

People from north eastern States face racism, 'Chinese' slur in Pune

Punekars point to north-easterners as carriers of coronavirus, taunt them in public places

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The fears surrounding COVID-19 have fuelled an old prejudice against people from the north eastern States who are living and working in Pune. The label 'Chinese' attached to them now comes with added xenophobia, insensitivity and verbal attacks in public places.

Last week, Hmingtei Chhangte, a working professional from Mizoram, was subjected to humiliation in Reliance Mart after a shopper in the same aisle created a ruckus, saying she could be a carrier of COVID-19.

Narrating the ordeal in a Facebook post, Ms. Chhangte said the woman covered her face each time she passed by her and when Ms. Chhangte asked her what the matter was, the woman began to scream and shout, gesticulating that Ms. Chhangte had been 'infected'.

While the staff intervened to calm the woman down, Ms. Chhangte, who has been living and working in Pune city for a decade, left the store feeling insecure and disheartened.

"We have received at least 10 reports of racist or xenophobic incidents from people from north eastern States, because of their features. Women, especially, are very uncomfortable venturing out of home. They face 'coronavirus' taunts while going out to buy groceries or even taking children to a park," said S.K. Sourio, former president of the North East Community of Pune.

At times, those creating a ruckus do not even have the courtesy to listen to the explanations and protestations of people from the north east who say they are not Chinese citizens, but Indians, he said.



Spectators holding banner inside D.Y. Patil stadium at Navi Mumbai during the Road Safety World series T20 match between India Legends and Sri Lanka on Tuesday. • VIVEK BENDRE

In another case, a woman, who did not wish to be named, said she was startled to hear cries of 'Coronavirus aa gaya' (coronavirus has come) when she went to purchase a protective face mask in the city's Sanghvi area.

Cabinet may discuss IPL today

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

With confirmed cases of COVID-19 rising, the Maharashtra Cabinet is likely to discuss the postponement of Indian Premier League (IPL) matches scheduled to be played in the State.

While Health Minister Rajesh Tope said in Nagpur that "events like IPL can always be organised later," the issue is likely to figure in Wednesday's Cabinet meeting.

The State government is understood to be contemplating writing to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the parent body of IPL, regarding the same. Mumbai is scheduled to host at least eight matches, including the season-opener

on March 29 and the final on May 24, during the T20 cricket league's 13th edition. While the government is pondering over the possibility of postponement of the IPL, Mumbai is already witnessing another cricket tournament, which is attracting large turnouts. Legends of the game, including the likes of Sachin Tendulkar, Brian Lara, Brett Lee and Jonty Rhodes have been participating in the Road Safety World Series. The five-nation veterans' T20 league, being played in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune, is incidentally an initiative of the State transport department.

"It is our humble request to Pune's citizens to desist from passing such racist comments or taunts, which hurt members from the north eastern States. This is a virus that is afflicting people of all races and communities. North, South, East or West, no part of the globe is secure from its scourge," Mr. Sourio said.

Mr. Sourio also said they had met the Pune Police Commissioner and the Deputy Collector to apprise them of such incidents. "Since we look different, we are anyway subjected to such xenophobic and racist insults. Now, I have sinusitis and I if I sneeze in a flight or an air-conditioned room, I wonder how my co-passengers or other people will react. Will they get angry that I am not taking precautions as I am 'Chinese', or will I even get a chance to explain to them that I hail from a north-eastern State?" she said.

A senior minister of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, said certain sanctions are inevitable to curb the spread of COVID-19. "We have to ensure the safety of people, and impose some restrictions to avoid the spread. The issue might be discussed in the Cabinet meeting and we will come to a decision," he said. The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) however is continuing with preparations for the marquee clash between Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings on March 29. (With inputs from Amol Karhadkar)

COVID-19: religious places step up precautions amid scare

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

From avoiding handshakes to modifying traditional religious practices, churches in Goa are taking various measures in view of coronavirus scare while priests at various temples have started wearing masks.

Apart from restricting flow of holy water at stoups, many churches have stopped offering communion to followers in their mouth as has been the custom. Parish priests have emptied out holy water

stoups installed at the entrance of churches to avoid them being acting as breeding grounds for any kind of virus.

While holding masses, priests are informing people about various precautions to be taken to keep novel coronavirus at bay. The sermons now also include preaching on food intakes to boost immunity.

Fr Eremito Rebello of the Church of Our Lady of Snow at Rachol village in South Goa said on Tuesday that though there are no formal

instructions from the Archbishop's Palace to adopt any such measures, priests are taking these initiatives on their own.

"Holy water has been temporarily reduced from the entrance of the church to stop any possibility of spread of virus. Also, the Holy communion is not given in mouth but on hand of Christian devotees," he said.

Priests at several temples, including famous Mangueshi temple in North Goa, have started wearing masks while on duty.

Woman, mother quarantined

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NASHIK

A 23-year-old woman and her 54-year-old mother were admitted in an isolation ward in the district civil hospital in Nashik in Maharashtra on Tuesday for suspected exposure to novel coronavirus, health officials said. The woman had gone to Dubai on February 27 and returned to Nashik on March 3 and was quarantined after she complained of throat pain, cold and cough. Her mother was admitted as they were together over the past one week, a doctor said.

श्री चित्रा तिरुनाल आर्युविज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, तिरुवनन्तपुरम, केरल - 695 011
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ईमेल / E-mail: sct@scimst.ac.in वेबसाइट / Website: www.scimst.ac.in

Admission Notice for Scheduled Tribe Student Empowerment Programs - 2020
Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology with the financial support of Dept. of Science and Technology, Govt. of India is offering following training programs with scholarship for the students belonging to scheduled tribe communities:

Category 1 - Students studying higher secondary, intermediate or 10+2 level
Category 2 - Students of 2nd/3rd/4th year BSc/BTech/BE or equivalent
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For details on the programs please visit our website: <https://www.scimst.ac.in/> Or contact Registrar, SCTIMST, Trivandrum on the email or telephone number given below:
Email: regoffice@scimst.ac.in; Tel: 0471-2524269 / 289 / 649. DIRECTOR

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
CHENNAI - 600 008

MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
E - Tender Notice for the Supply of Stores No. 20 / 2020
Dated: 09.03.2020

Southern Railway has implemented an e-system. All advertised tenders will be dealt through e-procurement system only. No manual offer / postal offer will be entertained. These tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in -> SR -> COS

Sl. No.	E-Tender No.	Description	Tender Closing date & time
1	82/20/506/EOT	6 Quad telecom cable	31.03.2020 @ 14.30 hrs.

Railway reserves the right to issue any corrigendum to the tenders.
Important Notice to Vendors: e-procurement is in the link www.ireps.gov.in.
Principal Chief Materials Manager

Muted Holi celebrations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD/MUMBAI

Holi celebrations in Gujarat and Maharashtra remained muted under the shadow of the coronavirus with revellers enjoying the festival of colours enthusiastically but ensuring adequate precaution by keeping off 'rain dances', otherwise a staple.

One of the organisers even deployed hand-held thermal detectors to check if any of the guests was under the weather due to coronavirus.

Prominent Holi party sites like the Rajpath Club and Karnavati Club in Ahmedabad did not organise rain dances.

Mumbai and most parts of Maharashtra also had a subdued Holi with appeals to revellers from authorities to participate in the festival of colours after taking necessary precaution against the contagion.

Officials and staff on frontline duty on the streets of the metropolis and other major cities said crowds were thinner than previous years.

Most preferred to play with dry colours to avoid water wastage, they said, adding that no untoward incident was reported till late afternoon.

At several upscale residential complexes in Gandhinagar, people were seen celebrating the festival of colours wearing masks.

"People are indeed worried about getting infected by the virus. Instead of not celebrating the festival, society members decided to enjoy the occasion wearing masks. We had distributed masks to everyone living in this society," said Dharmesh Patel of Satyamev Society near Gandhinagar.

In some places like Surat, youngsters were seen in large numbers enjoying Holi at event venues.

HINDU DEITIES WORSHIPPED IN JAPAN
TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY
BENOY K BEHL
FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR DR. MURUGA DEVARAJA

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CIN: U65110TN1921PLC001908

NOTICE FOR 94th TO THE 97th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS AND REMOTE E-VOTING INFORMATION

Notice is hereby given that:

- The 94th to 97th Annual General Meetings (AGMs), pertaining to years 2015-2016 to 2018-2019, of the members of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited is scheduled to be held on Thursday, the 9th of April, 2020 at 10.00 a.m. onwards at AVM Kamalavel Mahal, 109 - E, Ettayapuram Road, Thoothukudi - 628 002 to transact the business as detailed in the Notice of AGMs along with explanatory statement pursuant to Section 102 of the Companies Act, 2013. These AGMs are being convened pursuant to the order passed by the Hon'ble High Court of Madras on 06.02.2020. Hon'ble Shri Justice R. Balasubramanian (Former Judge) has been appointed as the Chairman of the AGMs.
- Pursuant to provisions of Section 101 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 18 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 and Secretarial Standard on General Meetings, the electronic copies of the Notice of AGMs and Annual Reports for the financial years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 have been sent to all the members on 7th March, 2020 whose email IDs are registered with the Bank/ Depository Participants. The same is also available on the banks website www.tmb.in. Physical copies of the notice of the AGMs and Annual Reports for all the four financial years have also been sent to all the members at their registered addresses by Speed Post. The dispatch of the all the notice and the annual reports has been completed on 9th March 2020.

Members who have not received the Notice and Annual Reports may download the same from the website of the Bank www.tmb.in or from the website CDSL www.evotingindia.com.

- The members holding shares either in physical form or in dematerialized form, as on the cut off date on Thursday, April 02, 2020 may cast their vote electronically on the ordinary and special business as set out in the Notice of AGMs through electronic voting systems of Central Depository Services India Limited (CDSL) from a place other than venue of AGMs ("Remote e-voting"). Further, the facility for electronic voting provided by CDSL shall be made available at the AGMs venue and the members attending the meetings who have not cast their vote by remote voting, shall be able to exercise their right to vote at the AGM venue. All the members are informed that:
 - the ordinary and the special business as set out in the Notice of AGMs may be transacted through electronic means.
 - the remote e-voting shall commence on Monday, April 06, 2020 at 09.00 A.M and shall end on Wednesday, April 08, 2020 at 05.00 P.M
 - the cut off date for determining the eligibility to vote by electronic means or at the AGMs is Thursday, April 02, 2020.
 - (i) The user ID and password will be provided by the CDSL by email to the members whose email IDs are registered with the Bank/DP or in PIN mailer through Registered Post to other members for the AGM.
 - Please follow all steps in the Electronic Voting - General Instructions to cast the vote.
 - In case members have any queries or issues regarding evoting, they may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Members and remote e-voting user manual for Members available at the download section of helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com; or call on toll free no.: 1800-225-533. In case of any specific queries please call to this mobile no. 9566141888
 - User ID and Password are being generated specifically for casting the vote in these AGMs by remote e-voting. This User ID and password are being sent by CDSL directly and members should use this User ID and password only.
 - Members can also update their mobile number and e-mail ID in the user profile details of the folio which may be used for sending future communication(s).
 - Shri Nagendra D.Rao, Company Secretary in practice and the present Vice President of ICSI has been appointed as the Scrutinizer to scrutinize the e-voting and to ensure that the e-voting process is held in a fair and transparent manner.
 - Any person, who acquires shares of the Bank and becomes Member of the Bank after dispatch of the Notice of AGMs and holding shares as on the cut-off date i.e. April 02, 2020, may obtain the User ID and password by sending a request at helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com; or call on toll free no.: 1800-225-533. Any person, who ceases to be member of the bank as on cut off date and is in receipt of Notice of AGMs shall not be eligible for e-voting.
 - If members forget their password, they can reset their password by using "Forgot User Details/Password" option available on www.evoting.cdsl.com.
 - A person, whose name is recorded in the register of Members as on the cut-off date alone shall be entitled to avail the facility of remote e-voting as well as electronic voting at the AGMs venue.

