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## OXFAM REPORT

## Covid deepened inequalities: wealth, education, gender

Wealth surge of richest 11 in pandemic could sustain NREGS for 10 years

UDIT MISRA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

A NEW report by Oxfam has found that the Covid pandemic deeply exacerbated existing inequalities in India and around the world.

The report, titled 'The Inequality Virus', has found that as the pandemic stalled the economy, forcing millions of poor Indians out of jobs, the richest billionaires in India increased their wealth by 35 per cent.

"The wealth of Indian billionaires increased by 35 per cent during the lockdown and by 90 per cent since 2009 to \$422.9 billion ranking India sixth in the world after US, China, Germany, Russia and France," states the report.

According to Oxfam's calcu-

EXPLAINED

**Growth vs inequality**

HIGH LEVELS of inequalities hurt the economy and undermine social cohesion. Some argue that governmental efforts to reduce inequality must succeed, not precede, efforts to boost growth because that will define how much there is to distribute. That will be the challenge for the Budget.

lations, since March, as the government announced possibly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

## India, China hold ninth round of LAC talks

KRISHN KAUSHIK  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

SENIOR MILITARY commanders from India and China met on Sunday for the ninth round of talks to discuss a possible solution to the nearly nine-month border standoff in eastern Ladakh.

The meeting, which began around 10 am on the Chinese side of the Chushul-Moldo Border Personnel Meeting

(BPM) point, continued until evening.

The latest effort came two-and-a-half months after the last round of discussions between the two sides on November 6, with around 50,000 troops deployed in the region, along with additional artillery, tanks, and air defence assets.

It followed a memo from India for talks while the two countries maintained regular

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Pak Zindabad: 11-hour police ordeal for family, friends over a game

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

TWO men were detained and questioned for eight hours through Saturday-Sunday night and three women for at least three hours Sunday morning by the Delhi Police — all because they were heard saying "Pakistan Zindabad" as part of a cycling game near Khan Market Metro station late Saturday night.

Their ordeal, that started at 1 am on Sunday, ended only by noon with the police admitting that "Pakistan Zindabad" was said in a "lighter vein", and no case was made out.

Ahead of Republic Day, police said, they were on "high alert" when they received a call around 1 am about a "group shouting slogans, praising Pakistan".

An enquiry officer was sent to the spot. "Two families (one from Delhi, the other from Gurugram) along with their child had come to India Gate Saturday night. They had rented Yulu bikes they were racing, and they had named each other after countries like India, Pakistan, Japan and Australia. They were cheering each other on by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

## Sexual assault under POCSO needs skin to skin contact: Bombay HC

Man who pressed breasts of child over her clothes convicted for molestation

VIVEK DESHPANDE  
NAGPUR, JANUARY 24

IN A controversial order that could have implications on a range of cases, the Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court acquitted a man of sexual assault on the grounds that pressing the breasts of a child over her clothes without direct "skin to skin" physical contact does not constitute "sexual assault" under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

## At IIM Calcutta, it's teachers versus Director over her powers, their role

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE FACULTY at Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, is locked in an unprecedented standoff with the institute's director alleging that she has centralised powers in her hands and usurped their role in administration and decision-making.

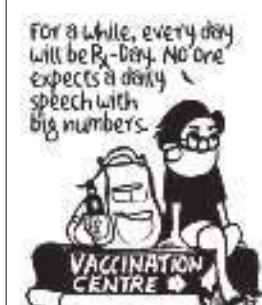


**Director Anju Seth says 'small group' upset with her**

Director Anju Seth has attributed the confrontation to "a small group of individuals" upset with her efforts to foster a

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



### THE WORLD

**PRACHANDA GROUP EXPELS OLI FROM PARTY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP** [PAGE 14](#)



### 1 YEAR AS UNION TERRITORY

## J&K: Drop in law & order incidents but uptick in militant recruitment

J&K DGP Dilbag Singh says several militant commanders killed in a year, 'situation better' on all parameters

NAVEED IQBAL  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 24

IN ITS FIRST full year as the newest Union Territory of the country, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed an uptick in recruitment to militant ranks; the number of law and order incidents, however, dropped significantly during the year.

According to police data for the last three years, the number of law and order incidents in J&K plunged 75 per cent to 143 in 2020 compared with 584 in 2019. Militancy-related inci-

### VIOLENCE RELATED TO MILITANCY

	2019	2020*
Militancy-related incidents	255	243
Law and order incidents	584	143
Militants killed	157	222
Militant recruitment	143	174**
Ceasefire violation	605	930

\*Up to Dec 30  
\*\*Out of which 76 killed, 46 arrested and 52 still active

dents also dropped 5 per cent to 243 in 2020 compared with 255 in 2019. The fall is significant when compared with 2018, which witnessed 417 militancy-related incidents.

The number of recruits joining militancy in the UT has, however, seen a 22 per cent rise to 174 in 2020 from 143 in 2019. Of the 174 recruits, 76 militants were killed and another 46 arrested. Just 52 remain active, data with the J&K Police shows.

When contacted, Director General, J&K Police, Dilbag Singh, told *The Indian Express* that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### SINGHU ECHO IN MUMBAI

Farmers from various parts of Maharashtra arrived in Mumbai on Sunday to participate in a rally on Monday against the new farm laws.  *Ganesh Shirsekar*  
[REPORT, PAGE 7](#)

**3 ROUTES FINALISED FOR R-DAY TRACTOR RALLY IN DELHI**  
[PAGE 4](#)

## SUPPLEMENTARY CHARGESHEET

## Goswami paid me \$ 12,000 and Rs 40 lakh to fix ratings: Dasgupta

BARC ex-CEO's lawyer: Handwritten statement has no evidentiary value

MOHAMED THAYER & KRISHN KAUSHIK  
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE FORMER CEO of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India, Partho Dasgupta, has claimed in a handwritten statement to Mumbai Police that he received US\$12,000 from Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Amab Goswami for two separate holidays and a total of Rs 40 lakh over three years, in return for manipulating ratings in favour of the news channel, according to the supplementary chargesheet filed in the TRP scam case.

The 3,600-page supplementary chargesheet, filed by Mumbai Police on January 11, also includes a BARC forensic audit report, WhatsApp chats purportedly between Dasgupta and Goswami, and statements of 59 persons, including former council employees and cable operators.



Dasgupta's statement against Goswami part of chargesheet



### AUDIT REPORT

- Favouritism towards channels
- Ratings were pre-decided
- BARC officials violated code

The audit report names several news channels, including Republic, Times Now and Aaj Tak, and lists instances of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



**DR SHEKHAR MANDE**  
DIRECTOR GENERAL, COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH  
[PAGE 12](#)

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## After strides in social welfare, Latur village hands over baton to all-woman panchayat

PAGE 1  
ANCHOR

MAYURA JANWALKAR  
ANANDWADI (LATUR),  
JANUARY 24

NINE YEARS after 50 per cent seats were reserved for women in Maharashtra's gram panchayats, Anandwadi village in Latur's Nilanga taluka has picked an all-woman panchayat. The six were elected unopposed in the panchayat polls held recently, their



The members were elected unopposed. *Amit Chakravarty*

way paved by the performance of two-time sarpanch Bhagyashree Chame, who was one of the three women elected in 2015, along with Shobha Kasle and Kalpana Sagar.

Given the number of 'Anandwadis' in Nilanga, the village, located 25 km from Latur city, is more commonly known as Gaur. Home to 635 people, mostly farmers, Gaur has in the past five years seen improved cleanliness, a campaign against superstitions, change in name plates of all 112 homes to that of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9





## Militant recruits

outrage her modesty,"

"In view of the above discussion, this Court holds that the appellant is acquitted under Section 48 of the POCSO Act and convicted under minor offence u/s 354 of IPC and sentenced him to undergo RI," said the judge said. The maximum sentence is five years and the minimum one year for an offence under this section.

"Evidently it is not the case of the prosecution that the appellant removed her top and pressed her breast," Justice Ganediwala said.

"The act of pressing of breast of the child aged 12 years, in the absence of any specific detail as to whether the top was removed or whether he inserted his hand inside top and pressed her breast, would not fall in the definition of 'sexual assault'."

The court of Extra Joint Additional Sessions Judge had found Ragde, 39, guilty of offence of sexual assault of the 12-year-old girl under POCSO along with Sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty); 363 (punishment for kidnapping); and 342 (punishment for wrongful confinement) of the IPC.

Ragde had moved the High Court against the judgment through his lawyer Sabahat Ullah. Public prosecutor M J Khan submitted in the High Court that un-

der Section 7 of POCSO, "pressing of breast" fell under the definition of sexual assault.

Citing from POCSO's definition of sexual assault, the High Court said, "as per the definition, the offence involves following necessary ingredients — act must have been committed with sexual intent, act must involve touching the vagina, penis, anus or breast of the child or making the child touch the vagina, penis, anus or breast of such person or any other person or doing any other act with sexual intent which involve contact without penetration."

Justice Ganediwala observed: "As per the definition of 'sexual assault', a 'physical contact with sexual intent without penetration' is an essential ingredient of the offence. The words 'any other act' encompasses within itself the nature of the acts which are similar to the acts which have been specifically mentioned in the definition on the premise of the principle of *eiusdem generis* (of the same kind). The act should be of the same nature or close to that."

In this case, dating back to 2016, the convict had taken the girl into wrongful confinement and had pressed her breasts while she was running an errand for her mother. As the girl did not return for a long time, the mother went

looking for her and found her in the upstairs room of Ragde's house. The room was bolted from the outside. She had met Ragde coming down the stairs and had asked him about her daughter's whereabouts. Ragde had told her that he didn't have any idea about where her daughter was.

The girl told her mother that Ragde had held her by the hand and taken her to his house on the pretext of giving her a guava but inside he tried to remove her salwar and he pressed her breasts. The mother filed a police complaint against Ragde, who was convicted by the lower court under both POCSO and IPC sections. The convict then moved the High Court.

## IIM

The letter, the faculty claims, was sent to the government only after exhausting all redressal avenues internally. This is unusual given that the IIMs, in the past, have always been critical of government interference.

Official sources said any intervention by the Ministry is unlikely, at least for now. "We cannot start interfering in an institute's internal affairs, especially when we are advocating autonomy for other higher education institutions along the lines of what has been granted to the IIMs," an official said.

ple her term as director at IIM in a year.

Among the issues flagged by the teachers is faculty shortage. Sources said that only one new faculty member has been hired in the last two years despite the institute losing over 10 teachers on account of resignation, superannuation, and voluntary retirement. Some of the exits, teachers alleged, were due to "harassment."

"There's a lot of micromanagement by the director... For instance, the doctoral research programme committee which deals with permissions for faculty to present papers at international conferences is almost defunct because the director insists on having the final say who can or cannot attend international conferences," said a teacher.

It's also alleged that in her role as chairperson of the Academic Council (AC), Seth indulged in selective recording of minutes and decisions of the Council.

Members have alleged that minutes of a crucial AC meeting held on September 17 and 21 last year did not reflect the decision that faculty feedback on Regulations under the IIM Act should be shared with the Board of Governors.

The new IIM Act came into effect January 31, 2018, and grants

say, was given just five days to submit suggestions on the draft and that the faculty feedback on centralisation of powers in the Board and Director was not considered by the Board while passing the Regulations.

Last month, after writing to the MoE against the institute leadership, the faculty also wrote separately on its concerns regarding the Regulations and requested the government to hold off its notification.

The Indian Express sent a questionnaire on these complaints to Seth. In response, she said: "Our team at IIM Calcutta is committed to uphold the requirements of the IIM Act to firmly set the Institute on the path to global excellence while at the same time fostering a culture of transparency, accountability and meritocracy. These essential aspects of the Act may cause disruption and discomfort to a small group of individuals with dissimilar values and interests.

"We are pained by the baseless stories instigated by this small group to sully the Institute's reputation built over decades. Despite the challenges we have confronted including those posed by the COVID crisis, we are now operating at even greater effectiveness and efficiency with devotion to the success of our talented stu-

dents, as well as I know how the TRP system works. He also alluded to helping me out in the future."

It states: "I worked with my team to ensure manipulation of TRP ratings that made Republic TV get number 1 rating. This would have continued from 2017 to 2019. Towards this, in 2017, Anab Goswami had personally met me at St Regis hotel, Lower Parel and given me 6000 dollars in cash for my France and Switzerland family trip...also in 2019 Anab Goswami had personally met me at St Regis and given me 6000 dollars for my Sweden and Denmark family trip. Also in 2017, Goswami had personally met me at ITC Parel hotel and given me Rs 20 lakh cash...also in 2018 and 2019...Goswami met me at ITC hotel Parel and gave me Rs 10 lakhs each time..."

Dasgupta's lawyer Arjun Singh said: "We totally deny this allegation as the statement would have been recorded under duress. It does not have any evidentiary value in the court of law." A member of Goswami's legal team declined to comment.

The chargesheet also includes BARC's audit report, dated July 24, 2020, which states that evidence "indicated favouritism shown to few channels" and "in some cases, we suspect that the ratings were



**DELHI POLICE**  
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

# REPUBLIC DAY 2021



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These issues aren't things that can't be resolved internally," the official said. Indeed, higher education secretary Amit Khare is learnt to have met Seth and Kulkarni and asked them to resolve the standoff internally.

Seth was appointed as the first woman head of IIM-Calcutta in November 2018. An alumnus of IIM-Calcutta (1978), she has a doctorate from the University of Michigan (1988). She joined Virginia Tech in 2008 and headed its department of management from 2008 to 2013. She will com-

pointment of directors, chairpersons and Board members. Each IIM, under the new IIM Act, has to draft its Regulations, which will oversee and guide the administration of the Institute.

Teachers at IIM-Calcutta have alleged that the Regulations seek to reduce the Academic Council's remit. One of them being that the Academic Council, in future, will only be able to elect one representative to the Board instead of two as has been the norm. Now, the Board chairperson will select the second.

The faculty also claims that, unlike peer institutes such as IIM-A and IIM-B, the formulation and adoption of the proposed Regulations of IIM-C was done without their engagement and consultation.

The Academic Council, they

are excited to march into the future with integrity and commitment to the pledge of 'IIM First', blessed by the good wishes and support of valued members of our faculty and extended community."

Asked about the faculty's concerns over the new Regulations, Board Chairman Shrikrishna Kulkarni wrote: "As a practice we do not discuss internal matters related to our beloved Institute and my Board in the public domain... Please be reassured that we on the Board are fully committed and aligned to the best interest of IIM Calcutta. The allegations listed in the email below are without context and baseless."

**BARC**

alleged manipulation as well as "pre-fixing" of ratings for the channels by BARC's top executives.

The supplementary chargesheet was filed against Dasgupta, former BARC COO Romil Ramgarhia and Public Media Network CEO Vikas Khanchandani. A first chargesheet was filed against 12 persons in November 2020.

According to the second chargesheet, Dasgupta's statement was recorded in the office of the Crime Intelligence Unit on December 27, 2020, at 5:15 pm, in the presence of two witnesses.

Dasgupta's statement reads: "I have known Arnab Goswami since 2004. We used to work together in Times Now. I joined BARC as CEO in 2013. Arnab Goswami launched Republic in 2017. Even before launching Republic TV he would talk to me about plans for the launch and indirectly hint at helping him to get good ratings to his channel. Goswami knew very

well the ratings suppression of Times Now to boost Republic's weekly rankings, and highlights a purported conversation between BARC's top executives and a senior marketing executive of India Today Group on "pre-fixing" Aaj Tak's ratings.

With multiple emails and messages between BARC officials attached as annexures, the report states that one of the reasons given by the council for changing Times Now's viewership data is to cater for "outlier" data, which is meant to identify spikes in viewership due to the channel being the "landing page" on some distributors.

The practice of placing a channel on the "landing page" was prohibited by TRAI. But that direction was set aside by the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal, and the matter is now in Supreme Court.

The audit was conducted by Acquis Risk Consulting. The executive summary of the audit report states that "manipulation was evidenced in 2017, 18 and 19 across English News Genre and Telugu News Genre".

The report states that six top executives of BARC, including Dasgupta, were involved in "manipulation of ratings and violation of the code of ethics" between 2018 and 2019.

When contacted, BARC said in an email: "As the matter is a subject of an ongoing investigation by the various law enforcement agencies, we are constrained to respond to your enquiries."

Republic said in a statement that "there has been a collusion of corporate and political interests to target" Goswami.

Times Now defended the use of landing pages, stating that they are "not ruled as illegal" and are simply the most preferred frequency which is sold and bought at a Premium by perfectly legal means". It said the outlier policy was "abused by corrupt BARC officials to manually intervene and willfully and deliberately improve channel ranks for favoured channels" and that it is "contemplating legal action".

India Today Group did not respond to queries from The Indian Express.

While Dasgupta is in jail, The Indian Express reached out to Mehta, Samrat, Ramgarhia, Kumar and Basu. Only Kumar responded. "I had remotely nothing to do with research or ratings as it was a different team which handled market analytics and data," he said, adding that everything else was "clandestine".

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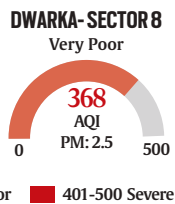
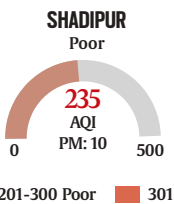
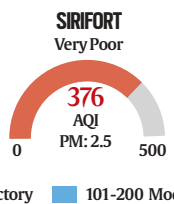
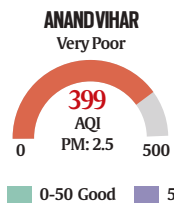
Any e-tenders which is sent by Post/ Courier/Fax or by hand will not be accepted. All such manual submission of tender even if it is on firm's letter pad or received in time will not be accepted. The above e-tender document along with full information is available on website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Dy. CEE/WP/ECR/Patna  
PR/01339/WPO/Mech/IT/20-21/52









S K Y W A T C H  
**FORECAST: Jan 25**  
Mainly clear sky.  
Dense to very dense  
fog in the morning  
**MAX: 17** | **MIN: 6**  
4.3°C below normal | 1.6°C above normal

**FARMERS' UNION ISSUES INSTRUCTIONS: 'MAINTAIN PEACE, DON'T CARRY WEAPONS'**

# Police nod for farmers' tractor march on R-Day, 3 routes from borders chalked out

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

DELHI POLICE Sunday said it has allowed the farmers' tractor march in the city on Republic Day, with adequate security arrangements in place. Three routes were finalised following a week of meetings between farmers and senior police officers.

In a press conference, Special CP (Intelligence) Dependra Pathak said, "We held discussions with Bharatiya Kisan Union leaders and there's an agreement that they will carry out their march after Republic Day celebrations at Rajpath. There should be no disturbance during the parade. We will provide them with adequate security; their march will be peaceful and they will return to the border at the end."

The Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) Sunday said only tractors and trolleys with tableaux will be allowed in the march; no one should carry a weapon, "not even sticks"; and maximum of 5 people can ride on one tractor. "No one will ride on the bonnet, bumper or roof of tractors," it said in a statement.

Police will remove barricades on January 26 for farmers to carry out the rally. Pathak said, "Farmers from Singhu will pass through Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar, Kanjhawala, Bawana, Auchandi border and KMP expressway before coming back to Singhu border. The distance will be around 62 km. From Tikri border, the tractors will pass through Nangloi, Najafgarh, Jharoda and KMP Expressway. Police will clear a route of around 64 km for the march. From Ghazipur border, a route of 46 km has been cleared as the rally will pass through 56-foot-road, Apsara border, Hapur road and reach KGP Expressway



Tractors near Singhu border, Sunday. Gajendra Yadav

county," instructions issued by the group said.

Tractors will not overtake the cars in which farmer leaders will travel, SKM said. There shall be no overtaking during the march and no music will be played in tractors, it added.

The group has also asked farmers not to indulge in quarrels with police, ignore rumours and verify information through its Facebook page — Kisan Ekta Morcha.

Police said more than 7,000 tractors from Tikri border, 5,000 from Singhu and 1,000 from Ghazipur will join the rally. "More tractors are coming in. We have faith that our farmer brothers will return to the borders peacefully,"

der, the tractors will pass through Nangloi, Najafgarh, Jharoda and KMP Expressway. Police will clear a route of around 64 km for the march. From Ghazipur border, a route of 46 km has been cleared as the rally will pass through 56-foot-road, Apsara border, Hapur road and reach KGP Expressway

(Eastern Peripheral Expressway)." Meanwhile, instructions for farmers, passed by SKM, also say they should pack 24-hours worth ration and water, and make arrangements for protection from cold in case they are stuck in traffic jams. The group stressed on the

need to ensure that the march is peaceful. "Through this parade we have to tell the country and the world about our plight... Our victory lies in the parade being taken out in a very peaceful manner... Our aim is not to conquer Delhi, but to win over the hearts of the people of this

## At Ghazipur, sisters from Nainital set up mahila store



Gursharanjeet and Harsharanjeet at the store set up by them. Abhinav Saha

**ASHNA BUTANI**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

AT GHAZIPUR border, two sisters from Nainital have set up a 'Kisan Mahila Store' with the aim of tending to the needs of women at the protest site. Over 1,000 women are now present at the site and more are expected to arrive in the run-up to Republic Day.

Gursharanjeet Kaur (25), the younger of the two, said, "We first visited the site on December 25. We saw a few stores but they did not have items like sanitary napkins. At the same time, women had just started coming in and we decided to make a few tents specifically for women." The sisters were involved in

sewa in a gurdwara back in their hometown. They accompanied their brother and father, who started a langar.

The sisters then decided to devote their time and resources to women's needs, and turned it into a reality with the help of friends and cousins.

They assessed the items that women needed most at the site. Harsharanjeet Kaur (28) said, "We decided to stay in the tents ourselves. We learnt that mosquitoes were a menace here and it is difficult for women to walk too far to use the washrooms."

They made arrangements to move the washrooms closer to the women's tents. The tents can accommodate around 80 people and they are currently setting up more of these.

Gursharanjeet is pursuing postgraduate studies in Biology and gives IELTS tuitions. Harsharanjeet works in the IT sector. While the sisters take care of the store, a few women volunteer to help them. Anju Parveen (39) from Trilokpuri said sewa has become her full time job since the protests began. "I don't have a farming background. I decided to come here and help because I eat food. It is our duty to help farmers."

Items at the store range from sanitary napkins and new undergarments to soaps, shampoo, toothpaste and towels. Nanni Devi from Faridpur visited the store in the afternoon to collect sanitary napkins and a towel. She said the store has made her stay at the border much easier.

## VHP holds bike rallies in capital for Ram Mandir funds

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE VISHWA Hindu Parishad (VHP) held bike rallies at 47 locations in the capital on Sunday morning to spread awareness about its donation drive for the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. VHP spokesperson Mahendra Rawat said this will be followed by a 'prabhat pheri (morning processions)' and bhajan programmes before the drive starts on February 1. It ends on February 27.

Holding saffron flags, volunteers of the VHP, Bajrang Dal and BJP raised slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram, with lorries playing devotional songs accompanying them at some places. They went around areas such as Andheria Mod, Trilokpuri, Mayur Vihar, Jangpura, Paschim Vihar, Tagore Garden and Vishnu Garden. The rally started at 10 am and lasted till afternoon



During the bike rally on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

in some areas. It was followed by a havan at several temples at Nangloi and Rajendra Nagar, and the opening of an office for fund collection in Tilak Nagar.

Vice-president of VHP's Delhi unit Surender Gupta said the organisation has started contacting RWAs, trade unions, temples, students' unions and other organisations, and will reach out to 42 lakh families through them. "Four-five groups will go to every area with 40,000 karyakartas of different Hindu organisations, who will be part of the drive," he said.

Rawat said 175 camp offices are being opened across Delhi — either at temples or small shops — which will be the centre point for fund collection. During the drive, cadres will reach out to families to tell them about the plan on the structure of the temple and how the money will be deposited in the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

## Max temp plunges to 15°C, no respite for next 4 days

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

DELHI WITNESSED a cold day on Sunday as the maximum temperature dropped to 15 degrees Celsius, six degrees below normal for this time of the year, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Scientists at IMD attributed the dip to winds blowing from the Western Himalayan region, where snowfall occurred on Saturday, and low clouds over Delhi and across northwest India during day time.

On Sunday, the Safdarjung observatory, which is representative of the city, recorded a maximum temperature of 15 degrees Celsius, lower than 20.4 degrees Celsius on Saturday, while minimum temperature was 8.8 degrees Celsius, higher than the 8 degrees Celsius the day before.

