019, or to deserve lower faculty positions after a year, if suitable candidates from the beneficiary communities are not found. This cannot obviously be a salutary course for official policy, when the reservation system, envisaged as an improvement on western ideals of affirmative action, is widely seen as the shortest path to equality and equity. What could help bridge the gap is a better understanding of the lacunae in the education system, marked by a sea of deprived public schools and colleges, hyper-commercialised private universities and colleges and islands of elite institutions such as the IIMs.

The failure of the Central higher education institutions to recruit faculty to all the reserved positions is usually attributed to the absence of enough qualified candidates, as the Education Ministry's committee for IITs did. One of the forward-looking remedial measures suggested by the panel was to start government-sponsored preparatory programmes, which would both equip aspiring faculty, and create a pool of research talent. This has merit in the context of management, science and other disciplines, and in the short term, could help qualified individuals overcome the deficiencies of their preparatory years. Such courses would also make these institutions of higher learning more socially responsive, meeting the goal of addressing historical deprivation of communities based on caste. Yet, there are larger questions that need answers, and which continue to be agitated in courts. One of them is whether there should not be even greater attention devoted to the most marginalised within the reserved categories, such as SC, since trickle down quota benefits for them are scarce. The egalitarian answer would be to continue expanding the pie of opportunity in the public realm, through ever greater funding of quality universal education at all levels and aiding the deprived through affirmative action on the road to equality.

# Responsible AI – the need for ethical guard rails

Without adequate safeguards, AI can widen social and economic schisms, leading to discriminatory outcomes



RENATA DESSALLIEN

**S**ince Czech writer Karel Čapek first mentioned robots in a 1920s play, humans have dreamed about intelligent machines. What if robots take over policing? What if nanny-bots look after our children and elderly? What if – and this has been rich fodder for dystopian literature – they became more intelligent than us?

Surrounded as we are by the vestiges of our analogue world, to many of us, these wonderings may seem decades from fruition. But artificial intelligence (AI), the engine of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is already very much with us.

### AI's exponential growth

It is embedded in the recommendations we get on our favourite streaming or shopping site; in GPS mapping technology; in the predictive text that completes our sentences when we try to send an email or complete a web search. It promises to be even more transformative than the harnessing of electricity. And the more we use AI, the more data we generate, the smarter it gets. In just the last decade, AI has evolved with unprecedented velocity – from beating human champions at Jeopardy! in 2011, to vanquishing the world's number one player of Go, to decoding proteins (<https://go.nature.com/3t1zlyj>) last year.

Automation, big data and algorithms will continue to sweep into new corners of our lives until we no longer remember how things were "before". Just as electricity allowed us to tame time, enabling us to radically alter virtually every aspect of existence, AI can leapfrog us toward eradicating hunger,

poverty and disease – opening up new and hitherto unimaginable pathways for climate change mitigation, education and scientific discovery.

### For better or for worse

Already, AI has helped increase crop yields (<https://bit.ly/3cAUv67>), raised business productivity, improved access to credit and made cancer detection faster and more precise (<https://go.nature.com/3qRmfbo>). It could contribute more than \$15 trillion to the world economy by 2030 (<https://pw.to/3tvmlql>), adding 14% to global GDP. Google has identified over 2,600 use cases of "AI for good" worldwide (<https://bit.ly/3gSmsM2>). A study published in *Nature* (<https://go.nature.com/3t1zlyj>) examining the impact of AI on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finds that AI may act as an enabler on 134 – or 79% – of all SDG targets. We are on the cusp of unprecedented technological breakthroughs that promise to positively transform our world in ways deeper and more profound than anything that has come before.

Yet, the study in *Nature* also finds that AI can actively hinder 59 – or 35% – of SDG targets. For starters, AI requires massive computational capacity, which means more power-hungry data centres – and a big carbon footprint (<https://bit.ly/3lmsof4>). Then, AI could compound digital exclusion. Robotics and AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers: self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.; but the day is not far when many desk jobs will also be edged out by AI, such as accountants, financial traders and middle managers. Without clear policies on reskilling workers, the promise of new opportunities will in fact create serious new inequalities. Investment is likely to shift to countries where AI-related work is al-



ready established (<https://bit.ly/2NnrMt7>), widening gaps among and within countries. Together, Big Tech's big four – Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook – are worth a staggering \$5 trillion, more than the GDPs of just about every nation on earth. In 2020, when the world was reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they added more than \$2 trillion to their value.

The fact is, just as AI has the potential to improve billions of lives, it can also replicate and exacerbate existing problems, and create new ones. Consider, for instance, the documented examples (<https://bit.ly/30Ny8Vl>) of AI facial recognition and surveillance technology discriminating against people of colour and minorities. Or how an AI-enhanced recruitment engine, based on existing workforce profiles, taught itself that male candidates were preferable to female.

### Privacy worries

AI also presents serious data privacy concerns. The algorithm's never-ending quest for data has led to our digital footprints being harvested and sold without our knowledge or informed consent. We are constantly being profiled in service of customisation, putting us into echo chambers of like-mindedness, diminishing exposure to varied viewpoints and eroding common ground. Today, it is no exaggeration to say that with all the discrete bytes of information floating about us online, the algorithms know us better than we know ourselves. They can nudge our behaviour without our noticing.

Given the global reach of AI, such a "whole of society" approach must rest on a "whole of world" approach. The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation (<https://bit.ly/3cDBrV2>) is a good starting point: it lays out the need for multi-stakeholder efforts on global cooperation so AI is used in a manner that is "trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace". And UNESCO has developed a global, comprehensive standard-setting draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to Member States (<https://bit.ly/3C4pEH>) for deliberation and adoption.

In a world where the algorithm is king, it behoves us to remember that it is still humans – with all our biases and prejudices, conscious and unconscious – who are responsible for it. We shape the algorithms and it is our data they operate on. Remember that in 2016, it took less than a day for Microsoft's Twitter chatbot, christened "Tay", to start spewing egregious racist content, based on the material it encountered.

### Ensuring our humane future

How then do we ensure that AI applications are as unbiased, equitable, transparent, civil and inclusive as possible? How do we ensure that potential harm is mitigated, particularly for the most vulnerable, including for children? Without ethical guard rails, AI will widen social and economic schisms, amplifying any innate biases at an irreversible scale and rate and lead to discriminatory outcomes.

It is neither enough nor is it fair to expect AI tech companies to solve all these challenges through self-regulation. First, they are not alone in developing and deploying AI; governments also do so. Second, only a "whole of society" approach to AI governance will enable us to develop broad-based ethical principles, cultures and codes of conduct, to ensure the needed harm-mitigating measures, reviews and audits during design, development and deployment phases, and to inculcate the transparency, accountability, inclusion and societal trust for AI to flourish and bring about the extraordinary breakthroughs it promises.

Renata Dessallien is UN Resident Coordinator, India

## On the difficult trail of India's most wanted

The CBI's record in bringing to justice some of India's big-ticket offenders has been a mixed one



R.K. RAGHAVAN

I am not an uncompromising admirer of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), despite the fact that I was once director of the crucial agency. It is an outfit which has its strong points such as talented and dedicated supervisors with a sound knowledge of the law and of unquestioned integrity. It is also an outfit with a few glaring shortcomings, such as the enormous delay taken in completing many an investigation and having in its ranks a set of black sheep who have brought ignominy to the organisation. The CBI's performance in recent times has been a mixed bag, with its moments of glory alongside its moments of shame.

**The Nirav Modi, Mallya cases**  
For example, the Nirav Modi case which was very much in the news recently is testimony to the CBI's capacity to execute a professional job, provided it is given a free hand. The jeweller, who took Punjab National Bank for a ride, is holed up in Wandsworth Prison in London. He tried his best to demolish the CBI case to get him extradited but did not succeed because the London Westminster Court which tried him was convinced that the prosecution had a watertight case. It is generally believed that the CBI will succeed very soon in bringing him to Mumbai.

where he is expected to be lodged at Arthur Road jail. Fortunately, the CBI is learned to have received the unstinted support of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) of the United Kingdom, which has an enviable record of professional excellence. Extradition of accused persons who have fled India is the toughest task before the CBI. In this, we have had a few successes and many failures. I am happy that the CBI has done a thorough job in the Nirav Modi case, in ferreting out all details and presenting them before the London court.

In discussing the Nirav Modi case, my mind goes back to the Bofors gun case of the 1980s-90s where an enterprising wheeler dealer, Ottavio Quattrocchi, (said to be close to a political family in India) was allowed to escape from India with the then government's connivance, and later helped by influential persons in Delhi circles. He was never brought back to face trial in India despite overwhelming evidence against him.

More recently, Vijay Mallya, the liquor baron of Karnataka, who received huge financial favours from a few banks, has been dodging imprisonment and repatriation to India. There are many stories behind his success in evading the due process of law, some credible and some not. Mr. Mallya has lost his case both before the lower court and the High Court. His fate now depends on what view the U.K. Home Secretary will take. Sensing his hopeless situation, Mr. Mallya is believed to have sought asylum in that country.

The CBI can rightfully gloat over its success in the Nirav Modi case.



The order (February 25, 2021) of a Westminster Magistrate's Court, London did not mince words. It confirmed that the accused had indeed committed an extraditable crime. This is a shot in the arm for the CBI investigators. This was undoubtedly the outcome of sustained investigation for two years after overcoming the many obstacles put up by an accused person with enormous influence. He was able to get the help of two former Indian judges (one of whom was a former Supreme Court judge) to exploit the alleged loopholes in the prosecution story. However, this ploy did not succeed.

### Strategies by the accused

In all cases of extradition, the ruse of the accused was mainly to dispute that he had committed an extraditable offence. The endeavour here was to prove that the offence alleged against him was not in the statutes of the country where he is living. Another stand which an accused usually takes is to allege that political considerations had weighed in the mind of the requesting country in demanding extradition. A third strategy was on trying to prove that the country seeking transfer of the offender did not fulfil human rights requirements, particularly in respect of hygiene in the prison in which he

was proposed to be lodged. (A video of Mumbai's Arthur Road jail filed by the prosecution clinched the issue.) Incidentally, this is where Mr. Mallya will also be if and when he is extradited.

The London judge rejected all three contentions put forward by Mr. Modi's counsel, and this reflected the thoroughness with which the CBI had done its job.

In the present case, the facts are fairly clear unlike Bofors where the number of players was too many and the transactions under scrutiny originated from a foreign company. Mr. Modi bought up a single employee of Punjab National Bank who was willing to do his bidding.

### Financial fraud is a maze

A novel *modus operandi* was employed to hoodwink many in the top echelons of the bank in connection with the Letters of Undertaking and the bank's core banking system. This was a new lesson to learn for bank fraud investigators and the banking industry. Talk of tightening lending procedures becomes meaningless if a bank employee decides to turn a rogue and is able to successfully hide major unauthorised concessions. This is analogous to many attacks admitted to by financial corporations across the globe during the past few decades on their computer systems, where one bad employee (who had authorised access to sensitive information) can wreck all security arrangements.

A final thought. The public should be made to understand that financial crime in current times is too complicated for agen-

cies such as the CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) to unravel all the facts in quick time. What is involved here is a laborious process of identifying documents that are required to prove a case and to explore where exactly they are lodged or hidden. Many such documents, as in the Bofors case, are in other countries, in private and public recesses. There is mind boggling protocol that has to be observed in trying to procure them. Any ham-handed approach will frustrate the whole process.

### Other travails

In all such matters, another instrument of torture for the prosecution is the so-called Letter Rogatory (LR), which the relevant court in India will have to issue to the corresponding court abroad to get hold of documents or examining witnesses in the countries involved. This is a painfully long-drawn-out process which many influential accused persons have taken advantage of. Courts in India are sometimes unfair to the investigating agencies by lambasting them for being responsible for delays, ignoring the fact that it is quite often the foreign government concerned which is dragging its feet. This is part of the huge number of travails that the prosecution faces in pinning down the guilty. Agencies such as the CBI and ED are sometimes the favourite whipping boys of the public and, unfortunately, sometimes of the judiciary.

R.K. Raghavan is a former Central Bureau of Investigation Director and a former High Commissioner to Cyprus

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Vaccinate everyone

Given that the novel coronavirus is re-surfing in an almost frantic pace, it is essential that every single adult in the four 'election-due' States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and in the Union Territory of Puducherry be vaccinated on an emergency footing, irrespective of age and co-morbidity. And this includes all polling staff and security personnel as well. It should not be said that electoral democracy – India's celebrated asset – is

run at the cost of her citizens' health.

GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI,  
Chennai

**Governance, allegations**  
The charges of corruption levelled against the LDF Government in Kerala by the Opposition have fallen flat in the absence of any corroborative evidence to date. To assume that mere allegations, that too by the Opposition whose aim is to denigrate the government, alone would take the sheen off an otherwise performing government,

amounts to endorse the culture of tarnishing the opponent without substantive evidence and proof. The 'caged parrot' role played by the central agencies, violates all canons of federalism, with the intention of discrediting the government.

V.K. PRASAD,  
Kochi, Kerala

**Student's resignation**  
I write this in my personal capacity (I am the Secretary, Junior Common Room, Oriel College, Oxford) regarding the

resignation of Rashmi Samant, formerly President-elect of the Oxford University Student Union. First, the issue of certain remarks – attacking her faith and family. They are condemnable and I hope the university will address them. On her resignation, the passage of a motion at my college, asking our representatives to begin the process of her removal had nothing to do with her faith or nationality. On the contrary, the election of a first generation

J.P. LOO,  
Oxford, the U.K.

international student was widely welcomed. The complaint I think most discussed concerns a post containing a slur. This alone, in my view, could be forgiven: an honest apology would have sufficed (others may disagree.) Her response, however, was instead to claim a Chinese friend told her that this was a translation of 'eat that plant'. Her insistence upon this implausible excuse brought her honesty into question – and, more than that, her judgement. Whether or not her initial

remarks were overblown, it is not too much to ask for an honest president of sound judgement. The harassment of Ms. Samant must, of course, be condemned. Nevertheless, her stepping down was ultimately in the best interests of the students she was elected to serve. These considerations do not appear to have been covered in the Indian press, hence this clarification.

J.P. LOO,  
Oxford, the U.K.



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J.P. LOO,  
Oxford, the U.K.

AN-ND-E

# We need to urgently invest in public health

Only a robust public health system, and not healthcare alone, can lead to disease prevention and control



T. JACOB JOHN & M.S. SESADRI



GRI K.V.S.

The worst pandemic in a hundred years has demonstrated the importance of healthcare and public health in times of a health crisis. The efforts of healthcare personnel, from ASHA workers with only basic training, to highly specialised intensive care physicians, have saved countless lives and made India proud.

That healthcare is science-based was convincingly demonstrated. Lab diagnosis, clinical assessments, triage and management ranging from home quarantine to intensive care, clinical trials discriminating between useful and useless therapeutic modalities all gave society a glimpse of how modern medicine works. We learned that outcomes of well-designed clinical trials with their statistically significant differences between treatment modalities are sacrosanct for evidence – not unreliable personal anecdotes.

Healthcare personnel worked tirelessly, with single-minded devotion to duty, putting the best interests of others who were in need over their own personal priorities. This made a mark in public perception. Now we realise why good grounding in theory, long years in basics and specialisation, and apprenticing to gain experience in ethical, evidence-based medical practice are essential for the making of caring medical and nursing professionals. Both the science base and the discipline belong to the allopathic system of medicine. This was brought to India just over a century ago and successfully adopted by us as our own.

**Healthcare and public health**  
While the health-care capability in India ranks among the world's best, it is a different story when it comes to public health. We need to distinguish between the two. Healthcare refers to the transaction between one caregiver and one sick person at a time – hence the client is the sick person and therapy is the mainstay. For public health, the client is the community at large and the goal is disease

prevention and control. Disease control is the deliberate, intervention-based and quantified reduction of disease burden. It has to be data-driven. Data are required on baseline disease burden and real-time monitoring to track the control trajectory of all the highly prevalent infectious diseases. Reliable data must be collected from all sources including every healthcare provider, for monitoring disease burden by diagnosis and outcomes; for this exercise, the total population is the denominator.