4. Entry to the Venue of the AGMs will be permitted only on the basis of valid Attendance Slips along with the proof of identity. The Proxy holders, in particular, shall have to prove their identity at the time of entering the venue.

For Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited
Thoothukudi
10.03.2020
Prakash Chandra Panda
Company Secretary

IN BRIEF



IISc. cancels controversial lecture

BENGALURU
The Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science was forced to cancel a lecture by scientist and Kannada writer K.N. Ganeshaiah after students and other citizens took objection to the content on the grounds that it was both "Islamophobic and sexist". The lecture was scheduled for Wednesday, but cancelled on Tuesday.

One more KFD case confirmed in Wayanad

KALPETTA
One more case of Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), commonly known as monkey fever, was confirmed in Kerala's Wayanad on Tuesday. Of the 14 KFD cases reported in the district this year, three were undergoing treatment at the Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, and the District Hospital at Mananthavady. As many as five KFD cases were reported in the district in a week.

Remove party colours on govt. buildings: HC

Seeks compliance report in two weeks

P. SAMUEL JONATHAN
GUNTUR

The High Court on Tuesday directed the Andhra Pradesh government to restrain from painting government/panchayat buildings with colours similar to the ones of flags of political parties or party offices.

The HC directed the Principal Secretary, Panchayat Raj department, to remove the colours painted on the buildings within 10 days and directed the Chief Secretary to furnish a compliance report within two weeks to the court Registrar.

Issuing the orders on writ petitions, Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justice Nana Jayasurya directed the State Election Commission to hold free and fair elections to the local bodies and take appropriate steps without allowing the parties to take any form of evil practices which might influence the voters.

In a significant observation, the court held that it had become a common



Ward Secretariat at Durga Puram in Vijayawada painted with party flag colours.

practice for any political party to paint the buildings of panchayat or others akin to the colours of the party flag, and directed that such practices should stop. It also held that the National Building Code applies to the buildings of the Panchayat Raj also as they fall within the purview of the local self-government and constructed with government funds.

The court said the use of impermissible signs cannot be permitted to be used and said such actions might affect the conduct of free and fair elections.

COVID-19: partial shutdown in Kerala

Schools closed but no change in SSLC and Plus Two dates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With eight more cases of COVID-19 being confirmed in Kerala on Tuesday, the State has gone into a partial shutdown mode by imposing limits on public gatherings and ordering closure of schools and colleges till March 31 to prevent further spread of the disease.

At a press conference here on Tuesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who chaired a special Cabinet meeting here to cobble together a strategy to pre-empt COVID-19 from getting past the efforts of the government to contain it, urged temples, churches, mosques and ashrams to suspend crowded festivals and events till the threat eased. He advised madrasas and other places of religious



Scare in the air: A near-deserted casualty ward of the General Hospital at Pathanamthitta in Kerala on Tuesday. ■ LEJU KAMAL

learning to temporarily suspend classes.

No cinema shows

All public programmes, including those involving Ministers, stand cancelled. Government offices will observe a strict protocol to prevent the spread of the virus. The public have been advised to avoid overcrowded weddings and social activities for now. There will

be no cinema shows, staging of dramas and other cultural events till March 31.

Mr. Vijayan sought to marshal public support for the government's decision to shut down educational institutions and halt academic activities, including summer holiday camps and private tuitions, till the threat of the outbreak receded.

He said SSLC (Class 10) and Plus Two examinations

would be held as per schedule. Students under observation for COVID-19 could appear for the tests in special rooms. The government also shut down anganwadis and ordered District Collectors to supply meals to the children at their homes. As many as 1,116 persons are under surveillance across the State, of which 967 are confined to their houses. The rest 149 are in hospitals.

Pilgrims told to avoid Sabarimala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president N. Vasu has urged the public not to attend the monthly pujas scheduled to be held at Sabarimala Ayyappa temple from March 13 to 18.

Mr. Vasu told reporters here on Tuesday that the request to pilgrims to abstain themselves from the monthly pujas was made in view of the precautionary measures initiated by the government following the spread of COVID-19 cases. Pilgrims from all over the country reach the temple for the monthly pujas. The State Cabinet too had called upon the public to suspend festivals, marriages and other functions.

Office of IUML daily raided in Palarivattom flyover case

Ex-Minister accused of diverting money to the newspaper

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

Sleuths of the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) on Tuesday carried out raids at the headquarters of the *Chandrika* daily, the organ of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), in connection with the case registered against former Public Works Minister V.K. Ebrahim Kunju for alleged corruption in the construc-

tion of the flyover at Palarivattom in Kochi.

It was alleged that a portion of the kickbacks to the tune of ₹10 crore was transferred to the account of the daily during the demonetisation period.

The VACB team verified the accounts, records and documents at the office on the YMCA Road from 9 a.m. Previously, the VACB team had secured information

about the transfer of the money to the establishment.

It wanted to ascertain the source of funds that had been deposited into the account of the newspaper run by the Muslim Printing and Publishing Company. Mr. Kunju, who is a member of board of directors of the newspaper, however, termed as "politically motivated" the raids on the newspaper.

Door-to-door survey in A.P. to begin today

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government will conduct a two-day door-to-door survey starting Wednesday to identify the persons who had recently been to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) affected countries.

The ground level survey is to reach out to the persons who have not undergone 28-day mandatory observation and isolation and check any possibility of the spread of the virus.

The government has or-

dered all the District Collectors to make all arrangements for the survey and rope in Asha workers, village and ward volunteers, ANMs and other staff members to make door-to-door visits and gather information required.

Krishna District Collector A. Md. Imtiaz in a teleconference on Tuesday asked the officials of the Department of Health to engage volunteers and make arrangements to upload the information on the Secretariat mobile application.

KSRTC premier services see dip in bookings since March 3

Officials predict similar trend in intra-State operations

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

With people altering travel plans as a precautionary measure against COVID-19, the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has taken a hit primarily on its inter-State services. It has seen a reduction of 20% in bookings in premier bus services, which are air-conditioned.

According to KSRTC officials, the drop in passen-

gers and rise in cancellations began from March 3. With four people testing positive for the virus in Bengaluru since March 9, officials predict that bus services within the State may also see reduction in passengers. A senior KSRTC official said that operations to cities in Kerala such as Kottayam, Ernakulam, Calicut and Thiruvananthapuram were among the worst hit, apart from Hyderabad, Vi-

jayawada, Pune and Mumbai. "Since most of the premier buses running inter-State services are long journey, they are generally pre-booked. So we are seeing a 20% drop in passenger traffic," he said.

Shivayogi C. Kalasad, Managing Director, KSRTC, said though all the cancellations cannot be attributed to COVID-19 alone, most of it could be because of the fear of its spread.

Sweet wishes



All the best: A parent-teacher association member of Moyans School at Palakkad in Kerala giving honey to students before their SSLC examination on Tuesday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

They believe in the religion of humanity

Karimnagar realtor's effort to provide food is backed by people across religions

K. M. DAYASHANKAR
KARIMNAGAR

Hunger knows no religion, gender, or colour. It is neutral. In these times of polarisation along communal lines, some people have united for the cause of humanity. One such person is a man who is serving people, especially cancer patients and their attendants, by feeding them every Sunday in Karimnagar town.

It all started a year-and-a-half ago when S.G.M. Husain, alias Haqani, a realtor, was passing a cancer hospital at the Housing Board Colony Road when an old woman stopped him and asked where she could find some food. Mr. Haqani replied that there was no hotel nearby, but offered to get food for her.

'Really touched'

At the hotel, the owner, who knew Mr. Haqani, asked why he was taking a parcel. When



Members of HIM voluntary organisation serving food to patients at a hospital in Karimnagar. ■ K.M. DAYASHANKAR

the latter told the hotel owner about an old woman waiting for food at the hospital, the owner refused to take money. When Mr. Haqani returned and handed over the food packet to the old woman, she offered money, which he declined. "Then the old woman blessed me by putting her hand on my head, which really touched my heart and soul," he recalled.

That set Mr. Haqani think-

persons every Sunday without any interruption," said Mr. Haqani.

Seeing his service, his friends and well-wishers, including Hindus and Muslims, joined HIM and began contributing to it. Some pitch in bags of rice, while others give vegetables, pulses, oil, water packets, plates, etc. What stands out is that not all HIM's donors are rich; many belong to the middle class people.

Vanaja, a widow, who runs a flour mill in the town is such a contributor. She gives one rice bag per month, and other essentials whenever required. Taking time off, she also participates in the food distribution on Sundays.

"With the blessings of almighty, I have plans to serve food every day to the patients at the hospital. There is no religion for our charity service," said the altruist proudly.

Kerala HC calls for action taken report

Lens on land grab in Munnar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court has directed the State government to file a statement indicating the recommendations made by it on various reports, including the one by former Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue and Land Management) Nivedita P. Haran, on the illegal land grab in Munnar, and also the action taken by the Idukki District Collector or the police on the issue of bogus title deeds.

The Bench comprising Chief Justice S. Manikumar and Justice Shaji P. Chali directed the government to state the actions in a tabular form to enable the court to ascertain whether the steps

taken by the government were proper.

Forged titles

The order was passed on a petition filed by One Earth One Life and the Parishithi Samrakshna Samiti of Thodupuzha. They alleged that large-scale encroachments on revenue and forest land had taken place in Munnar, Devikulam, and Kannan Devan Hill villages. The encroachers created forged titles for the land, the petitioners alleged. The petitioners said those who encroached on the land included political parties, religious organisations and government employees. Some of them had taken loans using forged titles.

Two tombs in Qutb Shahi complex regain lost glory

Premamati and Taramati were legends

SERISH NANISSETTI
HYDERABAD

On Tuesday, as visitors walked past the freshly laid lawn and stepped inside the tomb of Premamati at the Qutb Shahi tombs complex at Golconda here, the morning sunlight bounced off the floor and lit up the insides. The accumulated grime over the years was gone; also gone was the musty damp odour. According to historians, Premamati was a companion of Abdullah Qutb Shah, the seventh king of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, who ruled between 1626 and 1672. She was fabled to be a danseuse and was powerful enough to build a mosque



U.S. Ambassador to India, Kenneth I. Juster, centre, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

just outside the Golconda fort. The stone mosque remains unfinished as Premamati died in 1662 when Abdullah Qutb Shah was at the

height of his power.

"Much of it is original lime stucco work. Wherever it was damaged, we restored," said Ratish Nanda, CEO, Aga

Conservation efforts impresses U.S. diplomat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster visited the Qutb Shahi tombs complex to mark the completion of year-long conservation efforts by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture on the twin mausoleums of Taramati and Premamati. The conservation effort was aided by the U.S. under its Ambassadors Fund for

Cultural Preservation.