As per IMD criteria, a cold day is when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or lower, and the maximum temperature is 4.5 degrees below normal, which is 21.3 degrees Celsius for this time of the year. The city has witnessed two cold days in December and one in January so far.

Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the IMD's regional weather forecasting centre, said, "Over the next 3-4 days, we can expect both cold day and cold wave conditions in the city... With the passing of a Western



Near Akshardham Temple Sunday. Abhinav Saha

### THE WEEK AHEAD

Day	Min	Max
Monday	6°C	17°C
Tuesday	5°C	18°C
Wednesday	4°C	18°C
Thursday	4°C	18°C
Friday	5°C	18°C

Disturbance recently, which caused snowfall and rainfall in the mountains in north India, cold winds are again blowing from this region towards Delhi. In addition to this, there is an up-lifted fog or low cloud covering the entire region from Punjab to West Bengal."

Meanwhile, the city's air quality is also forecast to deteriorate to the higher levels of 'very poor' category by Wednesday, as per agencies.

## Forest department seizes equipment of DJB, PWD

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE FOREST Department Sunday said it has seized equipment of Delhi Jal Board and Public Works Department from two locations for damaging tree roots by digging within one metre of them.

Forest officials said the PWD damaged roots of three trees at Ashram Chowk and the DJB damaged one tree root at New Friends Colony. Officials said digging and construction work within one metre distance of trees has been prohibited by the NGT in its April

2013 order. A forest official said, "We have powers under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act 1994 to seize equipment if we believe an offence has been committed and trees have been damaged."

"A hearing on the matter with the DJB will be conducted on January 28. PWD will be issued a notice about the hearing on Monday," the official said.

The DJB spokesperson did not respond to queries seeking a comment. An official from the PWD, in charge of the Ashram Chowk area, said: "Neither has our equipment been seized nor has our work been stopped."

## Slum dwellers being rehabilitated to pay Rs 1.4 L per flat

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

SLUM DWELLERS identified to be rehabilitated to housing societies will have to pay Rs 1.42 lakh per flat, according to a plan drawn up by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). In case of families falling under the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, a payment of Rs 31,000 per flat will have to be made, DUSIB member Bipin Rai told *The Indian Express*.

In the first phase, Rai said the government plans to shift up to 9,300 families by May. The gov-

ernment has readied 9,315 flats built under the Jawahar Lal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) for this purpose.

"General category beneficiaries will have to pay Rs 1.42 lakh per flat, which includes Rs 30,000 maintenance charges. In case of Scheduled Caste beneficiaries, the price of the flats has been fixed at Rs 31,000, including maintenance charges. We plan to complete the first phase of rehabilitation by May. The process will start in March," Rai said.

Across Delhi, especially in its outer areas, around 40,000 flats built by various agencies, including DUSIB, Delhi State Industrial

**In case of families falling under the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, a payment of Rs 31,000 per flat will have to be made, DUSIB member Bipin Rai said**

and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (DSIIDC), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and Delhi Development Authority (DDA), have been lying unused and in a state of complete disrepair for up to 12 years.

Of the 9,315 flats, the largest chunk, 7,400, is at Bhalswa, where seven clusters will be shifted. Among the rest, 1,060 flats are at Sultanpuri and 855 at Bawana. These are all 1-BHK flats in multi storied apartments. A top DUSIB official said CM Arvind Kejriwal has directed that slum dwellers be shifted to Sultanpuri by April 31, while May 31 is the deadline for the remaining ones.

This will mark the first major round of rehabilitation since the AAP took office in 2015. Among the major poll promises made by the AAP was that of in-situ or on site rehabilitation of slum clus-

ters instead of forcing them to shift to flats built in the city's peripheral areas, so they don't lose their sources of livelihood. However, the policy, called Mukhyamantri Awaz Yojana, allows for relocation beyond the 5-km radius cap with prior approval of the DUSIB board.

Last September, DUSIB had scrapped a decision to construct 3,780 flats to relocate over 3,000 families residing in slums of Jahangirpuri and Wazirpur near their sources of livelihood.

DUSIB had pointed out "no concrete plan of action for relocation has been drawn" and a large number of flats lie unused

inviting "unruly elements, vandalism and wear and tear". However, the government later announced its plan to construct 89,400 flats in three phases, out of which 41,400 flats are to be built at an estimated cost of Rs 8 lakh each by next year.

The Delhi government did not implement the Pradhan Mantri Awaz Yojana in the city. In 2019, it had carried out a survey to ascertain the number of slum dwellers. DUSIB estimates that there are around 20 lakh slum dwellers in the city, which has nearly 675 jhuggi clusters, over 300 of which are on land owned by the DDA.



## 5 THE CITY

CORONAVIRUS  
IN THE CAPITAL

		Total		Vacant
TOTAL CASES		8,054		8,228
HOSPITAL BEDS		1,175		949
VENTILATORS				
	Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Jan 23	197	367	10	76,868
Jan 24	185	315	9	62,307
Total	1,741*	6,21,375	10,808	1,03,51,768

\*Total active cases

## RECOMMENDATIONS SENT TO MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT &amp; HIGHWAYS

## To tackle unpaid fines, traffic police suggests cancelling licence, registration

MAHENDER SINGH  
MANRAL

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

DELHI TRAFFIC Police has recommended to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH) to cancel driving licence and registration of vehicle owners if several challans are pending against them. It has also asked the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to recover pending e-challans from traffic offenders when they try to renew their insurance. The move comes after traffic police found that several violators were not paying challans.

A senior police officer said this is to ensure electronically issued summons are complied with as 25,000 challans are being issued



Police said many offenders are not paying challans. Archive

by speed cameras every day but 60% of these remain unpaid.

Data from Traffic Police shows that 82,17,692 notices were issued by speed cameras, 18,03,293

challans by red light violation detection cameras and 16,92,308 for other violations in the last year. However, the amount received in fines last year was Rs

1,24,17,23,000 as compared to Rs 94,08,03,900 in 2019.

JCP (Traffic) Manish Kumar Agrawal said, "We have written to MORTH to restrict/block services like licence, registration, permit, pollution under control (PUC) certificate, etc. We have informed them that licensing and registration of vehicles have been linked to pending challans. If someone goes to re-register their vehicle or re-validate their driver's licence, and is found to have pending challans, services will be blocked unless they pay. We have also suggested that IRDAI ask for a higher premium from such defaulters."

Traffic authorities also decided to share details of pending e-challans of registered vehicles with insurance companies. "Traffic Police has asked the ministry to create a legal framework

for insurance companies to take into cognizance the challan history of the vehicle insured," a senior police officer said.

Meanwhile, data provided by traffic police shows a decline in traffic violations since the 2019 amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act came into effect.

"A total of 2,51,547 challans were issued for improper parking in 2020 as compared to 9,34,699 challans the previous year. While 1,05,436 challans were issued for one-way violation in 2020, 2,93,698 people were prosecuted in 2019. Similarly, 91,257 people were prosecuted for not wearing helmets last year but 10,36,151 challans were issued in 2019. 86,342 challans issued for crossing the stop line in the last year as compared to 3,38,031 challans," an officer said.

## SDMC to begin phase II of RFID toll plan from March

ABHINAV RAJPUT

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

FROM MARCH, the South Delhi Municipal Corporation has planned to start phase II of the radio-frequency identification (RFID) system at 111 locations from where 20% of vehicles enter the capital. This is to ensure automatic toll deduction and end congestion and confusion at toll booths.

In July 2019, 13 major toll booths — through which 80% vehicles pass through — were equipped with RFID technology to deduct toll and Environment Compensation Charges automatically from commercial vehicles. The South MCD is the

nodal agency for collecting taxes from vehicles entering the capital.

Of the 111 points, 10 are to be equipped with boom barriers and RFID infrastructure while handheld devices will be made available at the rest as they are very small points. The 10 entry points are Kundli-2, Loni Main, New Seemapuri, Chander Nagar, New Kondli, Noida Major, Pul Prahladpur, Bajghera, Dhansa and Jharoda.

The newly formed Commission for Air Quality Management has asked the South MCD to complete the second phase by January 31. However, a senior South MCD official said it could be delayed as the proposal has been placed in



RFID systems will be set up at 111 more locations. Archive

the house but is yet to be approved. The official said speedy implementation of the project is very important as it was observed that old polluting vehicles were trying to sneak into the

capital from non-RFID border points.

Leader of house, South MCD, Narendra Chawla said the proposal has been sent back due to issues with the budget, which is Rs 36 crore. "We have limited money as our finances have been hit. So we have asked the toll department to decrease the budget and bring a fresh proposal, which we would most likely pass in the next meeting."

Members of the erstwhile Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority Sunita Narain and Bhure Lal had said expansion of the RFID system was a key project that needs to be expedited. If implemented well, it will help reduce pollution in the capital.

## EXPLAINED The tech

Radio-frequency identification technology is used to collect money automatically without halting vehicles. Around 6 lakh vehicles enter the capital every day. Public help booths have been set up near toll plazas, from where drivers can collect RFID tags. The device will be installed on windshields of vehicles. Each time a vehicle enters the capital, money will be deducted automatically.

## After SDMC, North body nod for food trucks

**New Delhi:** After the South MCD gave its nod to food trucks, the North body has also passed a similar proposal in its budget. A senior official of North MCD said that the exact details are yet to be chalked out but people earning less than Rs 25,000 income would be allowed to operate food trucks. The budget also proposed revenue generation ventures, like ATMs and LED ads at 6,1000 parks under it. **ENS**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ( DIVYANGJAN )**  
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India)  
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This Institute invites applications from eligible candidates for the following Regular Post to be filled on **Direct Recruitment basis** at this Institute.

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Level	Category
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The Last date for receipt of Completed Application forms is **22.02.2021**  
The detailed notification is available on institute's website: www.niepid.nic.in

**Director**

**Delhi Police**  
Shanti • Sewa • Nyaya

# TRAFFIC ADVISORY

## Republic Day Celebrations on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

**TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS**

In order to facilitate smooth passage of the Parade, movement of traffic on certain roads leading to the route of the Parade and Tableaux will be restricted as under:-

- (1) No traffic will be allowed on Vijay Chowk from 06.00 PM on 25.01.2021 till Parade is over. Rajpath is already out of bounds.
- (2) No cross traffic on Rajpath intersections from 11.00 PM on 25.01.2021 at Rafi Marg, Janpath, Man Singh Road till Parade is over.
- (3) 'C'-Hexagon-India Gate will be closed for traffic from 05.00 AM on 26.01.2021 till Tableaux crosses Tilak Marg.
- (4) From 04.00 AM on 26.01.2021 Traffic on Tilak Marg, BSZ Marg and Subhash Marg will not be allowed in both carriageways. Cross traffic will only be allowed depending upon the movement of the Tableaux.

**ROUTE OF THE PARADE/TABLEAUX :-**

(A) **Parade Route:** Vijay Chowk - Rajpath - Amar Jawan Jyoti - India Gate - R/A Princess Palace-T/L Tilak Marg Radial Road - Turn right on "C" Hexagon - Turn left and enter National Stadium from Gate No. 1.

(B) **Tableaux Route:** Vijay Chowk - Rajpath - Amar Jawan Jyoti - India Gate - R/A Princess Palace-T/L Tilak Marg - Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg - Netaji Subhash Marg - Red Fort.

**FOR NEW DELHI RAILWAY STATION**

- From South Delhi:- Dhaura Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Panchkuian Road - Outer Circle Connaught Place - Chelmsford Road for Paharganj side or Minto Road- Bhavbhuti Marg for Ajmeri Gate side.
- From East Delhi:- Boulevard Road via ISBT Bridge- Rani Jhansi Flyover - R/A Jhandewalan - D.B. Gupta Road- Sheela Cinema Road - Paharganj Bridge and reach New Delhi Rly Station.

**FOR OLD DELHI RAILWAY STATION**

- From South Delhi:- Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - Ring Road - Rajghat - Ring Road - Chowk Yamuna Bazar - S.P. Mukherjee Marg - Chhatta Rail - Kauria Bridge and reach Old Delhi Rly. Station.
- Though there will be no restriction for people from North Delhi going towards New Delhi Railway Station or Old Delhi Railway Station, yet it is advised that they plan their journey in advance and take sufficient extra time to reach their destination to avoid possible delay.

**BUS TERMINATING POINTS**

Movement of the City Bus Services will be curtailed at the following points:-

1. Shivaji Stadium
2. ISBT Sarai Kale Khan
3. R/A Kamla Market.
4. Delhi Sachivalaya (IGI Stadium)
5. Pragati Maidan (Bhairon Road)
6. Hanuman Mandir (Yamuna Bazar)
7. Mori Gate
8. ISBT Kashmiri Gate

**INTER STATE BUSES:**

(i) Buses from Ghaziabad bound for Shivaji Stadium shall take NH-9 (NH-24), Ring Road and terminate at Bhairon Road.

(ii) Buses coming from NH-9 (NH-24) shall take right turn on Road No. 56 and terminate at ISBT Anand Vihar.

(iii) Buses coming from Ghaziabad side will be diverted at Mohan Nagar towards Bhopra Chungi for Wazirabad Bridge.

(iv) All Inter State buses coming from Dhaura Kuan side shall terminate at Dhaura Kuan.

**METRO SERVICES**

Metro Rail Service shall remain available for commuters at all Metro Stations during the Republic Day Parade on 26th Jan., 2021. However, Boarding/De-boarding at the below mentioned station will not be permitted as per schedule given:-

Name of Metro Station	Boarding/De-boarding not allowed
Kendriya Sachivalaya	From 5.00 AM till 1200 Noon on 26.01.2021.
Udyog Bhawan	
Lok Kalyan Marg (Race Course)	From 8.45 AM to 1200 Noon on 26.01.2021
Patel Chowk	
ITO	

**TSR/TAXIS**

No TSR and Taxi will be allowed to enter or ply after 0700 hours on 26.01.2021 in the Area bound by:-

**MOTHER TERESA CRESCENT – BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG – ASHOKA ROAD UPTO R/A PATEL CHOWK – SANSAD MARG UPTO TOLSTOY MARG UPTO – TOLSTOY MARG UPTO KASTURBA GANDHI MARG – KASTURBA GANDHI MARG UPTO FERROZESHAH ROAD – FERROZESHAH ROAD UPTO R/A MANDI HOUSE – BHAGWAN DASS ROAD – MATHURA ROAD – SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MARG – HUMAYUN ROAD – A.P.J ABDUL KALAM MARG – KAMAL ATA TURK MARG – KAUTILYA MARG AND SARDAR PATEL ROAD (EXCLUDED).**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL PUBLIC**

- In case any unidentified object or suspicious person is seen, information must be conveyed to the nearest policeman on duty.
- Flying of sub conventional aerial platforms like para-gliders, para motors, hang gliders, UAVs, UASs, microlight aircrafts, remotely piloted aircrafts, hot air balloons, small size powered aircrafts, quadcopters or para jumping from aircraft etc. are prohibited over the jurisdiction of National Capital Territory of Delhi from 20.01.2021 upto 15.02.2021 (both are inclusive).
- General public and motorists are advised to keep patience, observe traffic rules & road discipline and follow directions of traffic personnel deployed at all intersections and remain updated through Traffic Police Facebook page, Twitter handle and Traffic Police Helpline. People are requested to plan their journey in advance and keep sufficient time in hand to avoid inconvenience.

**BE A TRAFFIC SENTINEL** Download App from **24 HOURS TRAFFIC HELPLINE 011-2584444/1095** **FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL : 112** **TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL : 1090**



# 6 GOVT & POLITICS



## DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



### NEW RESPONSIBILITY

THE CONGRESS unit in Kerala, many leaders of which have been critical of party MP Shashi Tharoor in the past, seems to have warmed up to him as it gears up for a tough Assembly poll fight. The Oommen Chandy-led election management and strategy committee in its first meeting entrusted Tharoor — also a member of the panel — to consult people and collect inputs for the manifesto. Quickly came in appreciation from coalition partners too. IUML MP E T Mohammed Basheer lauded the decision, saying Tharoor had an acceptability in all sections of society, including youth, and this would help him get good feedback for the manifesto.

### PARADE PARTY

FOR THE first time, a 122-member contingent of Bangladesh Armed Forces will participate in the Republic Day parade. The majority of soldiers in this contingent hail from the most distinguished units of the Bangladesh Army comprising 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 & 11 East Bengal Regiment and 1, 2 and 3 Field Artillery Regiment. These units have the distinct honour of fighting and winning the 1971 Liberation War. This year, Bangladesh celebrates 50 years of its independence.

### THE CHIEF QUESTION

WILL CONGRESS have a non-Gandhi as party president in June? There is speculation in the party after CWC decided to defer election of the party president till June. The new president will have a term till December 2021 since the party has to hold organisational elections in the second half of 2021. Rahul Gandhi was elected Congress president in 2017 with a five-year term. So the new president will be for the remaining term. Many leaders believe the party could appoint a non-Gandhi — as desired by Rahul when he stepped down in 2019 — for the remaining part of the term. That way, one senior leader said, the party can honour Rahul's wish and it will also get the flavour of a non-Gandhi as president. And in organisational elections at the end of 2021, Rahul can return as full-fledged president, the leader said.

### Electronic version of voter card to be launched today

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

LAW MINISTER Ravi Shankar Prasad will on Monday launch the electronic version of the voter identity card, which can be downloaded on a mobile phone or a personal computer.

The e-electoral photo identity card is non-editable digital version of the electoral photo identity card and it can be saved in facilities such as digital locker and can be printed in the PDF format, Election Commission officials said.

"Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will launch the e-EPIC programme and distribute e-EPICs and Elector Photo Identity Cards to five new voters," a Commission statement said on Sunday. The physical card takes time to print and reach the voter, and the idea is to provide faster delivery and easy accessibility to the document, the statement said.

## Identity politics, spiritual leadership: Furfura Sharif cleric's party modelled on IUML

**LIZ MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

BEFORE HE launched the Indian Secular Front (ISF), Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui, the 34-year-old cleric of Furfura Sharif in West Bengal, visited Kerala and closely monitored the activities of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), led by the spiritual leader of Muslims in Kerala.

Inspired by the way the Panakkad Thangal family wields political and social influence in Kerala politics and among the Muslims in the state, Siddiqui tried to be part of the IUML, which has units in most of the states in the country.

However, IUML refused to join hands with Siddiqui or let him form a political outfit that could work as a coalition.

"The cleric and his associates had visited Kerala during the floods in 2018 after collecting money for relief work. They had seen how the Thangals, spiritual

### AMIT SHAH IN ASSAM



Home Minister Amit Shah being presented with a 'japi' at a rally in Nalbari district on Sunday. *PTI*

## 'Cong-AIUDF will open gates to infiltrators'

**ABHISHEK SAHA**  
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 24

HOME MINISTER Amit Shah Sunday said the Congress-AIUDF alliance in Assam would only open the gates to "infiltrators" in order to secure a vote bank, and argued that it was only the Narendra Modi-led BJP government that can ensure a "corruption-free, foreigner-free and terrorism-free" Assam.

Shah on Sunday addressed two events in the poll-bound state—one, a government function in Kokrajhar in Bodoland Territorial Region to commemorate one year of the signing of the Bodo Accord, and the other, BJP's 'Vijay Sankalp Samaroh' in Nalbari. "Those who have been in power here for years and talk about Assamese culture, I want to ask them, what have you done for Assamese culture? You have done nothing apart from garnering votes," said Shah.

"Do you want to make Assam free of infiltrators or not? Congress and Badruddin Ajmal cannot protect Assam from infiltrators. Their

alliance will open all doors for infiltrators and allow infiltrators to come into Assam because that is their vote bank. If anyone can stop infiltrators, it is only and only the Narendra Modi-led BJP government," Shah said. He spoke on how the Modi government has repealed Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir and started building the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Ajmal, the MP and perfume baron, leads the AIUDF, a party that enjoys a large support base in the state's Bengali-origin Muslim community. The Congress and the AIUDF, together with three Left parties and a regional party, have announced a grand alliance against the BJP in the forthcoming polls, expected in April.

At both events, Shah spoke about divides and conflicts in Assam. "When the Congress ruled Assam, they have only made people fight against one another... They follow the British policy of divide and rule... The Congress stained Assam with blood. The blood of Assamese youth has just bled," Shah said in Nalbari.

He continued: "The Congress

shot bullet at Assam's youth. Those who are doing 'andolan' (protests) today, are helping the Congress by cutting into the BJP's votes. People of Assam should identify those who are helping the Congress in disguise—they do not have Assam's benefit in their minds. They want to help Congress win."

"Assamese and non-Assamese; Bodo and non-Bodo... we need to identify those who are causing these conflicts. They are not doing it for our development but to score political points. Time has come for people of Assam to teach such people a lesson," Shah said in Kokrajhar.

Shah's reference underlines Assam's long history of violent agitations, insurgency and also, more recently, the genesis of two new parties — the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Rajior Dal — from the massive anti-CAA protests in 2019. The two parties are in talks about an alliance for the coming elections.

In Kokrajhar, Shah said that the decades of violence were over now, and the "era of peace" has begun.

### EPS says Stalin remembering deity because of Assembly polls

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHENNAI, JANUARY 24

A DAY after DMK chief M K Stalin was seen carrying a Vel, the spear associated with the Hindu deity Lord Muruga, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami Sunday accused him of deception and said he remembered the divine symbol only because polls were around the corner.

"People who used to talk ill about gods are now taking Vel in their hand," he said at a rally in Coimbatore on Sunday—a dig at Stalin's atheism and DMK's rationalist founding principles. This was a theme he repeatedly touched on during the day at other roadshows and public meetings in rural areas.

Aggressively going after his rival, Palaniswami said: "They can recognise Vel only during the poll season. He wasn't able to see God or Vel earlier."

During his rallies near Thiruttani in northern Tamil Nadu on Saturday, a place known as one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga, Stalin was welcomed by a silver Vel by his party men.

At another place, Palaniswami picked up the Vel issue again. "Stalin has taken a new avatar with the Vel. Remember, your drama ahead of the polls is being closely watched by God. Wait and see, he will also do a drama to give you a fitting reply in the election results," he said.

The Chief Minister called Stalin an "actor". "Story, screenplay and direction of Stalin's drama is handled by Prashant Kishor. And Stalin is the actor. See, he has started acting already. He is playing this drama now because his Grama Sabha programmes failed to gain momentum," he said.

Palaniswami said electing DMK back to power would mean bringing back chaos. "Land grabbing... Load shedding... Do you really wish for that?" he asked aloud, pausing until he heard a loud 'No' from the crowd—a style reminiscent of the late Jayalalitha.

## Chinese troops in Indian territory: Rahul targets PM

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
TIRUPUR, JANUARY 24

CONTINUING TO target Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his second day of campaign in Tamil Nadu, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday alleged Chinese troops have occupied Indian territory and the man with "56-inch chest" cannot even utter the name of the neighbouring country.

Addressing meetings here and in Erode district as part of three-day campaign tour of Tamil Nadu ahead of the Assembly elections, he also repeated his charge that Modi governed the country for just five or six business people.

"For the first time, the Indian people can see that Chinese troops have occupied Indian territory. As we speak today, thousands of Chinese troops are occupying our territory and the man with a 56-inch chest cannot even say the word China. That is the reality of

our country," he said. The Chinese understood that Modi was "weak and destroyed the nation's economy and that is why they are inside our territory", he alleged.

Without any doubt, he said, he could tell the people that China would have never had the "guts" to step inside Indian territory if the economy, farmers and small and medium enterprises had been strong and if the "nonsensical GST" and demonetisation had not been implemented. The Prime Minister has weakened the country because he does not work for the people but only for his five or six businessmen friends and China has "come inside" because of such a weakened position, he claimed.

Taking forward his Tamil language and culture pitch to connect with the people and attack the BJP, the Congress MP said he wanted to be the soldier of the Tamil people in Delhi and reiterated that he would not allow the saffron party to disregard Tamil culture.



Rahul Gandhi in front of a statue of former Chief Minister MG Ramachandran in Erode district. *PTI*

### WAR OF WORDS CONTINUES

## TMC says slogans raised to heckle Mamata, BJP claims bid to appease '30%'

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, JANUARY 24

THE WAR of words between the BJP and Trinamool Congress over West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's refusal to speak at the event to mark the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose after Jai Shri Ram slogans were raised continued on Sunday.

While Trinamool leaders have alleged that BJP supporters raised the slogans to humiliate and heckle the Chief Minister, the BJP has accused Banerjee of trying to appease the minority population.

TMC MP and Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday said it was a deliberate attempt by BJP not to let the Chief Minister to speak in the event.