Data collection for HIV control is sample-based, under the unique Indian design of sentinel surveillance, established in 1986 and still continuing. It shows only the time trend of declining infection prevalence. Counting of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and laboratory tests for polioviruses (including molecular methods distinguishing wild from vaccine viruses) were crucial for polio elimination in India. The commonality between HIV/AIDS and polio programmes is the availability of denominator-based data. The denominator for polio elimination is the national total under-five population. So, we knew the total disease burden. And when it reached zero, we knew polio was eliminated.

Our health management does not have a way of prospectively collecting data on all diseases and deaths by diagnosis. That is precisely the task of public health. In its absence, we have only the numerator data on various diseases, including COVID-19, but not the denominator – in short we do not have a comprehensive and quantified profile of any disease in the entire population, including those under vertical programmes – tuberculosis, malaria, leprosy, AIDS.

For COVID-19, computerised med-

ical records informed us about how many were tested for SARS-CoV-2 infection – and among them, how many were positive, hospitalised, survived or died. All statistics are available in the public domain. Everyone knows that the numbers cover only a fraction of the total, but what proportion of the total, will remain unknown forever.

## Social vaccination

To get an insight into the totality of infections in the whole population, we rely on the shape of the COVID-19 epidemic curve that peaked in September and steadily declined to the present – with less than 20,000 daily new infections since January 7 until recently. That informs the proportion already infected – most probably 50%-60%, for 700 million to 800 million people. But the detected numbers are over 11 million. Where does the truth lie: nearer to 11 million or to 700 million? We will not know without a public health surveillance system. The sero-surveys on random samples, an attempt to derive the totality of infections, reported widely disparate figures and failed to give us a reasonably reliable picture.

For COVID-19, there are non-pharmacological preventive interventions – face masks, hand hygiene, physical distancing – and pharmacological prevention by vaccination. Where we fell short is timely and comprehensive public education with authoritative and authentic information communicated effectively to the public for self-motivated behaviour modification. In other words, a 'social vaccine'. Social vaccination is another function of public health.

In the absence of public health infrastructure, India's AIDS Task Force designed and successfully applied

'social vaccine' during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and this was continued by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO). Sadly, there was no crosstalk between the COVID-19 programme and NACO; hence principles of social vaccine, so effectively deployed in AIDS prevention, were not adopted for COVID-19 prevention. Now, during the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, authentic health education regarding vaccination is conspicuously lacking, leading to considerable vaccine hesitancy among even healthcare staff. Post-vaccination surveillance, vital for assessing vaccine efficacy and safety, is not being conducted, again a lacuna in public health. We sorely miss public health.

COVID-19 has strong social determinants of infection transmission – overcrowding, lack of cough/sneeze etiquette, and urban-rural divide in health awareness and education. These factors are common for influenza and TB too. Typhoid, cholera, leptospirosis, scrub typhus, malaria, rabies, etc. have environmental determinants. In countries where public health is given equal status with healthcare, public health addresses both social and environmental determinants and controls these diseases. Public health personnel have jurisdiction over people in their homes and workplaces, food and water distribution chains, and over ecosystems – ranging from densities of arthropod vectors, rodent and canine populations, to flight ranges of fruit-eating bats.

Our government errs when it thinks that healthcare for people's felt need alone will suffice, without mitigating disease determinants through public health. India's style of mounting ad hoc responses only when there is a pandemic is no longer tenable. Currently our healthcare institutions are cluttered with too many infectious diseases that are amenable to control if only we had public health. Imagine how much wealth is going down the drain for want of public health. Investment in public health will result in health, wealth and prosperity.

*T. Jacob John is retired professor of clinical virology, Christian Medical College, Vellore and M.S. Seshadri is retired professor of medicine (endocrinology), CMC, and Medical Director of Thirumalai Medical Mission Hospital, Ranipet*

# Coalition of compulsion

The BJP has been deepening its presence in Assam, making the regional parties more and more dependent on it



VIKAS TRIPATHI & DHRUBA PRATIM SHARMA

The BJP's ability to forge alliances with prominent regional parties during Assembly and Lok Sabha elections enables it to win votes from wide segments of society with the exception of the bulk of Muslim votes. In Assam, for the coming election, the BJP gave up its alliance with the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and chose to ally with the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) apart from the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Key leaders including the only sitting MLA from the Ganashakti Party joined the BJP.

## Inability to form a counter-coalition

The opposition is dominated by two major alliances. The Congress is in an alliance with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), based mainly among Bengali-speaking Muslims; the Left parties; the Anchalik Gana Morcha; and the BPF. This alliance is expected to have a major impact in Muslim-dominated seats in Lower and Central Assam as well as in the Barak Valley.

Then, a regionalist alliance of two fledgling but prominent regional groups comprising the Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP), supported by the influential All Assam Students' Union, and the Rajor Dal, which is backed by the left-oriented Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, may impact outcomes in the Assamese-dominated areas, mostly in Upper Assam.

Despite unanimous resistance among opposition parties to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, they could not forge a pan-Assam coalition to counter the BJP. A State-wide counter-coalition would have been pragmatic given the BJP's dominance.

There are three reasons why the BJP could stitch and retain a regionalist coalition while the Congress failed to forge a State-wide counter-coalition. First, the deepening religious polarisation and consequent Hindu consolidation in favour of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had foreclosed the possibility for the AGP to expand electorally on its own. Though it could not secure a seat in the Lok Sabha in 2019, the AGP witnessed a marked increase in its contested vote share. Factionalism within the party and the gradual appropriation by the BJP of caste Hindu votes, tribal votes and the tea tribes' votes reduced the possibilities for the AGP to expand its political base on its own. Thus, its

dependency on the BJP grew. The party has been more pragmatic than ideological – it decided to be a part of the NDA while simultaneously opposing the CAA. The shift of traditional AGP voters, caste Hindus in particular, to the BJP has ensured that this dependency may continue till the time the BJP remains a dominant pole in the State. On the other hand, while the Congress-AIUDF alliance may reap electoral advantages in minority-dominated constituencies, it remains self-limiting in Upper Assam constituencies, which are marked by ethno-linguistic diversity and religious homogeneity.

Second, the BJP's strength also lies in projecting itself as representing indigeneity and the cultural identity of Assam. Its alliance with the UPPL and the fact that key leaders from the Ganashakti Party, which has a popular base among the Mising community, joined the BJP shows the national party's aggressive alliance strategy. This not only puts it in an advantageous position but also helps it in its pursuit of cultivating an independent base among the indigenous groups.

Third, the Sangh Parivar's long-term strategy of cultivating a base among the tea tribes has significantly contributed to the BJP's electoral stability in Upper Assam. Implementation of welfare schemes as well as negotiation of pay hikes for the tea workers have been aimed at retaining the support of this populous community. Despite the territorial concentration of a few ethnic groups, several constituencies in Upper Assam are ethnically diverse with the tea tribes' votes having a considerable impact in the outcome of the elections.

## Mobilisation across sections

With the BJP now dominating the landscape, its allies have become more dependent on it. This has shrunk the autonomous electoral space for the regional parties. The constitutive basis of such a compulsive coalition with the BJP can be attributed to two processes.

First, the BJP appropriated the question of cultural identity and indigeneity and infused it with deeper religious meaning and symbols. Second, it further deepened the dependency of diverse ethnic groups on it through the creation of development councils and ensured representation in political bodies. Thus, religious-based mobilisation overtook the ethno-linguistic basis of political mobilisation in the State. While the opposition parties were in a dilemma over forging a counter-coalition fearing religious polarisation in Upper Assam, the NDA has maintained a pan-Assam regional alliance.

*Vikas Tripathi and Dhruba Pratim Sharma teach Political Science at Gauhati University, Guwahati*

# A robust economic relationship

From an industry perspective, U.S.-India collaborations in certain areas will bring many gains

CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE

Under the new U.S. administration, the economic relationship with India can be expected to be on the radar as India has enjoyed bipartisan support in the U.S. A closer economic partnership would bring gains to both sides in terms of GDP, employment, and productivity, given the complementary natures of their economies.

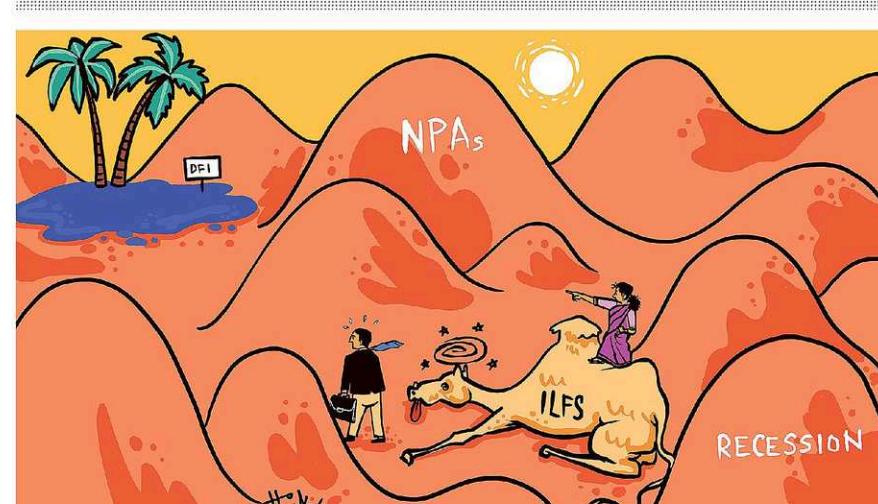
From the industry perspective, a robust collaborative agenda would rest on a comprehensive set of actions which can take bilateral trade in goods and services to the desired goal of \$500 billion. In the five years to 2019, bilateral trade grew at a CAGR of 7.7% per year to \$146 billion. If we assume the same rate of growth, the \$500 billion target will be achieved by 2036. To ensure this, the CAGR would need to be set at 11.9%. This is doable if the right policy actions are taken. CII has outlined key areas for collaboration.

## Areas for collaboration

One, a collaborative response to the pandemic would contribute to global containment of the virus. Business partnerships are already taking place in the supply chain to ensure coordinated shipping, distribution, and last-mile connectivity. As India becomes the hub of global vaccine distribution, building confidence in the Indian IPR regime, reviving the U.S.-India Health Dialogue, and mutually recognising standards and approvals will help drive healthcare exchanges.

Two, the macro trade architecture can be strengthened with a broad trade agreement focusing on resolving the low-hanging fruit. The U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum meetings can be revived along with a cross-sector track-2 group to look at convergence on issues such as market access. There is potential for flexibility from both sides for restoring the Generalised System of Preferences which would help lower duties for certain Indian products. The two countries should consider initiating discussions on a free trade agreement.

Three, mobility of professional labour would aid trade in services. Recent regulations in the U.S. have impacted labour mobility which can be addressed through immigration re-



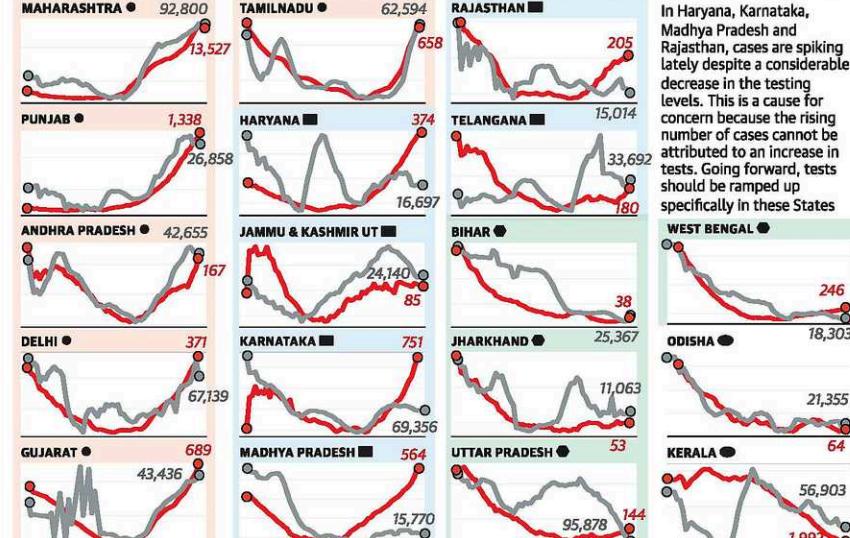
## DATA POINT

### Dissecting India's latest COVID spike

COVID-19 cases have been steadily rising in India since mid-February. While Maharashtra accounted for 62% of India's cases on March 14, infections are also spiking significantly in 11 other States/UTs. However, there was a corresponding increase in the number of tests conducted only in six of these States/UTs. In the rest, testing levels either decreased or remained more or less the same. Four States where new cases flattened also recorded a decrease in tests, which means that many cases may have gone undetected. In two States, both cases and tests are decreasing.

*By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Sumant Sen and Naresh Singaravelu*

The charts show the seven-day rolling averages of new cases – and new tests – for major States in the last two months



## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 17, 1971

Emergency declared in Ceylon

The Government of Ceylon has declared a state of emergency with effect from midnight to night [March 16]. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, is due to broadcast to the nation to-morrow morning when she is expected to tell the people about the situation in the country. The "Che Guevara" insurgent group which has come under strict police surveillance consists mainly of educated unemployed youth. They have been holding secret classes in various parts of the country on guerrilla activities. Several of them have been arrested by the police but they have had to be subsequently released as no specific charges could be brought against them under the present laws. The Government is now reported to be framing legislation to give wider powers to police to investigate insurgent activities. During the past few days, there have been several cases of sporadic violence. One of these incidents was the attack by a mob on the American Embassy in Colombo with hand bombs. Following this attack, two embassy cars were burnt and five others were damaged, while a police inspector who was stabbed by the mob died three days later.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 17, 1921

Madras School of Arts  
From an Editorial

The feeling is growing among people interested in the matter that the Madras School of Arts has fallen upon evil days. As we have more than once pointed out, the school does not now enjoy about half the popularity that it did in the days of Mr. Havell. It would appear that pure art is seriously neglected in the School, while in the matter of industrial art it has yet to establish a reputation. Mr. Hadaway, the present Principal of the School, appears to be a gentleman who prefers the Arcadian methods of education. He is an enthusiastic exponent of the doctrine that "anatomy and geometry has never yet been of real service in making an artist" and expects his students to be geniuses to blossom forth, solely by dint of hard work in drawing from figures of objects and without the adventitious aid of anatomy and geometry, into great artists. Mr. Hadaway's position that the importance of the ability to draw accurately cannot be too strongly emphasised as a fundamental equipment of an artist is understandable, but, surely, one who sticks to mere drawing for all time to come can never become an artist.

FROM PAGE ONE

## 'Vaccines to foreign nations won't hit India'

He said ₹35,000 crore had been allocated for vaccines in the 2021-22 Union Budget.

Asked about the efficacy of the vaccines against the U.K., South African and Brazilian variants, the Minister replied, "The efficacy of the vaccines on the mutants, right now, the experts are of the opinion, particularly,

about one vaccine, they are very clear that this is also very, very effective on the possible mutations also."

He said the Central Health Ministry, especially, the NEGVAC or the National Expert Group, was keeping abreast of all the latest developments in and outside the country.

## Older IIMs lag behind newer ones

To understand the faculty recruitment process, Dr. Joshi's RTI queries also asked for a breakdown of the number of candidates who applied from each category, were interviewed, offered jobs, and accepted employment at each IIM between January 2019 and December 2020.

The response showed that in some cases, hundreds of applicants were listed but none made it through the hiring process.