"This is my third visit to the Qutb Shahi tombs. It looks so beautiful today. It has progressed tremendously. I am delighted," said Mr. Juster.

"We got a grant of \$1,00,000 (about ₹70 lakh) and the two mausoleums have been restored using that fund," informed Ratish Nanda of Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), on the recent effort to restore two tombs here. The other restored tomb belongs to Taramati, who is fa-

bled to be a companion of Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah.

The two tombs are of two women who retained their

identities and were honoured with a space inside the royal necropolis of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. They have been restored using the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Photographs taken before the conservation work began show domes covered with moss and big peepal trees. "The trees led to seepage, damaging the inside of the dome. The plinth was in a dilapidated condition," said AKTC's Prashant Banerjee.

Interestingly, while Premamati's dome is 1.5 times bigger than that of Taramati's, both of them look equal due to the different sizes of the finials. A dancing pavilion built in Taramati's honour outside the Golconda Fort still exists and has been turned into a convention centre.

IAF plane returns from Iran with 58 Indians

Globemaster aircraft evacuated stranded persons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) C-17 Globemaster aircraft with Indians evacuated from Coronavirus-hit Iran landed at Hindan Air Force Station on Tuesday morning.

"The C-17 returned from Iran to Hindan airbase this morning with 58 Indian citizens onboard. The Indians who have returned from Iran will be quarantined at Hindon," the IAF said.

Defence officials said 31 women, 25 men and two children were brought back. The aircraft also carried 529 samples for investigation.

"IAF has activated necessary medical protocols and has put required facilities in place to provide fellow citizens with adequate care and support," the IAF stated.

The C-17 with an IAF medical team and support staff onboard took off at 8 p.m. on Monday evening from Hindan airbase.



Back home: Indian nationals after they were brought to India by Indian Air Force's C-17 Globemaster aircraft from COVID-19-hit Iran, at Hindon airbase on Tuesday. Fifty-eight Indians were airlifted in the military transport aircraft. ♦♦♦

Anti-HIV drugs given to Italian couple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Amid rising COVID-19 cases in India, for the first time a combination of two drugs, which is widely used for controlling HIV infection, was administered on an elderly Italian couple undergoing treatment at a Jaipur hospital for it.

The Drug Controller General of India has approved "restricted use" of the combination of medications lopinavir and ritonavir which are second-line HIV drugs, for treatment after the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) sought an emergency approval.

Three more test positive in Maharashtra

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Samples brought back
The state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) have reduced the prices of petrol and diesel by 30 paise and 25 paise a litre respectively as international crude oil price fell.

The sixth consecutive cut comes after the OMCs reduced the prices by a quarter of a rupee on Monday.

In Delhi, a litre of petrol is priced at ₹70.29 and diesel ₹63.01. In Mumbai, petrol is

Three more persons in the city have tested positive for COVID-19, taking the tally of positive cases in Maharashtra to five, said State health officials on Tuesday.

The daughter of the Pune couple, who tested positive on Monday, a co-passenger and the Ola cab driver who ferried the couple from Dubai on March 1, were the latest to test 'positive', said Dr. Pradip Awate, State epidemiologist.

As of now, all five positive cases in the State are from Pune.

"All five persons including the couple, their



Keeping vigil: Security guards posted outside Naidu Hospital for Infectious Diseases in Pune on Tuesday. ♦ JIGNESH MISTRY

daughter, a co-passenger who hailed from Yavatmal district and the Ola cab driver who ferried the couple, have been placed in isolation in Pune's Naidu Hospital after their samples that were sent to the National Institute of Virology

(NIV) tested positive," Pune district Collector Naval Kishore Ram said, adding that all five individuals were stable and there was no cause for concern.

In addition, the samples of two other family members had also been sent to

the NIV for tests, said Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar.

Tracking the rest

Saying the couple who tested positive were stable, he said the district administration was tracking the tour group of 40 persons who were with the couple on their trip to Dubai.

At present, six persons including the couple, three of their kin and the Ola driver are in isolation at the Naidu Hospital.

"The Pune couple had travelled to Dubai in the last week of February and were part of a 40-member tour group. They returned to India on March 1. One of the two started showing symp-

oms of infection and were referred to Naidu hospital for a check-up on March 8. Their samples were sent to the NIV and both tested positive. As Dubai was not in the list of the affected places given out by the Centre, the passengers could not be checked and separated at the airport itself," Dr. Mhaisekar said.

To track down the persons with whom the couple had travelled to Dubai and with those who came in contact with them in the past week, five teams comprising officials from the police, health and revenue departments, as well as authorities from Pune and the Pimpri-Chinchwad civic bodies had been formed.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	31.2	14.4	Kozhikode	.....	35.6	27.2
Ahmedabad	32.3	19.4	Kurnool	.....	37.3	24.4
Aizawl	23.1	12.1	Lucknow	.....	22.4	13.6
Allahabad	24.3	12.2	Madurai	.....	36.8	24.0
Bengaluru	32.9	22.4	Mangaluru	.....	34.7	24.7
Bhopal	0.6	30.2	18.6	Mumbai	.....	.....	.....
Bhubaneswar	33.8	22.7	Mysuru	.....	33.9	24.3
Chandigarh	23.7	10.4	New Delhi	.....	26.6	10.0
Chennai	33.6	23.6	Patna	.....	.....	.....
Coimbatore	35.8	24.0	Port Blair	.....	31.4	22.0
Dehradun	25.3	8.3	Puducherry	.....	32.6	23.8
Gangtok	15.6	9.0	Pune	.....	33.1	17.5
Goa	33.2	21.1	Raipur	.....	.....	.....
Guwahati	30.3	15.4	Ranchi	.....	27.7	13.0
Hubballi	33.0	20.0	Shillong	.....	18.4	4.1
Hyderabad	0.5	34.7	21.3	Shimla	.....	16.6	5.7
Imphal	27.2	8.7	Srinagar	.....	34.3	2.8
Jaipur	32.4	14.6	Thiruvananthapuram	.....	34.3	26.1
Kochi	32.4	26.2	Tiruchi	.....	37.1	23.0
Kohima	24.2	9.5	Vijayawada	.....	32.0	25.6
Kolkata	31.0	18.7	Visakhapatnam	.....	32.0	25.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	46	29	17	78	100	100	.....
Bengaluru	12	50	86	.....	128	.....	.....
Chennai	8	16	16	25	43	.....	.....
Delhi	33	53	5	190	233	.....	.....
Hyderabad	7	26	21	41	63	.....	.....
Kolkata	8	38	13	253	149	.....	.....
Lucknow	6	42	55	275	42	.....	.....
Mumbai	54	47	11	162	178	.....	.....
Pune	51	18	82	79	76	.....	.....
Visakhapatnam	11	28	41	29	49	.....	.....

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

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Oil Marketing Companies cut petrol and diesel prices

The prices have come down by over ₹5 a litre this year

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

The state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) have reduced the prices of petrol and diesel by 30 paise and 25 paise a litre respectively as international crude oil price fell.

The sixth consecutive cut comes after the OMCs reduced the prices by a quarter of a rupee on Monday.

In Delhi, a litre of petrol is priced at ₹70.29 and diesel ₹63.01. In Mumbai, petrol is

selling at ₹75.99 and diesel ₹65.97. In Chennai, petrol will cost ₹73.02 and diesel ₹66.48, according to data from Indian Oil Corporation.

In Kolkata, petrol is selling at ₹72.98 and diesel ₹65.34.

The prices of petrol and diesel have come down by over ₹5 a litre each since the beginning of this year. They are likely to drop further in the coming weeks as India follows the monthly average pricing of the benchmark crude oil.

Experts see the fall in the Brent crude oil price as a blessing for the macro-economy as India imports over 83% of its requirements.

The shares of the OMCs surged on falling crude oil prices. HPCL gained 6.17% to close at ₹213.25 and BPCL closed, up 5.20%, at ₹423.80 in a weak Mumbai market on Monday. Indian Oil Corporation was down 1.34% at ₹99.45. The market was closed on Tuesday on account of Holi.

Fund allocation for madrasas witnesses drop

Only half the funds utilised for this financial year

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The government spending on improving education at madrasas has dropped drastically after the States were asked to pitch in with funding, said a parliamentary panel, slamming the "disturbing trend" which hurts children from the most educationally backward communities.

After the change in funding ratios, only 15% of allocated money was used last

Changing patterns

In FY19, only 15% of the funds allocated for providing quality education in madrasas was utilised. According to the Central government, this drop in utilisation was due to a change in funding pattern of the scheme from being a wholly sponsored one by the Centre to a 60:40 split with the States



Year	Allocation (₹)	Expenditure (₹)	Utilisation (%)
FY18	120 cr.	107.89 cr.	89.91
FY19	120 cr.	18.25 cr.	15.21
FY20	120 cr.	63.57 cr.	52.98*

*As on February 2, 2020

year. With just over a month left in this financial year, only about half the funds had been spent. The Centre intends to hike allocations more than 80% next year, despite the low utilisations in

the last two years. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, which submitted its report on demand for grants in 2020-21 to the Rajya Sabha

last week, expressed concern that the School Education department has not used the allocated funds for providing education to madrasas over the past three years.

Over the last three years, the Centre's annual budget has allocated ₹120 crore for the scheme.

In 2018-19, funding for the larger component of the scheme was changed from a 100% Central grant into a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a 60:40 split between Central and State funding. Only ₹18.25 crore was actually spent that year.

In 2019-20, the expenditure under the scheme was ₹63.57 crore as on February 10, 2019, just above half of the allocated amount. With over a month to go, the Centre hoped that the final expenditure would be higher, it told the panel.

IN BRIEF



HC gives permission for meeting against CAA

MADURAI
The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court granted permission for the conduct of a public meeting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Thoothukudi on March 13.

Unhappy Sikkim govt. ends 5-day working week

GANGTOK
Not happy with the performance of the staff, the Sikkim government has withdrawn the five-day working system and declared holidays only on second and fourth Saturdays.

'Hindu adoption not valid without consent from wife'

Supreme Court cites two essential conditions for adoption

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Hindu adoption is not valid unless the man takes prior consent from his wife and there is a "ceremony of giving and taking in adoption," the Supreme Court has held.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao said the mandate of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956 was that no adoption was valid unless the two essential conditions of the consent of the wife and the actual ceremony of adoption

were established.

The March 6 judgment came on an appeal by M. Vanaja, who claimed she is the adopted daughter of the late Narasimhulu Naidu. She had filed a civil suit for partition of property. The suit was dismissed. The Hyderabad High Court had eventually upheld the dismissal, following which an appeal was filed in the apex court.

Justice Rao, who wrote the judgment, said Sections 7 and 11 of the 1956 Act are the consent of the wife before a male Hindu adopts a

child and proof of the ceremony of actual giving and taking in adoption.

"The appellant [Vanaja] admitted that she does not have the proof of the ceremony of giving and taking of her in adoption. Admittedly, there is no pleading in the plaint regarding the adoption being in accordance with the Act. That apart, the respondent, who is the adoptive mother, has categorically stated in her evidence that the appellant was never adopted," the court concluded, rejecting appeal.

Girl hangs herself after intimate video surfaces

Boyfriend leaked it to his friends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

A 16-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide in Chharranagar locality of Gujarat's Ahmedabad after her boyfriend leaked their intimate video, police said on Tuesday.