"Yesterday, the CM elected by 2.5 crore people in the state was humiliated... I appeal to people to give a befitting reply to people who insult Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his birth anniversary," Abhishek said while speaking at a public meeting in South 24 Parganas district.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Banerjee, sharing a dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Victoria Memorial, refused to speak after a section of the audience raised 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans when she was about to speak.

Banerjee had said, "I feel a government programme should have some dignity. This is a government programme, not the programme of a political party... I thank the PM and the Culture Ministry for organising the programme in Kolkata. But it doesn't behove you to humiliate a person after extending an invitation."

Condemning the incident, TMC MP Mahua Moitra said, "Never have I been prouder to be part of Mamata's team. In an ocean of monkeys she stands out as the lone lioness. Nation Needs to Know: How come when Great

Lord & Protector Shri Modi was speaking at Netaji event none of his fans hailed him with Jai Shri Ram? How come the heckle cry was only raised when CM Mamata spoke?..."

Senior TMC leader and state minister Firdah Hakim said, "BJP has turned a government programme into a joke. Will it look good if Prime Minister Narendra Modi comes to an event and we engage in sloganeering? This is an insult to Lord Ram as well..."

Hitting back, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said, "Jai Shri Ram slogan is raised to welcome guests. When the PM arrived (at the event), the slogan was raised. The same was done when Mamata Banerjee arrived. What is there in this slogan that Mamata Banerjee felt insulted?... she has done it keeping a political agenda in mind. She has done it to appease 30 per cent [an apparent reference to the Muslim community] population," he said.

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said, "Those who consider Jai Shri Ram a slang should refrain from politics... Mamata Banerjee deserved this as she had sent people to jail for chanting this slogan. Of course we will do politics over Netaji's legacy. He was a political leader so we will 100 per cent indulge in politics over his name..."

Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said, "It was done to insult Mamata Banerjee. We feel insulted as she is the CM and a woman. We must respect the dignity of her chair. I am strongly protesting this."

CPM leader Mohammad Salim said, "It must be condemned. At the same time, Mamata Banerjee has turned almost all her government programmes into political events. It is a different matter who learnt this from whom. We will hope she will mend her ways." Left Front chairman Biman Bose, too, condemned the incident, saying it was an insult to the state.

**DIPANKAR GHOSE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's announcement to contest the Assembly election from Nandigram will help the TMC campaign by bringing back her streetfighter image and by preventing the BJP from claiming a part in the Nandigram movement, according to party leaders.

TMC leaders said the decision has enthused the cadre, specifically in Medinipur where there was some demoralisation after former state minister Suwendu Adhikari left for the BJP. The leaders said that after a decade in power, "it was natural" for people to begin to see Banerjee as a CM and not a fighter for "people's rights" she once was, but the symbolism of

contesting from Nandigram would be a reminder of who she is.

Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Chief Whip of TMC in Rajya Sabha said, "Nandigram is a major sensitive political incident of Mamata Banerjee's life. She was one of the only people in independent India who went on a hunger strike for 26 days. The Centre and the Governor appealed to her, but she was reluctant because of the way the farmers were attacked. She was the lone voice for the farmers."

"Ultimately, her stance was vindicated when the people rallied around her and even courts gave judgements in favour of her stance that no land of any individual can be taken by the government without consent. And the central government led by Manmohan Singh had to amend the archaic Land Acquisition Act."



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram. *File*

Referring to Adhikari, Ray said "some people" were trying to claim credit for Nandigram movement. "If by defecting to BJP, someone claims that it was he who gave birth to the movement, it is not only far from truth, but also means that BJP is trying to exploit the situation as if it was also part of the

Nandigram movement, which is laughable. BJP was nowhere in the people's movement," Ray said.

TMC strategists admitted Adhikari's departure was seen as a problem in areas in and around Nandigram and Medinipur. "It is foolish to say his leaving does not mean anything. It is a political

move that needed to be countered. Even if you look at local media surveys, after he left, they said at least twenty seats in and around Medinipur were going to BJP. That has changed now. It is not Suwendu versus nobody. It is Suwendu versus Mamata in Nandigram," a senior TMC leader said.

"Now people are waiting to see what he will do. Will he fight from Nandigram, or will he change the seat? The questions are now with Adhikari and people are watching," the leader added.

Another leader said the cadre in these districts are now waiting and watching as opposed to jumping the ship. "Many workers from any party go where they think the party they are affiliated to will win. Now they know TMC is going nowhere," another strategist said.

While Adhikari has promised

to quit politics if Banerjee is not defeated in Nandigram, the BJP leadership has said results of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections show TMC has lost ground in Banerjee's home seat Bhawanipur and that her decision to contest from Nandigram is to save face.

Ray said Banerjee has "never said" she would not fight from Bhawanipur as well. Referring to Narendra Modi contesting from Vadodara and Varanasi, and Rahul Gandhi from Amethi and Wayanad, he said this was not new to Bengal either. "Ajoy Mukherjee contested in 1967 from Tamruk and Arambagh. In Arambagh, Prafulla Chandra Sen, his predecessor as CM was the Congress candidate and he lost. Whether it is wrong or right will be decided by people."

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New Delhi





**UP FOUNDATION DAY**  
Adityanath govt launches free coaching, starts new award

# Dispel rumours, lies about vaccination, PM tells youth

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 24

**DIPANKAR GHOSE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

LAUNCHING THE three-day celebrations to mark the foundation day of Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced a new award, UP Gaurav Samman, which will recognise "exceptional people" whose work brings laurels to the state.

The award will be given to people from several fields, including technology, culture and sports, and the Chief Secretary will head its selection committee.

At the event at Awadh Shilp Gram in Lucknow, the Chief Minister also announced launch of a statewide free coaching facility for students to help them prepare for competitive exams like JEE, NEET and UPSC. Abhyudaya Coaching programme will begin from Basant Panchami, the day goddess of learning, Saraswati is worshipped, the CM said.

He said that despite playing a leading role in the country's culture and tradition, the state's foundation day was not celebrated earlier because "people at the helm of affairs earlier" never thought of it.

"After BJP came to power, then Governor Ram Naik said most states celebrate their foundation day, but not Uttar Pradesh. When I moved the proposal in Cabinet, it was accepted with open hearts."

The Chief Minister said the law and order situation in the state has improved. "UP has been the focal point of India's Independence and has led the country in every field. For the past few years, it carried an image of 'Danga' (riot) Pradesh and 'Apradh' (crime) Pradesh". However, we have successfully shunned that image by ensuring strict law and order since 2017. UP has become a model for law and order, employment and investment."

The Chief Minister praised people of the state for their "steely resolve" during the pandemic. "It came as no surprise that Uttar Pradesh received accolades from foreign countries and WHO for commendable work done in the Covid management," he said.

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday called on the youth to assist in the country's Covid-19 vaccination programme by dispelling "lies and rumours" surrounding it.

Addressing cadets of the NCC and NSS as well as artists who will take part in the Republic Day parade, Prime Minister Modi also called on youngsters to lead the effort for a self-reliant India.

Exhorting the youth to help in the vaccination programme, he said it was important that the right information about vaccines be spread. "You have to give the correct information about the vaccine to the poorest of the poor, and the common citizens. By making the vaccine for coronavirus in India, India's scientists have fulfilled their responsibility. Now, we must fulfill our responsibility. We have to defeat every instrument of lies and rumours by the right information. We have to remember that our republic is strong because it is defined by our



PM Narendra Modi and Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Arjun Munda, Kiren Rijiju and Renuka Singh with artists participating in the Republic Day parade at an 'At Home' event Sunday. PTI

sense of duty," he said.

On the Atmanirbhar Bharat mission, Modi said: "We have become slaves to foreign products".

"The first responsibility of making an Atmanirbhar Bharat should start with us only. I am not saying that if you have some foreign item you go throw it away tomorrow.... But we do not even

know how these things have entered, in one way have made us slaves, mental slaves," he said.

The Prime Minister said the goal of a self-reliant India would be met not only by words, but by action, particularly from the youth.

Lauding the diversity of the country on the eve of Republic Day, he said: "India may have

many paths, but the destination is the same—Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat." He also referred to the Prakash Parva of Guru Teg Bahadur and the anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. "The 75 years of independence, the life of Guru Teg Bahadurji, the valour of Netaji, his courage, all of this is a very big inspiration for us."

## NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY OBSERVED IN UTTARAKHAND

# Child rights panel takes cue from *Nayak*, makes 19-year-old CM for a day

**LALMANI VERMA**  
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 24

ON SUNDAY, when all offices were closed in Dehradun, police personnel and government officials stood outside room no. 120 on the first floor of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha building where 19-year-old Srishti Goswami was reviewing the work of over a dozen departments.

After a detailed presentation on crime records by DIG, Law and Order, Nilesh Anand Bharney, Goswami asked him to ensure the safety of women in public transport and prohibition on the sale of drugs in a 500-m radius of schools.

The student of Agriculture Science was the symbolic Chief

Minister of Uttarakhand for a day. The initiative was taken by Uttarakhand State Commission for Protection of Child Rights to mark the National Girl Child Day. Officials said they took the cue from Bollywood movie *Nayak* in which the protagonist, played by actor Anil Kapoor, became CM for a day.

"That was cinema... this is real. You can guess the excitement. I am thankful to CM (Trivendra Singh Rawat) and the Commission for providing me this golden opportunity," Goswami said after her four-hour tenure. She added that if she gets a chance to become "real CM" for a day, she will work on priority to address issues related to children.

During the review meeting,



Srishti Goswami reviewed work of over a dozen departments

Goswami asked officials to prevent child abuse and ensure that privacy of women is maintained after natural disasters at any place.

Responding to the presentation on the country's longest motorable single-lane bridge, Dobra Chanti bridge across Tehri lake,

she asked officials to renovate dilapidated bridges across the state. The recommendations she made will be forwarded to the government for consideration, officials said.

Earlier, when Leader of Opposition in Bal Vidhan Sabha, Asif Hasan, remarked that there was no engine in the "double engine" government, Goswami responded by listing decisions the state government has taken for the public.

Goswami belongs to Daulatpur village in Haridwar district where her father runs a grocery shop and her mother is an Anganwadi worker. She was chosen to be CM for a day as she was elected Chief Minister for three years in Bal Vidhan Sabha in 2018. Higher Education Minister


Dhan Singh Rawat welcomed Goswami on her arrival to the Vidhan Sabha and also attended the review meeting as a representative of Chief Minister Rawat, who was in Haridwar to inspect arrangements for Kumbh Mela.

Usha Negi, chairperson of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, said the Chief Minister approved the idea of Goswami as CM for a day to send a message of encouraging leadership capability among girls on the occasion of National Girl Child Day.

"Anil Kapoor did such a role in *Nayak*. So we thought Uttarakhand can present it in the form of a 'nayika' to send a message of girl empowerment by making a child who is already CM of Bal Vidhan

Sabha the CM for a day. The review meetings were aimed at developing administrative quality."

The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights in 2014, along with an NGO and a social organisation, started Bal Vidhan Sabha to help children understand governance and democratic processes. Students apply to be selected as legislators. After interviews, the commission selects one legislator from each of the 70 constituencies and those selected vote to elect a CM, ministers and a Leader of Opposition from among themselves for three years. Meetings of Bal Vidhan Sabha are held on issues related to children and the recommendations are sent to the state government.




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New Delhi



BRIEFLY



V K Sasikala

KARNATAKA

Sasikala stable, says hospital

**Bengaluru:** Expelled AIADMK leader V K Sasikala, who is serving a jail term in a corruption case and has been hospitalised for Covid-19, is stable, according to the hospital where she is undergoing treatment. The symptoms have reduced and she is now stable, authorities at Victoria Hospital said Sunday. Her sister-in-law J Ilavarasi, who is also serving a prison term in the corruption case, has tested positive for Covid-19 and admitted to Victoria Hospital. A bulletin said: "Conscious, alert and well oriented. Stable and comfortable, taking oral food normally and walking with support." She had complained of fever on Wednesday, a week before her release. **PTI**

BIHAR

Man held for killing official

**Patna:** A block-level officer who had gone missing from his Patna home was found dead on the outskirts of the state capital with police arresting a man for the alleged killing. The body of Masaurhi block agriculture officer Ajay Kumar (45) was found with injuries on the head. A senior police officer said: "A trowel could have been used for the murder after he was abducted." The police arrested one Golu Kumar, son of a seeds dealer, in connection with the killing. The officer had lent Rs 6 lakh to Golu, which he was not returning. **ENS**

JAMMU & KASHMIR  
2 suffocate to death in vehicle

**Jammu:** Two people were found dead inside a mini-truck on Sunday in Banihal along the Jammu-Srinagar Highway as they waited for the blocked route to reopen. Sources said both appear to have died of suffocation as they had burnt coal in a fire-pot to keep themselves warm during the night. The official word on the cause of death is awaited. Following the incident, people, including drivers, pelted stones at Railway Chowk in Banihal, saying the duo died of cold because of the administration. The highway was reopened later. **ENS**

GUJARAT

Starlings found dead in Rajkot

**Rajkot:** Six rosy starlings were found dead on the bank of the Aji river in Rajkot on Sunday, raising fears of bird flu in the city. "We have sent samples of two of them to the National Institute of Virology and handed over the remaining carcasses to the forest department," said Dr KU Khanpara, deputy director of animal husbandry, Rajkot. "It's difficult to comment on the cause of death until reports are in." **ENS**

Kerala govt to refer rape cases against Chandy, others to CBI

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
JANUARY 24

**MONTHS AHEAD** of Assembly polls in Kerala, the CPM-led state government has decided to recommend to the CBI the rape cases registered against Congress leader Oommen Chandy and his other party colleagues based on complaints by a woman accused in the 2013 solar scam. The solar scam during the tenure of the previous government led by Chandy was one of the key issues in the 2016 Assembly elections in which the UDF was routed and the LDF came to power. The woman alleged she was sexually exploited by Chandy, AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, Congress MPs Hibi Eden and Adoor Prakash and former minister AP Anil Kumar. Then Congress leader AP Abdullah Kutty, who later joined the BJP and became its national vice-president, is also an accused. Although the woman had earlier complained against Kerala Congress (M) leader Jose K Mani, who recently joined the LDF, no case has been registered against him. The state Home Department on Saturday issued a gazette notification, saying the government has decided to refer five cases, registered in 2016, 2018 and 2019, to the CBI. The judicial commission which probed the solar scam had recommended in 2017 that a case for sexual abuse be registered against Chandy, Venugopal and other Congress leaders. The woman, in a letter to the commission, had alleged that Chandy and others sexually abused her and allowed her solar firm to make illegal gains when Congress was in power. Thereafter, the CPM government ordered registration of crim-

inal cases against Chandy and others, but there was little progress in the cases as the government got adverse legal advice. Also, Chandy moved the High Court, which quashed the case against him and restrained the media from debating contents of the letter. The woman then filed new complaints against the Congress leaders and fresh cases were registered. Recently, she approached Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, seeking a CBI probe into the cases. The woman told the media that she did not see a political motive behind handing over the cases to CBI. "I had complained against 14 persons, including Jose K Mani. Now, six cases in which FIR has been registered would be handed over to CBI," she said. CPM state secretary A Vijayaraghavan said the government took a decision based on the complainant's demand for a CBI probe. "The cases were handed over to CBI as part of ensuring natural justice to the complainant," he said.

Chandy, who has been appointed chairman of the Congress election management and strategy committee, said, "The LDF came to power after staging massive agitations against the UDF government on the solar scam issue. What have they been doing for the last five years? They did not take any action on the complaints. Let CBI probe the issue." Congress Chief Whip in Lok Sabha, Kodikunnil Suresh, said the state government's decision is a "ludicrous political drama". Union Minister and BJP leader V Muraliedharan said Vijayan has sensed defeat in the Assembly elections. "Vijayan has been against the CBI probe into FCRA violations in the government housing scheme and twin murders of Youth Congress leaders by CPM cadres. The sudden love for CBI shows the government's double-standard," he said.



BEACH LANDING

Army personnel practise manoeuvres during the 'AMPHEX-21' exercise at Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Sunday. **ANI**

Nitish: Anti-social work being done on social media

**Patna:** Two days after the economic offences unit and the cyber crime wing of Bihar Police issued a circular asking government departments to bring to its notice the use of objectionable language against public servants, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday said "anti-social work was being done on social media" and that word on good work done by his government was not "percolating to people". Speaking at an event to mark the birth anniversary former chief minister Karpoori Thakur, Kumar said: "Technology is to be used for good, but it is being misused... Anti-social work is being done on social media. This is sending a wrong message to the younger generation," said Nitish. "They (youth) have to be told about how things were in the. What was the condition of roads, electricity and water supply. They also need to told what is being done today," Kumar added, without making any reference to the recent police circular. **ENS**

UP: ATS arrests two Chinese nationals for 'financial fraud'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 24

**THE UP Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS)** has arrested two Chinese nationals, identified as Pochnli Tengli alias Li Teng alias Alice and Xu Xunfu alias Julahi, in connection with financial fraud after they allegedly bought SIM cards with forged documents. The two were held in Noida on Saturday based on information provided by 14 people who had been arrested on January 17 in connection with a financial scam. In a statement on Sunday, the ATS said, "The ATS, Uttar Pradesh, got information that a gang is conspiring and is procuring SIM cards on fake IDs and then are opening online bank accounts. They were exchanging money after indulging in cheating through the accounts. The money was being forwarded for use in criminal activities. When the information was verified and checked, it came to the fore that some criminals had opened bank accounts putting in fake details in different banks. These bank accounts were receiving money from an unidentified source which was being drawn by different means. With regard to this, the ATS had on January 17 made 14 arrests. A red-corner notice and a blue-corner notice were issued against the absconding Chinese accused, who were arrested from Noida on Saturday."

The ATS said during preliminary questioning it came to light that the Chinese used to procure pre-activated SIM cards from distributors and retailers after those passed through several people in Delhi. "The pre-activated SIM cards used to be made available to the manager of a hotel owned by a Chinese couple in Gurgaon. One of them [the couple] used to stay in China, and the accused were connected to them through WeChat," read the statement. The ATS added, "On direc-

tions of the owners of the hotel, the OTP for WhatsApp registration was shared with the Chinese nationals. The two accused do not know who was using the 150 activated WhatsApp numbers and where they were being used." An ATS officer said it was still not clear where the WhatsApp, for which OTPs were shared, accounts were being used since the messaging app is not used in China. "China does not have WhatsApp, and we are still trying to unearth where the WhatsApp was being used," the officer added. The ATS said till date the two accused had given 1,000 pre-activated SIM cards to the hotel owners. According to the squad, Li Teng alias Alice's business visa expired in September 2020, while Xu Xunfu's business visa expired the month before that. An officer said the two would be presented in court and their remand would be sought for questioning.

Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, sources say research is likely to begin this year itself. In its proposal note, NIO said: "The historicity and the date of 'Ramayana' remain a debatable subject among historians, archaeologists and scientists. It is proposed to carry out scientific and underwater archaeological studies to understand the nature and formation of the Ram Setu and its surrounding area."

The agency's research vessel named Sindhu Sadhana will be deployed to collect samples of sediment from 35-40 metres below the water level. Sindhu Sadhana is an indigenous exploration vessel which can stay underwater for up to 45 days. Ram Setu has been at the centre of debate since 2005 when the UPA government proposed the

Javadekar: People of different faiths for construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

**UNION MINISTER** for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar on Sunday said that people from different faiths were in support of the Ram temple at Ayodhya and that the day that the Babri Masjid was demolished was the day a "historic blunder" had been rectified. Speaking at an event at the Delhi BJP office to felicitate people who have donated money for the construction of the temple, Javadekar said he was in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. "When foreign invaders like Babur came to India, why did they choose Ram temple for demolition...there are lakhs of temple in the country. Because they knew that the soul of the country resides in Ram temple...", he said. "The structure of the temple was demolished. It was not a mosque, because it is not a mosque if there is no worship. I am a direct witness. I used to work in Yuva Morcha. On December 6, 1992, I was present in Ayodhya. We were in the same courtyard with millions of servants. On the second day the whole world saw how a historical blunder was rectified," he said.

BJP leaders in Delhi will start a drive across the city starting February 1 to collect funds for the construction of the temple at Ayodhya. Javadekar said that people of other faiths also support the construction of the temple. "I am happy that lord Ram is no longer claimed by one religion and has become a symbol of pride for the entire country. Even people of other religions favour construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya," he said. The minister said the construction of the temple has begun and will be completed in two years. Not only all Indians, but crores of people from all over the world will visit Ayodhya to see the temple, he added.

AMU to bury time capsule of its 100-year history on R-Day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 24

**THE ALIGARH Muslim University (AMU)** will bury a time capsule recording the evolution of the varsity over the last 100 years of its existence on Republic Day as part of its centenary celebrations. The capsule, which weighs around 1.5 tonnes, will contain documents showcasing the rich history of the AMU. "As part of the university's centenary celebrations, we will bury a time capsule on the campus on January 26. The event will be presided over by Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor. The time capsule will contain documents showcasing the history of the varsity and its journey over



Aligarh Muslim University

the past 100 years. It will also have the biography of founder Sir Syed Ahmed and his addresses. It will also have texts of speeches of prominent people from pre-Independence era," said AMU spokesperson Rahat Abrar. "Besides the details of all the buildings on the campus, the time capsule will also have copies of convocation addresses of chief

guests from 1922 to 2018. The documents about growth, development and journey of the varsity will also be preserved in the time capsule," Abrar said. The time capsule will be buried in the park opposite the Victoria Gate, which is the oldest building in the university, said the university official. The papers which will be kept in the capsule will be preserved by making them acid-free and with addition of some chemicals. "We have taken all possible precautions regarding the capsule so it can be preserved for a long time. The capsule has been built with high tempered steel and is around four feet deep. It will be buried 30 feet deep into the earth," the spokesperson added.

Centre gives green light to underwater study to determine Ram Setu origins

DIVYAA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

**THE GOVERNMENT** has approved an underwater research project to ascertain the origins of the Ram Setu — a 48-km-long chain of shoals between India and Sri Lanka. Talking about the aim of the exploration, Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture, Prahlad Singh Patel, said, "The world should get to know about the Ram Setu through evidence based on scientific research."

Ram Setu, also known as Adam's Bridge or Nala Setu, holds religious significance because of the Ramayana. The central advisory board on archaeology, which functions under the Archaeological Survey of

India (ASI), has approved the proposal for this underwater exploration project. The study — to be conducted by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) Goa — will focus on the process behind Ram Setu's formation and also whether there are any submerged habitations around the structure. Patel said, "ASI has been asked for permission by the NIO on two counts — excavation to ascertain the age of the structure, and to explore the surrounding area. The permission has been granted."

Also, Ram Setu's age will be ascertained through the study of fossils and sedimentation to see if it correlates with the Ramayana period, sources in the Ministry of Culture told *The Indian Express*. Keeping in view the upcoming

Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, sources say research is likely to begin this year itself. In its proposal note, NIO said: "The historicity and the date of 'Ramayana' remain a debatable subject among historians, archaeologists and scientists. It is proposed to carry out scientific and underwater archaeological studies to understand the nature and formation of the Ram Setu and its surrounding area."

The agency's research vessel named Sindhu Sadhana will be deployed to collect samples of sediment from 35-40 metres below the water level. Sindhu Sadhana is an indigenous exploration vessel which can stay underwater for up to 45 days. Ram Setu has been at the centre of debate since 2005 when the UPA government proposed the

Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project, to build a shipping canal to link the Arabian Sea with the Bay of Bengal. For this, a channel passing through the limestone shoals of Ram Setu was to be dredged in the Sethusamudram sea, between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. However, the project was opposed by environmental groups as well as by the BJP as they said that the project would damage the Ram Setu. At the time, AIADMK chief Jayalalithaa had demanded from the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that Rama Setu be declared a national monument, even as then DMK chief MK Karunanadhi had come down heavily on "communal forces" for using the "myth" of Ram Sethu to stall the Sethusamudram project.

Hit by pandemic, IFFI's virtual-physical format is main show this year

KRISHN KAUSHIK  
PANAJI, NEW DELHI,  
JANUARY 24

**THE PASTEL** yellow and white, colonial style building that houses the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) is on a street in Panaji that runs parallel to the Mandovi river till it meets the Arabian Sea. For the last ten days or so, the street was lit up, with lights dangling from electric poles and trees all along it. It seemed like an earnest attempt to brighten the venue that annually hosts the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), because barring the lights, little else suggested the festival is on. The pall of the pandemic sat heavy on this year's edition of IFFI, which concluded on Sunday. It was visible in the absence of any large crowds near any of the seven venues where the movies

were screened. To compare, queues were longer outside the entrances to the several offshore casinos in Goa, just a few hundred meters north on Mandovi. Officials however, insisted that crowds were present, though virtually. Because of the pandemic, the objective this year wasn't to get the crowds, an official said, but to ensure that "people who matter", like movie critics and students, among others were present. It is the first time IFFI was conducted in this hybrid fashion of physical and virtual screenings. Officials said nearly a 1000 people across the country watched movies online, and around 3500 registered themselves to be physically present at one of the seven screens near ESG, officials who managed the festival said. IFFI director Chaitanya Prasad said the festival was "very meticulously planned".