At IIM-Lucknow, for example, there were 888 applicants for faculty positions over the two year period, including 197 from reserved categories. Only seven were shortlisted for interviews, and none were offered jobs. Of the 691 applicants from the general category, 59 were shortlisted and 12 were offered jobs. "The IIMs cannot continue to use the excuse of unavailability of qualified candidates. They need to be intentional, and scout for applicants, as done in affirmative action programmes by the world's top universities," said Anil Wagde, an alumnus of IIM Kolkata. "They also need to ensure that biases are not allowed to play out through the shortlisting and inter-

view process."

Since 2019, when Parliament passed the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, the IIMs have been actively lobbying the Education Ministry to exempt them from the law's requirements to reserve faculty positions for SCs, STs, OBCs and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).

They had earlier cited a 50-year old Central government memo which exempted scientific and technical posts from reservations.

In November that year, the Education Ministry told the Lok Sabha that the 20 IIMs had only 11 faculty from the SC/ST categories.

On Monday, it told the Lok Sabha that the IIMs had filled 21 posts reserved for SCs and 5 reserved for STs, along with 36 reserved for OBCs, which is still far below the legally mandated quotas.

"There has been some incremental progress, but the IIMs are still not actually implementing the law. The problem is that most are not taking any intentional steps to change the situation, just paying lip service. The older IIMs are acting with impunity," said Mr. Wagde.

## Cannot send back Myanmar exiles: MP

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Vanlavena said, "Most of them have relatives in our State. There are 16 to 17 roads that connect Myanmar to India, there is a small river, it is very easy to cross over to India. There is no fencing. The Mizoram government has also sent a petition to the National Human Rights Commission. They are not here for good; they will be sent back once the situation is peaceful. MHA should provide food and amenities to the refugees."

He said the refugees from Myanmar belong to the Chin ethnic group, comprising Lai, Tidim-Zomi, Lusei and Hualngi tribes – related to the dominant Mizos in the Northeast.

"The Chief Minister spoke to Home Minister Amit Shah and he was promised that no refugee will be deported to Myanmar. But he gave this assurance about those who have already entered and now MHA has sent a letter to send them back," the MP said.

The MHA in a letter, dated March 10, to the four States said the State governments have no powers to grant "refugee" status to any foreigner and India is not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol.

**Almost 400 escapees**  
Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that "all foreign nationals (including asylum seekers)" are governed by the various provisions of law. "However, a standard operating procedure (SoP) was issued in 2011 by the Central government and amended in 2019 which has to be followed by law enforcement agencies while dealing with foreign nationals who claim to be refugees," the reply stated.



Mizo National Front MP K. Vanlavena. ■ FILE PHOTO

ment has said 383 Myanmar nationals, including women and children, have crossed over. Mizoram's Home Department officials told local journalists in State capital Aizawl that 297 of the asylum-seekers who entered five border districts have been verified, while the remaining 86 are yet to be verified.

The unofficial number of Chin refugees is at least twice that of the official figure.

"About 98% of the Myanmar nationals claim that they belong to the police force and fire service. They chose to leave the country rather than obey the military regime," the local publications said, quoting unnamed Home Department officials.

Six Mizoram districts – Hnathial, Champhai, Lawngtlai, Saitual, Serchhip and Siaha – share a 404-km border with Myanmar's Chin State. Officials said only Saitual has not reported the entry of any refugee from Myanmar since the coup. Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga and the State's MPs have preferred a humanitarian approach, offering them temporary shelter and food.

"The influx could not be prevented because much of the border is porous. They cannot be pushed back now because it is against humanitarian values," officials in the State were quoted as saying.

The Mizoram govern-

## Come out with 'rule curve' for Mullaperiyar: SC

Failure to give information will attract appropriate action, it tells Tamil Nadu

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary will be "personally responsible" and "appropriate action" will be taken on failure to give information on the 'rule curve' for the Mullaperiyar dam to the Supreme Court-appointed Supervisory Committee.

The 'rule curve' in a dam decides the fluctuating storage levels in a reservoir. The gate opening schedule of a dam is based on the 'rule curve'. It is part of the "core safety" mechanism in a dam.

After a nearly day-long hearing, a Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar directed the Supervisory Committee to issue directions or take steps to address the three

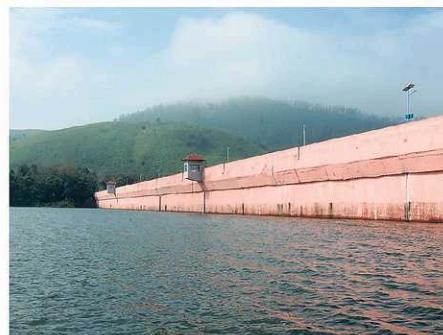
core safety issues – the monitoring and performance of the instrumentation of the dam, finalising the 'rule curve' and fixing the gate operating schedule – and submit a compliance report in four weeks.

"We find that the three core issues are directly concerned with the safety of the dam and will have a cascading effect on persons residing in the nearby areas," the court noted.

T.N. blames Kerala

During the high-voltage hearing, the Tamil Nadu government blamed Kerala for delaying the finalisation of the 'rule curve' for the 123-year-old dam.

"Right from the beginning, Kerala has adopted an



**Contentious spot:** Tamil Nadu blamed Kerala for delaying the finalisation of the 'rule curve' for the 123-year-old dam.

obscurantist and obstructive stand... Kerala government is somehow not comfortable with Tamil Nadu operating the dam. Kerala has made consistent efforts to obstruct Tamil Nadu from operating the dam. Kerala is preventing the finalisation of the 'rule

curve'. We are not able to access data which is in their terrain. There is no road built, the power supply has not been restored, though we had paid for it... How do we function?" senior advocate Shekhar Naphade, for Tamil Nadu, said.

"First you give the information on the 'rule curve' to the Supervisory Committee... Trees and roads do not immediately concern the safety of the dam," Justice Khanwilkar told the Tamil Nadu side.

### 'No politics'

The Kerala government, represented by senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, has accused Tamil Nadu of adopting an "obsolete" gate operation schedule dating back to 1939.

However, the court sharply intervened to stop Kerala from making any politically-coloured statements in court. Justice Khanwilkar said the court was not the place to make political speeches to the masses. "Local politics between States should not be played out in the Supreme Court," Justice Khanwilkar remarked.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Dr. Joe Joseph and the office-bearers of the Kothamangalam block panchayat in Kerala, expressing their apprehensions about the lack of proper supervision of water levels in the dam located along the Periyar tiger reserve.

"Meetings are held just for attendance. The instrumentation scheme, safety mechanism, etc., have not been finalised for the past six years. The sub-committee was formed by the Supervisory Committee without informing the Supreme Court... We are seeking a continuous *mandamus* from the Supreme Court to control and monitor the work of the Supervisory Committee," senior advocate Gopakumar, representing the petitioners, said.

The court listed the case for hearing on April 22.

## Congress names six more candidates for Kerala poll

Chennithala, Chandy file their papers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress has announced the names of contestants in six more constituencies for the coming Assembly election in Kerala.

They are T. Siddique (Kallpetta), V.V. Prasanth (Nilambur), Firoz Kunnumparambil (Thavanur), Riyas Mukkoli (Pattambi), P.C. Vishnunath (Kundara) and Veena Nair (Vattiyurkavu).

The party is yet to name a candidate to oppose Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and BJP State president K. Surendran were among those who filed their nomination papers on Tuesday for the Assembly election.

Mr. Chandy reached the Pambady block office and submitted three sets of papers before the Assistant Returning Officer.

Mr. Chennithala filed his nomination papers for the Haripad constituency.

Mr. Surendran, who submitted his nomination at the Block Development Office in Konni, is slated to file two more sets of nominations on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and BJP State president K. Surendran were among those who filed their nomination papers on Tuesday for the Assembly election.

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A united opposition should emerge as an alternative to the BJP. I do not see

that initiative very much from the party that I was in earlier," he said.

## P.C. Chacko joins NCP, to campaign for LDF

Pawar welcomes former Congress MP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Days after announcing his resignation from the Congress party, former MP P.C. Chacko on Tuesday joined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) at party chief Sharad Pawar's Delhi residence.

"I am happy to be part of a party that is functioning, active and a party moving with a direction," Mr. Chacko told presspersons after being welcomed by Mr. Pawar, senior NCP leaders Praful Patel, Supriya Sule and others. In Kerala, the NCP is a part of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and Mr. Chacko said he would start campaigning for the LDF, which is pitted against the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

"A united opposition should emerge as an alternative to the BJP. I do not see

that initiative very much from the party that I was in earlier," he said.

"I am sure that Pawar sahab, his leadership, contacts will be most effective in forging the unity of the opposition in the country against the misdeeds of the BJP," he added.

Mr. Pawar, who earlier in the day met CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, endorsed the comment on an alternative front.

HC sets aside SEC order on unanimous elections

VIJAYAWADA  
The Andhra Pradesh High Court has set aside the State Election Commission's (SEC) order for an inquiry into the unanimous election of candidates for the MPTCs and ZPTCs, and directed all the candidates who were elected unanimously to be given declarations to that effect immediately.

Mr. Reddy, in his complaint, said farmers from his constituency had informed him that some "influential persons" in the then government had illegally taken away their land by creating an environment of fear.

Mr. Reddy approached the CID for a probe into the allegations on February 24. The Additional DG of the CID had asked DSP S. Surya Bhaskar Rao to conduct a preliminary inquiry. Based on the report, the CID registered a case.

## Karnataka wakf board restricts use of speakers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MYSURU

The Karnataka State Board of Waqaf (wakf) has restricted the managements of mosques and dargahs from using loudspeakers between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

**APPEAL**  
Name of Patient: Galikwad Pruthviraj Mahadev, 8 years.  
Hospital Name: Deenanath Mangeshkar Research Centre, Thalasseri Major.  
Disease: Bone Marrow Transplant at Our Hospital under my care.  
The approximate expenses cost of the procedure would be Rs 10,00,000.  
We request Kind Hearted Philanthropists to save him. Kindly send donation by Cheque/D.D./M.O. favouring  
Our Account Details: S/B Account No: 20000913487, State Bank of India, Rajah Annamalaiapuram Branch and IFSC Code: SBIN0001855. You can donate Google Pay  
No. 988407377, UPI ID: sbman134@oksbi which is exempted under 80G of I.T. Act.  
Contact: SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, (ADMIN DIVISION) Flat No A1, Cebros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76, Kamrajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai - 600 024. Ph: 044-2044165, Mobile: 9884607377, E-mail: savepoorlives@gmail.com Our website: www.savepoorlives.com  
DONATION SENT TO VARIOUS HOSPITAL IN FEBRUARY MONTH FOR RS.1,90,452/-

## HC wants end to postings for money

Bench urges CJ to initiate *suo motu* proceedings against Karnataka govt.

KRISHNAPRADAS

BENGALURU

In an unprecedented order, the High Court of Karnataka has urged the Chief Justice to initiate *suo motu* proceedings against the State government to put an end to the "pernicious practice" of posting officers "for monetary considerations and reasons other than public interest".

A Bench of Justice R. Devdas passed the order on March 15 taking note of the "high-handedness" of the talsildar and the Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Bengaluru South taluk, who acted con-

trary to the law even when an issue related to the grant of a parcel of land, the value of which was several crores of rupees, was sub judice before the High Court.

### 'Not on merit'

"This court should take judicial notice of the fact that such high-handed action on the part of the respondent-authorities [talsildar and AC] could not have happened if the authorities were sensitive about their powers and functions, and the obvious disregard may have been occasioned due to the fact that postings are given to such

an officer shells out money to get a plum posting, he would employ every means possible to recover the money he has invested and make every effort to make money for future needs and, therefore, this forms the vicious circle of corruption."

"Time has come when this court has to step in to find out the truth and direct the State to put in place regulations to check the tentacles of corruption from taking stranglehold on the society. Therefore, this court would urge that the Chief Justice may take note of the observations and take up *suo motu* proceedings against the State government to put an end to the pernicious practice," observed Justice Devdas in his order.

The court said, "There cannot be two views that if



sensitive offices not on merit or with public interest in mind," the court observed.

"It is obvious that the respondent-authorities are fearless of the consequences of being in conflict with the law. Such officers are emboldened by the fact that they are protected by the government."

The court said, "There cannot be two views that if

## Swapan Dasgupta quits RS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Nominated Rajya Sabha member Swapan Dasgupta resigned from the Upper House on Tuesday after being named as a BJP candidate in the West Bengal Assembly election.

"I have resigned from the Rajya Sabha to commit myself totally to the fight for a better Bengal. I hope to file my nomination as BJP candidate for the Tarakeswar Assembly seat in the next few days," he said.

Mr. Dasgupta found himself in a tight spot after questions were raised about him contesting the election on BJP ticket despite being a nominated MP. Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra said he should be disqualified from the Upper House. "Tenth Schedule of Constitution says nominated RS member must be disqualified if he joins any party after expiry of six months from oath," she tweeted.

## Bypolls to two LS, 14 Assembly seats on April 17

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday announced that bypolls to two Lok Sabha and 14 Assembly seats across 11 States would be held on April 17.

The Lok Sabha seats — Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and Belagavi in Karnataka — would go to the polls on the same day as the Assembly constituencies of Morva Hadaf in Gujarat, Madhupur in Jharkhand, Basavakalyan and Maski in Karnataka, Damoh in Madhya Pradesh, Pandharpur in Maharashtra, Serchhip in Mizoram, Noksen in Nagaland, Pipili in Odisha, Sahara, Sujangarh and Rajamand in Rajasthan, Nagarjuna Sagar in Telangana and Salt in Uttarakhand. The counting is on May 2.

## Census interim data by 2024'

Ministry tells parliamentary panel that NPR data will also be available by LS poll

VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The provisional data for the latest Census and National Population Register (NPR) will be available before the Lok Sabha election in 2024, according to information provided by the Union Home Ministry to a parliamentary committee.

The Ministry informed the committee that Census and update of the NPR would be among the major thrust areas for the financial year 2021-22.

The previous Census was conducted in 2011 and the NPR, which has a database of 119 crore residents, was last updated in 2015.

The first phase of Census House-listing and Housing Census that was to be conducted along with the NPR from April 1, 2020, was indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Tentative timeline**  
The Ministry shared a tentative timeline with the parlia-



**Indefinite delay:** The first phase of the Census was to be done from April 1, 2020, but was postponed due to the pandemic.

mentary panel, saying that provisional Census results will be released in the financial year 2023-24 and the primary Census abstracts (PCA) will provide village-level data on important indicators.

As reported by *The Hindu*, a mobile application has been developed for collecting the Census details and NPR and residents can also self-enumerate. The field-

work for the first phase of Census 2021 that will provide data on housing conditions, household amenities and assets possessed by the households is expected in 2021-22.

The fieldwork for population enumeration phase to provide data on demography, religion, SC/ST, language, literacy and education, economic activity, migration and fertility will be done in 2023-24.

The committee was informed that the mobile app through which Census will be conducted will be available in 16 languages.

The Ministry said the NPR database had been created by collecting family-wise data and it can be strengthened by linking Aadhaar to each member.

It said "consolidated details of a family" are not available through Aadhaar and based on it "a family structure" cannot be created without visiting each household and collecting information such as relationship among family members.

"Further, the Aadhaar database may not be made available to this office due to legal provisions in the Aadhaar Act, 2016. During the next update of NPR, the Aadhaar number is being collected voluntarily. The presence of the Aadhaar number in the NPR database will facilitate its integration with other databases," the Ministry said in the report.

Ms. Sitharaman said, "Rahul Gandhi has probably outsourced his comments to a very hardcore communist." The comments, which she termed "two-liners", did not help the situation

## Govt. committed to protecting interests of bank staff: Nirmala

Finance Minister says UPA govt. had 'nationalised corruption'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the UPA government had "nationalised corruption" and "privatised taxpayers' money". She was responding to comments by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi earlier in the day that the Centre was "privatising profit and nationalising loss".

In a tweet supporting the strike by the public sector bank (PSB) employees against privatisation, Mr. Gandhi said: "Goi is privatising profit & nationalising loss. Selling PSBs to Modicronies gravely compromises India's financial security. I stand in solidarity with the striking bank employees."