She hanged herself from the ceiling of her house on Monday, an official said.

"Her boyfriend leaked her intimate video to three of his friends. On February 29, the girl's parents had lodged a rape complaint against her boyfriend after the leak came to their notice," he said.

"The girl and her boyfriend had shot an intimate video with each other's consent. But the boyfriend leaked it to his friends," Inspector Hemant Patel said. "The boyfriend has been booked for rape under sections of IPC and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, his friends have been charged under the Information Technology Act for circulating the video," he said.

(Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 am - 7.30 pm)

Indian filmmaker chosen for L'Atelier programme

NAMRATA JOSHI
MUMBAI

Indian filmmaker Baudhayan Mukherji has made it to the list of 16 directors chosen for Cinefondation's prestigious L'Atelier programme at the Cannes Film Festival this year. The festival will be held from May 12 to 23 and the L'Atelier programme

runs from May 14-21. Mr. Mukherji heads to the French Riviera with his upcoming project *Marichjhapi*.

Now in its 16th year, the programme brings together filmmakers with promising projects, along with their producers, and industry professionals, producers, distributors

and potential partners, in Cannes. Mr. Mukherji is an advertisement and feature film director based in Mumbai.

Marichjhapi, written by Mr. Mukherji and Abhinandan Banerjee, is the first film that they found too big and ambitious to self-finance and have gone out

and sought co-producers for. "It's a new feeling. Till now, we haven't been answerable to anyone," said Mr. Mukherji.

The Atlanta-based American production house, Splendid Films, is already on board and Mr. Mukherji hopes that L'Atelier will help start "European conversations" and for the pro-

ject go a "little more international".

Set in the Marichjhapi in the Sunderbans in January 1979, the movie is based on real incidents of atrocities and violence heaped on refugees to the island. If all falls into place, Mr. Mukherji intends shooting in January-February 2021.

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Solid Waste Management Department

S.W.M.C.No.A7/0899/2020

Notice Inviting e-Tender

E- Tenders are invited for the following work in Single stage two cover system as detailed below.

The Superintending Engineer (SWM), Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), invites online tender for "Primary Collection, Secondary Transportation of Construction and Demolition Waste from Zone 9 to 15 to the processing facility at Perungudi site of Greater Chennai Corporation (the Authority) under PPP mode" are available in online www.tntenders.gov.in From 19.03.2020 onwards.

Date and time of Pre Bid Meeting	03 rd April 2020 at 11.00 AM
Last Date and Time of Submission of Bid	23 rd April 2020 at 03.00 PM
Bid Opening Date and Time	24 th April 2020 at 04.00 PM
Cost of Tender Documents and EMD	Cost of tender document Rs.20,000/- + 12% GST EMD: Rs.9.50 Lakhs

DIPR/1325/Tender/2020 Superintending Engineer/SWM

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU - PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Building Organisation - Form of Contract : Lumpsum
Short Time Tender Notice No.28 / VLR - CLE / 2019 - 2020 / Dated : 10.03.2020

For and on behalf of Government of Tamil Nadu Sealed Tenders are invited by the Special Chief Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (Construction and Maintenance) Circle, Vellore - 1 for the following works from the eligible Contractors registered in Public Works Department of Government of Tamil Nadu, upto 3.00 pm as per office clock on 24.03.2020 for Price tender for the work in S.I.No.1 & 2 and for the work in S.I.No.3. Two cover system (Pre qualification and Price tender). Price Tenders for the work in S.I.No.1 & 2 and Prequalification cover (Cover) for the works in S.I.No.3 will be opened on 24.03.2020 at 3.30 PM by the Special Chief Engineer in presence of the Tenderers or their authorised agents.

(1) Construction of 5 Additional Class Rooms in GGHSS at Thiruvannamalai in Thiruvannamalai District, (2) Construction of 2 Additional Class rooms, Science lab, Art / Craft room, Library, Toilets and Drinking water arrangements in GHSS at Kadiyavanur in Kallakurichi District, and (3) Construction of BC College Girls Hostel (100 Students) at Arakonam in Ranipet District.

The E.M.D. remittance and other details can also be available from the Govt. designated website (<http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in>) and Office of the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Building (C&M) Circle, Vellore - 632 001. The tender schedule can be downloaded at free of cost from the above website, upto 23.03.2020 - 5.45 pm.

Special Chief Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Vellore-1.
DIPR/1295/TENDER/2020



Market mayhem

The global rout in equities amid the widening coronavirus outbreak portends more pain

Manic Monday saw India's bellwether S&P BSE Sensex suffer its worst single-day fall in terms of points as the 30-stock gauge plunged 1,942 points, or 5.2%, to its lowest close in 52 weeks. While the proximate trigger for the headlong selling spree was the global market rout induced by an oil price plunge, there are clear indications that the underlying investor sentiment has turned bearish. From the S&P BSE 500 index, comprising the top 500 BSE-listed companies across all key industries, to the S&P BSE SmallCap index, representing the smallest listed firms, there was virtually no corner left untouched by the sell-off. While every Sensex member lost ground, with 22 retreating at least 3%, both the broader gauges accounting for a combined 1,200 companies saw about 93% each of their constituents posting declines. The breadth of the losses is one sure indicator that investors are looking to exit equities for now with whatever gains they can muster, or worse in a bid to cut their losses. And Monday's losses, while dramatic, have only extended a slide that has over the past month seen the Sensex and BSE 500 lose about 13% each, and the mid-cap gauge drop 14%. Coinciding with this slide has been a 116% jump in volatility as measured by the National Stock Exchange's India VIX index, another ominous sign that prices are unlikely to stabilise any time soon. Also, foreign institutional investors have turned net sellers of their Indian equity holdings in a big way this month, taking the cumulative net sales since February to ₹10,658 crore.

With the Indian economy still in search of fair winds and the global outlook for growth getting bleaker with each passing day as the widening coronavirus outbreak threatens to push the world into its worst downturn since the 2008 financial crisis, a sustained sell-off looms. To complicate matters, the proposed State Bank of India-led bailout of capital-starved Yes Bank may be a far tougher challenge than appeared at first flush. Among the hurdles is a legal challenge to the plan by holders of the troubled lender's Additional Tier-1 bonds. And the best intentions of the Centre and efforts by the RBI notwithstanding, any failure to expedite the resolution at Yes Bank runs the risk of undermining wider banking sector stability. To be sure, already there is talk of concerted central bank action among the leading western economies as well as likely fiscal measures to address the threat posed by COVID-19. The U.S. Federal Reserve last week made an emergency cut in its benchmark interest rate and President Trump is contemplating a raft of steps including a payroll tax cut. The RBI and the Centre too would ideally need to move in lockstep with measures to ensure adequate liquidity to help bolster sentiment at this time of market and economic fragility.

Scoring low

The absence of playgrounds and electricity in govt. schools speaks poorly of policy priorities. It should rank as an irony that as a founder-leader of the International Solar Alliance, India has not yet electrified a significant number of government schools, while extolling the elegance and virtue of photovoltaic electricity to the rest of the world. The lack of power in schools is taken note of by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development in its latest report on budgetary grants for school education and literacy for 2020-21. Under the framework of concurrent powers, the Centre operates its own schemes and sponsors several school education programmes covering the States, notably Samagra Shiksha and the Mid Day Meal scheme. Yet, as the panel found from data for 2017-18, only 56.45% of government schools had electricity and 56.98% a playground, while almost 40% lacked a boundary wall. There are some high-performing States, but even in politically well-represented Uttar Pradesh, almost 70% of schools lacked electricity. Other depressing insights from the district information database as of end-2019, are: neglect of toilet construction for children with special needs, failure to build toilets for girls in a third of secondary schools and laboratories for higher secondary science students. The tardy progress on such important facilities, in spite of the projects having been sanctioned, shows the low priority that school education is being accorded.

One of the first things the NDA government did at the launch of its second term was a '100-day programme' for education, focused in part on training of school-teachers and opening of central schools. It should be possible to bring the same mission-mode approach to infrastructure now, ensuring that no school is left behind. Solar power can be installed in schools and toilets built for all students in 100 days. Community participation can make sure that the objectives are satisfactorily met. It may be more challenging to find attached playgrounds, but that problem can also be overcome by identifying suitable commons that can be upgraded to accommodate students, while permanent arrangements are made. More fundamentally, the Centre and States must realise that their talk of a demographic dividend has little meaning, when they do not provide enough funding for proposals on the one hand and the administrative machinery fails to utilise even the amount allocated in some cases. As the parliamentary committee notes, the allocation to the School Education and Literacy department has suffered a cut of 27.52%, amounting to ₹22,725 crore in the Budget Estimate for 2020-21, although public expenditure on education has been rising. The government-run school sector needs a fund infusion. A public school system that guarantees universal access, good learning and all facilities has to be among the highest national priorities.

For a universal status of personhood

In instilling a regime where there is a presumption against citizenship, the Foreigners Act denies the weakest their rights



SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

A series of judgments delivered by the Gauhati High Court over the course of the last few weeks has brought into sharp focus the utter brutality of the regime governing the Foreigners' Tribunals in Assam. These verdicts entrench the establishment of an unreasonable burden on people declared as deemed foreigners by seeking from them a standard of proof that is wholly incommensurate with the consequences that befall the ultimate finding — in many cases, consignment to detention camps and a pronouncement of a condition of statelessness. From a reading of the judgments, the standard, as it were, is so disproportionate that it is virtually impossible to glean what a petitioner actually has to do to succeed. Indeed, the chances of success are so negligible that, an analysis of 787 orders and judgments of the High Court between 2010 and 2019, by Leah Verghese and Shruithi Naik of Daksh India, shows us that in 97% of the cases, the petitioner before the court was confirmed as a foreigner.

This statistic is scarcely surprising given the list of documents deemed inadequate for the purposes of establishing a person's citizenship. Consider the following: electoral photo identity cards, voters' lists bearing petitioners' names, land revenue receipts, certificates issued by the local panchayat, bank passbooks, permanent account number (PAN) cards and ration cards. Each of these has been variously rejected as proof of citizenship. What is more, accord-

ing to the court, not only must a petitioner adduce documentary evidence, whatever that might actually be, establishing that their parents or ancestors were present on Indian soil prior to March 25, 1971 — a cut-off date distinct to Assam — but they must also independently validate those documents by securing the testimony of their issuing authorities. For example, if a petitioner produces a certificate of her marriage in an attempt to establish her lineage, and should that document be accepted by the Tribunal, the petitioner will still have to lead evidence through the authority that was responsible for dispensing the certificate. Is there, we might want to ask ourselves, a more noxiously labyrinthine exercise than this?

Assam and tribunals

The Foreigners' Tribunals (FT), which work as quasi-judicial bodies, were originally created through an executive order made by the Union government in 1964. Their task was to furnish opinions on whether persons referred to them were "foreigners" or not within the meaning ascribed to the term under the Foreigners Act, 1946. This legislation, which was enacted by the colonial government with a view to regulating migration into India, defines a foreigner as any person who is not a citizen of India. It also accords to the government a wide-ranging power to control the entry, exit and movement of foreigners to and within the territory of the country.