Actor-director Biswajit Chatterjee gets the Indian Personality of the Year Award at IFFI in Panaji.

@PIB-India

"The way Covid progressed, our planning also took that into account. If the cases were unfortunately increasing at some point of time, that was a time we kept our work together. We also kept options — if the festival is stopped or postponed, what will we do." He added that once it was decided to postpone the festival, they zeroed in on the dates — January 16-24 — and stuck to them. According to Prasad, they organisers had decided on holding virtual screenings even before the postponement plan was finalised. "When we invited applications

for cinema, we gave the option for entries to be virtual only, physical only, or both. At that point of time, that was for November, we had an overwhelming response for virtual," said Prasad. Finally, a mixed, format was selected. Prasad said around 85 movies premiered in the festival, including some which were "world premieres". Though the total registrations were less than half those in 2019 — when around 10,000 people had registered — last year's edition also marked it's golden jubilee. The number of entries however didn't take a very big hit this year. A total of 224 movies from across 60 countries hit the screens this year, compared to the 300 in 2019. Officials said that even as the pandemic disrupted lives around the world, the participation of international films and

their crew is not disheartening. At least 46 international directors, actors and actresses, whose movies were screened at the festival managed to make it. Several Indian filmmakers, including Madhur Bhandarkar, Rahul Rawail and Hariharan also conducted virtual "master-classes" on filmmaking. "What we feel is that this hybrid version is going to stay. Will definitely happen in the next edition, with more improvement. This was a trial phase, where hopefully, we have done well," Prasad said. Speaking more about the new format and it's challenges, Prasad said, the experience of screening films only online was new, as "we have to be very careful because the streaming process, where the rights are given to us". He explained that "there are issues as far as streaming of films

virtually are concerned for world premieres" as they are largely for the "the Indian audience". Further, Prasad said if the movies were intended for global audience, then the parameters would be different. "Next time, we will pitch for that," he said. "Because we were doing the first time here, we had to be a little cautious and not overambitious. Our focus was to reach out to people who matter in cinema — students, film critics, among others."

Though "there were no ticket sales" and nobody can enter the screening unless they had registered beforehand, but "people who matter for cinema are here", Prasad reiterated. For the new format, the organisers cut down the number of screenings per day to 28. Prasad added, "The quality of cinema is no less this year."

**FULL REPORT ON**  
**www.indianexpress.com**



‘Maoist’ leader Kanchan Nanavare dies in Pune hospital after long illness

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PUNE, JANUARY 24

KANCHAN NANAWARE alias Bhoomi (38), an alleged Maoist operative who was arrested along with her husband Arun Bhelke alias Rajan by the state Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in September 2014, passed away at Sassoon General Hospital in Pune following a prolonged heart ailment and related health complications, police said.

Her lawyers had filed for a bail application on medical grounds in sessions court in Pune in September last year, which was rejected and her bail plea in the Bombay High Court was pending for disposal.

A senior police officer told The Sunday Express that Nanavare passed away at Sassoon General Hospital around 4 pm on Sunday. At the time of the couple's arrest from Pune in 2014, the ATS had recovered a forged PAN card, an Aadhaar card, a stock of medicines and other items from them.

The couple was facing charges under sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Lodged in Yerawada Central Prison since her arrest, Nanavare has been suffering from cardiac ailments since her college days. Her lawyer, Advocate Rohan Nahar, told *The Indian Express*, "We have come to know that Nanavare has passed away today. We had applied for her bail on medical grounds in September last year and had moved the HC after it was rejected by the sessions court."

UP tops in disbursing vendor loans; Bengal, Kerala lowest

SANDEEP SINGH  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

EVEN AS several state governments and their local administrations are pushing the PMSVANidhi Yojana, the Centre's micro-credit scheme for urban street vendors, there are stark differences in the pace of implementation of the scheme across states.

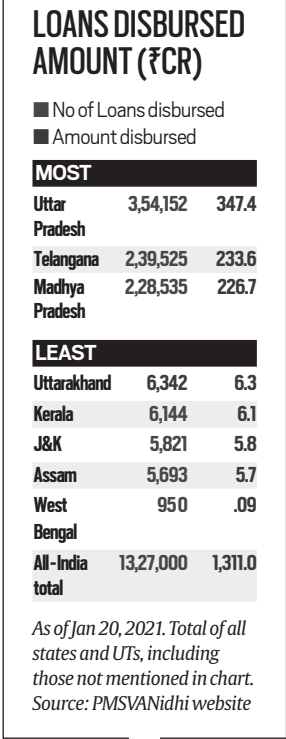
While Uttar Pradesh has disbursed over 3.5 lakh loans, and Telangana and Madhya Pradesh have given out over 2 lakh loans each over the past seven months, West Bengal, Assam, and Kerala have disbursed only a small fraction of those numbers.

The PM Street Vendors' Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PMSVANidhi) scheme, launched in June 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic, provides street vendors collateral-free loans of Rs 10,000 at concessional rates. All vendors who have been vending since March 24, 2020, and have a certificate of vending, can avail of the loan.

UP tops the implementation list, with banks in the state having disbursed loans aggregating to Rs 347.4 crore to 3.54 lakh individuals as of January 20.

West Bengal sits at the bottom of the list – a mere Rs 9 lakh has been disbursed during this period under the scheme to just 95 individuals across the state, data on the PMSVANidhi website show. The disbursement numbers in West Bengal are lower than states that are far smaller in area and population, such as Tripura, Mizoram, and Goa.

Kerala is among the worst performers, the data show. It has



so far disbursed a total Rs 6.09 crore to 6,144 individuals, scoring above only West Bengal and Assam among the bigger states.

The best performing states after UP are Telangana (2,39,525 loans aggregating to Rs 233.6 cr) and Madhya Pradesh (2,28,535 loans; Rs 226.7 crore). Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh have disbursed over Rs 50 crore each under the scheme.

According to bankers, urban local bodies (ULBs) and town vending committees are responsible for identifying eligible borrowers and issuing them certificates of vending, identity cards

and letters of recommendation – the onus for making the scheme successful, therefore, lies with them.

If ULBs do not recommend lists of beneficiaries to banks, bank branches will not be able to execute the scheme, a banker in the private sector said. "So states where ULBs are pushing the scheme have seen more beneficiaries and higher disbursements from banks," said the official, who declined to be identified.

Asked about the extremely low numbers in West Bengal, the State Urban Development Agency (SUDA), which plays a key role in accepting applications, said it was on account of delay in approval of the scheme in the state.

"The scheme was approved by the state government six months after it was launched, and only after its approval in January were applications sponsored," a SUDA official said on condition of anonymity.

The state Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Minister Firhad Hakim, however, said there was no interest in the scheme from street vendors, who had already benefitted from grants by the state government.

"We gave Rs 2,000 directly to street vendors, whereas the central government is giving them a loan. There was no delay from our side," Hakim said.

Another SUDA member said that the weak numbers in West Bengal reflect the tensions between Centre and the state.

"The state government for obvious reasons didn't sponsor the applications, and accordingly the number of applications was

low." However, the SUDA member said, "The issue between the Centre and the state has now been resolved."

Ashwin Kumar Jha, convener of the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) in West Bengal, said the number of applications was now rising, and sanction and disbursement amounts were expected to increase soon. "There will be more sanctioned applications, since bankers have assured that applications will be treated on priority," Jha said.

On the low numbers in Kerala, a senior SLBC official said the union government aimed to take the scheme to 1 lakh vendors, but the state has only 24,000 registered street vendors.

"There are a few factors for the poor off-take under PMSVANidhi. We are not getting enough applications despite good campaigning by banks. A section of street vendors feels the amount is too small for resuming business. Many vendors are waiting to resume business first, otherwise they fear that they would default on repayment," the official said.

Under the scheme, vendors can avail a working capital loan repayable in monthly instalments in one year. While SBI charges interest at 7.25 per cent, the scheme offers an interest subsidy of 7 per cent on timely/early repayment of the loan. However, despite the interest subvention, many loan accounts under the scheme have turned NPAs.

INPUTS FROM SWEETY KUMARI AND SHAJU PHILIP  
FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

Negative Covid test, registration: Centre issues Kumbh SOPs

LALMANI VERMA  
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 24

A NEGATIVE Covid-19 RT-PCR test report, a medical certificate and registration with Uttarakhand government will be mandatory for devotees wishing to attend Kumbh Mela-2021 in Haridwar, according to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Health Ministry.

Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Sunday inspected the site of the event and said arrangements will be made according to the Centre's SOP. Kumbh Mela-2021 is likely to be held from February 27 to April 30. An estimated 10 lakh people will attend the mela on a regular day and about 50 lakh people are expected to attend on special days including Magh Purnima on February 27, Mahashivratri on March 11, Somvati Amavasya on April 12, Baisakhi on April 14, Ram Navmi on April 21 and Chaitra Purnima on April 27.

The Uttarakhand government will have to convey to all states that only those possessing negative RT-PCR test reports with a test date 72 hours prior to the

date of visit shall only be allowed to enter the Kumbh Mela site.

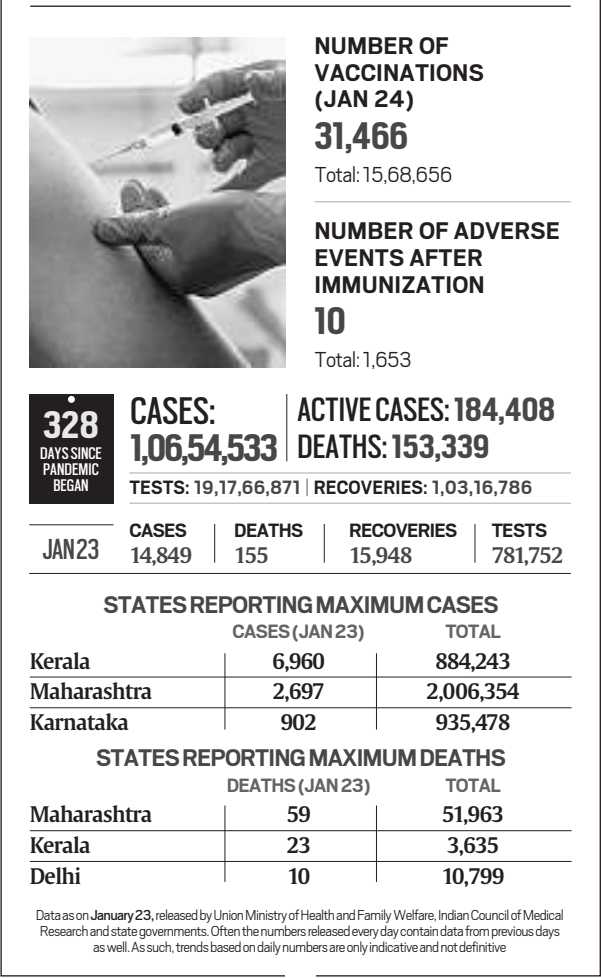
According to the Centre's SOP, healthcare and other frontline workers will be vaccinated on priority in the nationwide drive and that only those workers who have been vaccinated will be deployed on duties at the event.

The state government will follow the same regimen of registration of devotees as the one being used for Amarnath Yatra. All devotees will have to register with the state government and obtain a compulsory medical certificate in their state. Vulnerable populations – those above 65 years of age, pregnant women, children below 10 years of age, those with underlying comorbid conditions – shall be discouraged to attend the Kumbh Mela.

Use of face covers or masks will be mandatory.

The Incident Command System (ICS) for the Mela will have a special taskforce that will respond to all matters related to Covid-19 management. The Centre's SOP adds that events such as exhibitions, and prayer meetings within the mela site should be restricted or regulated as far as feasible.

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE



In the works, CSR-like policy for scientific community

ESHA ROY  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE MINISTRY of Science and Technology has drafted a policy on the lines of the mandatory corporate social responsibility model for the country's scientific community, with a senior official saying this was necessitated by scientists' "isolation" from societal needs. The "Scientific Social Responsibility" policy, under consultation for a year now, has been finalised and will soon be sent to the Union cabinet for approval.

As per the draft policy, every "knowledge worker" has to devote at least 10 person-days each year to SSR activity, which can include giving lectures in schools and colleges, sharing infrastruc-

ture, conducting skill development workshops, and coming up with solutions to local environmental or health issues. Beneficiaries can include students, school and college teachers, local bodies, communities, women's groups, NGOs and MSMEs, among others.

"While the knowledge worker would be given wide latitude in choosing the SSR activity, it should necessarily pertain to the transmission of scientific knowledge to society," says the draft policy.

Prof Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary at the Department of Science and Technology, said: "The idea is to create linkages between science and society. Our institutes have certain resources at their disposal, both infrastructural as well as knowledge-based, and

EXPLAINED

## Budgetary support for science

THE SCIENCE, Technology and Innovations Policy, 2020 and the new SSR draft policy have both emphasised the need for "line ministries"—that is, central ministries that would benefit from scientific innovations—as well as state governments, to keep aside a portion of their budget for scientific innovations. The SSR policy envisages that such a budget be used for pro bono activities of scientists for various projects.

these resources can be used to develop new direct interfaces with society. While scientists may do this already, it is arbitrary and lacks structure. We want to institutionalise this exercise."

Prof Sharma said scientists

have often "worked in silos" and been "isolated from societal needs". "With increased exposure to society, they will also gain knowledge and the kind of research and inventions that is required in the country right now.

This is something that has now been borne out by the Covid-19 pandemic which has shown us how a specific problem can actually provide an impetus to science," he added.

The policy envisages an SSR monitoring system in each institution to assess institutional projects and individual activity. Institutes are also to publish their SSR activity as part of their annual reports. Individual SSR work is to be given due weightage in "performance evaluation of the knowledge worker, such as the performance-based assessment system the output of university and college teachers".

"In the near future, this monitoring and grading can become a part of the institution's ranking," said Prof Sharma.

FROM PAGE ONE

‘Pak Zindabad’

shouting these names when some locals heard them shout, 'Pakistan zindabad', said Eish Singhal, DCP (New Delhi and PRO).

During interrogation at the Tughlaq Road police station, police found the family had "named" the 14-year-old boy "Pakistan" during the game.

"When the boy was slow, others, which included his parents, shouted 'Pakistan haar gaya... peechhe reh gaya,' and when the boy started speeding, they cheered him with 'Pakistan Zindabad'," said the officer.

The two men in the group – one of them is the boy's father – were detained by the police for eight hours, before being allowed to leave at around 9 am Sunday.

The three women and the child were also taken to the police station at night but allowed to go home. The women, including the child's mother, were again called to the police station between 8 and 9 am and let go at noon.

Officials of the Special Cell and Intelligence Bureau were involved during questioning, said sources.

Singhal said, "They were cheering and said Pakistan zindabad in a lighter vein."

Latur village

their women occupants, a sanitary napkin dispenser, inclusion of widows in festivities, a drive to encourage organ donation, and a free flour-grinding mill.

Having first become sarpanch in 2005, Chame says she will now make way for a new sarpanch, to be chosen from among the six members. The seventh seat, reserved for STs, will be filled soon, with another

woman, she says. "We had a name in mind and the village had agreed to her, but her caste certificate was found invalid by the district administration."

One of the changes the village takes great pride in is the normalisation of the conversation around menstruation, led by ASHA worker Manisha Tangadpalle. "Menstruation is a natural process, but girls hesitate to talk to their mothers about it, though they talk to me freely. The sanitary napkin dispenser we set up in the anganwadi gives three napkins for Rs 5. Soon we will install a machine for safe disposal of napkins too," Tangadpalle says.

Sangeeta Chame, who runs the mill that grinds flour for free, still remembers the Raksha Bandhan from two years ago, "in which brothers gifted sanitary napkins to sisters".

Tangadpalle's grandfather, who passed away in 2017, was the village's first organ donor. With his example prominently displayed at the gram panchayat office, 447 villagers have pledged to donate their organs since.

To dispel superstitions about ghosts and spirits, a deserted village crematorium has been transformed into a children's park. "People used to be scared of the crematorium but now children come on their own to play," says Bhagyashree's husband Dyanoba Chame, who has authored a book in Marathi titled *Nirmile Astiva Majhe* (Creating My Identity) that tells the story of the transformation of the village.

Nilanga MLA Sambhaji Patil Nilangekar says another village in the taluka, Dongargaon, had chosen an all-woman panchayat but, unlike Gaur, they met with opposition. Gram panchayat polls are not contested on political party

symbols but candidates are often backed by parties. In Gaur village, candidates were chosen by the villagers themselves.

"I often cite this village as an example. The property cards in the village are all in the name of women, they have started their flour mill, women and men work equally hard in their farms," says Nilangekar, a BJP legislator, adding that, importantly, the women panchayat members in Gaur are not proxy candidates for the men in their families.

A government official also acknowledges that this is what sets Gaur apart. "Leadership at the grass-root level takes time to emerge. But giving women power is important."

The goodwill earned by the members means villagers are ready to pitch in with donations, like for renovation of the gram panchayat office, to supplement the panchayat's modest annual budget of about Rs 2.5 lakh. One of the schemes the funds have helped organise is the Kanyadaan Yojana, to ensure no one "thinks of their daughters as a burden". In the past five years, villagers have shared expenses for five weddings. A board at the entrance to the panchayat declares that the village doesn't give or receive dowry.

Ayodhya Chame, 55, head of Gaur's Santamukti Samiti or dispute-resolution committee, says the panel ensures disagreements are resolved before they turn into serious rows. "This is why we could elect our gram panchayat unopposed," she says.

Ayodhya points out that having women in leadership roles sets a good role model for the younger generation. As an example, she says, "Earlier, only fathers would go to children's school to

discuss issues. Now mothers come, and children see them as having a role beyond the home."

Bhanudas Nagmode, 74, a retired primary school teacher, says they are happy to concede the success to their women. "We have had no infectious diseases in the last many years, open drains have been covered, the village is cleaner," Nagmode lists.

Ganga Chame, 29, among the six new panchayat members, says the election marks another milestone. "We came here as daughters-in-law, but our families never discouraged us from participating. They put their faith in us and let us take our own decisions."

Vishnu Chame, a former member of the panchayat, says it is not surprising that Gaur was receptive to change. Home to Marathas, Dhangars, OBCs and STs, Gaur has never let caste matter, he says. Whether weddings or funerals, every family in the village participates.

Inequality

the strictest lockdown anywhere in the world, India's top 100 billionaires saw their fortunes increase by Rs 12.97 trillion – enough money to give every one of the 138 million poorest Indians a cheque for Rs 94,045 each. In stark contrast, 170,000 people lost their jobs every hour in the month of April 2020, the report points out.

"In fact, the increase in wealth of the top 11 billionaires of India during the pandemic could sustain the NREGS scheme for 10 years or the health ministry for 10 years," according to Oxfam's calculations.

The report states that Covid has the potential to increase economic inequality in almost every country at once – the first time this has happened since records

began over a century ago.

Sectorally, India's large informal workforce was the worst hit as it made up 75 per cent of the 122 million jobs lost. Informal workers had relatively fewer opportunities to work from home and suffered more job loss compared to the formal sector. The 40-50 million seasonal migrant workers, typically engaged working in construction sites, factories etc. were particularly distressed, notes the report.

The pandemic also spiked health and education inequalities.

Over the past year as education shifted online, India saw the digital divide worsening inequalities. On the one hand, private providers such as BYJU's (currently valued at \$10.8 billion) and Unacademy (valued at \$1.45 billion) experienced exponential growth yet, on the other, just 3 per cent of the poorest 20 per cent of Indian households had access to a computer and just 9 per cent had access to the internet.

In terms of healthcare, Oxfam found that since India does not report case data segregated by socio-economic or social categories, it is difficult to gauge the distribution of the disease amongst various communities. But India currently has the world's second-largest cumulative number of COVID-19 positive cases and globally, the poor, marginalised and vulnerable communities have higher rates of COVID-19 prevalence.

"The spread of disease was swift among poor communities, often living in cramped areas with poor sanitation and using shared common facilities such as toilets and water points," it states.

In this regard, it found that

only 6 per cent of the poorest 20 per cent households had access to non-shared sources of improved sanitation, compared to 93 per cent of the top 20 per cent households in India.

In terms of caste, just 37.2 per cent of SC households and 25.9 per cent of ST households had access to non-shared sanitation facilities, compared to 65.7 per cent for the general population.

The pandemic has also widened gender disparities.

The unemployment rate among women rose from already high 15 per cent before Covid to 18 per cent. "This increase in unemployment of women can result in a loss to India's GDP of about 8 per cent or \$218 billion," states the report. Of the women who retained their jobs, as many 83% were subjected to a cut in income according to a survey by the Institute of Social Studies Trust.

Beyond income and job losses, poorer women also suffered healthwise because of the disruption in regular health services and Anganwadi centres. "It is predicted that the closure of family planning services will result in 2.95 million unintended pregnancies... 1.80 million abortions (including 1.04 million unsafe abortions) and 2,165 maternal deaths," states the report.

The pandemic also fueled domestic violence against women. As of November 30, 2020, cases of domestic violence rose by almost 60% over the past 12 months.

"While the Coronavirus was being touted as a great equaliser in the beginning, it laid bare the stark inequalities inherent in the society soon after the lockdown was imposed," said Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar.

Oxfam India's findings are

part of the Oxfam International report released on the opening day of the World Economic Forum's "Davos Dialogues".

"The deep divide between the rich and poor is proving as deadly as the virus," said Gabriela Bucher, Executive Director of Oxfam International.

Oxfam has argued the urgent need for policymakers to tax the wealthy individuals and rich corporates and use that money to "invest in free quality public services and social protection to support everyone, from cradle to grave".

However, with the Union Budget round the corner, not everyone is convinced of these policy recommendations.

N R Bhanumurthy, Vice-Chancellor of Dr B R Ambedkar School of Economics University in Bengaluru, said that this is not the year to prioritise inequality.

"Reducing inequalities is very important but it should be a medium-term target. Between growth and distribution, we must get the sequencing right. We need to grow first before we can distribute. Otherwise, we can get stuck in a low-income equilibrium," he said.

Kargil

Hanle, and Kargil feels ignored. Feroz Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Kargil, has written to Lt Governor R K Mathur protesting that "cultural and religious symbols" of Kargil have been ignored.

"It is unfortunate to note that a singular aspect of Ladakh has been incorporated for display on the UT Ladakh tableau during Republic Day, thereby failing to showcase the rich and diverse religio-cultural fabric of Ladakh," Khan has written. "It is felt that

Andhra: ASHA worker's death after vaccination sparks protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AMARAVATI, JANUARY 24

AN ACCREDITED social health activist (ASHA) died in the Government General Hospital in Guntur in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday with her fellow workers alleging that she died following Covid vaccination.

Guntur district Collector Samuel Anand said the exact cause of the ASHA's death would be revealed only after a post-mortem but maintained that not a single adverse event following immunisation was reported in the district as 10,099 healthcare staff were vaccinated in the first eight days.

ASHAs staged a demonstration in front of the GGH, demanding compensation of Rs 50 lakh for the kin of the deceased.

A leader of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions that led the protest picked up an argument with the district Collector when he visited the hospital to console the family members of the deceased.

The Collector said he would send a proposal to the state government for payment of compensation to the ASHA worker's kin, on the lines of those paid to frontline health workers who succumbed to the pandemic.

The 44-year-old ASHA complained of severe headache and fever on January 22, three days after she took a shot of the Covid vaccine.

Her brother denied that she had suffered a brain stroke as was being asserted by the GGH doctors.

Vaccinated teacher dies in Telangana

Hyderabad: A 45-year-old Anganwadi teacher, who was administered the Covid vaccine nearly a week ago, died after complaining of chest pain overnight in Warangal district in Telangana, doctors said on Sunday.

The teacher, vaccinated on January 19, had taken some medicines on Saturday night as she was having chest pain and slept in her house at Shayampeta on the outskirts of Warangal. She was found dead on Sunday morning, they said.