Ms. Sitharaman said, "Rahul Gandhi has probably outsourced his comments to a very hardcore communist." The comments, which she termed "two-liners", did not help the situation



Nirmala Sitharaman

and Mr. Gandhi should have engaged in a serious discussion instead, she said.

"Nationalising corruption and privatising tax payers' money for the betterment of one family is all that Rahul Gandhi will have to take as a reply for that tweet, which probably some outsourced fellow in his team is feeding him with," she said.

### Assurance to workers

Ms. Sitharaman said the interests of all employees of state-owned banks that were likely to be privatised

would be protected. She clarified that public sector presence would continue in the banking space.

"...We have announced public enterprise policy based on which we have identified those four areas in which we said government presence, public sector presence, will be there, and bare minimum presence is what we have said, in financial institutions are also there."

"Meaning, even in financial sector we will still have the presence of public sector enterprise... not all of them are going to be privatised," she said.

She said the government would ensure that these privatised institution would also continue to function.

"After the privatisation, we will also have to ensure that the staff or the personnel who are there, their every interest will be protected."

(With inputs from PTI)

## No more adjournment of Zakia Jafri plea: SC

Petition against clean chit to Modi

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

case to April as several lawyers were engaged with the ongoing Maratha quota case before a Constitution Bench.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Gujarat government, asked the court to list the case next week.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for the SIT, also sought an early hearing while objecting to the adjournment.

The case has seen several adjournments in the past months.

At one point in an earlier hearing, Justice Khanwilkar had orally remarked that "we cannot keep adjourning this. We have to hear it someday..."

On February 8, 2012, the SIT had filed a closure report, giving clean chit to Mr. Modi and 63 others.

## Rajya Sabha passes MTP Bill

Opposition's demand for scrutiny by Select committee defeated by voice vote

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 that increases the time period within which an abortion may be carried out.

Opposition MPs said the Bill still did not give women the freedom to decide, since they would need a nod from a medical board in the case of pregnancies beyond 24 weeks.

The Opposition's demand to send the Bill to a parliamentary Select Committee for detailed scrutiny was defeated by a voice vote.

Currently, abortion requires the opinion of one doctor if it is done within 12 weeks of conception, and two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks. The Bill allows abortion to be

done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women, between 20 and 24 weeks.

For a pregnancy to be terminated after 24 weeks in case of substantial foetal abnormalities, the opinion of the State-level medical board is essential.

The Bill was passed in March last year in the Lok Sabha.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said the

amendments in the Bill had been made after studying global practices and wide consultation within the country.

The amendments, he said, had been made pursuant to the rising number of pleas in the court.

There are 23 petitions in front of the Supreme Court and many hundreds in the High Courts



protect the dignity of women," he said. The original Bill was framed in 1971.

During the debate, however, many of the Opposition members, while welcoming the Bill, pointed out the severe lacunae and problems with its approach.

Congress leader Ami Yajnik, who opened the debate, said the medical board had to have specialists but government data itself showed a grave shortage in availability of doctors. "Should the State intervene when the pregnant woman is worried about her own life, about the well-being of the foetus, and also about the stigma involved?"

Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi said it was wrong to say the Bill was based on a "right-based" approach. Instead, it had a "need-based" approach.

## Cabinet gives nod to Bill for setting up DFI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a Bill to set up a Development Finance Institution, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced.

The Minister said the government had mentioned in the Budget that it would be setting up a national bank for funding infrastructure and development activity. As of December 2019, she said, there were over 6,000 brownfield and greenfield projects requiring funding.

"Even as the Budget session is still on, the Cabinet has already cleared the setting up of a Development Finance Institution," she said, adding that the Budget provided for an initial amount of ₹20,000 crore for the institution.

## G-23 cannot exist in any other party, says Rahul

He says Congress will elect its new chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Making his first public comments on the group of 23 dissenters (G-23), former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said such a group could not exist in any party other than the Congress.

In a virtual conversation with the faculty and students of U.S.-based Brown University, moderated by Professor Ashutosh Varshney, Mr. Gandhi spoke on issues such as whether the Gandhi family should step aside from leadership.

Talking about the inclusive nature of the Congress that allows conversations and negotiations, Mr. Gandhi said, "For example, there are 20 people, a group of 20 people, who have a different view on the Congress. Do you think they could

exist in the BJP, BSP, Trinamool Congress?"



Rahul Gandhi

## PM's Principal Adviser Sinha quits position

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

P.K. Sinha, Principal Adviser in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), has relinquished his high-profile position on personal grounds. Top sources in the government have confirmed the development to *The Hindu*.

He was appointed in the PMO first as Officer on Special Duty briefly and then as Principal Adviser, a position specially created for him, in September 2019.

Earlier, he was Secretary, Ministry of Power, and served as Cabinet Secretary for four years from 2015.

Mr. Sinha is a retired 1977-batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre and served in various capacities during the UPA and the NDA regimes. In the PMO, he looked after policy matters of all the Ministries and Departments.

## Energy meet calls for faster shift to renewables

Pandemic offers an opportunity: IRENA

T. NANDAKUMAR

The COVID-19 crisis offers an unexpected opportunity for countries to decouple their economies from fossil fuels and accelerate the shift to renewable energy sources, says the World Energy Transitions Outlook report, brought out by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

Previewed at the virtual Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue, which began on Tuesday, the report proposes energy transition solutions for the narrow pathway available to contain the rise of temperature to 1.5 degree Celsius. Highlighting the need for countries to change direction with careful recalibration of stimulus packages and recovery measures, director general of IRENA Francesco La Camera said, "The COVID-19

crisis has highlighted the cost of tying economies to the fate of fuels prone to price shocks. Amid this, renewables have shown remarkable resilience."

IRENA observed that the emergence of a new energy system based on renewable technologies and complemented by green hydrogen and modern bioenergy. It estimated that by 2050, 90% of total electricity needs would be supplied by renewables, followed by 6% from natural gas and the remaining from nuclear. The agency has identified 30 innovations for the integration of wind and solar PV in power systems.

Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate, who delivered the keynote address, criticised the leaders for continuing to invest in fossil fuel commitments, saying, "We cannot eat coal and we cannot drink oil."

## Attempt to belittle institution, ECI replies to Mamata letter

Panel alleges repeated innuendos by CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday said in response to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's letter to Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora that the ECI would not like to be kept in the dock for "alleged proximity to any political entity" and that if the CM persisted in perpetuating this myth, it was unfortunate.

The letter to Ms. Banerjee by Deputy Election Commissioner in charge of West Bengal Sudeep Jain in response to her letter on Sunday noted that the Commission had met representatives of the Trinamool

Congress on four occasions in Delhi and Kolkata. "...if it is stated by Hon'ble CM that the Commission should meet political parties, it is only an attempt to belittle the institution of Commission with repeated innuendos and averments. Commission maintains the position that they would not like to keep on being put in the dock for alleged proximity to any political entity, etc. However, if Hon'ble CM persists in creating and attempting to perpetuate this myth for reasons best known to her, it is singularly unfortunate, and it is only for Hon'ble CM to adjudicate as to why she is doing so," Mr. Jain wrote.

## KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
# 49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Kanchi Bhavan Race Course Road  
Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 080-22265383

website : [www.kiadbd.in](http://www.kiadbd.in)

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-43/CORG-I/13358/2020-21 Date: 03.03.2021

### CORRIGENDUM-I

In furtherance to this office tender notification No. IADB/ENGG-EP-43/11461/2020-21 dated:28.01.2021, the calendar of events is extended for the work of Providing LED Street lights to the newly formed roads of Mulwada Industrial Area, Vijaypura District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is: 03.04.2021 upto 04:00 pm

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal

<https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/-

Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.



Wear Mask



Follow Physical Distancing



Maintain Hand Hygiene

h-04:

Chairman, OJEE&lt;/

80% of fresh cases are from five States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

As per data released by the Health Ministry on Tuesday, five States – Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu – account for nearly 80% (79.73%) of the 24,492 new cases registered in the past 24 hours.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 15,051, followed by Punjab with 1,818, while Kerala reported 1,054.

India has also reported 20,191 recoveries and 131 deaths in the last 24 hours.

## Vaccination is slow: MPs' panel

Standing Committee says it will take many years to cover whole population

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has observed that "till now, less than 1% of the Indian population has been vaccinated and at this rate it will take many years to vaccinate whole population".

The panel, headed by Congress leader Anand Sharma, tabled the report in the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

"The Committee also expresses its concern that a large number of people are missing the second dose of the vaccine. The Committee



**Following up:** A policewoman receiving the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Thane on Tuesday. ■ PTI

believes that it is very serious issue as the virus is mutating and new variants of COVID-19 are being reported

in different parts of the world," the report said.

The committee recommended that all frontline

health workers and corona warriors, including central armed police force (CAPF) personnel and State police, receive the recommended doses of vaccine.

"An attempt should be made to cover maximum people as early as possible," the report said.

Officials from the Home Ministry told the panel that a special campaign against vaccine hesitancy had been launched.

Further, regular reviews are being undertaken with States and UTs for increasing the pace, the Ministry said.

## Maharashtra told to plan for the worst

Health Ministry official calls for greater surveillance; State asks for more vaccine doses

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry has cautioned Maharashtra to plan for a "worst-case scenario" with sufficient lead time as the State continues to report the highest number of new daily COVID-19 cases and deaths across India. It has also directed the resumption of death audits to support public health action and minimise mortality.

In a letter to the State earlier this week, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said while the available health infrastructure was adequate, Maharashtra needed to look into vaccine hesitancy among frontline workers, "as their services would be required if the trajectory follows the upward swing as is being witnessed now". He also said the State should also expedite vaccinating those with comorbidities and the elderly.

The letter comes a day after the State government an-

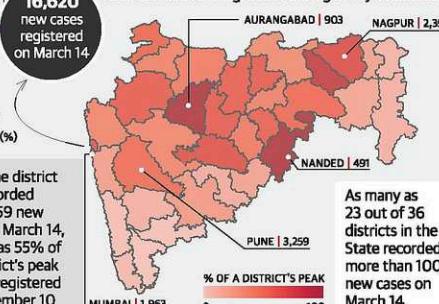
### Second Wave

Maharashtra recorded over 16,000 new COVID-19 cases on March 14, the highest for the State in 2021. As the State's share in India's daily cases continues to increase, two of its districts recorded their highest single-day infections on March 14



**PEAK IN DISTRICTS:** Aurangabad (903) and Nanded (491) districts recorded their highest daily cases on March 14 since the beginning of the pandemic. New cases in other districts in the eastern and central parts of the State came close to their peaks.

Map shows the new cases recorded on March 14 as a % of the district's highest ever single-day infections



nounced a series of restrictions, mandating cinema halls, hotels, restaurants and offices to function only at 50% capacity till March 31

and prohibiting all social and religious gatherings.

After its visit to Maharashtra, the Central team has recommended that treating

physicians should be re-sensitised on clinical management protocols.

"Maharashtra is in the beginning of a second wave of

COVID-19 pandemic. There is very limited active effort to track, test, isolate cases and quarantine contacts. There is no adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour among people both in rural and urban areas," the team noted.

The Health Ministry has now recommended monitoring of the situation at the highest level, strengthened surveillance enhanced involvement of private practitioners, increased testing and reviewing the practice of isolating 80-85% of active cases kept at home. It added that measures such as night curfews and weekend lockdowns had limited impact on containing/suppressing the transmission.

State Health Minister Rakesh Tope denied that the Maharashtra government was "not serious" about tackling the surge, and said he had sought 2.2 crore vaccine doses from the Centre.

(With inputs from Shoumoj Banerjee in Pune)

## 'Post-vaccine blood clots a form of rare cerebral thrombosis'

WHO rules out link between AstraZeneca vaccine and clots

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Scientists at the Germany-based Paul-Ehrlich-Institut report that the blood clots observed in some of those vaccinated are a "special form of very rare cerebral vein thrombosis". This corresponds to a deficiency in platelets and bleeding following vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

The recommendations from the institute were the reason Germany put on hold ongoing vaccinations until a full review by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The EMA last week said that several cases of immune thrombocytopenia, a lack of platelets in the blood that can lead to bleeding and bruising, had been reported under its vaccine safety monitoring process.

"We do not want people to panic and we would, for the time being, recommend that countries continue vaccinating with AstraZeneca," WHO Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan was quoted as saying by news agency AFP.

India also is reliant on Covishield, which is based on the AstraZeneca vaccine, and forms the bulk of the nearly 30 million vaccines that have been so far administered to the population.

The blood clots observed post vaccination, however, are less than the background

number of such thrombosis events even without vaccination. The World Health Organization (WHO) has ruled out any link between AstraZeneca's vaccine against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and reported blood clots.

"The Quad vaccine collaboration initiative is a pathbreaking effort, envisioning manufacture of U.S. vaccines in India – and delivery to countries in the Indo-Pacific region with support of Japan and Australia. It is an example of collective efforts which can be leveraged for global good in these challenging times," Mr. Muraleedharan said, addressing an event organised by the Indo-American Friendship As-

## Quad officials hail vaccine drive

Production of U.S. shots a path-breaking effort: Muraleedharan

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

The vaccine initiative announced by the Quad leaders last week was a "path-breaking effort" at a "truly historic" summit, said Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan, as officials in the Australia-India-Japan-U.S. coalition also said that details of the plan to provide 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Southeast Asian countries by 2022 are being worked out.

"The Quad vaccine collaboration initiative is a pathbreaking effort, envisioning manufacture of U.S. vaccines in India – and delivery to countries in the Indo-Pacific region with support of Japan and Australia. It is an example of collective efforts which can be leveraged for global good in these challenging times," Mr. Muraleedharan said, addressing an event organised by the Indo-American Friendship As-



The Quad plans to provide 1 billion doses of the vaccine to Southeast Asian countries by 2022. ■ FILE PHOTO

sociation in Delhi.

In Canberra, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne announced the pledge of an additional \$77 million for the Quad effort, in addition to about \$400 million that Australia has already committed for regional vaccine access.

"Quad partners will take opportunities to implement joint or closely coordinated programmes of support for our partner countries in the

## Govt. appoints new chiefs for CRPF, NSG

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

The Modi government on Tuesday named senior IPS officer Kuldeep Singh as the new Director General (DG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Mr. Singh is Special D-G of the CRPF as the post of D-G is vacant following superannuation of A.P. Maheshwari on February 28. Mr. Singh is a 1986-batch officer of the West Bengal cadre. His appointment is up to September 30, 2022 when he will superannuate.

Another IPS officer of the 1986 batch M.A. Ganapathy of Uttarakhand cadre has been named as the DG of National Security Guard (NSG). His appointment is up to February 29, 2024. The post of D-G, NSG has been vacant since last October when the then D-G A.K. Singh retired.

## Due process not followed in quota law'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Senior advocate Shyam Divan on Tuesday argued before a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court that the Maratha quota law was enacted without following the specific procedure laid out in the 102nd Constitutional Amendment to recognise socially and educationally backward classes.

Appearing before the five-judge Bench, Mr. Divan, appearing for petitioners challenging the Maratha quota, said the procedure is laid out in Article 342A introduced by the Constitution amendment in 2018. Under Article 342A, only the President in consultation with the Governor can specify SEBC in a State.

## 'No parliament should discuss internal issues of other nations'

Birla's remarks come days after U.K. MPs discussed farm stir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

No parliament should discuss laws passed in other parliaments and issues that are internal to sovereign countries, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Tuesday.

Mr. Birla made these re-



Om Birla

marks in the Central Hall of Parliament while hosting the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) president Duarte Pacheco. The event was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Harivansh, Union ministers, Members of Parliament and members of the diplomatic community.

The Speaker's remarks are significant as they come

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Pacheco, a member of the Portuguese Parliament, said the coronavirus pandemic has shown that 'multilateralism' is the way forward and lauded India's effort to provide vaccines across the world.

Mr. Pacheco described India as a special friend of the IPU that had played an important role in parliamentary diplomacy.