In Assam, the FTs have played a role unique to the State's history. Typically, the tribunals there have seen two kinds of cases: those concerning persons against whom a reference has been made by the border police and those whose names in the electoral roll has a "D", or "doubtful", marked



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

against them. The references made to the FTs in the State have arisen out of a mandate contained in the 1985 Assam Accord. The agreement was a product of a student-driven movement against, among other things, immigration into the State following the declaration of Bangladesh's independence on March 26, 1971. It made a number of stipulations, including a direction to government to identify and have declared as foreigners any person who entered Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 24, 1971 — the names of the persons so identified, the accord says, ought to be deleted from the electoral rolls. What is more, the pact also demanded that the government identify those who came into Assam on or after March 25 of that year and have them deleted and expelled. It was to this end that in 1997 the electoral rolls were revised in the State and more than three lakh individuals were marked as doubtful voters. This revision was made without any prior and independent verification. Out of those left out, nearly two lakh people have already been referred to the FTs.

Burden of proof

Ordinarily, under the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, the burden of proof in any court of law lies on the person who seeks to make a claim or assert a fact. This would mean that before the FTs, it is the government, which avers that a person is a foreigner, on whom the burden ought to lie. But Section 9 of the Foreigners Act reverses this

burden. It places the responsibility on every person referred to an FT by the State to establish before the Tribunal that he or she is, in fact, a citizen of India.

In 1983, the Union government, sensing the oppressive nature of the burden placed, introduced the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act. This law, which overrode the Foreigners Act, subtly shifted the onus to prove citizenship from the individual to the government. But, in July 2005, the Supreme Court, in *Sarbananda Sonowal vs Union of India*, declared the legislation unconstitutional. The Court found, through an almost cavalier consideration of history and facts, that migration into Assam constituted "external aggression" against the State, and, therefore, that the Central government had violated Article 355 of the Constitution. Given this, the burden to establish citizenship, the Court held, ought to always rest on the individual.

It is this judgment in *Sarbananda Sonowal* that has since served as the fundamental premise on which the Gauhati High Court has ruled on various petitions made against the verdicts of the FTs. But even assuming the burden ought to lie on the individual to establish her citizenship, these rulings could still benefit, as Madhav Khosla recently pointed out, by the outlining of a sensible test on what degree or level of proof ought to be sufficient to discharge the burden. However, by holding, for example, that persons suspected of being foreigners ought to not only provide documentary evidence but also have those documents attested by the authority that issued them, the Court has foisted on the petitioners a standard that is virtually impossible to meet.

Perhaps, the solution lies, as Gautam Bhatia has written, in an

approach taken by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. That is that the burden to establish citizenship might well lie on the individual, as the Foreigners Act stipulates, but once he or she has produced a basic set of documents that, on the face of things, make out a plausible claim, the onus ought to then shift to the State to rebut the evidence provided. Ultimately, as the Gauhati High Court has itself held, individuals are not expected to establish "beyond reasonable doubt" that they are citizens of India. What is expected of them is to show on a balance of probabilities that they are not foreigners. In such circumstances, the rational answer would be to allow the onus to shift to the State once the individual has met a basic threshold of proof.

This approach is, no doubt, far from perfect. In a country like ours, where the weakest and poorest among us are often denied access to basic goods, requiring individuals to produce documents to establish citizenship can by itself represent an onerous demand. We often see rights as universal, but as political philosopher Hannah Arendt pointed out in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, to truly possess rights, individuals often need to belong to a political community. In other words, "the right to have rights" is seen as contingent on citizenship. In instilling a regime where a presumption against citizenship operates, the Foreigners Act denies to the weakest among us this right to have rights. It treats them as less equal beings. To reverse this damage, we must do as Seyla Benhabib has suggested. We must recognise a universal status of personhood of every human being independent of their nationality.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

The public unravelling of Yes Bank

The manner of its collapse raises questions on the central bank's role and the late action by the Enforcement Directorate



PUJA MEHRA

On Sunday, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Yes Bank's swashbuckling co-promoter Rana Kapoor, accusing him and his family of using shell companies to receive kickbacks from the bank's corporate borrowers.

On March 5, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had used its powers to supersede the bank's board and impose restrictions on its operations. The bank's depositors cannot withdraw more than ₹50,000 for the next four weeks at least. Predictably, the State Bank of India (SBI) has emerged as Yes Bank's knight in shining armour. Surprisingly, though, it is crowd-sourcing the rescue plan.

Balance sheet scam

The manner in which the Yes Bank collapse has unravelled raises several questions. The full extent of its troubles spilled into the public domain two years ago, when, in September 2018, the RBI had declined to extend Mr. Kapoor's term as managing director and chief executive officer by three years. It directed the bank to end his tenure by January 31, 2019.

The scam on the bank's balance sheets must have been visible to the RBI as far back as in 2015. The RBI's asset quality review (AQR) had forced Yes Bank, as it had several other banks, to report transparently their previously unlisted non-performing assets (NPAs).

Before the AQR in 2015, bankers avoided recognising bad loans on their books. They did this by restructuring the loans susceptible to defaults or by extending new loans, called evergreening, to keep the stressed borrowers afloat. Thus, while the borrowers were able to avoid defaults on repayments, the lenders managed to show low NPAs.

The RBI found that for the year ended March 2016, Yes Bank had classified loans worth ₹749 crore as gross NPAs, understating the figure by a whopping ₹4,176.70 crore. It directed Yes Bank to reclassify more loans as NPAs. Dismissing this to the stock exchanges in May 2017, Yes Bank assured investors that the higher NPAs would not have further ramifications as it had already taken remedial action.

However, just five months later, in October 2017, the bank disclosed, once again, that the RBI had discovered more underreported gross NPAs on its books. For the year ended March 2017, the underreporting was of the tune of ₹6,355 crore.

Why has the ED then swung into action so late, giving Mr. Kapoor



VIBHAV BIRWANKAR

18 months to cover his tracks and potentially remove all the money he can from the bank in this period? If the RBI's inspections of the bank's books left it with no confidence in Mr. Kapoor, surely then that ought to have been a smoking gun to suspect if not investigate his role in Yes Bank's serial under-reporting of NPAs. Also, Yes Bank was looking for investors for the last few months. The moratorium and the investigation against Mr. Kapoor seem to have been triggered by the failure to find investors. This suggests that had investors been found, Mr. Kapoor may have escaped action. After all the RBI's discomfort with him was known even back in 2018. Why didn't the ED take action at that time?

In December 2018, barely two months after Mr. Kapoor's extension was rejected, former RBI Governor Urjit Patel resigned from the central bank. Did the RBI and other authorities go soft on Yes Bank after that? Its transgressions continued even after the RBI fined the bank and forced changes in its management. For the year ended

March 2019, the RBI discovered underreported NPAs worth ₹2,299 crore. Incidentally, around the time the moratorium was announced last Thursday, news broke of another resignation at the RBI. This time of its well-regarded Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan, a specialist in regulation, supervision of banks and non-banking finance companies. The exit follows a four-decade career at the RBI and just three months ahead of his retirement in June. Was it prompted by the health issues cited or a protest against the RBI's stance on policy matters such as handling of Yes Bank?

Shareholders' role

And what of the bank's shareholders? Why did they ratify remuneration hikes and a renewal of tenure for Mr. Kapoor despite public information of the serial under-reporting of NPAs? The regulators must ensure now that all current equity held by Yes Bank holders should get wiped out since it represents a pure risk capital. If this is not done, any investment by Yes Bank's saviour, the SBI, will be a subsidy to them. Let us not forget that barely two years ago, the SBI and its associate banks received ₹8,800 crore in recapitalisation from the Central government. Other public banks received more.

How credible can the rescue be when barely three months ago the SBI had disclosed that the RBI has discovered under-reported NPAs —

of ₹11,932 crore for the year ended March 2019 — on its books?

Most importantly, why are public comments being sought on the restructuring scheme for Yes Bank? This is unfair to the SBI. The restructuring scheme is no one's business other than the SBI's. After this precedent, next time a bank, say a Kotak Mahindra Bank or HDFC Bank, is to get an investment from a new investor, will that scheme also be put up for public comments?

If this were a commercial decision taken by the SBI, and not capitulation before the government of the day, it would have put greater financial might and a well-crafted plan behind the rescue.

Finally, what other options were considered by the RBI? Did they include a market-based solution? DBS Bank has just turned into a wholly-owned subsidiary of its Singaporean parent. Could Yes Bank's network of branches been of interest to it? Ideally, the moratorium ought to have been announced, together with the scheme for restructuring, over a weekend. That would have made it less disruptive, the limit of ₹50,000 on withdrawals by depositors would not have been needed, and the RBI's credibility would not have suffered as much.

Puja Mehra is a Delhi-based journalist and author of *The Lost Decade (2008-18): How India's Growth Story Devolved into Growth Without A Story?*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

The cost of saving Yes

In the Yes Bank case, in our haste to find faults and then fix responsibility for them, are we not overlooking a vital aspect which could have played a significant role in the disastrous showing by the bank — the floundering economy of the country? I would say that it all started with the folly of demonetisation which virtually brought the cash-driven rural and MSME sectors of the economy to its knees. It also struck a huge blow to the real estate sector. The parlous state of the real estate sector did have a role to play as far as some prominent NBFCs who lent massively to the sector are concerned. The slowdown in realty and the stalling of infrastructure projects has had a chain reaction in the form of

sharply reduced demand for many products. Unless the government realises the gravity of the situation and initiate steps to stimulate the economy, there could be more bad news.

M.P. MURALIDHARAN, Bengaluru

■ How many readjustments is the government of the day going to make to save every bank that is ready to collapse? What about the State Bank of India's own non-performing assets? The Yes Bank case shows that lending heavily to corporates without due diligence of their loan history is one of the major issues affecting the banking sector. Had similar loan amounts been extended to small- and medium-scale industries it would have most certainly boosted growth and

employment and might have even revived the sinking growth of MSMEs. The government of the day needs to invite the best banking experts to run banks and also ensure a strong regulation regime to control the issue of growing NPAs.

RATNARAJ JAIN, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

■ The case raises questions on the efficacy of present regulatory systems and procedures. It is to be noted that the bigwigs who commit these huge financial frauds are very aware of our legal system, where a case can be dragged on for decades using the maze of adjournments and appeals at various levels. It is to be hoped that at least now the banking regulator will thoroughly reform the regulatory systems and procedures and that

independent bank board members will be appointed based on their professional competence and integrity.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI, Hyderabad

Name and shame

The puerile, insidious act of the Uttar Pradesh government, of using hoardings to "name and shame" persons arrested during protests last December against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, is reprehensible and exceeding its remit (Page 1, "HC orders removal of Lucknow hoardings", March 10). By demonising the alleged protesters and portraying them as criminals is proving of *mens rea* by the government per se. The judiciary should have also adjudicated to recover the expenses against the

provision of hoardings from the Lucknow District Magistrate.

DEEPAK SINGHAL, Chennai

Quest for a govt. job

The report that well qualified candidates are among newly appointed conservancy staff in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu is not the first of its kind in India (Page 1, "When PGs pick up the broom to become govt. servants", March 10). Though social equality has ensured a more level playing field, the

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

We erred: The first entry in the Corrections and Clarifications column (March 10, 2020) erroneously gave the number of CPI(M) MPs in the Lok Sabha as two. The correct figure is three.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 855 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

India needs all hands on deck

It is puzzling why the country relies solely on the National Institute of Virology for genome sequencing



R. PRASAD

On February 6, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognised the Pune-based National Institute of Virology (NIV) as one of the 15 laboratories that would provide reference testing support for the novel coronavirus.