Her body was shifted to state-run Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital for post-mortem and samples were also collected there and sent for testing to ascertain the cause of death, its Superintendent Dr K Nagarajuna Reddy said. PTI







THE IDEAS PAGE

Reforming capitalism

World Economic Forum will meet at a time when global economy is in crisis. Delhi should contribute to the framing of new rules to govern international institutions



RAJA MANDALA  
BY C RAJA MOHAN

WHETHER IT IS a clever gimmick or a serious attempt to produce structural changes in the organisation of global capitalism, the World Economic Forum’s initiative for “The Great Reset” has set off furious conspiracy theories on the right and contemptuous dismissal from the left.

The Great Reset, conceptualised by the founder and executive chairman of the WEF, Klaus Schwab, has evolved over the last few years and is based on the assessment that the world economy is in deep trouble. He argues that the situation has been made a lot worse by many factors, including the pandemic’s devastating effects on global society, the unfolding technological revolution, and the consequences of climate change.

Schwab demands that “the world must act jointly and swiftly to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions. Every country, from the United States to China, must participate, and every industry, from oil and gas to tech, must be transformed. In short, we need a ‘Great Reset’ of capitalism.”

The right sees the WEF arguments about restructuring the global economy as a dangerous attempt to impose “socialism” and dismantle the traditional society, or what remains of it. The left scoffs at the Davos Man’s talk on the crisis of capitalism. It points to the complicity of the Davos forum in promoting policies that have brought the world to the current impasse and question its capacity to produce solutions.

Irrespective of what the WEF might say, there is no denying the contemporary global challenges. The reigning assumptions about deregulation and globalisation that significantly reduced constraints on capital within and across borders over the last three decades are now being challenged across the world, including in the US that long championed these ideas four decades ago.

Delhi, which is in the middle of an economic reset of its own, must not only pay attention to the global debate, but also recognise that the current crisis and its political consequences will inevitably lead to a rearrangement of the global order; Davos or no Davos. If structural change is inevitable, the question is what Delhi can do to maximise India’s possibilities and limit the potential dangers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be among the many world leaders who will be addressing this week’s annual gathering of the WEF. The pandemic has compelled the forum to move online from its traditional wintry abode in the Swiss Alps. But Davos has not given up on a physical meeting for 2021. It is scheduled to take place in June in Singapore.

This is only the second time that the Davos annual forum is taking place at another location. In 2002 January, the forum convened in Manhattan, to demonstrate the resilience and resolve of international capital against the spectacular terror attacks on New York and Washington — the financial and political centres of the post-War global order — on September 11, 2001.



C R Sasikumar

tres of the post-War global order — on September 11, 2001.

The choice of Singapore is certainly practical; it is also symbolic. The success of East Asia, or “Greater China” if you will, in containing the pandemic stands in stark contrast to the failures in North America and Europe. The only cities that can host large physical events right now are in Asia, and Singapore is arguably the most convenient. Meanwhile, the much-talked-about Asia’s rise — notwithstanding its internal contradictions — is with us and is now a decisive factor in reordering the global economy.

The agenda of The Great Reset touches on many key issues facing the world. Three of them stand out.

First is the question of reforming capitalism. Davos has been at the forefront of calling for “stakeholder capitalism” that looks beyond the traditional corporate focus on maximising profit for shareholders.

The demands for its reform are as old as capitalism itself; we also know that the dominant capital tends to resist change. What is different this time is the vocal support for the principles of stakeholder capitalism from the top honchos of the global industry. In the US, progressives hope President Joe Biden, like Presidents Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt, will bring much-needed reform. Not everyone is convinced though.

Commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* routinely dismisses stakeholder capitalism as a front for “irresponsible corporatism” that diverts cash flows from productive use of capital that can produce collective good. On the American left, critics argue capital has shown little concern for the interests of stakeholders and its instinct for profit maximisation has only gotten worse during the pandemic.

The large technology companies that were to deliver us into the digital utopia have proven to be as rapacious as the European merchant kings of the early colonial era and exploitative capitalists of the 19th century. Big beneficiaries of deregulation and special concessions around the world, the tech giants pay few taxes and actively depress wages for working people. They also have acquired unprecedented power to influence the governments.

Realists would suggest that capitalism is

The Great Reset, conceptualised by the founder and executive chairman of the WEF, Klaus Schwab, has evolved over the last few years and is based on the assessment that the world economy is in deep trouble. He argues that the situation has been made a lot worse by many factors, including the pandemic’s devastating effects on global society, the unfolding technological revolution, and the consequences of climate change.

not going to reform itself. Making capital more responsive belongs to the realm of the state. The kind of policy choices that a state makes in mediating between different stakeholders depends, in turn, on the balance of political forces within societies and between them.

Second, Davos is certainly right to focus on the deepening climate crisis. Climate sceptics have been ousted from Washington and President Biden has rejoined the 2015 Paris accord on mitigating climate change. But that is not enough to resolve the main political challenge on climate change. It is about distributing the economic and social costs of moving away from carbon use within and across nations.

Internally, the conflict is about managing the differential social impact and externally, it is about reconciling the divergent carbon policy imperatives among the major economic actors. This again leads to the realm of contested politics — both internal and international.

Third is the growing difficulty of global co-operation that Davos wants to promote. The era of great power harmony that accompanied the liberalisation of the global economy at the turn of the 1990s has yielded place to intense contestation. The contestation is not just political but increasingly economic and technological. If the world needs universalist solutions, getting them has become harder than ever before. This, in turn, might lead to “competitive multilateralism” and the construction of coalitions of the willing, capable to develop and enforce new rules.

Unlike in the 20th century, India now can and must actively contribute to the framing of new rules to govern global capitalism and re-shaping of international institutions. At the same time, it must also reform its own economy and society to make it more equitable, sustainable and capable of coping with rapid external change. It is only those nations that can effectively manage the dynamic interaction between the internal and external that will come out as winners in the Great Reset that is unfolding.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“America and Britain are each emerging from disruptive internal periods. The alliance between them must be rooted in realism about the present, not fantasy about the past” — THE GUARDIAN, UK

Majority complex

The BJP believes that its legislative majority makes differing views irrelevant, gives the right to impose its will on future generations



SALMAN KHURSHID

THE UP GOVERNOR recently remarked that the Opposition does precious little politics beyond presenting representations to her. As a long-term politician, she must know what politics entails. When in Opposition, there is an implicit obligation to provide constructive cooperation and honest scrutiny of government decisions.

The governor need not go very far to test her idea of politics as farmers, including from western UP, are gathered on the border of the national capital to protest the farm laws. The Opposition, including the Congress, have extended their unqualified support to the movement but have strategically refrained from stealing the thunder of the farmers. Sadly, politics has taken a strange turn, so much so that organic protests like those against the CAA-NRC and now the farm laws remain uneasy about political parties being seen sharing the stage with them. This model owes much to Kejriwal-IAC, where the hidden agenda for transforming the agitation into a political party happily allowed taking discreet support from the opponents of the Congress, but without conceding them space directly. It is another matter that the enterprise helped the BJP and hurt the Congress.

The Congress is the only Opposition party that has the footprint to make a difference to the resistance to the incumbent government, although given the present conditions, we understand that we will have to keep space for like-minded Opposition parties. It is still early to expect a workable two-way accommodation, given the regional contradictions that exist. However, a joint effort within Parliament and beyond on demonetisation, GST implementation, the Citizenship Amendment Act, police atrocities, mixed marriages laws, the future of J&K, farm laws, incompetent handling of COVID-19, etc, is neither inconsistent with political ideology nor the strategies of the entire spectrum of the Opposition. Let us not forget, if India lives there will be opportunity for the Opposition. Some stillborn steps were taken in the past months but time is running out to put up a formidable challenge to the insensitive and incompetent functioning of a government that claims overwhelming popular support but in electoral records can show less than 40 per cent of the popular vote. The government believes that its majority makes all differing views irrelevant. Laws that they legislate can still be reversed in the future, but changes like the new Parliament and Central Vista will impose the will of a transitory majority on

future generations.

Several of the far-reaching changes to the structure of India have, of course, been approved by the Supreme Court but then so was the Emergency, which the apex court is wondering if it can declare unlawful decades later. In a democracy, you either live with the past you inherit or pretend that it was different. The present government wants to rewrite history and certainly alter the path of the future. We seem to have made the mistake of only attacking the government for that instead of engaging with citizens who support the government. We need to ask them why, if at all, they hate us; how they believe their preferred way of life is being adversely impacted by the alternative way of life; what in the system we have inherited prevents them from feeling that their proud Hindu identity is complete; how the Hindutva project will address our collective concerns about food, jobs, education, health and happiness.

Despite our deep differences, we cannot and must not countenance anything like a civil war to the finish. We have lived together and our destiny is to live together. The project to acquire power and retain it for some time will certainly be served by accentuating an ostensible divide — but then what? Even a powerful military is unable to secure status quo beyond a period; powerful demagogues lose their grip; unshakeable structures like the Soviet Union give way; demigods are humbled. Only dialogue and empathy survive in the ultimate analysis.

To return to the governor of UP: Surely Her Excellency accepts that all this is about politics. To believe in this, to articulate this, to educate the electorate about this, to stand up and be counted — it is politics at the highest and certainly different from politicking that everyone seems to confuse with politics. But, of course, there is another dimension: Debate and discourse are dismissed as non-starters and politics is noticed only when there is disruption. Make it impossible for a government to work; block the streets and trains; switch off electricity and water; squeeze supply of food and other supplies; disturb public peace — these are certainly not publicly advocated by anyone in authority yet are we to believe that they are symptoms of live politics? Furthermore, a hapless police force contorts public protest into sedition, though thankfully yet not into insurrection — the word being used for the storming of the US Capitol by the rednecks supporting President Donald Trump. But who will explain to the hundreds of incarcerated youth charged with UAPA and other offences in the CAA-NRC FIRs that their politics was a crime? Understandably, there is a red line between protest and sedition but advising the citizen to protest for politics should come with an assurance that it will not be crushed by an impervious law.

The writer is senior Congress leader and former Union minister



AKSHAY ROUT

Swachh lessons for Covid times

World’s largest sanitation programme can be a model for caution post the vaccine

ACROSS EUROPE, EVEN in Rome, there were poignant reports of subdued Christmas celebrations, unavoidable, because of the fear of the unpredictable coronavirus. Countries have fallen back on that age-old adage, discretion is the better part of valour. New Year’s Eve was not much different. In India, cities and states took recourse to a new set of restrictions that can’t be dismissed as killjoy. Leaders and governments are having to anxiously remind citizens about pandemic protocols. Among the few rescue acts of Joe Biden’s first day in the White House was the restoration of the mask. In Mumbai, civic authorities have found that the number of people revelling at wedding receptions, pubs, restaurants and night-clubs exceeded the permissible limits — in fact, many were making merry without the mandatory mask. More than 10 lakh people were fined in the Maximum City for not using masks. Violations were also reported in other cities and towns. So, the announcement of a night curfew was an expected enforcement response.

Fines and police action are perhaps justified for protecting lives and preventing the system from collapsing. But making the wearing of masks a sustainable habit and observing physical distancing as part of everyday behaviour would have to be part of a shared — albeit none to cheerful — vision till there is a decisive green signal. It has to be like India’s Swachh Bharat, a sterling example of people’s partici-

pation. In Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s words, “swachhata” was taken up as a “collective national responsibility”. As the vaccine entered the collective imagination of an expectant population, PM Modi reminded: “Dawai bhi, Kadaai Bhi”. Though it’s currently constricted by avoidable vaccine hesitancy, India’s vaccine programme will hopefully usher in herd immunity at the earliest.

Behavioural changes require time. The observation of safe sanitation practices — especially those pertaining to toilet use, assiduously cultivated during the Swachh Bharat years of 2014-2019 — is a case in point. The key findings of the Fifth Round of the National Family Health Survey, 2019-20 do throw up certain concerns about the state of sanitation in the country, particularly in its rural parts. It would appear that the focus of the Swachh Bharat Mission on toilet access and use needs to be taken forward with double the vigour. Sustaining the changed behaviour requires a steady stream of campaigns, something that has always tested the implementers.

Very pertinently, the Swachh Bharat Mission Phase II gives institutionalised attention to the sustainability of ODF (Open Defecation Free) status, despite the action moving on to solid and liquid waste management. While Amitabh Bachchan called out for “Darwaza Bandh” — shut the door on open defecation — in the initial phase, the current call is for “Har Koi, Har Roz, Hamesha”. Trained

swachhagrahis remain watchful across India’s six-and-a-half lakh villages to make sure that the guard is not down. The scale of mass action and buzz creation around sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission was unprecedented.

For a country that prides itself on accomplishing the world’s largest behaviour change programme, involving 600 million citizens, sustaining a corona-responsive behaviour should be less challenging, given that the threat is much direct. In fact, to inculcate a new behaviour has always been relatively easier compared to changing an age-old habit like open defecation.

The hard work of the last 10 months of surveillance and testing, not to speak of enduring the painful lockdowns, and the fruitful precautions of masking, distancing and regular hand washing will come to a naught if the commencement of vaccination or the slide in the COVID case count are seen as an invitation to freedom. The year of vaccination, 2021, can only be compared with Phase II of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Much like the imperative sustain an ODF society, the behavioural changes necessitated by the pandemic must be preserved with double the effort even though the vaccine has opened up a vista of hope and the scale of infection is down — the latter owes in no small measure to the observance of the distancing and masking prescriptions.

While the network of election operations

is seen as a model for vaccine distribution, the instruments and mechanisms of Swachh Bharat Mission can address the need for sustaining COVID-responsible behaviour — covering the face and maintaining physical distance. A volunteering force like the swachhagrahis or the band of young and skilled warriors like the zila Swachh Bharat *preraks* could be apt for the purpose.

Barely have the first jabs been administered in a handful of countries, a mutant variant of the virus has made its presence felt. The fear of a second or third surge of the pandemic lurks. Post vaccine, COVID-19 may moderate in terms of severity and infectivity, but it might not be completely eliminated some time soon. The learning from the pandemic is not only resilience but also humility in conduct and being aware that the virus remains an unpredictable adversary. The piece of cloth spread across the face that shuts off some of our sensory organs, besides being functionally efficient, is symbolic of this willing subjugation — that has to continue. The Clean India of Mahatma’s dream became possible when 130 crore Indians came together and adopted new habits of sanitation. The same joint resolve is necessary not to let a single mask drop off the nose.

The writer, a former Director General (Special Projects), Swachh Bharat Mission, is presently a Visiting Professor at Central University of Odisha. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CENTRE’S FOLLIES

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Pause or repeal: Government may have to go back to SC or Parliament on farm laws’ (IE, January 22). This is not the first time the current government at the Centre has undermined the authority of constitutional provisions. Be it CAA-NRC or the recent farm laws, the government has remained blissfully ignorant of both constitutional principles and public sentiment, while marching to its own beat. In this process, the government has insidiously tarnished the ideals of a parliamentary democracy, envisioned by our leaders and enshrined in our Constitution.

Shreya Singh, Mumbai

BIDEN’S FIRST DAY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Biden’s burden’ (IE, January 22). The recent assault on the US Capitol building is proof of the fact that America is a tinderbox. Now that Joe Biden is in the Oval Office, he should work to stanch the bleeding. As the US president, he can either rise to the occasion by reaching out to the other side, or he could drive a wedge deeper between the Democrats and the Republicans by perpetuating this ugly partisan fight.

Varun Das, Zirakpur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Biden’s burden’ (IE, January 22). The way US Joe Biden reversed 17 executive controversial decisions of his predecessor on Day One signals his intentions to the world — that he is firm about mending things. His quick decisions will go a long way in bringing changes in a positive way for America and the rest of the world.

SS Paul, Nadia

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● LET CHILDREN BREATHE:  
AJAY SINGH NAGPURE,  
NITYA KAUSHI

● CLIMATE CONCERNS  
2021: ASHISH CHATURVEDI,  
VIJETA RATTANI

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DRAGON’S DEN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Slaying the Dragon’ (IE, January 22). It is ironic that on the one hand, the mere name of a foreign-sounding fruit can stir the waters for Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani but the shutting down of legendary Gujarati publishers like Lokmilap go without any intervention on his part. It is high time that the Gujarat government introspected and channelled its energies towards the linguistic and cultural causes that actually matter.

Kushal Khandhar, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Slaying the Dragon’ (IE, January 22). The renaming of dragon fruit to “kamalam” was unnecessary, to say the least. It is high time that the government, in this case in Gujarat, understands that there are more important issues to focus on. The debilitating condition of the country’s economy and its people due to the pandemic is surely a more major concern than these petty issues.

Komal Pugalía, Silchar



DR SHEKHAR MANDE, DIRECTOR GENERAL, COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

# Could we've waited for Phase 3 trials?... But should we not save 50,000 lives?... There is no risk to anyone

Dr Mande talks about “guarded optimism” over drop in Covid-19 cases, says effectiveness of vaccines will be monitored for the next two years, and explains hygiene hypothesis and why he believes our immune system can deal with new strains. The session was moderated by Resident Editor (Pune) Amitabh Sinha

**DR SHEKHAR MANDE:** A global health emergency like Covid-19 was foreseen for the last several years. We did not know in what form it would come, but for 20-25 years it was being predicted that the next pandemic was just around the corner. And, even after this pandemic is over, there is a possibility that another one might still be around the corner. So, we should be prepared for that.

In India, the first Covid-19 case was reported on January 30, last year. We discussed the issue at a meeting of the directors of all the laboratories under Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on February 25-26. The World Health Organisation declared the pandemic on March 11, almost 15 days later. By that time, our strategy was already in place and it was rolled out by mid-March. There were several aspects to the response. The first vertical was surveillance, which we are doing even today. It includes sequencing different viral strains across India, conducting air sampling surveys to know how far the virus travels etc. The second vertical was diagnostics. You would have heard about, for example, the Feluda test kit that has come from the CSIR's stable... We did dry swabs, which reduces the cost of RT-PCR tests by half. The dry swab method has also been approved by the Indian Council of Medical Research.

The third vertical is interventions, where we are looking at both vaccines as well as drugs. Favipiravir is already being sold in the market by Cipla, the process for which was generated in the CSIR... We have also taken cognizance of traditional knowledge and some trials are going on along with Ayush (Ministry).

The fourth aspect is medical instruments, and there have been several innovations here too, including the BiPAP 'SwasthVayu' Ventilator. It's for people who are not critical but their oxygen level needs to be enhanced. We have already supplied 1,200 such ventilators to the Delhi government. We have launched 'rapidly deployable hospitals' which can be set up in remote locations in about five days and six such hospitals are ready in Himachal Pradesh now.

There were two principles that we used while bringing about these innovations. Number one, there has to be industry's involvement, like Cipla's in the case of Favipiravir. The second important point that we discussed was that all the components must be made in India, so that we don't have to depend on imports. So with both these principles, we are now in a position to scale up everything for the benefit of society.

**AMITABH SINHA:** In your assessment, is the Covid-19 graph in India in an irreversible decline, or is there still a fear of a second wave? Also, can you tell us a little bit about the different Covid-19 strains that have emerged?

Are we over the pandemic in India? There is a very guarded optimism about it. The number of cases is going down. It's hovering between 16,000-20,000 cases per day in India, compared to about 2,20,000-2,40,000 per day in the US. But we are guarded, because the pandemic isn't over. If we let our guard down, there is every possibility of a second wave. So, we must be very, very careful when we say that the number of cases have gone down. Compared to other more developed nations, the defining feature in India has been the early lockdown. It gave us the opportunity to tell people about the dangers of the pandemic, and to prepare to handle the pandemic as well. We were able to educate everyone that when you step out of the house, don't forget your mask, wash your hands, keep distance, and that actually helped. You don't see this happening even in the most developed countries.

About the strains... Every virus mutates. There is an interplay between the host (the human body) and the pathogen, which is the virus. Now, as the pathogen tries to establish an infection in the host, the latter tries to get rid of the pathogen. (As the virus mutates) our immune system tries to get rid of it (the mutations), unless a very large number accumulates simultaneously. The UK strain can accumulate 17 mutations in its spike protein. A virus has millions of atoms coated around a sphere, and we actually see only 17 mutations... Therefore, it is believed that the human immune system is sufficiently capable of getting rid of even the new strain.

**ESHA ROY:** Whether it's the UK variant or the South African variant, what is the Indian government doing to identify and stop the spread in the country? Also, what have been the takeaways from genome sequencing done so far? For instance, are some



WHY  
**SHEKHAR MANDE**

As chief of CSIR, which has a network of 37 of India's premier research labs, Mande has been at the centre of govt's Covid-19 response strategy. As vaccination begins, his team will be part of the pharmacovigilance process for next 2 yrs

**strains more virulent than the others?**

The standard strategy that all governments around the world have adopted is testing, tracking, tracing... We sequence strains from those people who have a history of travel to the UK etc. Once we know that the person is UK-positive, we isolate the person so that the virus doesn't spread to others. That's the government's strategy. Also, you know about SpiceHealth. We are trying to actually collect samples at airports and then reduce the number of days

required for sequencing. That's precisely what SpiceHealth will be doing at different airports in the country.

Now, are any of the new variants more virulent? It's not proven yet. What is proven is how transmissible they are. What is the probability of one person to transmit a variant to another person, which is typically defined by the R-number. And these variants (UK, South Africa) are actually known to be more transmissible, about 60 to 70% more... However, it is not known whether they are more lethal or not.

**ANURADHA MASCARENHAS:** Why don't we have a single drug that is fully effective against Covid-19 so far?

Development of any drug typically takes 10-12 years. So, when Covid-19 came up, the easiest strategy was to go for 'repurposing'. As part of the strategy, drugs which are already in the market and are 'generally regarded as safe' (GRAS)... we can find a different use for that particular drug. There are roughly about 3,000 drugs which are in the market for human consumption, and must be tested for Covid-19... That is how Favipiravir and the others came up... As for

new drugs, they will take another four-five years to come out.

**ANURADHA MASCARENHAS:** Professor Rohini Godbole from the Centre for High Energy Physics at IISc, was awarded the Ordre National Du Merite, among the highest distinctions bestowed by France. How can we encourage more women to join STEM sectors?

There is a leaky pipeline somewhere. Let us accept that fact. At the school level, there is equal opportunity for everyone. As we start climbing up, unfortunately, the number (of women) drops dramatically. And, by the time you come to the job market, the numbers are even lower, and at the senior leadership level, the numbers are pathetic. So how do you encourage (women to join STEM sectors)? First, let us accept that we have not done well on these numbers. Then, one has to continuously and proactively keep talking about these issues in the public space, even if the truth is inconvenient. Secondly, people like me, who have the advantage of being in an administrative position, must try to correct things... At the CSIR we have ensured that all advisory bodies, committees, have a gender balance. We have tried to do the same in senior leadership positions too. It's a huge challenge. When I joined the CSIR two years ago, neither of our 37 laboratories had a woman director. Today, four of our laboratories are headed by female directors. It is still a pathetic number, and we are working towards taking it to 17-18...

**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M:** About 55 lakh doses of the Covid-19 vaccine will be administered purely based on safety data of the Phase 1 and 2 trials. We don't have efficacy data for the Bharat Biotech vaccine. Do you think the scientific principle that is being applied now is sustainable?

... We are losing hundreds of people

every day, right? In the next three-four months, let us assume you lose about a 100 people a day. That means about 3,000 people a month, and about 10,000 deaths in the next three-four months. That's a low estimate. The higher estimate could be 50,000 people. Now, a vaccine candidate has been proven to be safe, there has been no adverse impact in Phase 1 clinical trials as well as in the pre-clinical trials in animals. In Phase 2 clinical trials, you show that (the vaccine) is immunogenic, that it is eliciting sufficient

immune response in a human being. So, the hope is that since it is generating an immune response, the human immunity can likely take care of the virus. The criticism has been that we could have waited for another four months for Phase 3 clinical trials to get over... (But) you are going to risk the lives of 10,000-50,000 people. That's the first risk. The second risk is that mutants are very rapidly emerging around the world. If you are a regulator, what would you do? Would you save 50,000 lives? Would you allow mutants to arise or would you go for a vaccine which is known to be safe and elicits a response, although its efficacy is not well known?

See, there has been no adverse impact of taking the vaccine. You are not being subjected to any kind of risk, you are not going to develop any adverse reaction, there is no serious illness that you are going to develop... Essentially, if the vaccine generates an immune response against this particular virus, that's good. But even if it does not elicit a response, you have not lost anything per se. There is nothing adverse that you have done to yourself.

**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M:** In one of your

earlier interviews, you said there is a difference between efficacy and effectiveness of the vaccine. Can you elaborate?