"Portugal supports India's claim for permanent member of the Security Council," the lawmaker said, pitching for a greater role for New Delhi in the global order. He further said that in him, India has a special friend in the IPU.

## War of words over misuse of sedition law

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress members in the Lok Sabha and Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday got into a war of words over the number of sedition cases over the past 10 years. While the Opposition party accused the government of misusing the law, Mr. Reddy responded by asking the Opposition not to lecture the government on democracy.

The Minister said "there is no direct involvement of the Centre in sedition cases", and said that during the UPA government, all sedition cases were clubbed with Indian Penal Code cases and that was why the government could provide data for 10 years.

## Counsel to be present when Vaze is quizzed

Luxury car, ₹5 lakh in cash seized

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

He has also filed an application asking if all procedures were followed during and after Mr. Vaze's arrest. The NIA will file its reply on March 25, the day Mr. Vaze will be presented in court.

He is in NIA custody for his "role in placing explosive laden vehicle near Car-michael Road".

The NIA also conducted searches at Mr. Vaze's office located in the Police Commissioner's Office compound in south Mumbai.

Late at night, the NIA Inspector General Anil Shukla said a Mercedes, which Mr. Vaze was using, was seized and ₹5 lakh in cash, a note-counting machine, two number plates and some clothes were recovered.

(With PTI inputs)

## China will allow travellers only if they take its vaccines

Little relief as such vaccines are unavailable in India

ANANTH KRISHNAN

A number of China's overseas missions, including its embassy in New Delhi, have announced they will begin "facilitating" travellers provided they have taken "Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines".



**Blanket ban:** Indians have been barred from travelling to China since last November.

Indians have been barred from travelling to China since November last year, when China suspended valid visas and residents permits not just for travellers from India but for most countries citing COVID-19 concerns.

work resumption and other relevant activities" and family members of Chinese nationals, provided they have taken Chinese vaccines. The announcement did not say if it would apply to students.

### Similar situations

Asked by a reporter in January if the Chinese government would take a "sympathetic view" of the plight of some of the 23,000-plus Indian students enrolled in Chinese universities who remain in India – many of them returned to India when China was dealing with the pandemic in early 2020, but there is no official figure of how many are now awaiting to return – as many had taken on considerable financial burdens to pursue medical degrees in China, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hu Chunying said, "I can relate to your feelings, including the confusion and plight of so many Indian students as you mentioned. I believe similar situations exist all over the world. To my knowledge, there are many Chinese students who have invested heavily in studies overseas, but due to the sudden COVID-19 outbreak, they are unable to pursue

medical degrees in China.

After WeChat was banned

and students complained to their colleges, one university, the newspaper reported, began to use the Alibaba-owned DingTalk and Tencent's Meeting for online classes. Eventually, those apps were banned as well.

The larger concern for the students, who will have to pass challenging exams in India after graduation to be able to practice, is their inability to receive laboratory training as they remain unable to return.

In a March 5 meeting with the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui, India's envoy in Beijing Vikram Misra "flagged outstanding consular issues pertaining to Indian nationals" and "requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' facilitation in seeking a resolution," the Indian Embassy in Beijing said in a statement.

The Xpulse 200's Rally Kit completely changes the experience the motorcycle provides, offering unmatched value for money



## A game changing off-roader



VISHAL VENUGOPAL

The Xpulse 200 is a great value-for-money off-roader but for ₹38,000 more, Hero will sell you a fully road-legal Rally Kit that ramps up its off-road abilities. This includes a rebound and compression-adjustable front fork, a pre-load and rebound adjustable monoshock and Maxxis off-road knobbies. You also get a handlebar riser, a longer gear lever to accommodate bulky off-road boots, a tall rally-style seat and a longer side stand. That is a proper off-road kit for not a lot of money, but it is for everyone?

### The transformation

The changes that the Rally Kit brings about are apparent from the moment you climb onto the bike. With the taller suspension and seat, you are perched a massive 933mm high in comparison to the 823mm on the stock bike. If you use the stock seat with the Rally Kit suspension, the height is 882mm; the rally seat on the stock suspension sits at 878mm – both tall combinations that will take some getting used to.

At 158kg with the kit (stock is 157kg), this bike is nowhere close to being as light as the 105-odd kg 250cc dirt bikes available from Kawasaki or Suzuki. Then again, it is about five times lighter on the pocket and road legal too. The Maxxis knobbies go against everything one would expect a tyre to do on tarmac. They never feel settled and it is like you are constantly riding on a flat tyre. Cornering is a nervous experience as well,

and then, there is also the loud droning tyre noise on tarmac.

Just to prove how they hate being on tarmac, our tyres have done just over 700km and are already showing signs of wear. Performance suffers too, with the Rally Kit-equipped bike slower than the stock Xpulse in all our acceleration tests although, surprisingly, the braking distance was actually reduced.

### Dirty dancing

However, none of this matters because the Rally Kit helps you experience what a serious off-road setup feels like in the dirt. One will soon realise that the trick with these tyres is to let the handlebar move about and figure itself out.

This can be an unusual sensation at first but once you get the hang of it you start to realise that this is a very capable motorcycle to ride in the dirt. The suspension is comfortable on the road, but it really comes into its own once you

**Trail fix** Bumps, jumps and ruts don't dampen the Xpulse 200's enthusiasm on the road ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

### HERO XPULSE 200 RALLY KIT SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	199.6cc single-cylinder, oil-cooled
POWER	18.08hp at 8500rpm
TORQUE	16.45Nm at 6500rpm
KERB WEIGHT	158kg
WHEELBASE	1420mm
SEAT HEIGHT	933mm
GROUND CLEARANCE	275mm
SUSPENSION (F/R)	Telescopic fork/Monoshock
SUSPENSION TRAVEL (F/R)	250mm/220mm

pick up speed. Bumps, jumps and ruts are dealt with a composure that is noticeably better than the stock suspension and the bike flies through them in a completely unflustered manner.

### Rally ready

By now, you should be able to figure out if the Rally Kit is for you. If you are looking at aggressive off-road riding, or considering a debut in competitive rallying, there is not anything else like the Xpulse 200, and that too at this price.

However, the components are also available individually, and you should definitely consider them if you own an Xpulse. For example, tall riders can make the bike much more comfortable with just the seat and the handlebar riser for a total of ₹2,850. If you feel the stock suspension is not as capable as you would like, you can go for the Rally Kit suspension at ₹18,000 for the fork and ₹7,500 for the shock. As for the tyres, which are priced at ₹10,000 for the pair, we would only recommend them if your time on tarmac is minimal to non-existent.

Overall, the Rally Kit completely changes the experience the motorcycle provides, and it offers unmatched value for money.



### AUTO SNIPPETS



#### Ford launches EcoSport SE

Ford has launched a new EcoSport SE priced at ₹10.49 lakh for the petrol variant and ₹10.99 lakh (ex-showroom) for the diesel. The SE packs in most of the kit of the fully-loaded S variant including automatic HID headlamps, a sunroof, Ford's 8.0-inch SYNC3 touchscreen infotainment system with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity, tyre pressure monitor, six airbags and more. It however misses out on bits such as ISOFIX child seat mounts and puddle lamps.



#### Upcoming Ola Electric scooter revealed

Ola Electric has revealed its upcoming electric scooter for India ahead of its launch in the second half of 2021. The model looks visually similar to the AppScooter from Etreco, the Netherlands-based electric scooter company acquired by Ola last year, though the company says it has completely re-engineered the vehicle. The Ola Electric scooter gets the same unusual single telescopic front suspension, but it will likely be tweaked for the Indian riding environment and also to keep costs low. The scooter gets a quirky headlight with twin-pod LEDs encased within an LED strip.



#### Land Rover Defender is 2021 Women's World Car of the Year

In the 2021 edition of the Women's World Car of the Year awards, the Land Rover Defender was adjudged the 2021 Women's World Car of The Year. The Defender was a part of nine finalists consisting of cars and SUVs that were adjudged the winners in individual categories of the 2021 Women's World Car awards in late February. The jury for the 2021 awards comprised 50 women motoring journalists from 38 countries on five continents.

### Q&A WITH HORMAZD



#### Petrol vs diesel

I have to replace my 2017 Tata Hexa XTA as it is a BS4 model. I am considering the Toyota Fortuner petrol auto/manual. Is the petrol any good or should I consider something else below the ₹35 lakh mark? A 7-seat SUV is my preference and a decent boot space is much required.

**Sushant Sharma, Ghaziabad**

Firstly, we don't understand why BS4 is the reason you want to change your Hexa. Unless you feel the need to upgrade to a vehicle with a cleaner BS6 engine, we would advise you against replacing your Hexa if it is running fine, especially since it is just over three years old. BS4 vehicles are more frugal than BS6 vehicles and there is no real replacement for the Hexa, which we feel is the best Tata in many ways, be it seat comfort, cabin quality, refinement and ride comfort.

If you are still keen on going for the Fortuner, we advise you to go for the latest model with the upgraded diesel engine. Whilst the difference in cost between diesel and petrol has narrowed, diesels still make far better sense in a big SUV than petrels – one of the reasons why it is hard to find a petrol Fortuner (it would guzzle fuel and won't have the same torque as the diesel or be as nice to drive). Our advice is to stick to diesel if you are going in for a big SUV.

#### Night lights

I'm experiencing trouble with the stock headlights of my 2018 Honda Amaze VX MT (i-DTEC) BS4. Will 100/90 or 130/100 bulbs be good or will HID be suitable? I go on long journeys often, but don't switch on my high-beam to avoid irritating drivers on the other side.

**Lalith Kishore Sharma Chirala, Karimnagar**

We would suggest you upgrade to 100/90 bulbs, they would only be slightly better in offering the desired illumination. To further aid your highway driving at night, we recommend replacing the existing fog lamps with a pair of projector lamps with HIDs.

You could opt for the standard 3.0-inch projector lamps from IPH to sit flush in the Amaze's stock fog lamp housing and install HID bulbs of 4,300K light temperature (yellow colour) specification. The projectors will complement the main headlights and offer a much superior lighting experience, even when both are at their respective low-beam settings. This advice comes on the presumption that being in South India, you won't encounter extreme foggy conditions during your drive. The entire setup should cost you between ₹6,000-8,000.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of Autocar India. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in



GAVIN D'SOUZA

While at first glance this may look like a regular 3 Series with a few cosmetic tweaks, the BMW M340i is much more than that. This car is powered by a 3.0-litre in-line six petrol engine – a unit that has been absent from the mainstream 3 Series line-up for a while now, though you do get a twin-turbo unit in the last-gen and new M3s. So, what is the car like?

The power the M340i packs is certainly its biggest calling card – 387hp and 500Nm from a 3.0-litre turbocharged straight six. This is the same unit as in the larger 740Li, 840i and the X5 and X7, but like in the Z4, it has been fettled by the M Division to be altogether more aggressive. A sports exhaust also means that it sounds better too. BMW claims a 0-100kph time of 4.4 seconds; we achieved a time of 4.36 seconds in our tests.

### Packs a punch

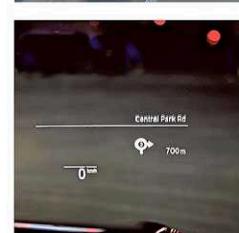
The engine does not give you quite the punch in the guts as an M3, but it revs freely and smoothly all the way to 7,000rpm in every gear, every time. The M Division has worked on the suspension too, which is 10mm lower than a 330i's and a bit firmer too. There are no adaptive dampers, which is a bit of a shame for a dual-nature car of this sort, but

With variable-ratio steering and upgraded brakes, the M340i offers a nice, tied-down feeling in the corners and good composure at high speeds



### M340I SPECIFICATIONS

WIDTH	1827mm
HEIGHT	1440mm
WHEELBASE	2851mm
TYRE SIZE (F/R)	225/45 R18 / 255/40 R18
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	59 litres
BOOT CAPACITY	480 litres
ENGINE	2998cc, 6 cyls, turbo-petrol
POWER	387hp at 5800rpm
TORQUE	500Nm at 1850-5000rpm
GEARBOX	8-speed automatic



**Best of both worlds** The M340i is a great blend of comfort and usability ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

BMW says they are saving that for the M3 and M4.

Coming to the xDrive system, this car does not get the specialised M version seen in the likes of the M5, so you can't switch to RWD mode. However, putting the car in Sport or Sport+ does apportion more power to the rear, and there is also a sports rear differential that shuffles torque left to right to pull you out of a corner faster. The result is a clearly rear-biased feel and the M340i has quite a bit of safe under-steer built into it.

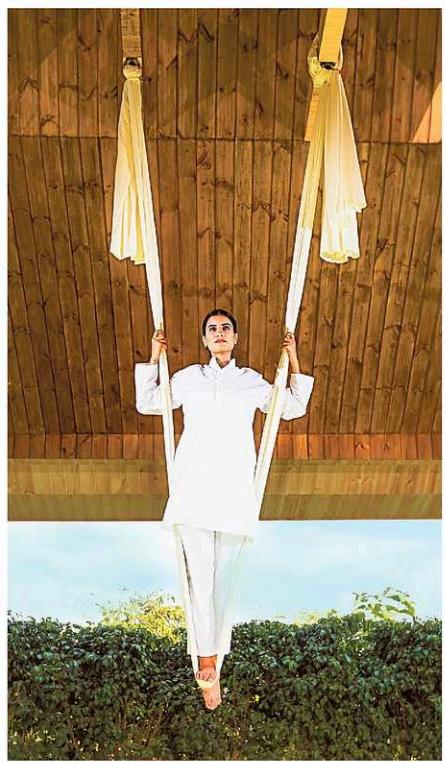
On the styling front, there is very little visual differentiation between this and the 330i M Sport. Only real aficionados

will spot the gunmetal grey accents, or the grille's different pattern for its slats, or that this car is equipped with the higher-spec Laserlight headlamps. The 18-inch alloy wheels are just the right size and look good but again, they are exactly the same set you will find on a 330i.

Differences inside are even fewer; the most noticeable being the neat textured dashboard trim and the black part-Alcantara upholstery with a few embellishments in the signature M colours. The equipment list is largely the same as the 330i M Sport, with the only notable addition to the M340i being the

higher-spec adaptive LED headlamps with laser high beams, a 16-speaker Harman Kardon audio system, a heads-up display and – finally – Android Auto in addition to Apple CarPlay, both of which work wirelessly.

In conclusion, the M340i fits that 'middle child' bill quite well. As it is locally assembled, BMW has priced the M340i at ₹62.90 lakh (ex-showroom) – lower than a BMW 530d (₹69 lakh), and this car's competitor, the CBU imported Mercedes-AMG C43 Coupe (₹80.17 lakh). However, if you want a bit more practicality, there is an X3 M40i version coming soon too.



PRIYADARSHINI PATTANDY

Despite the constant buzz of cellphones, endless video meetings, and binging on OTT entertainment, the sound of silence was unnerving through lockdown. As cities begin to open their borders, travellers are looking for ways to rest, relax and reconnect with their families: as a result wellness holidays are rising in popularity around the country.

**Domestic dominion**

Vana, a retreat in Dehradun, did not expect much when it opened its doors in October 2020, post-lockdown.

"We even shortened the minimum duration of stay to three days, from five. But by November we were overwhelmed with the response," says Jaspreet Singh, executive director of the property.

Clients of all age groups came in, and soon there were repeat customers. "These were people who just wanted to get out of the city and enjoy the outdoors. Some after staying for three days even extended their stay," says Singh. Given its proximity to Delhi, Vana expected a large clientele from the capital but was pleasantly surprised to get bookings from Kolkata, Mumbai and Bengaluru as well.

In previous years, 70% of Vana's clientele were international guests. As of the last quarter of 2020 and early 2021, it is the domestic travellers who are thronging this destination.

A similar story continues at SwaSwara in Gokarna, which reopened in August, after a hiatus of five months. Seeing the increase in domestic travellers seeking holistic holidays, they brought down their minimum stay to five nights from seven, and now also accommodate children below 15, making it possible for more Indian families to partake in this experience.