The number of COVID-19 cases remained constant at three for nearly a month in India, but now it is going up steadily. Anticipating such a scenario, more labs are screening COVID-19 samples now. Besides the 52 labs belonging to the Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratories network of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 10 labs under the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) have been included for testing COVID-19 samples.

Till recently, all the 52 labs were allowed to only screen samples; only NIV was authorised to confirm positive cases. With more suspected cases piling up, a long delay in confirming positive test results would have become inevitable for NIV. So, in a welcome move, ICMR has pre-empted such a scenario. "Four-five days ago, 13 labs were authorised to confirm positive cases without sending them to NIV. Another 17 labs will be authorised to do so on March 11 and the remaining labs on March 13," says Nivedita Gupta of ICMR. With the 10 labs under the NCDC regularly confirming positive H1N1 cases, we can expect these labs to be authorised to also confirm positive COVID-19 cases.

Unfortunately, several national labs have not been brought up to speed to perform other vital functions during an outbreak.

Sequencing the genome

NIV is the only lab in India which has a bio-safety level-4 (BSL-4) facility to culture pathogenic, novel viruses, study the origin of such viruses and provide a comprehensive characterisation of them by sequencing the entire viral genome. NIV has sequenced the SARS-CoV-2 genome collected from two patients in Kerala.

When the entire genome is sequenced it helps researchers under-



"Anticipating a rise in COVID-19 cases, more labs now are screening samples." Students wear protective masks at a railway station in Kochi. ■ REUTERS

stand the arrangement of the four chemical entities or bases that make up the DNA or RNA. The differences in the arrangement of the bases make organisms different from one another. Sequencing the genome of SARS-CoV-2 will help us understand where the virus came from and how it spread.

In the last decade or so, many national laboratories have developed the expertise to sequence the entire genome of viruses and bacteria using the latest equipment (next-generation sequencing, or NGS). About a dozen labs have a BSL-3 facility to inactivate the virus and sequence the genome using advanced equipment. They also have the expertise to undertake such work.

It is therefore puzzling why India relies solely on NIV for undertaking genome sequencing. If there's a compelling need to have all hands on deck to sequence the genome, it is now.

While NIV sequenced two of the three COVID-19 samples collected from Kerala in late January-early February, it is not clear if more samples have been sequenced. Contrast this with how other countries have responded. Many of the 263 sequences shared with the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID), a public platform started by the WHO in 2008 for countries to share genome sequences, are by universities and hospitals. In mainland China, many of the sequences are shared by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which is present in all the 31 provinces. At 90, China has posted the most sequence data on GISAID. This is fol-

lowed by the U.S. (37).

Unutilised expertise in India

"We tested around 75,000 samples of H1N1 during the 2009-2010 outbreak. We have a BSL-3 facility and the latest sequencing equipment. We are ready to help out if ICMR reaches out to us," says Professor V. Ravi, Head of the Department of Virology at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, about sequencing.

"It is time for team building, not the time to work in silos," says Dr. Chitra Pattabiraman from NIMHANS. "If we are not given an opportunity to develop these skill sets and not encouraged to participate, then how are we ever going to get good at it?"

During the 2018 Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, a lab outside NIV, the Manipal Centre for Virus Research, successfully proved that given an opportunity it could not only diagnose the novel virus but also partially sequence it. The Manipal Centre confirmed the Nipah virus in 17 of the 24 samples it received from Kerala. Unfortunately, since April 2019, the Manipal Centre has been directed to restrict itself to processing the samples of pathogens specific to the BSL-2 facility. It is not even one of the designated labs to test for the novel coronavirus.

Virologist Professor Gagandeep Kang, executive director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, however feels that given that the number of COVID-19 cases in India is still under 60, NIV does not feel overwhelmed.

While agreeing that many labs/in-

stitutions in India have the ability to sequence the viral genome, Professor Kang emphasises that sequencing is useful to know where the virus strain came from and to check if the strain is evolving, but does not inform us of the immediate strategy to control the outbreak or its spread.

With the latest sequencing equipment widely available in many research labs and the cost of sequencing falling, researchers are using genome sequences for genomic epidemiology. This becomes possible as scientists already know the number of mutations that arise on an average in a month in the case of COVID-19, its incubation period, and the average time between cases in a chain transmission (serial interval). Using this data, it has become possible to identify the index case even when the source of infection is not known, and find the link between two seemingly unconnected outbreaks.

How China built capacity

China was completely unprepared when the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) struck in 2002-2003. The outbreak infected over 8,000 people globally and killed nearly 800. The bird flu (H5N1) outbreak that followed in 2003 underscored the need for influenza detection and response in China. This led to a collaboration between the Chinese National Influenza Center and the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2004 to build capacity in influenza surveillance in China.

For the next 10 years the collaboration worked in many ways: it led to developed human technical expertise in virology and epidemiology, a comprehensive influenza surveillance system, strengthened analysis, the dissemination of surveillance data, and improved early response to influenza viruses with pandemic potential. By 2014, the national influenza surveillance and response system included 408 labs and 554 sentinel hospitals.

Today, there is a Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in each of the 31 provinces in mainland China. The infrastructure and capacity-building that was put in place by China for influenza surveillance stood in good stead when the H1N1 pandemic struck in 2009.

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A progressive system of taxation

Why reverting to the classical system of taxing dividend is a good move



R. ANAND

As a concept, 'dividend' has been in existence since the inception of the Income Tax Act. Any shareholder in a company is entitled to dividend as a return on investment. Dividend covers various elements of payouts from a company and seeks to tax those at some stage. The question is: at what point should the dividend be taxed and how? The matter assumes significance since corporates pay tax on their profits and any tax on the distribution of post-tax profits amounts to double taxation. The Finance Bill, 2020 has reverted to the classical system of taxing dividends (in the hands of the shareholders). The Bill seeks to withdraw the dividend distribution tax (DDT) payable by the company. This move has created ripples since high-net-worth individuals never expected a full tax in their hands, which is being sought to be achieved by the proposal.

Three methods of taxing dividend

The three methods of taxing dividend are the classical system; the simplistic system or DDT regime; and the imputation system. The classical system was in vogue till 1997-98. According to this system, the dividend was taxable in the hands of the shareholder, subject to the then available deduction under Section 80L for a maximum of ₹12,000. This was a progressive system.

The Finance Act of 1997 analysed the merits and demerits of the classical system and embarked on the route of the simplistic system of taxing dividend in the hands of the distributing company. In the process, millions of shareholders were spared the burden of offering dividends as tax in their hands. The DDT system replaced the classical system from 1997-98. The rate of DDT started at about 10% and climbed to 20.56%. The advantage of DDT was that tracking of dividend in the hands of the company became easier and collecting the tax on dividend was a painless process. The main drawback was that the treaty agreements with countries like the U.S. did not permit the set-off of the DDT paid against the tax liability of the shareholder. DDT was simple but inequitable since it made no distinction between a low taxpayer and a high taxpayer.

With India registering substantial growth between 1997 and 2020, corporate performances also registered progress and dividend pay-outs increased. The income tax payer came under the radar of the IT depart-

ment. This development made tracking of the shareholder much easier. The withdrawal of DDT came as a relief to the corporate sector which has wanted DDT to be removed and the effective corporate tax rate in India to be reduced. Corporates are also required to conserve cash for further growth. This largely prompted the government to revert to the classical system for taxing dividend.

Maximum tax rate

However, this means that the starting rate of tax works out to 10% and the highest rate works out to, say, 43%. Tax paid in dividend is out of money earned and received and more often than not represents holding of shares passed on by generations without any cost incurred. On this score, discharging tax at the maximum marginal rate more than justifies the principle of equity and sharing with the government in the overall developmental agenda. Shareholders in other countries with a protective treaty regime can receive dividend attracting tax rates as low as 5%. The distortion in the current regime viz. the foreign shareholder being taxed at a much lower rate than the Indian counterpart is obvious. This would require some correction. The main contention of the high-net-worth individual is that while the classical system is acceptable as a concept, the maximum tax rate is an unexpected extra burden.

Some countries follow the imputation system. The dividend is taxed in the hands of the shareholders but they are also allowed a set-off of a portion of the corporate tax discharged by the company. In many ways, the imputation credit resembles an underlying tax credit granted to non-residents under certain treaties entered into by India. While there are complexities in that system, it mitigates the hardships caused by the double taxation impact of dividend distribution.

Indian promoter groups control a majority of shareholding in Indian companies. For them, the wealth is largely represented by the value of shares and the dividends received over a period of time. These have been passed on to successive generations. These shares can be held by individuals, HUFs, family companies, or family trusts. Any decision to declare dividend is analysed from the standpoint of the company and the standpoint of the entity receiving the dividends. As long as dividends were received tax-free, the structure was irrelevant. But with the current proposal even family trusts can be taxed at the maximum rate. This blow is bound to force companies to revisit their strategy of paying dividends.

The move to the classical system is not only well-conceived but also tilted towards the appropriate progressive system of taxation.

R. Anand is a Chartered Accountant

Writing as resistance

Despite insurmountable challenges and ennui, distress shouldn't prevent us from writing

KUNAL RAY

Visuals of the Delhi riots kept many across on tenterhooks. People despaired and felt distressed. Frantic calls were made to ensure safety of friends and family. Social media rituals of 'like', 'dislike', and 'share' were duly performed. Witnessing the frenzy increased our sense of helplessness. During occasions like these, one wonders what we can do to help. Is it good enough to just write and bemoan the troubling state of affairs? Can anyone really benefit from that? The heart-breaking visuals that emerged from the riots and the poignant, relentless accounts remind us of W.B. Yeats's much cited poem, "The Second Coming", where he says, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity."

Dealing with agony

In the times we live in, violence is being normalised in the most grotesque way. As a result, people resort to different ways of dealing with their agony. Some might take to writing to capture the terror that was unleashed on the streets of Delhi. Writing serves as a document and gory reminder to what transpired and how. Writing captures memory, safeguards it for posterity for future action and recall. But writing in times of distress is easier said than done.

Some might even deem it escapist. They might think it doesn't take much to write in the comfort of your home when war is being waged on the street outside. Writing is a comfortable option in comparison. And it cannot prevent genocide. However, I am sure many would agree if I say distress derails writing. It makes the act of writing difficult, often perilous.

The writer struggles for the exact word to justly quantify her enormity of grief and desolation. Distress creates perplexity. You wonder if there's any purpose to it all, to all that you write, read, compose, paint. Does anybody care? While ruminating over these questions, I chanced upon a video of vocalist Shubha Mudgal singing Habib Jalib's famous

nazm, 'Main nahi manta (I do not accept)' at a protest site and it made me realise that every such gesture matters. It restored an individual's faith in what they do. Perhaps all purpose is what is lost.

The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote extensively about and in distress. So did Qurratulain Hyder, Krishna Sobti and Saadat Hasan Manto and many others. Faiz Ahmad

Faiz's *Hum Dekhenge*, which became the protest anthem across recent demonstrations in the country, lived perennially in distress. Writers like Mirza Waheed, Salma, and Perumal Murugan have given a face and body to distress in their writing. Svetlana

na Alexievich's Nobel Prize is a recognition of the memorials to distress she has built in her writing. Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005) is a heartwrenching narrative about living with distress following the death of loved ones. Distress is political but it is also personal. It comes from a deeply felt sense of compassion and heartache. Distress has birthed newer forms of writing and artistic expression. Distress is an institution, a laboratory of ideas to genesis further writing.