Efficacy is calculated in clinical trials on subjects that have received either the vaccine dose or the placebo. Neither the person who is administering the vaccine nor the person who is receiving it knows whether it is the actual vaccine or a placebo. At the end of the study, which takes a few months, you find out who got what. For example, in the Moderna trials, about 30,000 people were given a dose of either the placebo or the vaccine, and 196 developed Covid-19 after a few months. Of these, 185 had received the placebo and 11 had received the Moderna vaccine. So the efficacy was 95%.

Based on efficacy, the regulator decides to give approval for the vaccine to be administered to the general population. Now, in

If we were under-reporting, one-and-a-half-million people would have died of Covid-19. Is that believable? Under-reporting is not the cause (for low numbers)

ratories of the CSIR)... We can go on citing examples... We collaborate with everybody. When the Rs 48,000 crore order for Tejas was placed, most people lauded the DRDO. Nobody knew that a large amount of technology and the entire control system of Tejas was made by the CSIR. Many people don't know there is a very glorious collaboration between the CSIR, DRDO and HAL. It is a fault on our part that information has not been distributed among members of the public.

**TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA:** There is a lot of discussion about

how low- and middle-income countries have low Covid-19 mortality rates. Is the 'hygiene hypothesis' the only reason behind it or is there a loose link with the BCG vaccination? Or, in India's case, is there a low recording rate of the deaths?

My personal research paper on the issue is coming out in a journal called *Current Science*... The population of the United States is roughly one-fourth of India's. The total number of deaths in the US is more than double that of India. If you take the ratio of people dying per million, it is a highly skewed ratio in the countries which have high GDP or a high Human Development Index. This is true across the world. If you look at the number of people dead in African and Southeast Asian countries, it is way lower than countries with high GDP and HDI. Many people say it is under-reporting, but if you are under-reporting, India would have had to report about eight to 10 times more deaths (in comparison to the US). If we (India) were under-reporting, about one-and-a-half-million people in India would have succumbed to Covid-19. I don't think anyone believes that one-and-a-half million people in India have died... Under-reporting is not the cause. In Africa, it would have caused havoc. In places like Dharavi, it would have been a catastrophe. But that has not happened.

The second issue that countries with high HDI have is an ageing population. If you look at the life expectancy in such countries, the average age is much higher than countries like ours. And, we know that this virus affects older people more.

Now look at the distribution of other diseases. The incidence of communicable disease like tuberculosis, malaria and cholera in countries which have higher GDP and HDI is much lower. And the incidence of these diseases in low-HDI countries is much higher. On the contrary, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, asthma, psoriasis are much higher in countries with high HDI and lower in low-HDI countries... In low-HDI countries, the sanitation parameters tend to be poor... It is an established fact that improved sanitation conditions have increased the incidence of auto-immune disorders in higher HDI countries... According to the hygiene hypothesis, as we are continuously exposed to pathogens since our childhood, our immune system is trained... In the paper (in *Current Science*) we are saying that what has saved us is the immune training our body has got because of continuous exposure (to pathogens) since our childhood.

**AMITABH SINHA:** This is probably not the last pandemic that we will see. In terms of our response, how is the next pandemic going to be different? What are the things we have learned and institutionalised so that the response to any such pandemic in the future is different and qualitatively better?

Most important is health monitoring infrastructure... In this case, the response was very rapid. As soon as the Chinese authorities detected the cluster of pneumonia-like cases, they reported it to the WHO. By the fourth day, the WHO team was on the ground in Wuhan to assess the situation. On the seventh day, we knew that it was because of a virus called coronavirus... We need to have a rapid action force... And this is good in the country right now... We are doing reasonably well (in our response) and we should try to improve. But what we actually need to improve is infrastructure in terms of safety level facilities. We need to have multiple BSL-4 (biosafety level-4) facilities in the country, where we can take the infectious organism and assess it. We also need to look at zoonosis — many viruses jump from animal to human. We must keep sampling viruses or parasites in animals all the time. It is important to have a surveillance system for animals and potential diseases that could come from many of them.

Lastly, we need to have supply chains and logistics ready for diagnostics, drugs, essential equipment, doctors, nurses, so that if any such contingency arises, we are able to cater to any remote corner of the country within a very short time.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

the general population there are people who were excluded from clinical trials. People with comorbidities, people who are above the age of 70... So now you will measure things in the entire population. In the real world scenario, the numbers will change from 95%... That is effectiveness. There is a subtle difference and it is being monitored post vaccination. There is going to be very close monitoring for two years as part of the pharmacovigilance process.

**HARISH DAMODARAN:** What is the total budget of the CSIR and how much of that is spent on sponsored or demand-driven research?

Till about 10 years ago, there used to be enormous delays in flights in Delhi due to fog. All those delays have reduced significantly. A transmissometer (for the determination of visual range) has been installed across 100 airports in the country. It is called Drihti and was developed by NAL (National Aerospace Laboratory, a constituent of the CSIR). Today, Delhi has three-five installations of Drihti.

We heard the news of the government procuring Tejas aircraft. About 70% of Tejas weight is carbon fibre. Who made the carbon fibre? The CSIR-NAL. The Tejas lands on naval ships and to be able to land and take off from naval ships, it needs a precise landing and take-off spot. The error cannot be more than half a metre. How do pilots do that? There's something called a 'head-up display' in Tejas aircraft which allows the pilot to make precise take-off and landing. Who made that head-up display? It is the Central Scientific Instruments Organisation in Chandigarh (one of the constituent labo-



New Delhi







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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@indianexpress.com](mailto:explained@indianexpress.com)

## CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

# Rhesus macaque shows promise as model for Covid-19 vaccine studies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24



IN INFECTIOUS diseases such as Covid-19, animal studies help scientists predict how well a candidate vaccine will work. They inform scientists which immune cells triggered by the vaccine are protective, whether the vaccine will be viable as a human intervention, and how the disease progresses in people with compromised immune systems.

The rhesus macaque, a monkey widely prevalent in India, is a promising model for vaccines against Covid-19, according to two independent studies.

In *Nature Microbiology*, scientists have recommended use of the macaque as a model to help develop vaccines. The study also found that the baboon showed greater disease development, making it a potential option for evaluating anti-viral therapeutics and co-morbidities such as diabetes.

And in *Nature Communications*, scientists have reported that rhesus macaques infected with SARS-CoV-2 developed protective immune responses that might be reproduced with a vaccine.

In the *Nature Microbiology* study, scientists at Texas Biomedical Research Institute (Texas Biomed)

and Southwest National Primate Research Center (SNPRC) evaluated three nonhuman primate species — Indian rhesus macaques, African baboons and new-world origin common marmosets — and young and old animals.

They found that the macaque and baboon models develop strong signs of acute viral infection leading to pneumonia, and the non-human primate immune system mounts a strong response and clears the SARS-CoV-2 infection.

In the *Nature Communications* study, scientists at the California National Primate Research Center at the University of California, Davis, infected eight rhesus macaques with SARS-CoV-2 virus isolated from the first human patient treated at UC Davis.

The researchers followed immune responses in the rhesus macaques over about two weeks. The animals showed all the signs of producing an effective immune response to a viral infection.

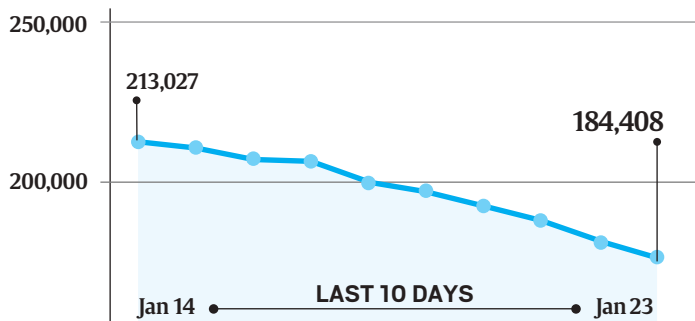


PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

## INDIA ACTIVE CASES

184,408



Note: The Jan 23 figure in this graph is based on the government update on Jan 24

INDIA TOTAL CASES  
10,654,533

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on Jan 24

WORLD TOTAL CASES  
98,861,235

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on Jan 24



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## SIMPLY PUT

# Tech giants v regulators

Google and Facebook have locked horns with Australian govt over laws that propose to make them pay news organisations for using their content. The outcome of the fight will have implications for India as well.



Mel Silva, managing director of Google Australia and New Zealand, appears via video link during a Senate inquiry in Canberra on Friday. AAP Image via AP

last week, Google said that News Showcase — which features story panels that allow participating publishers to package the stories that appear within Google's news products — has on board more than 450 publications across a dozen countries, including *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Libération* in France; *El Cronista* and *La Gaceta* in Argentina; *TAG24* and *Sachsische Zeitung* in Germany; and *Jornal do Commercio* from Pernambuco in Brazil.

Google had announced in December 2020 that it would "soon start offering people access to paywalled content in partnership with select news publishers". It had said it would pay participating partners to provide limited access to paywalled content for News Showcase users.

Last Thursday, Google said it will pay news publications in France for the use of their content online. The tech major and APG, a French news media group, said in a joint statement that after months of talks, they had agreed on the principles on which news publications should be compensated for the distribution of their content on Google platforms.

However, Google's first response to France adopting the EU copyright rules was to stop displaying news snippets — until the French competition regulator stepped in, in October last year. Google also pulled the plug on its Google News service in Spain, which made payments to publishers mandatory.

### The core issue

Paying for news feed in itself appears to be less of an issue for the tech giants, given that Google entered the agreement to pay news

publications in France just hours before threatening to remove its search functions in Australia. The fight in Australia is evidently centred on how much control these companies would be able to retain on their payout process — operational aspects such as deciding the quantum of payments for news feed sources, and having to reveal changes in their algorithms. The hefty fines proposed by Canberra are being seen as an added problem.

There is no denying that tough action by regulators has been behind the moves by Facebook and Google to launch platforms such as the proposed news tab and Showcase, unlike Naver's largely voluntary action in Korea.

European authorities have specifically linked payments to copyright, without putting a forcing device into the agreements. Australia's code, on the other hand, is almost entirely focused on the bargaining power of news outlets vis-à-vis the tech majors, and has some coercive features as well. It is more of a competition issue in Australia, of power equations between traditional news outlets and tech platforms, with the question of abuse of dominance by the latter hanging in the balance.

Australian regulators had initially proposed a voluntary code of conduct, but have since stepped up pressure. Australia's competition regulator has warned that the planned laws to force Google and Facebook to pay for news content were "likely just the start of more regulation for digital platforms".

"This bargaining code is a journey, if we see market power elsewhere, we can add them to the code," Australian Competition and

PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

PARLIAMENT IN Australia is debating legislation that would require Google and Facebook to enter into payment negotiations with media companies for using their content, with an arbiter mandated to adjudicate in the event an agreement cannot be reached.

The Internet companies have pushed back against the legislation — and the fight is being watched around the world, given the impact the outcome could have across geographies, including in India. There is also renewed focus on a template that has been rolled out with some success in South Korea.

Nearly four years previously, Naver, South Korea's most popular news site and biggest search engine, had thrashed out an unusual model for working with Korean news publishers — designating some 125 outlets as "Naver News in-link partners", and paying them for published stories on Naver. Another 500 odd news outlets are unpaid "search partners". The total payout was over \$40 million in 2017.

While this may not be the perfect model — news outlets have generally been unsatisfied with their share, also, there has been controversy recently over allegations that Naver manipulated the ranking of articles critical of South Korea's top football association on the latter's request — the template remains operational in a nation where nearly 85 per cent of the population accesses news online.

### The fight in Australia

Google last week threatened to remove its search engine from Australia. Facebook said it could block Australian users from posting or sharing news links if the proposed norms on royalty payments were put into operation.

Representatives of the tech majors appeared at a Senate hearing in Canberra last Friday. They argued that the media industry was already benefiting from traffic routed to them by the digital platforms, and that the proposed rules would expose them to "unmanageable levels of financial and operational risk".

### Firms' response elsewhere

Bloomberg and some other media outlets have reported that Facebook plans to launch its news tab feature (available in the US since 2019) in the UK, with likely tie-ups with *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *The Independent*. And Google is rolling out its news offering platform, Google News Showcase.

Both these platforms aim to formalise payment pacts with news outlets. In a statement

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

IN THE weeks leading up to US President Joe Biden's swearing-in, cybersecurity experts examined whether his Peloton bike — a piece of exercise equipment — would be permitted inside the White House. They eventually concluded the bike was safe, according to media reports from the US.

### So, what is the Peloton bike?

Made by the Peloton company, it is an Internet-connected, stationary, indoor cycling bike with cameras, microphones and tablets attached, so its riders can livestream fitness classes and communicate with one another. Priced at upward of \$2,500 (around Rs 1.8 lakh), it is made of carbon steel and alu-

minium and weighs around 60 kg. Users are also required to pay \$39 (around Rs 2,895) per month for Peloton's live and on-demand classes.

Apart from Biden, revealed on his podcast that he was an active user of the Peloton bike and had purchased one during the lockdown to stay active, the Obamas and actress Kate Hudson are also fans of the bike. Today, the company, and its exercise bike in particular, have a cult following across the United States.

### Why did it come under security scrutiny?

The Peloton tablet is connected to the Internet and comes fitted with cameras and microphones that allow riders to hear and see each other if they so choose. A report by *Popular Mechanics* magazine warned that the bike could be seen by the Secret Service as a



The Peloton bike has many fans in the US

security threat, as hackers could potentially access Biden and the White House through the bike.

A disclaimer on the Peloton site reads: "At Peloton, we consider the security of our systems and the best interest of our members a top priority. However, no matter how much effort we put into system security, there can

still be vulnerabilities present. Because of this we are looking to the security community to help us meet this top priority through programs like responsible disclosure."

### So, will Biden's Peloton bike be permitted in the White House?

Cybersecurity experts have reportedly said that if Biden really wants to bring his Peloton bike to the White House, he can. But it will have to be massively stripped down by the Secret Service and National Security Agency (NSA) first.

"... really, cybersecurity experts say, if Biden wants his bike, he can surely have it, though it might bear little resemblance to the off-the-assembly-line version after the Secret Service and the National Security Agency are finished with it," *The New York Times* reported.

# A cloth called risa: part of Tripura culture, set to be a national brand

DEBRAJ DEB  
AGARTALA, JANUARY 24

TRIPURA CHIEF Minister Biplab Kumar Deb and his government have been promoting the traditional risa, a handwoven cloth used by the state's indigenous communities, as a signature identity of the state. The risa is being branded under the India Handloom Brand, Deb announced recently.

### So, what is a risa?

The traditional Tripuri female attire comprises three parts — risa, rignai and rikutu. Risa is a handwoven cloth used as a female upper garment, and also as headgear, a stole, or a present to express respect. As an upper garment, it is wrapped around the torso twice.

Rignai is primarily worn as the lower garment and literally translates into 'to wear'. It can be understood as an indigenous variety of the sari of mainland India.

Rikutu is mainly used as a wrap, or like a 'chunri' or a 'pallu' of the Indian saree. It is also used to cover the head of newly married Tripuri women.

These garments were traditionally hand-

woven. Handloom remains an integral part of the Tripuri household, even with the advent of powerloom-manufactured garments.

### What is the government doing to promote the risa?

For several years, the risa has already been in circulation as an honorary stole among indigenous community leaders and tribal political leaders. Chief Minister Deb has been sporting a risa on his shoulders ever since he started campaigning as a BJP Mahasampark Abhiyan convener way back in 2015. Today, many of his party functionaries are seen with the risa.

On Kokborok Day (which celebrates the indigenous language of that name) earlier this month, Deb posted photos on social media of himself wearing a risa and appealed to others to promote tribal craftsmanship. Days later, at the plenary of the North East Council at Shillong, Deb said his government is emphasising production and marketing of indigenous handloom and handicrafts products to follow the Prime Minister's "Vocal for local" call.

### Why is the risa important?

Woven in colourful designs and worn as

an upper garment, the risa also has a host of crucial, social and religious utilities. Adolescent Tripuri girls are first given a risa to wear in an event called Risa Sormani, at age 12 to 14.

The risa is used in religious festivals such as Garia Puja by tribal communities, a turban by men during weddings and festivals, a cummerbund over the dhoti, a head scarf by young girls and boys, and a muffler during winters. The cloth is also used as a makeshift hanger to hold an infant on the mother's backs. And it is presented as a mark of honour to distinguished recipients.

Risa is common in almost all 19 indigenous tribal communities of Tripura. However, each community has its own designs.

### How long has the risa been part of Tripura's traditions?

The complete Tripuri attire is claimed to have originated even before the time of the Manikya Kings, who ruled Tripura for over 500 years starting from the 15th century. Although the history is contested, Maharaj Trilochana, aka Subhrai Raja is said to have invented nearly 250 designs of rignai during his time for his 250 wives.



Risa is the handwoven cloth draped around the upper body.

Tribal Research and Cultural Institute

Today, the risa is undergoing changes due to competition with powerloom-manufactured products available at cheaper rates.

The garment is made in handloom or loom

at homes, usually not more than one or two pieces in a month. Most of this art is handed down through generations. However, many of the designs were lost with the passage of time, and only a few remain.

### What will branding mean?

Tripura's ruling BJP-IPFT government claims that due to apathy of previous governments, skilled Tripuri craftsmen and weavers were not being able to sell their products internationally and suffered financially.

The current government aims to promote risa nationally as Tripura's signature garment, besides providing uniforms to anganwadi and ASHA workers.

The government is also focusing on designs. At a training camp of handloom weavers in Mandai village last year, organised by the Tripura Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation, one handwoven risa had the Tripurasundari Temple on it, said Aparna Debbarma, an executive of Mandai Handloom Cluster. The temple has been the epicentre of the BJP-led government's tourism policy; the design was provided by Weavers Service Centre at Agartala.

Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma of the erstwhile royal family, too, has welcomed the move to promote tribal handloom products. However, with the Tripura Autonomous District Council polls coming, branding indigenous clothing should not be relegated to political gimmicks, he said.

### What is being done to support weavers?

The Handloom and Handicrafts Directorate has marketed their products in expo and industry fairs in Agartala, among whom a few represented Tripura in Delhi and Guwahati etc. Balai Goswami, chairperson of the Tripura Handloom & Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd, said The government is preparing a team of weavers to represent Tripura at the National Handloom Expo in Delhi in February this year. The risa with temple designs is set to be displayed there.

As of 2018, Tripura had 1,37,177 handloom weavers, according to the National Handloom Census, with 60 handloom clusters. They receive benefits from the National Cooperative Development Corporation. However, only a handful of them work exclusively on traditional tribal handloom.



TOPOF THE  
WORLDAlexandria  
Ocasio-Cortez

## UNITED STATES

Man charged  
with threatening  
to 'assassinate'  
Ocasio-Cortez

Dallas: A 34-year-old Texas man has been arrested for allegedly taking part in the storming of the US Capitol this month and posting violent threats, including a call to assassinate Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York. Garret Miller, who is from the Dallas suburb of Richardson, was arrested on Friday after being named in a five-count federal complaint. Authorities say he called for violence in online posts, including a tweet that simply read "Assassinate AOC," a reference to Ocasio-Cortez.

AP

## THE NETHERLANDS

## 'Asia's El Chapo' arrested in Amsterdam

Amsterdam: Dutch police said on Saturday they had arrested the alleged leader of a sprawling Asian drug syndicate who is listed as one of the world's most-wanted fugitives and has been compared to Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. Tse Chi Lop, a Chinese-born Canadian national, was detained on Friday at the request of Australian police, who led an investigation that found his organisation dominates the \$70 billion-a-year Asia-Pacific drug trade, Dutch police spokesman Thomas Aling said.

REUTERS

## NIGERIA

## Pirates kidnap 15 sailors in attack on Turkish ship

Istanbul: Pirates off Nigeria's coast kidnapped 15 sailors from a Turkish container ship in the Gulf of Guinea on Saturday in a brazen and violent attack that was farther from shore than usual. One sailor was killed in the raid, an Azerbaijani citizen, while those kidnapped are from Turkey, according to the respective governments and a crew list obtained by Reuters. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's office said on Sunday he was orchestrating officials in the "rescue of kidnapped ship personnel".

REUTERS

## Turmoil in Nepal ruling party as Prachanda group expels PM Oli

SHIRISH B PRADHAN  
KATHMANDU, JANUARY 24

PRIME MINISTER K P Sharma Oli was expelled from the primary membership of the Nepal Communist Party by the splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Sunday for alleged anti-party activities, further intensifying the infighting within the ruling party.

The decision was taken at the Standing Committee meeting of the faction led by former Prime Ministers Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal at Parisanda in Koteswhor after Oli failed to give explanation to his recent moves as sought by party leadership, said Ganesh Shah, a senior standing committee member of the party.

Earlier in December, the splinter group had removed 68-year-old Oli, one of the two chairmen of the ruling party, as the co-chair. Madhav Nepal was named as the party's second chairman. Prachanda is the first chairman of the party.

The Prachanda-led faction on January 15 sought clarification from Oli alleging that he was carrying out activities that go against the party's policies. The faction decided to remove Oli even from the ordinary membership of the party after he chose not to furnish any clarifi-



K P Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'



cation, party sources said.

Oli had been accused of violating party statute by the splinter group.

There is a provision of disciplinary action in party's Constitution in case of public activities against the party's principles, programmes, policies and legal system, factionalism and conspiracy within the party, violation of party decision, lack of loyalty and trust in the party, breach of confidentiality, according to party sources.

The latest political development came two days after the NCP's splinter faction led a massive anti-government rally, saying the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the Parliament by Oli has posed serious threats to the country's hard-earned federal democratic republic system.

Prachanda last week said that by dissolving the House, Oli has dealt a blow to the

Constitution as well as the democratic republic system which has been established in the country through seven decades of struggle by the people.

Madhav Nepal, who last month replaced Oli as the chairman of the party by Prachanda-led faction, said that the Constitution has not given rights to the prime minister to dissolve Parliament.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 after Oli, known for his pro-China leanings, in a surprise move dissolved Parliament, amidst a tussle for power with Prachanda.

His move to dissolve the 275-member House sparked protests from a large section of the NCP led by Prachanda, also a co-chair of the ruling party.

Oli, who is the chairperson of a faction of the NCP, has said he was forced to dissolve the House after knowing that the

Prachanda-led faction was planning to file a no-confidence motion against him and introduce an impeachment motion against President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Oli-led CPN-UML and Prachanda-led NCP (Maoist Centre) merged in May 2018 to form the Nepal Communist Party following victory of their alliance in the 2017 general elections.

After a vertical split in the ruling party following the dissolution of the House, both the factions, one led by Oli and another led by Prachanda, have submitted separate applications at the Election Commission claiming that their faction is the genuine party and asked to provide them the election symbol of the party. However, the Election Commission is yet to decide the matter.

In December, China sent a four-member high-level delegation to Nepal to prevent a split within the NCP. The team - led by a Vice minister of the Chinese Communist Party, Guo Yezhou - held separate meetings with several top NCP leaders before returning home without much success in its mission.

India has described Oli's sudden decision to dissolve Parliament and call for fresh elections as an "internal matter" and said that it is for the country to decide as per its democratic processes.

PTI

## As China-Taiwan tension rises, US warships sail into region

REUTERS

TAIPEI, JANUARY 24

A US aircraft carrier group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt has entered the South China Sea to promote "freedom of the seas", the US military said on Sunday, at a time when tensions between China and Taiwan have raised concern in Washington.

US Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement the strike group entered the South China Sea on Saturday, the same day Taiwan reported a large incursion of Chinese bombers and fighter jets into its air defence identification zone in the vicinity of the Pratas Islands.

The US military said the carrier strike group was in the South China Sea, a large part of which is claimed by China, to conduct routine operations "to ensure freedom of the seas, build partnerships that foster maritime security".

"After sailing through these waters throughout my 30-year career, it's great to be in the South China Sea again, conducting routine operations, promoting freedom of the seas, and reassuring allies and partners," Rear Adm. Doug Verissimo, commander of the strike group, was quoted as saying.

With two-thirds of the world's trade travelling through this very important region, it is vital that we maintain our presence and continue to promote



The USS Theodore Roosevelt. Reuters File

## EXPLAINED

Tensions rise  
days into  
Biden  
presidency

CHINA VIEWS democratically ruled Taiwan as its own territory, and has in the past few months increased military activity near the island.

The US, like most countries, has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, but is bound by law to provide the island with the means to defend itself. Joe Biden was sworn into office only on Wednesday. His administration says its commitment to Taiwan is "rock-solid".

the rules-based order which has allowed us all to prosper," Verissimo said in the statement.

The announcement comes just days after Joe Biden was sworn in as US president. Biden's nominee for secretary of state, Antony Blinken, told his Senate confirmation hearing on Tuesday there was "no doubt" China posed the most significant challenge to the US of any nation.