**POOCH CAFE****HAGAR THE HORRIBLE****TIGER**

# A healthy escape

Rejuvenating massages, in-depth consultations, organic menus. Domestic travellers are embracing wellness holidays to satiate their wanderlust, and counter the harrowing effects of 2020



**At peace** (Clockwise from top right) A bird's eye view of SwaSwara in Gokarna; a group activity at Vana in Dehradun; and relaxation and aerial yoga at Naad Wellness in Sonipat

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



**Free to head out**

most travellers is safety and sanitisation of the place they are visiting. There are precautions and safety checks in place. At Vana, the *vanavasis* (that is what the guests here are referred to as) are required to produce a COVID RT-PCR negative report issued 96 hours before travel.

Naad Wellness in Sonipat, Haryana had initially restricted entry to people arriving by flights, but is now open to all and does thermal checks for all its guests. However, a majority of their clients are still road trippers from Delhi-NCR, Meerut, Jaipur, Chandigarh and "places within a 200-kilometre radius," says Manoj Khetan, co-founder of Naad Wellness.

The pandemic scenario constantly changing, these properties have to continuously pivot. While the focus of many has traditionally been on digital detoxing, this year they are offering WiFi in certain rooms to attract the Work-From-Home brigade.

"We have a few couples who are dividing their time between their office work and our well-being services. We understand what the current situation is like, and work on their schedule," says Manoj.

For corporates, this is yet another novel off-site option. They use time between meetings for yoga, Ayurveda, reflexology, acupressure and the myriad services that Vana has to offer. "For many people, sitting at home all these months has led to fear psychosis. They need to get out. In the last four-five months we have seen a lot of guests who have relocated here and work out of here," says Singh.

Meanwhile, a section of travellers are looking for active holidays after a year on the couch, resulting in a surge in fitness activities like running, kayaking, cycling, standup paddling and trekking. Delhi-based Harsha Verma, who has

house doctor.

A resident artist asks clients to meditate and interpret the emotions that come up during the process. "Many of us tend to bury our trauma. Here, you can release them through colour," says Mini Chandran, general manager, adding that sometimes a few clients even cry after a session.

Meantwhile, a section of travellers are looking for active holidays after a year on the couch, resulting in a surge in fitness activities like running, kayaking, cycling, standup paddling and trekking. Delhi-based Harsha Verma, who has

**Primarily a bastion of international guests and a select few, they are now garnering interest from a wider domestic audience**

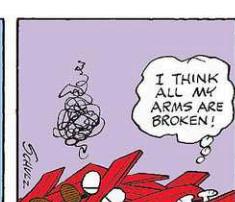
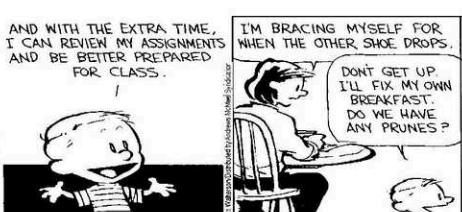
just mustered up courage to venture out again, says, "The last year felt like it was spent in a gilded prison. In a regular year, we would just pack up, hop on a flight and head to just about anywhere, from Singapore to Sri Lanka. This year was spent researching safe holiday destinations. Luckily, one day I came across charming places within India, which I had no idea about," says Harsha.

While these vacations are not exactly easy on the pocket, after a year of saving (with barely anyone travelling through 2020 because of the pandemic), many clients are willing to experiment, and loosen their purse strings. Prices can range from ₹12,500 for one-night stays, to extensive packages that cross the ₹1 lakh mark, depending on duration, consultations, activities and amenities.

The common concern, for

representatives of these properties are quick to state that they are not a generic spa resort. "It must be understood that wellness is not just about detox or a massage. It involves the five senses," says Khetan.

He is hopeful that more people will get to experience this. There has been a surge in enquiries and bookings ever since the vaccines rolled out, so he only expects things to get busier in the days to come.

**PEARLS BEFORE SWINE****PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES**

# Togs that tell the tale

Academy Award winning costume designer Ruth E Carter says superhero films, despite being complicated, are fulfilling as well

MINI ANTHIKAD CHHIBBER

Costume designers are storytellers too, says Ruth E Carter, who was honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in February. The 60-year-old has worked with some of the biggest names in cinema, including Spike Lee and Steven Spielberg. Ruth won an Oscar (she was the first black winner) for *Black Panther*.

Talking from her living room in Los Angeles, California, Ruth says, "Everything comes from the writing. It takes you on a journey and helps you imagine the world. As far as costume design goes, we have to honour the written word and the imagination it sparks in us. The screenplay gives you the spirit, painting the colours in your mind. When I read a spirited, funny script, I see it in colour. I see what the vibrancy of the film is, and it does influence how big and bold you will be." No actor, Ruth says, comes into a fitting knowing the full picture.

MCU's *Black Panther* featured some signature looks by Ruth, from a stylish take on a lab coat for Shuri (Letitia Wright) to the futuristic interpretation of a Zulu hat for Queen Ramonda (Angela Bassett) and an elegant green designer suit teamed with a lip plate for a river elder.

"The most memorable part for me was the Warrior Falls. I was told over and over again by Ryan Coogler [director] that that was the place where we could show the most African tradition. It was where I could show the Tuareg, the Turkana, and the Masai. I could show all of the majesty of tribal customs and clothes. I did so much research and delved into some of the amazing adornments that tribes from the whole continent used. When we put that team together and I stood on set – that was the greatest moment I think of my whole career."

Superhero films, Ruth says, are complicated. "There is a lot of expectations from the fans, a lot of detail



**Colour on my mind** Ruth Carter and still from *Coming 2 America*

for the process of making the costumes. You would have a superhero suit that has a muscle sculpt underneath and headboard and 3D printing... There are lots of processes that go into creating a futuristic film. They are also highly creative, and for a designer it is kind of the dream come true, the utopia."

On the other hand, Ruth says no film is easy to design for. "When you do a contemporary film, you get a lot of opinions. Everyone comes to you with a strong idea of what they think it should look like. I would say some films are more accessible because maybe you shop more rather than build from scratch. As a designer however, I always try to build a little something for the character so it helps define them."

Ruth's latest assignment is the sequel to *Coming to America*, Craig Brewer's *Coming 2 America* where Eddie Murphy's Prince Akeem returns to New York in search of a son he did not know he had. "I had worked with Craig for *Dolomite is my Name*. I have also done seven pictures with Eddie. We were in a rhythm, we were already a drama troupe (*laughs*). When Eddie's team told me that they wanted me to do *Coming 2 America*, I first thought that we were doing a remake and I was concerned because the first film was so beloved and it didn't necessarily need a remake. After I read the script however, I realised that it is 30 years later. We had the big funeral ceremony to do for King Jaffe Joffer (James Earl Jones). We landed on what we saw in the first film, which was beautiful Ankara fabrics and gorgeous celebratory looks for the men and women."

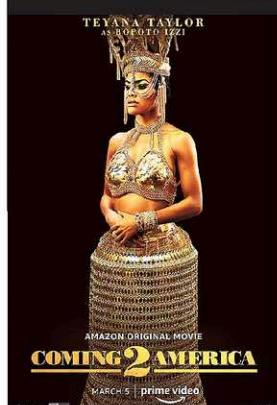
On who she enjoyed dressing the most, Ruth says with a laugh, "Oh I had so much fun dressing everyone. Tiana Taylor [she plays Bopoto, General Izzi's daughter] was special because she was outside of the royal family and we got to play with her dance costume and the chain-mail gown. Shari Headley (Queen Lisa) feels like she stayed still from 30 years ago and has not aged at all. She was a joy to dress in the beautiful gowns. Kiki Layne (Meeka Joffer, Akeem's and Lisa's eldest daughter) was also a favourite because of the athleisure wear that we got put on her. She was strong and athletic, and we didn't shy away from her beauty, form and femininity."

*Coming 2 America* is presently streaming on Amazon Prime Video

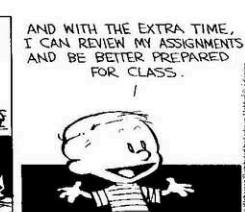
**EDGE OF TOMORROW**

The Scad Fash Museum of Fashion + Film, Atlanta is holding a retrospective of Ruth's work, Ruth E Carter: Afrofuturism in Costume Design, where 60 costumes from films including *Black Panther*, *Malcolm X* and *Selma* will be on display till September 12.

Ruth describes Afrofuturism as a way of bringing in hard science to culture, the idea of tomorrow, and what things will be or could be like.



AMAZON ORIGINAL MOVIE  
**COMING 2 AMERICA**  
MARCH 5 prime video



AN D-NOE



## MARKET WATCH

	16-03-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	50364	-0.06
US Dollar	72.55	-0.12
Gold	44481	0.26
Brent oil	67.95	-1.00

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	717.35	-1.70
Asian Paints	2468.60	113.60
Axle Bank	737.75	-6.65
Bajaj Auto	3654.45	-10.20
Bajaj Finserv	9613.30	-75.75
Bajaj Finance	5455.95	-16.90
Bharti Airtel	529.30	-6.45
BPCL	453.85	-6.70
Britannia Ind	3489.10	38.70
Cipla	792.30	-13.20
Coal India	145.70	-1.20
Divis Lab	3378.25	-32.75
Dr Reddy's Lab	4449.70	107.45
Eicher Motors	2661.05	-8.40
GAIL (India)	143.25	-0.30
Gasim Ind	1384.50	0.40
HCL Tech	1007.25	14.90
HDPC	2510.40	-25.10
HFDC Bank	1512.15	-16.50
HFDC Life	703.05	-1.10
Hero MotoCorp	3255.05	-9.10
Hindalco	333.90	0.10
Hind Unilever	2244.05	-8.30
ICICI Bank	594.95	-8.55
IndusInd Bank	1034.70	-3.95
Infosys	1384.00	10.40
Indian Oil Corp	100.40	-0.65
ITC	207.85	2.40
JSW Steel	425.95	-3.70
Kotak Bank	1902.20	-15.45
L&T	1461.80	-21.95
M&M	824.85	-1.55
Maruti Suzuki	7150.30	61.00
Nestle India Ltd.	16741.95	-91.10
NTPC	109.55	-0.95
ONGC	115.10	0.75
PowerGrid Corp	224.45	0.30
Reliance Ind	2100.60	-8.30
SBI Life	914.05	-5.95
State Bank	378.55	-5.35
Shree Cement	27430.80	-213.75
Sun Pharma	602.30	-3.20
Tata Motors	319.95	-3.20
Tata Steel	724.05	-12.35
TCS	3110.05	43.90
Tech Mahindra	1026.55	-10.10
Titan	1500.95	8.75
UltraTech Cement	6639.95	78.50
UPL	620.25	-1.10
Wipro	429.30	2.95

## IN BRIEF

## Apollo Tyres rolls out Apterra Cross for CSUVs

CHENNAI Apollo Tyres Ltd. has rolled out Apterra Cross tyres for the compact SUV (CSUV) segment. This is the first dedicated range of tyres that caters to the CSUV segment in the Indian automotive industry, the company said. The tyres are manufactured at the Oregadam unit and will be introduced in the ASEAN and SAARC markets later. In the domestic market, it will cater to vehicles such as Vitara Brezza and Nexon.

# Fuel demand has returned to pre-COVID levels: IOC's Vaidya

'March first-half diesel sales rise 7.4%; reflating economy to spur consumption'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

India's fuel demand, except for aviation turbine fuel, has returned to pre-COVID levels and a reflating economy will help consumption grow in the near future, the head of the nation's top oil firm said on Tuesday.

Fuel sales had fallen a record 45.8% in April when a nationwide lockdown was imposed to check the spread of coronavirus infections. Demand started to recover with the easing of lockdown restrictions, with petrol returning to normal growth first and now diesel too reaching pre-COVID levels.

"Except for ATF, we have touched normal demand," Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)



Back on track: OPEC's report forecast a 13.6% jump in oil demand in 2021 to 4.99 million barrels per day. ■ K.S.V. GIRI

Chairman Shrikant Madhav Vaidya said. "We are back on track." While petrol sales had reached pre-COVID levels a few months ago, diesel sales had risen 7.4% year-on-year in the first half of March. LPG sales had shown growth even during the lock-

down. With airlines not operating all flights, ATF sales remain below normal. "ATF may take a quarter's time to return to normal, maybe 3-4 months," he said.

IOC, he said, was bullish about fuel demand recovery as the economy grows.

"Let's hope for the best with the vaccine roll-out," he added. Diesel sales in the first half of March rose to 2.84 million tonnes while petrol demand climbed 5.3% to 1.05 million tonnes. This is the first annual rise in petrol sales since October.

ATF sales, which fell more than 80% in the aftermath of the lockdown, was down 36.5% in the first half of March. India's economy returned to growth in the last quarter as real GDP is estimated to have expanded 0.4% year-on-year after two quarters of contraction.

OPEC's monthly report last week forecast a 13.6% jump in India's oil demand in 2021 to 4.99 million barrels per day.

## Tackle CNG vehicle cost, bring it under GST

Changes will help spur sales: Nomura

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India has explored 5 TCM of reserves, of which less than 0.5% is used as fuel

ed in Maharashtra (30%), Gujarat (29%), Delhi (23%), Uttar Pradesh (9%), and Haryana (5%).

"India has large domestic reserves of natural gas as compared to crude oil. India has explored about 5 trillion cubic metres of recoverable reserves, of which less than 0.5% is used as fuel in the current CNG fleet," it said.

High vehicle volume and favourable conditions in the Indian automotive market presented an opportunity to promote NGVs, it added.

## Nokia to cut up to 10,000 jobs globally over 2 years

Move to pare costs by €600 mn by '23

## REUTERS

STOCKHOLM

Finnish telecoms group Nokia said on Tuesday it planned to cut up to 10,000 jobs within the next two years to trim costs and invest more in research capabilities, as part of its restructuring plan.

After taking over the top job last year, Chief Executive Pekka Lundmark has been making changes in a bid to transform the company to better compete with Nordic rival Ericsson.

**Focus on 5G, rivals**  
He announced a new strategy in October under which Nokia will have four business groups and said the

company would "do whatever it takes" to take the lead in 5G, as it banks on also capturing share from Huawei.

Nokia expects the restructuring to lower its cost base by about €600 million by the end of 2023. Half of the savings are expected to be realised in 2021.

## Taxation slowing growth of luxury cars in India: Mercedes

No production hub plans due to lack of local demand: MD

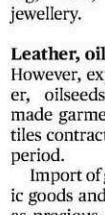
## YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

India needs to review the overall taxation of premium luxury vehicles, which is slowing the growth of such vehicles in the country, said Martin Schwenk, MD & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India.

"Duties, schemes, taxation is a massive burden... that is slowing the growth. So, we will have growth, but will not have exponential growth," Mr. Schwenk said.

"To come to really stronger growth, it would require more measures than we as a manufacturer can do.... we can only do so much in terms of cost," he added.



domestic demand, he said. Mr. Schwenk said the company was currently producing E-class models locally and may add another one in the next few months, but would not substantially change the way it operated in India.

"We have looked at the PLI scheme... the complexity for us is, any production we would set up in India would also require a strong domestic market," he said.

"And without a strong domestic footprint, it is very difficult to put investment here and then basically export into other countries because then one essential link of the chain is missing," the MD said.

## Gland to supply Russia's COVID shot

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Gland Pharma on Tuesday said it had entered into an agreement with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to supply up to 252 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V.

The firm said this is the first of multiple partnerships being explored to leverage its manufacturing capabilities to support global supply of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Gland will utilise the Drug Substance and Drug Product facilities at its sites in Hyderabad.

The production is expected to commence from the third quarter of 2021.

## Alkem unveils 'affordable' epilepsy drug

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Alkem Laboratories Ltd. has introduced Brivasure, an affordable drug for the treatment of epilepsy in India.