A challenge for writers

However, the creation of widespread distress, mayhem and disturbance is, in a sense, a conspiracy against writing. It ensures that writing becomes difficult. But that is exactly the challenge that writers must overcome. The oppressors don't want them to write. In such a scenario, there would be one kind of story, a single narrative written by the oppressor about the oppressed. And it is everyone's knowledge what that story would be. In writing sometimes, the wrong can become the right. It is this appropriation that our writing must resist. Despite insurmountable challenges and an all-pervasive ennui, distress shouldn't prevent us from writing. In fact, it should, ideally, spark off collective action to further the spirit of resistance.

Kunal Ray teaches literary & cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



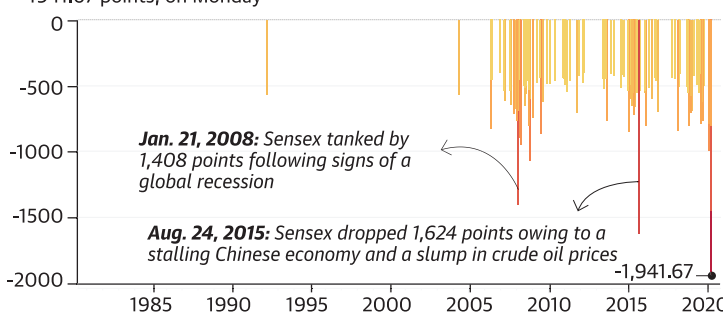
DATA POINT

A history of crashes

The Indian benchmark Sensex witnessed its biggest ever fall in absolute terms on Monday. The crash came amid fears of a global market slowdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Among the factors that led to the unprecedented crash is a weakening rupee. The Monday meltdown in the Sensex was accompanied by steep falls in many global markets. By Naresh Singaravelu and Sumant Sen

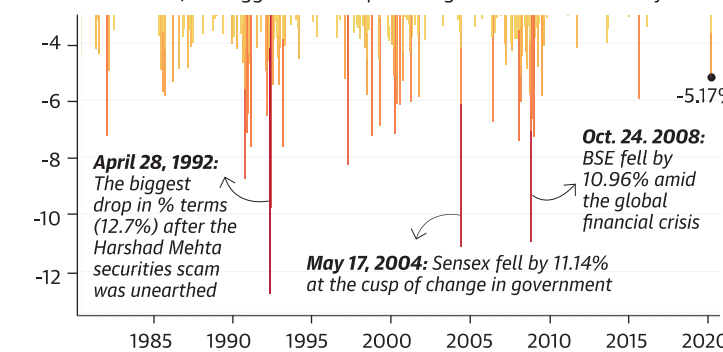
1. SENSEX DROP IN ABSOLUTE TERMS

The chart plots all single-day Sensex falls of over 400 points. The benchmark index witnessed its biggest single day fall on absolute terms, of 1,941.67 points, on Monday



2. SENSEX DROP IN % TERMS

The chart plots all single-day Sensex falls of over 3%. On Monday, the Sensex fell 5.17%, the biggest crash in percentage terms in the last five years



3. WEAKENING RUPEE

The chart plots daily closing values of the Indian rupee against the U.S.\$ since 1994. The rupee closed at a 16-month low on Monday



4. GLOBAL MARKETS FALL

The Sensex crash as global markets are tumbling across Americas, Europe and Asia. The graphs shows fall on Monday in % terms

Index	Change (%)
Euro Stoxx 50, Eurozone	-8.33%
Dax, Germany	-7.89%
FTSE 100, U.K.	-7.88%
S&P 500, U.S.	-7.29%
BSE Sensex, India	-5.17%
Nikkei 225, Tokyo	-5.07%
Hang Seng, Hong Kong	-4.23%
CSI 300, Shanghai	-4.23%
Kospi, S. Korea	-4.19%

Source: BSE Sensex, Bloomberg, IMF

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 11, 1970

New Prayer song for Tamil Nadu

A poem written by the late Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai, Professor of History in the Travancore University, and a noted Tamil scholar, has been adopted as the prayer song for Tamil Nadu Government functions. It is a two-stanza verse beginning with "Neeraram kadaludutha..." from Prof. Sundaram Pillai's play, "Manonmaniam". Only the first six-line stanza is to be used for the purpose of the State prayer song. An announcement about the prayer song was made by the Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, in his speech at the presentation here [Madras, March 10] early this week of State Awards for the best Tamil films, artistes and technicians of 1968. M. S. Visvanathan (best music director), who composed a new tune for "Neeraram kadaludutha," sang it along with P. Susheela (best female playback singer) for prayer at the colourful Awards presentation ceremony. Singing the fame of Tamil Nadu and the Tamil language the prayer-poem refers to Dravidanadu as the beautiful "tilakam" on the beautiful forehead (Deccan) of the "beautiful face of the world" that is Bharat.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 11, 1920.

Declaration of Rights.

Last evening at the Soundarya Mahal, Mr. A. Rangaswami Aiyengar, Editor of the "Swadesamitran" delivered a lecture on the "Declaration of Rights" for the benefit of students in the city. The Principal of the Law College presided. The learned lecturer discussed his subject from a purely legal and academic point of view, and studiously avoided considering the expediency, the political necessity or otherwise of a Declaration of Rights for Indians...[He] gave the essential limitation of such rights as were understood in the countries of the West. He then took his audience through the different stages in the growth of the constitution of different countries, including Great Britain, France and America and pointed out how after considerable agitation, the principle of the Declaration of Rights of the citizens came to be established. He referred more especially to the struggle between the rulers and the people in England for the recognition of this principle, ever since the time of the Magna Carta, which he said was nothing less than a Declaration of Rights. All progressive constitutions began with providing adequate safeguards against infringement into the fundamental and natural rights of man.

FROM PAGE ONE

Scindia meets Modi, quits Congress

At a meeting of the Congress Legislative Party held in Bhopal, around 92 MLAs turned up (including four independent MLAs) with 21 MLAs having sent in their resignations. The effective strength of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly is 228. If the resignations of the 21 MLAs is accepted, the strength would fall to 211, with the magic number being 106. The Congress will be left with 97 seats while the BJP has 107 seats.

"The BJP is keen that Mr Scindia join [the party] in the presence of former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. And there are two views over the road ahead — one is to emulate what hap-

pened in Karnataka, that is, go for a floor test in an Assembly with reduced numbers and wait for bypolls to complete the circle; the other is to ask for snap polls," said a source.

For the BJP, the defection of Mr Scindia and his supporters is a major shot in the arm in a State they lost after 15 years, which was considered one of the birth places of the Jan Sangh, the earlier avatar of the BJP.

Mr Scindia's grandmother, the late Vijayaraje Scindia was one of the stalwarts of the Jan Sangh and a founder member of the BJP, a point continually emphasised by BJP leaders through the day.

As 22 MLAs quit, Nath govt. on verge of collapse

"They play pressure politics, the Congress doesn't," he added.

Following their resignation, the 19 Scindia loyalists wrote to the Director General of the Police, Karnataka, requesting protection during their stay in Karnataka.

Meanwhile, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who had helmed the BJP government for the past 15 years before the Congress wrested it in December 2018, distanced the BJP from the resignations, terming it an internal matter.

"Our priority at present is the Rajya Sabha election," he clarified at his residence, where Bisahul Singh, four-

time Congress MLA and former Minister, announced his resignation and pledged support to the BJP.

Another State BJP leader Sanjay Pathak asked how Mr. Scindia could endure being disrespected within the Congress for so long. "Congress has always indulged in vendetta politics, targeted BJP leaders in the State. Whereas, we have worked for the State's development,"

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, who had last week flagged a purported poaching bid by the BJP, claimed to have proof of the party ferrying the 19 MLAs to Karnataka.

COVID-19 cases surge in country

In Kerala, cinema halls will be shut till March 31 and about 270 people who came in contact with coronavirus patients have been traced. Ninety-five of them are in the "high-risk category," according to officials.

Surveillance has been strengthened after fresh cases emerged in the State. "About 1,116 people are under observation, 976 are under home quarantine while 149 are in hospitals. They include people with symptoms as well," Kerala Health Minister K.K. Shailaja said.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Tuesday appealed to the government to classify the data of the epidemic and take appropriate action with clinical precision. "Sharing of data on daily basis with the public who are clueless as to what is expected of them has created panic across the country," the IMA said. It has also asked doctors to function as a source of credible information in their locality and instil confidence and trust. "It cannot be denied that the high-handed, top-down response in China is part of the reason for this global panic. The nuanced

and balanced approach of the Indian government is certainly better suited to handle the crisis in a country of 1.3 billion people," the IMA said.

The Central government in a release noted that all regular Visas (including e-Visas) which have been granted to nationals of France, Germany and Spain on or before March 11, 2020 and where these foreigners have not yet entered India stand suspended. "Visas of all foreigners already in India remain valid and they may contact the nearest FRRO/FRO through e-FRRO module for extension/conversion etc of their visa or grant of any consular service, if they choose to do so. A notification to this effect is being issued by the Bureau of Immigration," it added.

The Health Ministry said that after the 44 positive cases declared on Monday, three positive cases were reported from Bengaluru (with travel history from the U.S. via Dubai); one more from Bengaluru with travel history from the U.S. via Heathrow; and two positive cases from Pune (travel history from Dubai).

24 arrested for lynching man in Meghalaya

One of the picnickers, identified as Macmillan Kharshandy, died and two others sustained serious head injuries.

"We picked up these people around 4 a.m. They said they presumed the nine men to be kidnappers as they were moving back and forth from one village to another at night. They had apparently been forewarned about the movement of suspicious people via social media," District Superintendent of Police Claudia A. Lyngwa told *The Hindu* from Shillong.

The victims said they got late at the picnic spot and lost their way back at night, driving without a clue. Some villagers stopped and

surrounded their vehicle and assaulted them.

"A majority of those who participated in the lynching have been sent to judicial custody, while six were sent to police custody," Ms. Lyngwa said.

R. Pale, headman of Syntung village, said the elders had tried to control the mob in vain. "Some of the village elders went to the house of the victim in Shillong to pay their respects and apologise for the attack," he said.

East Khasi Hills district has been on the edge since February 28 when a clash between tribal and non-tribal people left a member of the Khasi Students' Union dead. Two more were stabbed to death later.

Tight fight for Gujarat RS seats

BJP determined to deny Congress two seats, to try to split Opposition numbers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

With elections to four Rajya Sabha seats under way in Gujarat, political activity in the State is set to intensify as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appears determined to retain the three seats despite being short of numbers on its side.

Of the four seats, the BJP holds three, while one is with the Opposition Congress. The arithmetic suggests both the BJP and the Congress can get two seats each in the absence of voting, based on the number of legislators on both sides.

Neither party has so far

However, the ruling BJP is unlikely to concede a seat to the Opposition party and will instead field a third candidate and try to split the Opposition party's numbers to ensure its victory.

"As of now, the Congress, with 73 legislators, can barely manage to send two candidates to the Rajya Sabha, but even a minor defection of a few legislators can change that scenario," a party leader said, adding there are already talk of a few legislators in touch with the BJP to either cross-vote or abstain from voting.