China has repeatedly complained about US Navy ships getting close to Chinese-occupied islands in the South China Sea.

The Theodore Roosevelt is being accompanied by the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill, and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Russell and USS John Finn, the US statement said.

## Biden administration to unveil more climate policies

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden's administration next week will release more policies it believes are needed to tackle climate change and is urging China to toughen one of its targets on greenhouse gas emissions, his top climate advisers said on Saturday.

Gina McCarthy, the White House's national climate adviser, did not say what policies would be released. A memo seen by Reuters on Thursday showed Biden will unveil a second round of executive orders as soon as Jan. 27 that include an omnibus order to combat climate change domestically and elevate the issue as a national security priority.

"We've already sent signals on the things that we don't like that we're going to roll back, but this week you're going to see us move forward with what's the vision of the future," McCarthy told a virtual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.



Joe Biden

Biden, a Democrat who took office on January 20, quickly issued executive orders canceling the Keystone XL pipeline that would import tar sands oil from Canada and rejoining the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Both of those moves reversed former President Donald Trump's policies. During his four years in office, Trump rolled back about 100 regulations on climate and the environment as he pursued a policy of "energy dominance" to maximize output and exports of oil, gas and coal.

John Kerry, Biden's special

climate envoy, said a recent pledge by China, the world's top greenhouse gas emitter, was "not good enough." In September, Chinese President Xi Jinping set a goal for his country to become carbon neutral by 2060, 10 years after the 2050 time frame favored by most countries, while also pledging a more ambitious short-term goal on emissions.

As secretary of state under former President Barack Obama in 2015, Kerry helped bring China to the table at the U.N. climate conference in Paris. Now, the Biden administration has begun to apply diplomatic pressure on countries to work harder on climate, said Kerry.

Tackling climate change did not mean a diminishment of lifestyle, such as driving less or not being able to eat meat, he said. The Biden administration, mayors and other local leaders will have to persuade Americans that curbing climate change "can be the greatest economic transformation in global history," Kerry said.

## Russia: US comments on protests support law-breaking

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW, JANUARY 24

THE SPOKESMAN for Russian President Vladimir Putin said the US Embassy's statements about the nationwide protests, in which more than 3,500 people reportedly were arrested, interfere in the country's domestic affairs and encourage Russians to break the law.

Dmitry Peskov made the crit-

icism Sunday, a day after protests took place across the country demanding the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Putin's most well-known critic.

During the protests, embassy spokeswoman Rebecca Ross said on Twitter that "the US supports the right of all people to peaceful protest, freedom of expression. Steps being taken by Russian authorities are suppressing those rights." The embassy also tweeted a State

Department statement calling for Navalny's release.

Peskov said the statements "indirectly constitute absolute interference in our internal affairs" and are "direct support for the violation of the law of the Russian Federation, support for unauthorised actions."

The protests attracted thousands of people in Russia's major cities, including an estimated 15,000 in Moscow, and demonstrations occurred in scores of

other cities. Peskov, however, dismissed the turnout as insignificant. "Now many will say that many people came out for the illegal actions. No, few people came out; many people vote for Putin," he said.

Navalny was arrested on January 17 when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had been recovering from severe nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin and that Russian authorities deny.



Rescuers carry a miner who was trapped in a mine in China's Qixia City.

AP/PTI

eye coverings for protection after such a prolonged period without sunlight. Some were carried out, but others appeared to be in better health and able to walk with assistance.

The January 10 blast at the Hushan gold mine near Yantai trapped 22 miners. A note sent up by the miners said that 11 were trapped in one section, one in another and 10 were unaccounted for.

NYT

## Ageing dams in India, US, other nations pose growing threat: UN report

YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, JANUARY 24

OVER A thousand large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025 and such aging structures across the world pose a growing threat, according to a UN report which notes that by 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of dams built in the 20th century.

The report, titled 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' and compiled by United Nations University's Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50-100 years.

It said at 50 years, a large concrete dam "would most probably begin to express signs of ageing." Ageing signs include increasing cases of dam failures, progressively increasing costs of dam repair and maintenance, increasing reservoir sedimentation, and loss of a dam's functionality and effectiveness.

The analysis includes dam decommissioning or ageing case studies from the US, France, Canada, India, Japan, and Zambia and Zimbabwe.

PTI

## Arab Spring exiles look back 10 years after Egypt uprising

SYLVIA HUI

LONDON, JANUARY 24

THE EGYPTIANS who took to the streets on January 25, 2011, knew what they were doing. They knew they risked arrest and worse. But as their numbers swelled in Cairo's central Tahrir Square, they tasted success.

Police forces backed off, and within days, former President Hosni Mubarak agreed to demands to step down.

But events didn't turn out the way many of the protesters envisioned. A decade later, thousands are estimated to have fled abroad to escape the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi that is considered even more oppressive. The significant loss of academics, artists, jour-

nalists and other intellectuals has, along with a climate of fear, hobbled any political opposition.

Dr Mohamed Aboelghait was among those jailed in Assiut in 2011 after joining calls for revolt against police brutality and Mubarak. Released amid the chaos, he reveled in the atmosphere of political freedom in the Arab world's most populous country — protesting, working as a journalist and joining a campaign for a moderate presidential candidate. But it did not last.

Interim military rulers followed Mubarak. In 2012, Mohamed Morsi, a member of Egypt's most powerful Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected as the first civilian president in the country's history. But his tenure proved divisive. Amid massive protests, the



Egyptians celebrate the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime at Cairo's Tahrir Square in February 2011. AP File

military — led by then-Defense Minister el-Sissi — removed Morsi in 2013, dissolved parliament and eventually banned the Brotherhood as a "terrorist

group." A crackdown on dissent ensued, and el-Sissi won two terms in elections that human rights groups criticized as undemocratic.

"I began to feel, by degree, more fear and threats," Aboelghait said. Friends were jailed, his writings critical of the government drew attention, and "I wasn't going to wait until it happened to me," he added.

After el-Sissi came to power, Aboelghait left for London, where he published investigative reports on other parts of the Arab world.

At his former home in Egypt, national security agents asked about him. When Aboelghait's wife last returned to visit relatives, she was summoned for questioning about his activities. The message was clear.

Data from the World Bank shows an increase in emigres from Egypt since 2011. A total of 3,444,832 left in 2017 — nearly 60,000 more than in 2013, the

years for which figures are available. But it's impossible to tell economic migrants from political exiles.

They relocated to Berlin, Paris and London. Egyptians also have settled in Turkey, Qatar, Sudan and even Asian countries like Malaysia and South Korea.

Human Rights Watch estimated in 2019 that there were 60,000 political prisoners in Egypt. The Committee to Protect Journalists ranks Egypt third, behind China and Turkey, in detaining journalists.

El-Sissi maintains Egypt has no political prisoners. The arrest of a journalist or a rights worker makes news roughly every month. Many people have been imprisoned on terrorism charges, for breaking a ban on protests or for disseminating

false news. Others remain in indefinite pretrial detentions.

El-Sissi maintains Egypt is holding back Islamic extremism so it doesn't descend into chaos like its neighbors.

"Sissi wants not only to abrogate the rights of the opposition and to prevent any critical voice from being uttered, Sissi doesn't actually believe, not only in the opposition, but he doesn't believe in politics," said Khaled Fahmy, an Egyptian professor of modern Middle Eastern History at Cambridge University.

A government press officer did not respond to a request for comment on targeting and intimidating Egyptians — either abroad or at home — based on their work as journalists, activists or academics, or for expressing political opinions.

AP



New Delhi





# 15 ECONOMY

UNLIKE IN PREVIOUS TWO QUARTERS, MOST COMPANIES SEE REVENUE GROWTH

## Q3: India Inc posts good report card on festive rush, rising commodity prices

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

FESTIVE FERVOUR, a sharp rise in commodity prices, a base effect and stupendous performances from IT majors have combined to make for a good Q3FY21 report card. Earnings season thus far has been full of surprises with most companies beating Street estimates. Unlike in Q1 and Q2, this time around almost all companies have grown their revenues smartly, some by pushing through bigger volumes but many by taking price increases to pass on the higher cost of inputs.

Thanks to rising steel prices globally and a pick-up in local demand, JSW Steel reported a 21 per cent year-on-year rise in revenues.

At Ultratech, volumes were up 14 per cent y-o-y on the back of demand from rural and urban housing and government-led infrastructure. Bajaj Auto cashed in on an 8 per cent y-o-y improvement in net average selling prices. Again, volumes at Asian Paints jumped an astonishing 33 per cent y-o-y, pushing up revenues by nearly 27 per cent on-year on the back of both pent-up and festive demand.

Again, several larger organised sector companies were able to take away business from smaller players whose supply chains were disrupted. Even though they came off a low base, revenues at Havell's rose a remarkable 39 per cent y-o-y as the company gained market share from smaller players. The headline numbers, for a sample of 184 companies (excluding

### STEEP FALL IN REVENUES FOR RIL

■ The headline numbers, for a sample of 184 companies (excluding banks and financials) though, are skewed by the steep 22% year-on-year fall in the revenues of Reliance Industries

banks and financials) though, are skewed by the steep 22 per cent y-o-y fall in the revenues of Reliance Industries (RIL).

Even as revenues rose, companies continued to cut costs and that aided margin expansion. Bajaj

Auto, for instance reported a 27 per cent y-o-y increase ebitda as it optimized fixed cost and spent less on employee costs. Thanks partly to better cost controls Avenue Supermarts was able to expand EBITDA margins by 2 bps y-o-y. With expenditure contracting more than the fall in revenues operating profit margins for the same expanded 500 bps y-o-y. To be sure a big jump in other income also boosted profits.

Retailers were among the worst hit post the pandemic but, with store operations nearing normalcy, Avenue Supermarts bounced back to post a good increase in revenues of 10 per cent y-o-y with demand for general merchandise picking up. Discretionary spends, however, don't seem to have seen as sharp

a recovery. At Shoppers' Stop, footfalls were down 50 per cent y-o-y resulting in a fall in revenues of 32 per cent y-o-y although many of the restrictions had been eased.

The IT pack put on a spectacular show posting strong revenues and margins on the back of robust spending by clients, a ramping up of large deals and what analysts are calling a 'budget flush'.

Managements sound confident they can keep up the good work given the big deal wins they've seen. Infosys has raised FY20-21 revenue guidance to 4.5-5 per cent from 2-3 per cent earlier; CEO Salil Parikh said the company was gaining market share in a growing pie. In a quarter in which it took wage hikes, TCS reported strong EBIT margins of 26.6 per cent. **FE**

### MARKET WATCH

#### FPIs INVEST ₹18,456 CR IN JAN SO FAR

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net buyers to the tune of Rs 18,456 crore from January 1-22, as global liquidity led to continued investment in emerging markets. As per depositories data, FPIs pumped in Rs 24,469 crore into equities. **PTI**

### INTERVIEW WITH CHAIRMAN, EDELWEISS GROUP

## 'Govt spending actually helps middle & lower class, so fiscal stimulus is more important'



Rashesh Shah

I find India at the same point. We had tough years between 1996 and 2004, there were scams in the market, Asian financial crisis, economic sanctions because of the Pokhran blast, the tech bubble burst and then there was 9/11 attack in the US and governed change in India in 2004. So, we did not see any capex in those eight years, PSU bank NPAs rose up to 18 per cent between 2001 and 2003 and the SARFAESI law was then brought in to handle this.

There was also NBFC crisis in that period and real estate prices halved between 1998 and 2003. The RBI cut repo rates from 8 per cent to 4 per cent between 2002 and 2004, because the economy had slowed down considerably.

Even now we are seeing similar things. Now there is IBC equivalent to SARFAESI, we had NPA crisis, we saw real estate crash, repo rate cuts by RBI and no capex over the last 8-10 years. So in a sense, 2021 is like 2004. While things changed significantly for the next five years in 2004, I think that it will see a similar change now and with the change in US, the global trade will also pick up again.

#### So is this a big inflection point?

Yes. It is also because of the size of India's economy now. India's progress and growth is like gravity, you can only experience it but will never be able to explain it.

#### What do you think the FM can do to utilise the opportunity in the forthcoming Budget?

For one year, release the fiscal constraint and spend money as that will be the real fuel to the economy. Second is to incentivise

investment by way of now taking care of dividend and capital gains tax. And third is privatisation and disinvestment. The government should embark on a 4-5 year plan for privatisation to raise Rs 10-15 lakh crore and should spend it.

I feel that by the end of 2021, investment will start.

#### What are the challenges to this opportunity?

The big challenge is to have a broad-based and inclusive recovery, otherwise it will not sustain. There has to be liquidity and credit availability for companies that are beyond AAA rated. While top guys have access to any amount of fund, if you go down, the liquidity is not there for them. So, one main piece will be credit growth. If it is between 5-8 per cent there will be inequality, but when it is 13-14 per cent then it is available to larger part of the economy.

The government needs to bring the confidence back. It has done GST and gone after tax evaders and now, for next 3-4 years there has to be lot of trust building and confidence boosting because India will be on growth path. You can't keep cleaning all day.

Third piece is spending. I think for next 12-18 months, government needs to spend and it has got the liberty to spend due to Covid.

#### What is more important: monetary stimulus or fiscal?

While both should continue for the next 12-18 months, I think fiscal stimulus brings more equitable growth and so it is important. When RBI loosens the monetary policy, it always benefits the upper tier as the money goes to bank and from there it mostly goes to AAA rated entities. So, RBI loosening only favours the haves' and not the have nots'. However, government spending actually helps middle and lower class. So, to address inequality, fiscal stimulus is more important.

I would say that the government should keep fiscal deficit concerns away for the short-term. At the same time, they must ensure that they are able to pull it back after 1-2 years. In 2009, they were not able to pull it back and it continued till 2012, resulting in huge spike in inflation.

### SECTOR WATCH ELECTRONICS

## IT Min invites bids for impact study on multi-function display business

AASHISH ARYAN  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology has floated an expression of interest (EoI) seeking bids from agencies for conducting an impact study on the business of refurbished, repaired, second hand or unregistered multi-function displays (MFDs).

MFDs are small cathode ray tube or liquid crystal display screens used in printers, photocopiers, cameras, aircraft or other information display systems and have soft buttons which can respond to user queries.

"The selected agency will have to furnish all these details within 120 days of the approval of their bid. The raw data and the findings of the survey will be scrutinised by the ministry before the final report is placed in public domain," a senior official said.

The impact study, to be conducted by the IT Ministry across 18 major state capitals and 18 tier-2 and tier-3 cities, aims to check several factors such as their viability in India, the presence of refurbished displays in tier-2 and tier-3 towns, the global innovation ecosystem, and the e-waste being generated due to import of MFDs. Apart from these, the ministry is also looking to estimate the export and import of MFDs from tier-2 and tier-3 towns and the employment such businesses generate.

The impact assessment is a part of the ministry's umbrella plan to develop a supporting innovation and manufacturing ecosystem around mobile manufacturing units.

The Production-Linked Incentive scheme, notified on April 1 last year, aims to give incentives of 4-6 per cent to electronics companies which manufacture mobile phones.

It also aims to give some incentives to companies that manufacture small electronics equipment like transistors, diodes, thyristors, resistors, capacitors and nano-electronic components such as micro electromechanical systems.

Last December, the MeitY had decided to come up with a policy aimed at promoting 3D printing on an industrial scale and helping domestic companies 'overcome technical and economic barriers' so that they can build supportive and ancillary facilities for world leaders in the technology, such as the US and China.

3D printing or additive manufacturing uses computer-aided designing to make prototypes or working models of objects by laying down successive layers of materials such as plastic, resin, thermoplastic, metal, fiber or ceramic. With the help of a software, the model to be printed is first developed by a computer, which then gives instructions to the 3D printer.

Apart from 3D printing, the ministry has also floated an EoI to invite companies that can assist in recycling and refurbishing of end-of-life lithium-ion batteries as well as printed circuit boards (PCBs). The aim of the lithium-ion battery recycling project is to contain the import of raw materials used for their manufacturing of such batteries and PCBs, as well as contain the e-waste generated by electronics gadgets using these components. At present, the Centre does not have any facility for processing, recycling, or refurbishing of end-of-life lithium-ion batteries or printed circuit boards.

India produced 2.6 kg e-waste per capita in 2019, while it has around 312 authorised e-waste recyclers, as per data from Global E-Waste Monitor, released in July 2020.

## 'December quarter sees 19 IPOs worth \$1.84 billion'

Reflecting strong momentum, India witnessed 19 IPOs worth \$1.84 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020 and market sentiment remains positive, according to an EY report



**ASIA-PACIFIC PICTURE:**  
**20%** Increase in volumes last year over 2019, i.e. at 822

**45%** Year-on-year rise in proceeds in 2020, i.e. \$136.2 billion

#### Distribution of initial public offers (IPOs) during Q4 2020

■ Main markets: 10

■ SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) segment: 9

**\$869 million:** Issue size of largest IPO in the country during December quarter, i.e. by Gland Pharma

**\$4.09 billion:** Amount raised by 43 IPOs in 2020, which ranks India ninth globally in terms of the number of IPOs last year

**GLOBAL TREND:**  
**19%** Increase in global IPO volumes in 2020 over previous year, i.e. at 1,363

**29%** Year-on-year rise in proceeds from global IPOs in 2020, i.e. \$268 billion

**Why is it important:** According to EY's India IPO Trends Report: Q4 2020, IPO activity proved resilient to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic last year, supported by low interest rates and expansionary monetary policies

Source: EY/PTI

## Irdai panel recommends separate payments for cost of vehicle, insurance premium

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THOSE BUYING a new vehicle may have to pay cost of vehicle and insurance premium via separate cheques, if the recommendations of a committee to review MISP guidelines are accepted by the insurance regulator Irdai.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) had issued the Motor Insurance Service Provider (MISP) guidelines in 2017, intending to streamline the process and bring the practices of vehicle insurance, being sold by automotive dealers, under the provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938.

MISP refers to an automobile dealer appointed by the insurer or the insurance intermediary to distribute and/or service motor insurance policies of vehicles sold through it.

In June 2019, Irdai had set up a panel to review the MISP norms.

### In June 2019, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India had set up a panel to review the Motor Insurance Service Provider guidelines

The committee has submitted its report with various recommendations for orderly conduct of motor insurance business through MISP channel.

Among the issues examined by the panel are the existing practice of collecting premium payment from the customer while soliciting the motor insurance policy.

The panel said under the present system, there is a lack of transparency in the cost of insurance premium when a customer buys a vehicle for the first time from an

automotive dealer and makes the payment through a single cheque.

As the MISP makes payment to the insurance company from his own account, "the customer does not know the insurance premium being paid as it is subsumed in the cost of the vehicle", the committee said.

It suggested that this lack of transparency is not in the interest of the policyholders' as the true cost of insurance is not known to the customer.

"The customer may not be aware of the coverage options and discounts available in the process. The customer also cannot negotiate with the MISP to get the best coverage at the optimal price."

The panel also recommended that the customer should make payment to the insurer directly which is facilitated by the MISP. "MISP shall not collect the insurance premium amount in its own account and then transfer the same to the insurance company," it said in its report.

#### So is the market rally justified at some level?

Market's work is to discount future earnings. It discounts the long-term outlook which keeps on changing. I also see a big similarity between 2004 and now and



## FOR SAMARITANS OF ROAD SAFETY

From left; Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Road Transport & Highways and MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari present the National Road Safety Award 2020 in the NGO Category to Simran Virk of Western India Automobile Association, during the inauguration of the National Road Safety Month at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, on January 18. Also present at the programme were Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways General V K Singh and NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

### EXPLAINED

#### recommended for decriminalisation?

Several offences related to timely filings, including annual reports and filings on changes in partnership status of the LLP, not related to fraud have been recommended for decriminalisation.

While none of these provisions recommended for decriminalisation in the CLC report currently have prison terms as a possible punishment, the panel has recommended that companies be required to pay penalties

for non-compliance, instead of fines which are imposed after a partner or the LLP is found guilty of misconduct by a court.

The report notes that there is a risk of a convicted person being disqualified or becoming ineligible for various posts in the case of fines imposed by courts, which would not be the case for penalties imposed by an appropriate authority. The Registrar of Companies would have the authority to levy penalties for any contravention of

#### Who benefits from the permission for LLPs to issue NCDs?

The CLC has also recommended that LLPs which are currently not allowed to issue debt securities be permitted to issue non-convertible debentures (NCDs) to facilitate raising of capital and financing operations. The move is likely to benefit startups and small firms in sectors which require heavy capital investment.

Full report on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

### BRIEFLY

#### ₹660 crore for Madhya Pradesh

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry said Sunday it has allocated an additional Rs 660 crore to Madhya Pradesh for capital expenditure.

#### Reliance spins off O2C biz

Mumbai: Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries has completed spin-off of the firm's oil-to-chemical (O2C) business into a new unit, the company said. **PTI**

## How decriminalisation of offences under LLP Act could help unclog judicial system

KARUNJIT SINGH  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE COMPANY Law Committee (CLC), headed by the Corporate Affairs Secretary Rajesh Verma, has recommended that 12 offences under the LLP Act be decriminalised and that LLPs be allowed to issue NCDs to raise funds with the aim of improving ease of doing business for limited liability partnership (LLP) firms.

#### Which offences under the LLP Act has the committee

## UK Prime Minister presses Biden for new trade deal

AAMER MADHANI  
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson made clear to United States President Joe Biden on Saturday that he's eager to forge a new US-UK trade deal.

The push for a new deal came in a broad-ranging call between the two leaders that touched on the global response to the coronavirus pandemic as well as the Biden administration announcing this week that the United

States would rejoin the Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization, according to a statement from Downing Street.

The UK regained control over its national trade policy at the start of the month following the end of a post-Brexit transition period.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki had said on Friday that the administration had no timeline for forging a new trade deal as Biden's attention is largely focused on getting the coronavirus

pandemic under control and pressing Congress to pass the president's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan.

Janet Yellen, Biden's Treasury secretary nominee, also signalled during her confirmation hearing earlier this week that Biden wasn't eager to negotiate new trade deals. "President Biden has been clear that he will not sign any new free trade agreements before the US makes major investments in American workers and our infrastructure," Yellen said. **AP**



CROSSWORD 4336

ACROSS

1

One left right out by choice rather than necessity? (5)

8

A weather-beaten bird (8)

9

Writer receives this French money (5)

10

Bill is leading the priest to be precise (8)

11

The last runners try to be first in this race (5)

12

Look for a cause of inflation (3)

16

Coaches will be seen in the street before long (6)

17

Threaten to get money (6)

18

Fruit seed is on the cards (3)

23

Many relax at the summit (5)

24

A partner placed inside is cut off (8)

25

Some projected amusements (5)

26

Encircled ally staging a revival? (8)

27

Factor eliminated by direct dealing (5)

DOWN

2

Light entertainment to repeat all over the place (8)

3

Trade using former coins (8)

4

Affected a stylish greeting (6)

5

Complete set of notes (5)

6

Learn anew about kidneys (5)

7

Colour for putting on (5)

12

It played its part in Cleopatra's poisoning (3)

13

Erected by salesman (3)

14

A sailor in the cast is naturally a good mimic (8)

15

Exert force on a chap to be journalist (8)

19

Eager to be camping? (6)

20

Memorial for a type of terrier (5)

21

Upset to make light of (5)

22

Checks foundation garments (5)

Solutions Crossword 4335: Across: 1 Ringleader, 6 Gaga, 10 Loser, 11 Eucharist, 12 Card game, 13 Islam, 15 On guard, 17 Sleight, 19 Transom, 21 Outworn, 22 Rusty, 24 Noticing, 27 Guerrilla, 28 Rogue, 29 Tale, 30 Malefactor. Down: 1 Rule, 2 Nostalgia, 3 Lurid, 4 Abeland, 5 Etchers, 7 Ariel, 8 Automotons, 9 Manifest, 14 Fortnight, 16 Assayers, 18 Good night, 20 Manilla, 21 Outrage, 23 Swell, 25 Circa, 26 Year.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

The most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has \_\_\_\_\_ - James Baldwin (7,2,4)

NZEOO

IOSLNT

FIOST

ATUGHN

Answer: The most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has foolishness.

SUDOKU 4362

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The Sun, symbol of life, sends plenty of surprises. There's one simple forecast: expect the unexpected. If I were you, I'd get out my day-to-day survival kit and work through the next week with my head down. Partners will be in a forthright mood and deft footwork will be necessary if you are to come through unscathed.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)

It's always difficult to leave the past behind but, for various reasons, you probably feel prepared to bid farewell to one close association. I suspect this is because somebody has given you such a rough ride, that you'll be happy to see the back of them. It's time to stick to your guns.