The drug has been introduced at price of ₹79.50 per strip for 25 mg, ₹148.50 for 50 mg, ₹230 for 75 mg and ₹295 for a 100-mg strip. Brivasure has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India in the adjunctive management of partial onset seizure with or without secondary generalisation.

Brivasure has exhibited faster onset of action, efficacy with favourable safety profile, the company said.

## IN BRIEF

## British sports journalism award for Holding

London West Indies cricket great Michael Holding, who came out in support of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, has been named the 'Best Pundit' at the SJA British Sports Journalism Awards 2020. PTI

## James leads Lakers to big win over Warriors

SAN FRANCISCO LeBron James' triple-double (22 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists), the 98th of his career, helped Los Angeles Lakers post a commanding 128-97 win over Golden State Warriors here on Monday.

**Other results:** Milwaukee 133 bt Washington 122; LA Clippers 109 bt Dallas 99; Phoenix 122 bt Memphis 99.

CMK

## SEBI tweak to quicken IPO funds reconciliation

Rules mandate investor compensation

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Markets regulator SEBI on Tuesday put in place a uniform policy to streamline the reconciliation process among intermediaries with regard to initial public offers as well as a new mechanism to compensate investors.

The new framework would address issues related to delays in receipt of mandate by investors for blocking of funds due to systemic issues at intermediaries and failure to unlock the funds in cases of partial allotment by the next working day from the finalisation of Basis of Allotment, SEBI said in a circular.

Other issues that would be addressed include Self Certified Syndicate Banks (SCSBs) blocking multiple amounts for the same Unified Payment Interface application. In case of delays, SCSBs would pay ₹100 per day or 15% p.a. of the application amount, whichever is higher, to investors.

## GMM Pfaudler wins bid for HDO's assets

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

GMM Pfaudler Ltd. (GMMP) has been declared as the successful bidder for the acquisition of HDO Technologies Ltd.'s assets for ₹58.46 crore.

The company had participated in the e-auction process for sale of assets owned by HDO, under the IBC. This facility, spread over 11.9 acres with seven manufacturing bays and built-up area of 23,617 sq. m. in Vatva, Ahmedabad, is equipped to manufacture heavy engineering equipment, the company said.

The transaction is expected to be completed by April 30.

their eye in. This latter is anathema to T20 cricket where, with just 120 balls to negotiate, batsmen could not be allowed such indulgence (unless you were Chris Gayle, but he is an exception).

**Attack is key**  
T20 is a different sport from either of the other two formats of the game. It took India a while to realise this. For long they were happy to pick players based on "white ball" performances in formats that were distinct from each other.

Now there is an acknowledgement of its main elements: attack is the platform on which batsmen build their innings, while bowlers think in terms of single deliveries (which is just over four percent of their quota) rather than overall plans. The batsman attacks, the bowler defends in an inversion of the traditional.

Before the start of the current T20 series, India skipper Virat Kohli set down a mission statement: "We want to be a side that plays free cricket," he said, "you will see guys more expressive and being much more positive (from now on)."

He thus pointed to an essential truth: what is good for the individual player –

playing himself in and getting a decent score – is often not good for the team as a whole. Success has to be measured in terms of attempts made and context, not necessarily runs scored. A 30 in 12 balls is more valuable than 50 in 50. Averages and strike rates paint incomplete pictures.

The captain is, in effect, telling his players to attack early and not hold back for fear of lack of depth in the batting. A few things had to come together before Kohli could make the promise implied in that.

**Accent on younger, fitter batsmen**

One, the accent had to be on younger, fitter batsmen suitably trained by exposure to international trends in the IPL. Players like Rishabh Pant and now Ishan Kishan bat with a confidence and a healthy disregard for personal glory that is a departure from the old way. This in turn comes from the clear message from the management: you will occasionally be dismissed cheaply doing the right thing for the team, but that will not be held against you.

Two, the conscious moving away from over-reliance on one or two

# Clinical Buttler makes short work of chase, England goes 2-1 up

Opener's unbeaten 52-ball 83 powers tourists to eight-wicket win; Kohli's brilliant 77 n.o. rescues India, struggling at 24 for three at one stage, but 157-run target proves inadequate

## ENGLAND IN INDIA

ASHWIN ACHAL  
AHMEDABAD

A whirlwind unbeaten 52-ball 83 from Jos Buttler guided England past India by eight wickets in the third T20I here on Tuesday.

Chasing 157, Buttler's blitz at the top of the order took England past the finish line with 10 deliveries to spare. The visitors grabbed a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

### Taking charge

Buttler assumed control after Jason Roy was dismissed cheaply in the fourth over. Buttler was severe on leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who bowled in the PowerPlay instead of Washington Sundar. Chahal, slow through the air, was clobbered by Buttler for two straight sixes.

Buttler's offensive powered England to 57 for one in the first six overs, taking the air out of the Indians. Washington gave his side some hope when he had David Malan stumped for 18, with a flat, 102-kmph fizz. Next man Jonny Bairstow, however, kept Buttler safe company to finish with an unbeaten 40.

Buttler recorded his highest-ever T20I score, going past his previous best of 77 not out, made against Australia last year.

The Indian fielding was shoddy, with Virat Kohli dropping Buttler on 76 and Chahal giving Bairstow a life two overs later.

After being put in, it took some late fireworks from Kohli (77 n.o., 46b, 8x4, 4x6) to push India to a respectable



**Typical Jos:** Buttler masterminded England's chase with an aggressive innings. — SPORTZPICS/BCCI

total. The England bowlers were brilliant for the most part, but succumbed to pressure at the death.

Pacers Jofra Archer and Mark Wood were particularly impressive, generating great pace and steep bounce.

Rohit Sharma, back from

rest, was scratchy, falling to a pull for 15.

Ishan Kishan, the hero of the second T20I, was dismissed in similar fashion, getting a top edge off Chris Jordan.

### Needless run-out

Kohli and Rishabh Pant (25, 20b, 3x4) batted sensibly to put on 40 runs for the fourth wicket, before an unnecessary run out cost Pant's wicket. Having completed a comfortable double,

Pant was pushed to take the third by an eager Kohli after a fumble by wicketkeeper Buttler. Pant, who had backed up well beyond the stumps, stood no chance of making the crease at the other end. It was a most untimely dismissal, which left India at a precarious 64 for four.

The home team stuttered to 100 in 16 overs – in desperate need of acceleration. Kohli answered the call, swatting Jordan over the square-leg fence. Wood faced

### SCOREBOARD

#### INDIA

Rohit Sharma c Archer b Wood 15 (1b, 2x4), K.L. Rahul b Wood 0 (4b), Ishan Kishan c Buttler b Jordan 4 (9b), Virat Kohli (not out) 77 (46b, 8x4, 4x6), Rishabh Pant run out 25 (20b, 3x4), Shreyas Iyer c Malan b Wood 9 (9b, 1x4), Hardik Pandya c Archer b Jordan 17 (15b, 2x6); Extras (b-1, lb-5, w-3): 9; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 156.

#### FALL OF WICKETS

1-7 (Rahul, 2.3 overs), 2-20 (Rohit, 4.4), 3-24 (Ishan, 5.2), 4-64 (Pant, 11.1), 5-86 (Shreyas, 14.3), 6-156 (Hardik, 19.6).

#### ENGLAND BOWLING

Rashid 4-0-26-0, Archer 4-0-32, Wood 4-0-31-3, Jordan 4-1-35-2, Stokes 2-0-12-0, Curran 2-0-14-0.

### Innings scan

INDIA	ENGLAND
53	33
14	12
6	5
24/3	57/1
7.80	8.61

a worse fate in the next over, being clobbered by Kohli for maximums over mid-wicket and long-off.

At the other end, Hardik Pandya (17, 15b, 2x6) was not at his best, but managed to carve out two sixes in the point and third-man region.

The pyrotechnics helped India rack up 56 runs in the last four overs, but it was not enough to tilt the match in its favour.

In a surprise move, the Indian team management decided to leave Suryakumar Yadav out of the eleven, despite the Mumbai cricketer not facing a ball in his debut match on Sunday.

## Rahul gets Rathour's backing



**Lone ranger:** Kohli was the only Indian batsman who looked comfortable against the England bowlers. — SPORTZPICS/BCCI

batting first at the Narendra Modi Stadium poses a challenge. "The pitch has been difficult to assess. The bounce is sticky when batting first. Today also we saw

some variable bounce. It has been tough, but having already played three games here, we hope to do better in the next two matches," Rathour said.

## Wood had a huge impact: Buttler



S. DIPAK RAGAV

While he might have walked away with the Man-of-the-Match award for his superb unbeaten 83, Jos Buttler credited England's bowlers for an impressive performance in the PowerPlay during India's innings.

"Lots of credit to the guys who bowled first up and to take three wickets in the PowerPlay was fantastic and really sets the game for you from there," said Buttler.

The English opener had special words of praise for pacer Mark Wood who starred with figures of three

for 31 and set the tone, removing India's openers.

"He [Wood] had a huge impact on the game. Any time you see him get a ball in his hand, be it Tests, 50 overs or T20, he is in fantastic rhythm. He is bowling extremely quickly and together with Jofra [Archer], the pace those guys can bowl, it's quite intimidating."

"To take early wickets is always a huge benefit in T20 cricket and it put India back and did not allow them to attack early on in their innings. It was a huge moment in the game, how well those guys bowled."

## Sreeshankar jumps to new National mark, qualifies for Tokyo

Dhanalakshmi bests Dutee in 100m; Amoj wins the quarter mile as Anas pulls out

## Indian bowling unit needs to fire

### SA IN INDIA

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
LUCKNOW

It is a challenge for India to be efficient in unfriendly bowling conditions.

India did fight without its bowling spearhead Jhulan Goswami in the fourth one-day. The team also posted its best total of 266 when the openers failed to fire.

There are a lot of positives for the Indian team, even as it trails 1-3 in the series, having lost three matches when batting first. It is a challenge for both the teams to win a match after losing the toss.

### Responded better

There is no doubt that South Africa has responded better to the conditions, built on the luck of winning the toss. Its catching and fielding have been exceptional.

The batting has fared brilliantly, with openers Lizelle



Smriti... can take any attack apart. — FILE PHOTO

Lee and Laura Wolvaardt playing a significant role. They have scored 442 runs combined in the four matches.

On the eve of the fifth match, leg-spinner Poonam Yadav did concede, while addressing the media, that the spinners had the onus to stop the run flow, if unable to take wickets.

**No age-group tournaments till end of May, says BCCI**

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The BCCI, owing to a resurgence of COVID-19 infections across the country, has suspended junior inter-state tournaments at least till the end of May.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah informed the BCCI affiliates about the decision through an email on Tuesday.

"While our endeavour was to get in as many matches as possible across different age groups, the prevailing circumstances have forced us to suspend all age-group tournaments," Shah wrote in the mail, accessed by *The Hindu*.

"I assure you that we will continue exploring a window for organising the age-group tournaments post IPL 2021," Shah added.

### FEDERATION CUP

UTHRA GANESAN  
PATIALA

For almost three years, Murali Sreeshankar had been battling disappointment, frustration and questions on his ability.

On Tuesday, the long jumper silenced them all, qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics with a 8.26m jump that evoked a rare scream from the usually mild-mannered athlete on Day Two of the Federation Cup. The 21-year-old bettered his own 2018 National Record of 8.20m and admitted it was a mix of emotions.

### Proving a point

"It's been a long wait after 2018; 2019 was a rough year and 2020 was the COVID year. For a long time, a lot of people had been saying 8.20 was my peak and I took it personally. There was a point to prove and I am glad I did it," said an ecstatic Sreeshankar.

Through the lockdown, Sreeshankar kept training at home, within a bubble, with his cousins. "I dedicate this achievement to them. When everything was closed, they trained with me and it would not have been possible without them or my father," he said.

He was also honest in his assessment of the road ahead. "When I did 8.20 my calibre was 8.80m at best. But I believe my ability at the moment is 8.40m. I am slowly getting into the rhythm and

having all jumps over 8m today is a great sign because the competition out there is very tough. One occasional jump of 8.26 will not be enough to sustain, I need to stay in the 8.20-plus mark consistently," he explained.

The big showdown in the women's 100m did not materialise, with Hima Das disqualified for a false start and Dutee Chand finishing second – her first defeat in the event since 2015 – behind Dhanalakshmi.

The men's 400m, won by



**Memorable day:** Sreeshankar's effort of 8.26m booked him a ticket to the Olympics while Dhanalakshmi emerged the fastest.

### FATIH

## Highest attainment

The jivatma's highest attainment is *jnana* or enlightenment, say the sastras. They also show that this depends on many factors such as one's past karma, single minded desire for this goal, proficiency in the sastras, adherence to truth and dharma, grace of the preceptors, and above all the grace of the Supreme Being. Just as Valmiki and Kalidasa were blessed by Devi's grace with the gift of poetic vision, the Devi Bhagavata Purana relates how one Satyavrata is conferred with *jnana* by Her grace at the appropriate time, pointed out Sri K. Srinivasan in a discourse.

Owing to the curse of a rishi, Satyavrata is a fool by birth though born in a reputed brahmana family. Distracted, he speaks rarely and eventually leaves his home to live in solitude on the banks of the Ganga. In due course, people are impressed by his commitment to truth, his austere way of life and his *vairagya*. Once, a wounded boar rushes into his hermitage and hides in the bushes. The hunter follows the boar and asks Satyavrata if he has seen it. Now, Satyavrata debates the dilemma in his mind – speak the truth and endanger the life of the boar or speak an untruth to save it. If, speaking the truth results in loss of life, it cannot be called truth. Likewise, even untruth, when tempered by mercy for the welfare of others, becomes truth.

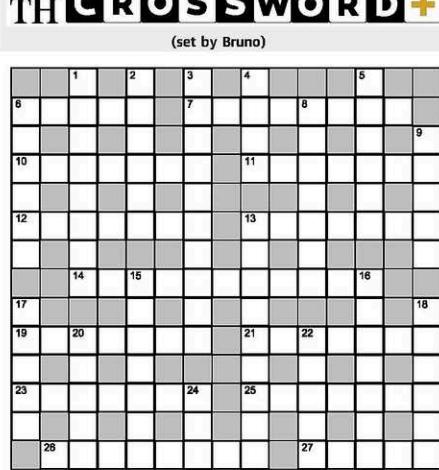
At this moment, Devi grants him the *jnana* and he utters the following words filled with philosophical wisdom to the hunter, "Why are you asking me this question? That force which sees, never speaks; that force which speaks, never sees." The hunter is disappointed and leaves knowing that he would not get any information on the boar from him. Since then, Satyavrata became a celebrated realised soul who only spoke the truth.

### 2021 TH CROSSWORD + 13197

(set by Bruno)

Never go off the grid.  
We are digital now. Come solve online!