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)

Family pressures are certainly stirring things up, but just for now I imagine that significant developments are bubbling away below the surface. Get on and keep up to date with routine chores, otherwise you may lose control. Actually, there's no time like the present for taking on fresh responsibilities.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

A few quick quips at someone else's expense may be your idea of fun, but I'm not sure if that's the best way to exploit Mars' sharp and uncompromising power. A little generosity would suit you well. After all, you have nothing to fear. You'd do best to take a cool, practical approach, by the way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Hope springs eternal, and with so many planets presenting a mysterious face, that is precisely what you need. Or, perhaps, I should say that you could use a few good ideas. With the right moves you may also give hope to others, and there is no better way to use your current planetary energy.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)

Socially you should be on a winning streak or, at least, you will be if you stop worrying about things like money and how much life is costing. The chances for a dreamy, soft-focus encounter really are splendid. But passions are also rising and colleagues could be argumentative.

CANCER (June 22 July 23)

You've pushed your own interests in the past and there's nothing wrong with that. Now you must go out in a very wholehearted way to impress family members and anyone else you live with. Formulate your plans today and be prepared to implement them within about forty-eight hours.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)

A great deal of your legendary charm relies on the location of that graceful sign, Libra, in your solar chart. According to your current patterns and alignments, your sales pitch is about to reach an all-time peak. Now is the time to persuade reluctant partners.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)

You are in a really good state to take a leap into the unknown. I know it's not in your nature to throw caution to the wind, but do try! You have no idea what will happen unless you open yourself to the new and untried. One word of advice, though: before you take a gamble, you have to work out the consequences.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)

Although your own intentions may be above reproach, don't criticise others whose standards seem to slip. Remember the old teaching about throwing stones. Never be the first to throw one unless you are absolutely blameless. In other words, don't criticise others when you are equally responsible.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)

Entrepreneurial and self-employed types are on an upwave. All of you are likely to benefit from windfalls. I'm not saying you'll be showered with gold from heaven, but you must end the week with future prosperity in your sights. Take no financial risks at all.

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd.

(A Govt. of India Undertaking, Ministry of Defence)

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NIT No. SCC/DC/OT(Press)/Refit/006/N.E.T-1473

Sub: Refit Work for Ship

Due Date: 21 days from date of publication

1. Details will be available in e-procurement portal <https://eprocuregrse.co.in>; Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/> and GRSE Website <http://www.grse.in/index.php/tender.html>

2. Any addendum/corrigendum to this tender enquiry will be published in above websites only.

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IN THE COURT OF THE SPECIAL SUBORDINATE JUDGE, (MACT) KRISHNAGIRI.

M.C.O.P.No: 615 /2019.

**Nandhavell, S/o. Veeramani,**  
Marandiyur Village,  
Uppanapatti Post, Uthangarai Taluk,  
Krishnagiri District.  
Tamil Nadu State. ... Petitioner.  
VERSUS/  
Dheendria Bhadoriya,  
S/o. Virendra Bhadoriya,  
Pandit Deendrayal Upadhyay,  
Ward No:19, Jagdalpur Post,  
Bastar District, Chattisgarh State.  
Pin Code-494001. ... 1st Respondent.  
**NOTICES TO 1st RESPONDENT.**  
The above named petitioner has filed the compensation petition Under M.V. Act, before the above said Honorable court against you and another. If you have got any objection, you may appear before this Court at 10:30 am. On 01/03/2021 either in person or through an Advocate and file your objection. If you fail to do so, the matter will be decided ex parte.  
(By Court Order)  
**R.Selvakumaran, M.B.A., M.A., M.L.L.,**  
Advocate & Notary Public,  
Uthangarai.

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निविदा सूचना संख्या-एस.पी.एस. / 2020-21 / 320-23 दिनांक- 16.01.2021

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--Telefax:- 0194-2496089, Email ID:- [xenmhchdk@yahoo.in](mailto:xenmhchdk@yahoo.in)--Gist of e-tender---

NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/255/e-tendering

Dated:-22.01.2021

E-tenders are invited from Original Equipment Manufacturers or their Authorized dealers/ Representatives for the below mentioned work:

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Turnkey package for Design, Supply, Installation, Testing , Commissioning of 1000 LPM PSA technology based Oxygen Generating Plants with Maintenance for Three years post Commissioning at Govt. Children Hospital, Bemina, Sgr	143	3000	03 months	Available

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2. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 27.01.2021 (10.00 hrs) to 11.02.2021 (15.00hrs ) in two (02) covers.

3. Opening of Bids :- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 12.02.2021 at 14.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer MHCHD, Sgr.

MHCHD, Srinagar, No: MHCHD/TS/8913-18, Dated:-20.01.2021 dipk-12201/20

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,

GOVT. OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

NORTH EASTERN RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KEONJHAR

Identification No. PMGSY Online NCB No. 286

NO. 200 / Date: 15.01.2021

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Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	No. of Packages	Availability of tender On-line for bidding	
			From To	
1	2	3	4	5
Superintending Engineer, North Eastern Rural Works, Circle, Keonjhar.	PMGSY Online NCB No. 286	15 Nos.	27.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	10.02.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.

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Public hereby informed that our clients Shri Satish Singh S/o Lt. Shri Soran Singh and his wife Smt. Rama Devi both R/o C-6A, Hari Enclave Part-2, Kirti Suman Nagar, Delhi-110086 herby declaring/ debarring/ disowning their daughter NITIN age 22 from their lives, movable and immovable properties and severed all the relation with her by immediate effect due to her immoral conduct and not loyal and under the control of my clients. If anybody dealing with her will do so with their own risk and consequences. My clients and their family will not be responsible for act and deed and thing done by her.

The Legal Today Law Firm Chamber No-326, Civil Side, Tis Hazari Court ND-54

PUBLIC NOTICE

My clients Sh. Ashok Kumar son of Sh. Dharampal @ Prabhul and Smt. Indu Singh wife of Sh. Ashok Kumar both resident of 1237, near M.V.N. School, Sector-17, Faridabad, Haryana-121002, do hereby disown/ debar their son Mr. Mirank Singh from their immovable and movable properties and severe all relations with him as he is continuously extending threats to life and property of my clients as well as he has become disrespectful, blunt and disloyal towards my clients.

Sd/- ARUN KUMAR (Advocate)

Ch. No. 72-A, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54

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I,Rahul Anand,S/o Sh.Partap Singh,R/o-C-48-C,Old DDA-Flats, Paschim-Puri Chowk,New-Delhi-110063,want to inform that father's name in some of my documents wrongly-written as Pratap Singh instead of Partap Singh. 0040561176-7

I,Laxmi D/o Ganga Prasad,W/o Late Jai Ram R/o-House-No-50,Sindiyi Pottery,Sarojini-Nagar, South/West Delhi-110023,have changed my Name to Urmila. 0040561176-6

I,Ranbir Sukh Manoj Nandwani S/o Sh.Manoj ghanshyamdas Nandwani R/o-Flat.No.607-B, Hamilton-Court,DLF-Phase-4, Gurgaon,Haryana.Have Changed my name to Ranbir Sukh Nandwani 0040561141-2

I,SUNILA GOIL W/o Anil Kumar Goel R/o-26B,HIG Complex,Swarnim Vihar,Sec-82,Noida, Dist.-Gautam Budh Nagar,UP-201304,have changed my name to SUNILA GOEL, for all purposes. 0040561176-2

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Government of Maharashtra

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

World Bank Project Division, Aurangbad

e-Tender Notice No. 05/2020-2021

Online Tender (e-Tender) in form B-2 for the (01 work) is invited by the Executive Engineer, World Bank Project Division, Aurangabad, Tel. No. 0240-2331342 through Online procedure. The blank tender forms shall be issued by Executive Engineer, World Bank Project Division, Aurangabad through e-Tender procedure. Right to reject any one or all tenders are reserved, details of tender is available on e-Tender site given below.

1) <https://mahapwd.com>

2) <https://mahatenders.gov.in>

If any change made in this e-Tender is informed on above portal.

Sd/-  
- Executive Engineer,  
World Bank Project Division,  
Aurangabad  
(dgipr/2020-2021/1971)



## NINE ACTIVE CASES AT AUS OPEN

One case of COVID-19 among those in quarantine ahead of the Australian Open has been reclassified, local health officials said on Sunday, leaving nine active cases in the group of players and support staff isolating in Melbourne hotels. **AP**

## BRIEFLY

## Maddison stars for Leicester, Abraham hattrick for Chelsea

*London:* Tammy Abraham scored a hattrick as Chelsea beat second-tier side Luton 3-1 to reach the fifth round of the FA Cup on Sunday. The striker took his tally on the season to 11 by netting twice in seven first-half minutes. Jordan Clark profited from the struggling Kepa Arrizabalaga's latest goalkeeping error to reduce the deficit to 2-1 on the half-hour before Abraham struck again in the 74th minute. Leicester City's James Maddison set up one goal and got on the scoresheet in a second-half comeback as they beat second-tier Brentford 3-1 away in the FA Cup fourth round on Sunday. The Foxes will host fellow Premier League side Brighton & Hove Albion in the next round. Championship side Brentford took the lead in the seventh minute from a set piece when the ball took two deflections before Danish centre back Mads Bech Sorensen stabbed home his first goal in English football from close range. **AP**

## Four Palmas players, Prez killed in crash

*Sao Paulo:* The president of Palmas football club and four of its players were killed on Sunday when a small plane taking them to a Brazilian cup game crashed on take-off. The fourth tier club said president Lucas Meira, along with players Lucas Praxedes, Guilherme Noe, Ranule and Marcus Molinari, all died. The pilot, named only as Wagner, was also killed. "The plane took off and crashed at the end of the runway at the Tocantinese Aviation Association," a small airfield near the city of Palmas, the club said. "We regret to report there are no survivors." The plane was heading to Goiania, around 800 km (500 miles) away, where Palmas were due to play Vila Nova on Monday in the last 16 of the Copa Verde, a tournament reserved for teams outside the traditional powerhouses of southern and northeastern Brazil. **REUTERS**

## Hazard scores as Real close gap

*Barcelona:* Eden Hazard scored and set up Karim Benzema for his first of two goals as Real Madrid eased to a 4-1 victory at Alaves in the Spanish league, ending a winless run in a match that coach Zinedine Zidane missed after he contracted the coronavirus. Hazard grazed a long pass to redirect the ball to Benzema, who doubled the lead for Madrid in the 41st after Casemiro had headed in the 15th-minute opener on Saturday. Belgium forward Hazard scored just his third goal of the season in first-half injury time to build a 3-0 lead at the break. Toni Kroos had recovered possession in midfield and set up Hazard's run behind a disordered defensive line. Joselu Mato pulled one back for Alaves on the hour-mark. Benzema made it a brace in the 70th after Luka Modric played him clear on the break. The French striker cut back inside the last defender before firing in his 10th goal in the league this campaign. Second-place Madrid reduced the gap to leader Atletico Madrid to four points. **REUTERS**

## Warning signs in neighbourhood

Ahead of series versus India, England skipper Joe Root scores 2nd century in as many Tests in Sri Lanka

**REUTERS**  
GALLE, JANUARY 24

JOE ROOT became the first England batsman to score over 150 in consecutive Tests in 16 years as he tormented Sri Lanka and led his side to 339 for nine in their first innings at the close of play on day three of the second and final Test in Galle.

However, the tired and cramping England captain was dismissed in the final over of the day for 186, run out after clipping the ball to short leg Oshada Fernando. Root's weariness saw him struggle to get back into his crease having pushed forward after playing the stroke.

England still trail by 42 runs and will seek to wipe out the deficit with Jack Leach and James Anderson at the crease on the fourth morning, although Sri Lanka spinner Lasith Embuldeniya has been excellent with career best figures of 7-132. Root followed up his 228 in the first test to match the feat of Marcus Trescothick, who scored 194 and 151 in consecutive tests against Bangladesh in 2005. His innings was again built around the impressive use of the sweep shot, which he has waged to take the attack to the Sri Lanka bowlers.

"It was an amazing innings," Root's team mate Jos Buttler told reporters. "To back up his double hundred in the first Test was a challenge both physically and mentally, and it has been a masterclass in batting against spin. "It's a great education for all of us, Not just the tactical and technical aspects, but also the concentration to apply himself for so long. "There were some amazing shots that show the confidence and skill level. He even played a late cut left-handed today. Everybody can learn a lot from watching Joe play spin."

## Embuldeniya on song

The tourists resumed the day on 98 for two having lost their openers cheaply for the third time in as many innings in the series. Jonny Bairstow never looked settled and fell on 28, an inside edge onto his pad off the dangerous Embuldeniya looping to Fernando at short leg.

Dan Lawrence was impressive on his debut in England's seven-wicket win in the



Joe Root plays the switch hit en route to 186 at Galle. In the first Test at the same venue he scored 228. *Sri Lanka Cricket*

first test but made just three as he edged Embuldeniya to Lahiru Thirimanne at slip.

At 132 for four, England were teetering, but Root and Buttler (55) put on a fifth-wicket stand of 97 before the latter tried a reverse sweep that went straight into his boot and bounced to short leg, providing a first test wicket for debutant spinner Ramesh Mendis. Sam Curran (13) was out in the final over of the afternoon session, caught at slip, before Dom Bess (32) put on a vital 81 with Root for the seventh wicket.

Bess and Mark Wood (1) were both also caught at slip by Thirimanne off Embuldeniya, the first time a Sri Lanka fielder had taken five catches in an innings. **BRIEF SCORES:** England 339 for 9 (Root 186, Buttler 55; Embuldeniya 7-132) trail Sri Lanka 381 (Mathews 110, Dickwella 92, Perera 67, Chandimal 52; Anderson 6-40) by 42 runs.

## Disrespectful to India if best XI not fielded: KP

*New Delhi:* Lambasting Jonny Bairstow's omission from the England squad for Tests against India, former skipper Kevin Pietersen said that it will be disrespectful to the host team if visiting team does not put on field its best XI in the marquee series. Not only Bairstow but all-rounder Sam Curran and pacer Mark Wood have also been left out of the squad.

Bairstow has been rested for the first two Tests as part of the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) player management policy, which stresses on giving adequate rest to every English cricketer in a packed calendar year, which includes 17 Tests and the ICC T20 World Cup.

The 40-year-old said a win against India is similar to a victory against arch-rivals Australia and urged the selectors to play both Stuart Broad and James Anderson.

"Big debate on whether ENG have picked their best team to play India in the 1st Test. Winning IN India is as good a feeling as winning in Aus. It's disrespectful to ENG fans & also @BCCI to NOT play your best team. Bairstow has to play! Broad/Anderson have to play!" Pietersen tweeted. In another tweet, Pietersen said the best players wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to play against an inform Indian team at home. **PTI**

## Reluctant wrestler Rohit crowned champion in Bajrang's category

**MIHIR VASAVDA**  
NOIDA, JANUARY 24

ROHIT SINGH confesses he wasn't destined to be a wrestler. It was because of his brother's misfortune, father's wish and desperation to earn a livelihood that led him to an akhara.

On Sunday, Rohit was crowned national champion in the 65kg category, one of the toughest weight classes in India. Representing Haryana, he staged a dramatic comeback in the last three minutes of the final against Services Sports Control Board's Shravan, erasing a seven-point deficit to win 12-8. Rohit impressed the national coaching staff with his speed and temperament, but honing these qualities – and winning a national title – was never his ambition or interest. Instead, as an 11-year-old, he was just happy to be in the company of his elder brother, an emerging wrestler, and cook roti sabzi for him.

In his free time, Rohit helped out his father, a cattle herder, by taking the livestock for grazing. "But then, one day my brother suffered an injury. I was cooking his meal and when I saw his condition, it was apparent

that he wouldn't be able to continue wrestling," Rohit, 19, says.

For a family of nine – Rohit is sixth of seven brothers – the income from herding cattle wasn't enough to run the household. "So, out of compulsion more than anything, I joined a wrestling school," he says.

"I was relieved when he took that decision," says Rohit's father Dalel Singh.

Dalel did not impose any decision on his sons but was certain of one thing – none of them would be cattle herders. "There's so much cattle theft these days... too much headache," he says. So, on the advice of a neighbourhood wrestler, Bholu Pehelwan, he introduced all his sons to wrestling.

In Haryana, the respect even a half-decent wrestler commands is the reason many are lured to the sport in the first place. Rohit had witnessed that first hand with his brother, but also realised the need for money to sustain a career in wrestling.

So, he began to take part in dangals across Haryana that had cash rewards as low as Rs 50. For almost a year, he crisscrossed across Haryana and travelled as far as Kolhapur in Maharashtra, where the prize money was slightly higher, to earn a livelihood. "But I



Rohit Singh, the 65kg winner, started his career in dangals with a cash award of Rs 50. *Express*

struggled to earn money by competing in dangals. I wasn't able to beat the main guys to earn enough cash prize," he says. "In 2015, I turned to Olympic-style wrestling."

Success on the mat came relatively easier.

"He has good speed, which is helpful in mat wrestling, and over the years, has developed a good technique, especially in launching leg attacks, an essential element in freestyle wrestling," former India coach Kuldeep Singh, who recruited Rohit for the Navy's wrestling team, says.

He became cadet national champion before bagging the junior crown and ultimately the senior title. Rohit's win in 65kg opens up an interesting race for the future. At present, the weight class is dominated by India's top freestyler Bajrang Punia, a multiple-time World and Asian medallist.

Having already won a quota for the Tokyo Olympics, Bajrang was exempted from the National Championship this weekend. He is now in Michigan (USA), preparing for the Games. On Sunday, college sports activity in the American state was halted after a Covid-19 outbreak, but Bajrang was able to continue his training. In Bajrang's absence, the audition to find his successor was underway in Noida, where Rohit emerged on top. "In the last few years, Rohit has dominated this weight category across all age-groups. By winning the senior championship, he has proven his potential," Kuldeep, also the Navy

coach, says.

Challenging Bajrang for a place in the national squad, though, isn't on Rohit's mind right now. "He (Bajrang) is a world medalist; a very big wrestler. And I have just won a national title," he says. "I'll take one step at a time and see where destiny takes me."

## SAI seeks report from WFI

The Sports Authority of India, on Sunday, sought a report from the Wrestling Federation of India over the violation of Covid-19 protocols that took place on the first day of the National Championships on Saturday, SAI said in a statement: "We have taken up the matter with the Wrestling Federation of India and impressed upon them that the SOP for competitions has to be adhered to strictly. We have also sought a report from the Federation on the alleged violation, by Monday. The federation has assured compliance of protocol."

The situation on Sunday was only marginally better. While no one except wrestlers was allowed on the field of play, there was no distancing in the stands, where hundreds of spectators, most of them without masks, sat in close proximity.

## CONTROVERSIAL PICK

## Why Court receiving Australia's highest honour is an unpopular decision

**SHAHID JUDGE**  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 24

FOR SOMEONE who holds a world record for 48 years and counting, one would think it's a fair decision by the Australian government to award Margaret Court the country's highest honour. Indeed, on January 26, the 78-year-old former tennis player will be awarded the Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AC). But it's a decision that has not gone down well with many people.

Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles keeps her on top in terms of tennis statistics, but her views relating to the LGBTQI (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers and intersex) community has rendered her an infamous figure among a large group of fans and former players.

For a few years, there have been calls to have her name removed from the Margaret Court Arena – the second-largest stadium

at Melbourne Park, the venue for the Australian Open. Now there's been a fresh backlash after the news that the country's highest honour will be conferred upon her.

## What have Australian government officials said about the decision?

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has refused to talk about the issue.

"I can't comment on an award that is done

through an independent process that hasn't been announced or I have no official knowledge of those things," he reportedly said.

"Those announcements will be made on the appropriate day (Australia Day). It is a system that recognises Australians from right across the full spectrum of achievement in this country. So, I can't really offer a comment on something that is speculative."

But Victoria State Premier Daniel Andrews has hit out at the decision.

"I do not support that. I do not believe that she has views that accord with the vast ma-



Margaret Court has always been vocal about her anti-homosexual views.

jority of people across our nation that see people, particularly from the LGBTQI community, as equal and deserving of dignity, respect and safety," he said. "I don't believe she shares those views and I don't believe she should be honoured because of that."

## Why is Court so unpopular?

As John McEnroe put it in a 'Commissioner of Tennis' segment for Eurosport, "there's only

one thing longer than the list of Margaret Court's tennis achievements: it's her list of offensive and homophobic statements."

Her unpopular stance has had the likes of greats like McEnroe, Martina Navratilova and Billie Jean King speak up against the "crazy aunt" (as McEnroe dubbed her) of tennis.

At the Australian Open last year, when Court was felicitated on the 50th anniversary of her winning the Calendar Grand Slam (all four majors in a single year) in 1970, the ceremony at Rod Laver Arena was a subdued event. At that same tournament, after a Legends exhibition match, McEnroe and Navratilova walked in at the Margaret Court Arena holding a banner saying "Evvonne Goolagong Arena," asking for the stadium to be renamed after the seven-time Grand Slam winner.

## What have been Court's statements that have caused outrage over the years?

Court has been quite vocal about her anti-homosexual views.

Back in 2013, when 2011 French Open mixed doubles champion Casey Dellacqua's partner Amanda Judd gave birth to a son,

Court wrote in an article: "(It) is with sadness that I see that this baby has seemingly been deprived of his father."

In 2017, when the Australian government was poised to legalise same-sex marriages, Court gave an interview to 20Twenty Vision Christian Radio. She talked about how tennis is "full of lesbians" and how transgender children were the work of "the devil."

When Qantas Airlines took a stand to support same-sex marriages, she declared that she would not use the airline as much as possible. As reported by The West Australian, Court dismissed the existence of racism in South Africa and expressed her support for Apartheid.

"Evvonne (Goolagong) and I went in there and played for the black people. I have 35 cultures in my church and I love them all," she said. In the same report, Navratilova was quoted saying about Court's pro-Apartheid stance: "Saying that South Africa dealt with the 'situation' (racial segregation) much better than anywhere else in the world, particularly the US: what exactly did she mean? "It is clear exactly who Court is: an amazing tennis

player, and a racist and a homophobe."

## What has she been doing after retiring from tennis?

Court was ordained as a Pentecostal minister in 1991. Four years later, she founded the Pentecostal church in Perth, called Victory Life Centre.

## Where do her achievements stand today?

Along with her record 24 Grand Slam singles titles, Court won 19 women's doubles majors and 21 mixed doubles crowns. She's among only three players – along with Navratilova and American player Doris Hart – to have achieved a Grand Slam Boxed Set (winning all four Grand Slams in singles, doubles and mixed doubles). But she's the only player to have done it twice. Currently, Serena Williams, on 23 Grand Slam singles titles, is the only player anywhere close to overtaking Court's mark. "Please win two more Grand Slams," McEnroe said, in a message to Williams, on Eurosport, "so we can leave Margaret Court and her offensive views in the past where she belongs."

## OVER 54 % OF TEAM'S RUNS

**DURING THE** course of this series, Joe Root went past the aggregate Test run tallies of Geoffrey Boycott, Kevin Pietersen and David Gower. He is now fourth in the list of England's most prolific batsmen with 8,238 runs. Only Alastair Cook (12,472), Graham Gooch (8,900) and Alec Stewart (8,463) are above Root.

**ROOT SCORED** 54.15 per cent of England's first-innings runs in the first Test (228 out of 421). So far in the first innings of the second Test, he has scored 54.86 per cent of the runs (186 out of 339/9).

**ROOT, PLAYING** his 99th Test, has 19 hundreds – level with Len Hutton. There are nine Englishmen ahead of him.

**ROOT'S DOUBLE** century in the first Test against Sri Lanka was his first ton since another double hundred – 226 – against New Zealand in Hamilton in Nov. 2019.

**THERE HAVE** been just two other 50-plus scores by England batsmen in the series so far. Root has scored 415 runs in the series so far, 305 more than the second-highest in England ranks – Jonny Bairstow (110).

**OF HIS** three dismissals in the series so far, two have been run-outs while the third was caught – in the deep going for quick runs in the company of the No. 11.

**IF HE** had scored 14 more runs in the first innings of the second Test, Root would have become just the second Englishman after Walter Hammond to hit double hundreds in two successive Tests.

**55.62**

In Asia, Root has scored 1,613 runs in 16 Tests at an average of 55.62 with 4 tons. He averages 71.55 in Lanka, 53.09 in India – where England play next – and 57.40 in the UAE vs. Pakistan. However, in 2 Tests in Bangladesh he averages just 24.50.





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