@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



### ACROSS

- 6 Finally "bejaar" and "Aiyo" translated to another language (5)
- 7 Inert gas seen at a lake a short while after creation (8)
- 10 Groundnut's outer layers need to be peeled off – therefore, suffer (7)
- 11 Greenhouse gas found by Chinese engineer (7)
- 12 Starting to cut use-less counsellors – unsure they help with applications (4-3)

- 13 Fashionable – "in" girls chasing sportsman's partner, waving (7)
- 14 Running musical piece's characterised by notes, I gathered (11)
- 15 Man quietly being apprehended by thug gets aid (4,3)
- 21 Comfortable lease – fully furnished (7)
- 23 Fashionable bad-mannered Royal replaced by village (7)
- 25 Tasting success where jam goes? (2,1,4)
- 26 U.S.-A chant reverberating at plant (8)
- 27 Often gambled with a man on the side (5)
- DOWN
- 1 Indian dish has flavonoids when cooked soft – often skinned (8)
- 2 Difficult to carry one off – primarily this style (6)
- 3 Temperamental nobhead cannot sit properly (10)
- 4 Love for a hot dirt-ball (4)
- 5 Is about going over a long distance, perhaps? (6)
- 6 Date missing in overdue assorted volume of work (6)
- 8 Protein's congenital malformation leads to condition of lipid deficiency (7)
- 9 Consolidate issue & last of online issues (5)
- 13 Canadian city crawling with heroes (10)
- 15 Online movement for love, perhaps? (7)
- 16 Starts to expect favours over time in sexual partner – save it for another time (4,4)
- 17 The rich, bottom to top, are trim (5)
- 18 Hello! Husband's being replaced by lady – a curvy one (6)
- 20 Inheritance, say comes in delicate setting (6)
- 22 Is a pirate one? Of course! Am annoyed! (6)
- 24 2 x (1/2 of 1/2) – that's funny (2-2)

### SUDOKU

		7			4		
3			2		7		
1	6		8	5			
5			4	2	8		
		6	5				
8	7	9				6</	

## TV PICKS

**India women v South Africa women:** Fifth ODI, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.  
**All England Open:** Star Sports 3, 2.30 p.m. & Star Sports 2 (HD), 4 p.m.  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**UEFA Champions League:** Sony Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Thursday)

## IN BRIEF



**Sarah Taylor joins Sussex's coaching staff**  
 HOVE (SUSSEX)  
 In a rare but welcome move, English County side Sussex has named 31-year-old Sarah Taylor, one of the greatest 'keepers to have graced the women's game, in their men's team coaching staff for the upcoming season. The 31-year-old Taylor, who has represented England in 226 games across formats with a world record 232 dismissals to her credit. PTI



**Ibrahimovic back in Sweden's squad**  
 STOCKHOLM  
 Footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic will return to Sweden's squad after an almost five-year hiatus to play in World Cup qualifiers at the end of March, head coach Janne Andersson said on Tuesday. The 39-year-old AC Milan striker had retired from the national team after the 2016 European Championships. AFP

**ICC bans two UAE cricketers for eight years**  
 DUBAI  
 The ICC on Tuesday slapped eight-year bans on United Arab Emirates (UAE) cricketers, former skipper Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt for their alleged role in trying to fix matches in the T20 World Cup qualifier in 2019. The bans are backdated to October, 2019, when they were provisionally suspended. PTI

## Joshua, Fury sign two-fight unification deal

**LONDON**  
 Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury (in pic) will face off in two all-British World heavyweight title unification fights, Joshua's promoter Eddie Hearn said on Monday. "All parties have now put pen to paper and we will be working hard over the next few weeks to confirm the site and date for the biggest fight in boxing," Hearn told Sky Sports. AFP



**Dinamo Zagreb coach quits after receiving prison sentence**  
 ZAGREB  
 Zoran Mamic has quit as Dinamo Zagreb coach after Croatia's Supreme Court confirmed his prison sentence for tax evasion and fraud, just days before the Croatian champion play a Europa League match against Tottenham. AFP



**Ronaldo's return to Real 'possible': Zidane**  
 MADRID  
 Zinedine Zidane opened the door to Cristiano Ronaldo returning to Real Madrid on Monday, admitting a comeback is "possible" for the striker. "We know the person he is and everything he's done at Real Madrid... I did what I had to do with Cristiano. Let's see what will happen in the future," said Zidane. AFP

# Messi spectacular against Huesca

Equals Xavi's Barca appearance record; Liverpool edges Wolves

## EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES  
MADRID

Lionel Messi scored a spectacular double the same night he equalled Xavi Hernandez's appearance record for Barcelona, the Argentinian inspiring his team to a 4-1 win over Huesca on Monday. Messi tied Xavi's 767 games in all competitions for Barca and marked yet another milestone with a brilliant brace, a curling effort in the first half flying in off the crossbar at Camp Nou before a late shot nestled in the corner.

"He's the most important man in the history of Barca," said coach Ronald Koeman. "Even better that he's still with us."

Antoine Griezmann had earlier followed suit with another impressive shot into the top corner before Huesca pulled one back, Rafa Mir



**Masterclass:** Lionel Messi put in yet another sublime show, this time against Huesca. ■ GETTY IMAGES

converting a doubtful penalty on the stroke of half-time.

But Messi helped Barca pull away, sending in a cross for Oscar Mingueza to head in and then scoring his se-

cond as the Catalans moved to within four points of league leader Atletico Madrid.

Messi made it 13 consecutive campaigns with 20 LaLi-

ga goals.

Diogo Jota scored the winner against his former club as Liverpool beat Wolverhampton 1-0 in an English Premier League match that

## Sai Dedeepya claws back to beat Avishka

## NATL. TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

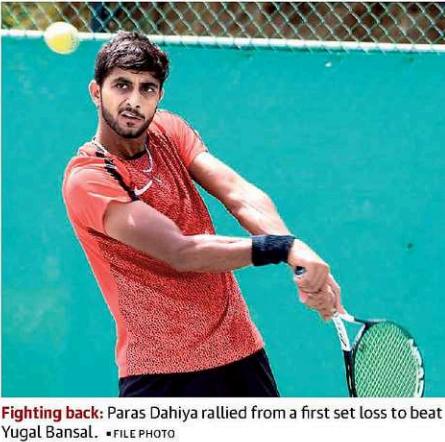
**Sai Dedeepya** recovered from the brink of defeat to beat Avishka Gupta 4-6, 7-6(5), 6-2 in the women's first round of the National hard court tennis championship at the Tennis Project, Ballavas, on Tuesday.

In the men's section, fourth seed Paras Dahiya bounced back to beat Yugal Bansal 4-6, 6-3, 6-3. Top seed Arjun Kadhe got past former National champion V.M. Ranjeet for the loss of five games.

**The results (first round):**  
 Men: Arjun Kadhe bt V.M. Ran-

jeet 6-2, 6-3; Chirag Duhani bt Anirudh Chandrasekar 7-6(9), 6-4; Ishaque Eqbal bt Lakshya Gupta 6-1, 7-5; Chandril Sood bt Lakshmi Shod 6-2, 6-2; Suraj Prabodh bt Raghav Jaisinghani 6-2, 6-1; Paras Dahiya bt Yugal Bansal 4-6, 6-3, 6-3; Prithvi Sekhar bt Jatin Dahiya 6-3, 6-2; Niki Poona bh Faisal Qamar 7-6(4), 6-1.

**Women:** Sai Dedeepya bt Avishka Gupta 4-6, 7-6(5), 6-2; Akanksha Nitrite bt Sonashe Bhatnagar 6-3, 6-2; Bela Tamkar bt Kashish Bhatia 1-6, 6-2, 7-5; Arthi Munijay bt Lagan Bidhan 6-2, 7-6(4); Reshma Maruri bt Kirti Tomar 6-1, 6-0; Rishika Sunkara bt Veda Varshita Ranabothu 6-2, 6-1; Soha Sadie bt Shilpi Das 6-0, 6-0; Shreya Tatavarthy bt Prathiba Narayan 6-3, 6-0.



**Fighting back:** Paras Dahiya rallied from a first set loss to beat Yugal Bansal. ■ FILE PHOTO

## Sandeep stuns stalwarts in trials

## WRESTLING

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

National champion Sandeep Singh Mann defeated two accomplished wrestlers, World championships medallist Narsingh Yadav and Asian medallist Amit Dhanakar, on his way to winning the men's freestyle 74kg selection trials on Tuesday.

In the trials held at the K.D. Jadhav Stadium inside the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi, Mann got the better of Narsingh 4-3 in the semifinals and beat Dhanakar 2-1 in the final to ensure a ticket to the Asian Olympic qualifier and the Asian championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in mid-April.

Asian championships silver medallist Jitender Kumar, another strong contender, lost to Dhanakar 3-0 on criteria in the semifinals.

Two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, who holds the post of the president of the School Games Federation of India (SGFI), with-



**Sandeep Singh Mann**  
 ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

drew as he was busy with internal issues of the SGFI and could not prepare for the trials.

Trials were held for three freestyle and six Greco-Roman weights.

**The winners:** Freestyle: 74kg: Sandeep Singh Mann; 97kg: Satyavrat Kadian; 125kg: Sumit.

Greco-Roman: 60kg: Ganender; 67kg: Ashu; 77kg: Gurpreet Singh; 87kg: Sunil Kumar; 97kg: Ravi; 130kg: Naveen.

## ALL ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BIRMINGHAM

P.V. Sindhu will look to shrug off her demoralising Swiss Open final defeat and take advantage of a depleted field when she spearheads India's challenge at the prestigious All England Open badminton championships, beginning here on Wednesday.

Carolina though has pulled out of the prestigious tournament due to an injury. Also missing in action will be the Chinese, Koreans and Chinese Taipei shuttlers, who decided not to compete in the Super 1000 event as it is not part of the Tokyo Olympic qualification period.

It affects the quality of the competition but also provides the 19-member Indian contingent an opportunity to go deep in the draw and recapture the trophy which has been won by just two Indians so far – the legendary Prakash Padukone (1980) and P Gopi Chand (2001).

While former world num-



**P.V. Sindhu.** ■ PTI

ber one Saina Nehwal had a runner-up finish in 2015, Sindhu's best finish was a semifinal in 2018.

Among other Indians, K. Srikanth and men's doubles pair of Satwikairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and will look to put their best foot forward.

Fifth seed Sindhu will kick off her campaign with a clash against Malaysia's Soni Cheah and is likely to face Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in the quarterfinals.

Saina has drawn in-form seventh seed Mia Blichfert of Denmark in her first round and might meet Scot-

land's Kristy Gilmour next.

In men's singles, Srikanth will open against Tommy Sugiarto of Indonesia, while B. Sai Praneeth will take on France's Toma Junior Popov and is likely to clash next with second seed Viktor Axelsen, who has won the two Super 1000 titles in Thailand, and the Swiss Open.

P. Kashyap will open against world number one Japanese Kento Momota, who is returning to international circuit after a horrific car accident last year that saw him undergo an eye surgery.

H.S. Prannoy will meet Malaysia's Darren Liew.

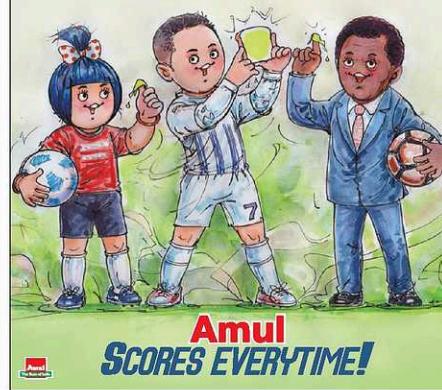
In men's doubles, Satwik and Chirag will open against Elio Adam and Julien Maio of France, while mixed doubles pair of Satwik and Ashwini Ponnapa will square off against Japanese duo of Yuko Kaneko and Misaki Matsutomo.

In women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnapa and N. Sikki Reddy will take on Benyapa Aditya Balda 7-6(5), 6-2; Yuvaan Nandal 7-6(5), 6-2; N. Sikki Reddy and Misaki Matsutomo.

In women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnapa and N. Sikki Reddy will take on Benyapa Aditya Balda 7-6(5), 6-2; Yuvaan Nandal 7-6(5), 6-2; N. Sikki Reddy and Misaki Matsutomo.

Devaharshith moves up

# PELE NUMBER PAR RONALDO!



He's the most important man in the history of Barca  
 RONALD KOEMAN  
 Barca coach

ended with Wolves goalkeeper Rui Patricio being carried off with a head injury on Monday.

The goalkeeper didn't finish the game after being struck on the head in the 87th minute by the knee of teammate Conor Coady, who was running back into his area.

Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo gave a positive update on Patricio's condition after the game, saying: "He's OK. He is conscious, he remembers what happened, he is aware. He is OK."

**The results:** LaLiga: Barcelona 4 (Messi 13, 90, Griezmann 35, Minguez 53) bt SD Huesca 1 (Mir 45+4-pen).

**Premier League:** Wolves 0 Liverpool 1 (Jota 45+2).

## Gursimrat nets Sudeva's winner; NEROCA relegated

## I-LEAGUE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

**Sudeva** Delhi FC rode on Gursimrat Singh's lone goal to a 1-0 win over NEROCA FC in a relegation round match of the Hero I-League at the Kalyani Stadium here on Tuesday.

Aizawl FC, which lost to Indian Arrows 2-1, held on to its top spot with 18 points.

Gursimrat headed in a ball when NEROCA goalkeeper was out of his place just before the half-time.

Aizawl FC, which lost to Indian Arrows 2-1, held on to its top spot with 18 points.

**The results:** Sudeva Delhi FC 1 (Gursimrat Singh 46) bt NEROCA FC 0; Aizawl FC 1 (Mal-sawmtluanga 22) lost to Indian Arrows 2 (Parthib Gogoi 11, Lalchhanima Salio 36).

NEROCA, which was at

## Indian team for Billie Jean King Cup

## TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The core group of Ankita Raina, Sania Mirza and Rituja Bhosale will continue to strive to take India forward in the Billie Jean King Cup world group play-off tie against Latvia to be played on indoor hard courts in Jurmala on April 16 and 17.

The other two spots in the team have been taken by Zeel Desai and Karman Kaur Thandi.

Riya Bhatia has been kept as a reserve in the team announced by the All India Tennis Association (AITA) on Tuesday. Riya has been struggling with her

The selectors with Nandan Bal as the chairman met through a video conference on Tuesday. Balram Singh, Mustafa Ghouse and Sai Jayalakshmy were the other selectors. The meeting was also attended by the AITA secretary-general Anil Dhupar, vice-president Hironmoy Chatterjee and captain Vishaal.

game in the recent international events at home. In contrast, Zeel has been at her best.

National champion Sowjanya Bavisetty was also unable to retain her place from the last team. Vishaal Uppal will continue as the captain. The announcement of coach and physio

has not been made yet.

The selectors with Nandan Bal as the chairman met through a video conference on Tuesday. Balram Singh, Mustafa Ghouse and Sai Jayalakshmy were the other selectors. The meeting was also attended by the AITA secretary-general Anil Dhupar, vice-president Hironmoy Chatterjee and captain Vishaal.

Devaharshith Neelam defeated Raghav Harsh 6-4, 5-7, 6-2 in the boys' first round of the ITF grade-5 junior tennis tournament at the SAIL tennis complex at Bhilai.

**The results (first round):**

**Boys:** Ronin Lotlikar bt Dev Kanbargi (Rou) 6-1, 6-0; Torus Rawat bt Saheb Sodhi 6-4, 7-6(4); Yuvan Nandal bt Aditya Balda 7-6(5), 6-2; N. Sikki Reddy Yellu bt Suhani Sabharwal 6-0, 6-0; Rutuja Chaphalkar (US) bt Chahana Budhbhatti 7-6(2), 7-5.

Kristi Boro bt Tanushri Pandey 6-0, 6-3; Gargi Pawar bt Priyanshi Panigrahi 6-1, 6-1; Ruma Gaikaiwari bt Hanna Nagpal 6-4, 6-4; Sanya Masand bt Nemha Sarah Kisportta 7-6(4), 6-2.

Devaharshith moves up

**SPORTS BUREAU  
NEW DELHI**

6-3. Daksh Prasad bt Vishesh Patel 6-4, 6-3; Dhruv Hirpara bt Kabir Chhabria 6-3, 6-2; Devaharshith Neelam bt Raghav Harsh 6-4, 5-7, 6-2.

**Girls:** Sanjana Sirmala bt Kotisha Modak 6-4, 6-3; Naisha Srivastava bt Zahnsa Bakytzhan (Kaz) 6-4, 6-1; Aarni Reddy Yellu bt Suhani Sabharwal 6-0, 6-0; Rutuja Chaphalkar (US) bt Chahana Budhbhatti 7-6(2), 7-5.

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**Abhinav stars in Delhi Audit's triumph**

Man of the match Abhinav Bali slammed a 53-ball 118 as Delhi Audit beat Ministry of Defence by 76 runs to win the inter-ministry tournament. Ankur Jukla was named best batsman, K