Neither party has so far



Madhusudan Mistry

declared any candidates for the four seats.

The last day for the filing of nominations is March 13, while voting will be held on March 26.

The term of Madhusudan Mistry of the Congress is ending, while from the ruling BJP, Shambhuprasad Tundia, Lalsinh Vadodia and Chunibhai Gohel are completing their term.

According to Congress insiders, in case "proper candidates" are not selected by the party, there will be some defections during the voting for the Rajya Sabha.

Once nomination papers are filed, the Congress is likely to shift its legislators to neighbouring Rajasthan to prevent any attempt at poaching or horse-trading from the ruling party.

Bikash is Left-Congress candidate

The former Kolkata Mayor will file his nomination later this week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

CPI(M) leader and former Kolkata Mayor Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya is the joint candidate of the Left parties and the Congress for the Rajya Sabha election from West Bengal.

He told *The Hindu* that he would file his nomination later this week. "Yes, I have been nominated as the joint candidate of the Left and the Congress. I will file it [the nomination] on March 12," he said.

Mr. Bhattacharya, 68, is a prominent lawyer and had been the Mayor of Kolkata



Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya

from 2005 to 2010. His name emerged as a consensus candidate after the CPI(M) Polit Bureau rejected the State unit's request for the nomination of party general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

"Mr. Yechury was our first

preference and when he is not contesting, our MLAs will support whomsoever the CPI(M) leadership nominates," Congress general secretary Amitava Bhattacharya said.

Mr. Bikash Bhattacharya is acceptable to the Congress because he was instrumental in bringing the Saradha chit fund scam and the Naradha video tapes before the Calcutta High Court and had pressed for an investigation by Central agencies.

In 2017, the Left parties put him up for the Rajya Sabha, but he could not file the nomination before the dea-

dline. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, he was the Left Front candidate in Jadavpur and was defeated by Mimi Chakraborty of the Trinamool Congress.

The Left parties and the Congress do not have enough strength in the Assembly to elect a nominee to the Rajya Sabha on their own.

However, if they come together, they can send one member.

The Trinamool Congress has announced four candidates: Mausam Benazir Noor, Arpita Ghosh, Subrata Bakshi and Dinesh Trivedi.

254 Kashmiri Pandits in govt. jobs since 2015

Home Ministry tells parliamentary panel that relief, rehabilitation provided to registered migrants

VIJAJITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

As many as 254 Kashmiri Pandits have joined government service in Jammu and Kashmir since a special package was announced for the displaced community by the Centre in 2015.

Under the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 7, 2015, the government approved creation of 3,000 additional State government jobs for Pandits at a cost of ₹1,080 crore.

A similar employment package was announced by the Manmohan Singh government in 2008 under which 1,474 State government jobs were provided to the migrant youth.

The Union Home Ministry, in reply to a parliamentary standing committee on relief and rehabilitation provided to Kashmiri Pandits, said that "till date, appoint-



Coming together: Kashmiri Pandits staging a sit-in in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on January 19, 2020. •PTI

ment orders to 528 candidates have been issued and 254 have joined duties."

The special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 was revoked and the State was bifurcated and downgraded into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh by Parliament on August 6, 2019.

The Ministry told the pa-

nel that as per the inputs provided by the government of Jammu and Kashmir, there are 64,827 registered migrant families comprising 60,489 Hindu families, 2,609 Muslim families and 1,729 Sikh families.

"Of the 64,827 families, 43,494 families are registered in Jammu, 19,338 in Delhi and 1,995 families are

settled in other States and Union Territories. Of the 43,494 migrant families, 5,248 families are living in migrant camps," the report tabled in Parliament last week said.

The Ministry said the government had been providing relief and rehabilitation packages to all registered migrants "irrespective of their religion".

"Cash relief to the eligible Jammu and Kashmiri migrants is given at the rate of ₹3,250 per person with a ceiling of ₹13,000 per family a month. The last enhancement was sanctioned in June 2018. In addition, dry ration is also provided," the Ministry told the panel.

Hike in cash relief

The monthly cash relief to the Kashmiri migrants was increased from ₹6,600 per family as sanctioned in 2004 to ₹13,000 per family per month in 2018. The cash al-

lowance provided by the State governments is reimbursed by the MHA.

"Regarding the transit accommodation, 849 flats are available, and 560 flats are under construction," the report said.

The panel led by senior Congress leader Anand Sharma observed that "the living conditions in the 849 transit accommodations are not good" and recommended that the Ministry should send a team to visit the transit accommodation and take necessary steps to provide adequate living conditions including floor space, hygienic food, water supply, sanitation and other basic amenities.

The committee also recommended that the Ministry should fast-track the construction of new transit accommodations so that the burden on the existing accommodation might be eased, the report said.

Mother, sister visit Omar on 50th birthday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah's mother and sister visited him in the Srinagar sub-jail to wish him on his 50th birthday on Tuesday.

Booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA), Mr. Abdullah's sister Safia Abdullah Khan and mother Molly Abdullah went to see him in the Hari Niwas palace, an interrogation centre that was turned into a guest house and now serves as a sub-jail for the NC leader since August 5 last year.

It was a quiet celebration for the Abdullahs, as NC president Farooq Abdullah remains in detention in his own house under the PSA. "Wishing my brother, Omar, a very happy 50th birthday!" tweeted Ms. Khan.

Kasuri recalls plan for Sir Creek pact

He says Pakistan had invited then PM Manmohan Singh to sign the agreement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

From the rise of nationalism and India's place in the emerging world to the need to combat climate change, several subjects were discussed at the third edition of WION's global summit held on March 5 in Dubai.

With "Navigating and negotiating global imperatives" as its theme, the summit brought together policymakers and global thought leaders for dialogues that offered insights on the way forward. The 2020 Global Summit served as a platform for global leaders to have a dialogue on a common global agenda.

Several topics, including balancing and recalibrating Pakistan's diplomatic strategy and getting the youth to participate in democracy, were discussed at the summit organised by WION, India's first International News Channel. *The Hindu* was the WION Global Summit's print partner for India.

The dialogue partners included former Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickre-



Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri
Former Foreign Minister of Pakistan

mesinghe; former Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga; Defence Minister of the Maldives Mariya Didi; Bharatiya Janata Party national secretary Ram Madhav; climate activist Vanessa Nakate; and former Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri.

The session on India's place in the age of multilateralism and nationalism touched upon the rise of right-leaning politics, and stressed India's place in a

world opting for protectionism and reclaiming national identity. Mr. Ram Madhav said nationalism saw various phases in the history and it was defined in a narrower sense after the advent of Hitler and Mussolini.

"As far as India is concerned, we have looked at nationalism with a beneficial vision — it is for the benefit of an individual in the larger interest," Mr. Madhav said.

In a session on climate consciousness, Greenland's first woman Prime Minister Aleqa Hammond spoke on how climate change had impacted her country's economy. Ms. Nakate, an Ugandan climate activist, said farmers, particularly women, in her country were the worst hit by climate change.

Paralysis in Pakistan

The third session attempted to underline the deep-rooted issues paralysing Pakistan and its diplomacy. It witnessed a debate on the country's economy and internal political stability.

Mr. Kasuri said that Pakistan had invited former Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh to sign an agreement on Sir Creek in 2006. "We wanted to prove to the world that India and Pakistan could change things bilaterally..." said Mr. Kasuri, suggesting that India and Pakistan were close to solving the Kashmir issue at one point.

While senior journalist and broadcaster Reham Khan said genuine leadership and party workers were lost in Pakistan, former Pakistani Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir suggested that religious tourism such as opening up the Kartarpur Corridor could ease tensions between India and Pakistan.

The fourth session had the spotlight on the global erosion of democratic norms and the fallout of the U.S.-China trade war. Mr. Wickremesinghe highlighted the role of the media and social media that opened up under-democratic countries. "Across the world, the level of literacy and standard of living are preconditions for individuals to be able to participate in decision-making," Ms. Vike-Freiberga said.

Political vacuum in Congress after Scindia's exit

The turmoil in Madhya Pradesh may push other marginalised State leaders to speak out, say analysts

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOHAL

The festering resentment of being overlooked for the post of Chief Minister and later as State Congress chief, coupled with the Lok Sabha election upset, nudged Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, the second-most popular leader in Madhya Pradesh during the 2018 Assembly election, to abandon the party.

With the elections to three Rajya Sabha seats from the State imminent, Mr. Scindia, anticipating another short shrift from the party, pulled the plug on the Kamal Nath government.

While the decision has plunged the Kamal Nath government into a crisis in the short term, it has created a political vacuum for the Congress in Mr. Scindia's bastion, the Chambal-Gwalior region.

Although former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan



Out in the open: Congress workers staging a protest against Scindia in Bhopal on Tuesday. At right, Gopal Bhargava and other BJP MLAs leaving Bhopal. ■ A. M. FARUQUI

strode ahead in popularity by 10-12% in 2018, Mr. Scindia was close behind, explained Yatindra Singh Sisodia, Director, Madhya Pradesh Institute of Social Science Research. "Therefore, he should've been the natural choice [of CM] for the Congress. The situation, out of control of the Con-

gress now, could have been addressed timely," he said.

Midterm election
If the remaining Congress MLAs resign en masse, a midterm election will become imminent. That eventuality may not go down well with most MLAs, says Sanjay Kumar, Director at the

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

"Most certainly the government is going out," he said, although he described Mr. Scindia's decision to quit the Congress as "immature". Mr. Kumar said, "There are difference of opinions within any organisation. One should not be taking whimsi-



Gopal Bhargava and other BJP MLAs leaving Bhopal. ■ A. M. FARUQUI

cal decision. He seems more interested not in the Rajya Sabha seat but in destabilising the Kamal Nath government."

Mr. Kumar further cautioned that the episode might encourage disgruntled Congress leaders in other States to speak out. "If the high command doesn't act in

a fair manner, we might see something of this kind in other States as well," he added.

Meanwhile, Bhagwandas Israni, former principal secretary of the State Assembly, said the BJP was likely to form the government given its numbers, and support from the Central government.

Youth losing out to veterans in Cong.

Generational divide widens in party

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The revolt and subsequent expulsion of Madhya Pradesh Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday can be a turning point in the tussle between the party's younger lot of leaders and the veterans.

The warning signals came from the party's Haryana lawmaker Kuldeep Bishnoi in a tweet: "@JM_Scindia's departure is a big blow to @INCIndia. He was a central pillar in the party & the leadership should've done more to convince him to stay. Like him, there are many other devoted INC leaders across the country who feel alienated, wasted & discontented. India's oldest party needs to empower young leaders who have the capacity to work hard & resonate with the masses."

The episode is also indicative of the drift within the Congress and the leadership's inability to take quick decisions.

Apart from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan is another State where the veterans managed to edge out Sachin Pilot, the State Congress President who led the party to victory in the December 2018 Assembly election. Mr. Pilot has a less than cordial relationship with party veteran and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

Future tense

With the Congress's clout being substantially reduced and young leaders not getting too many opportunities within the party, several like Milind Deora and Jitin Prasad are restive about their political future. Uncertainty regarding the party's top position has only added to their desperation.

Lok Sabha member

'He betrayed people's trust'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot slammed Jyotiraditya Scindia for quitting the Congress and accused him of betraying the trust of the people and the party ideology. He said people like Mr. Scindia could not thrive without power and the "sooner they leave the better [it is]".

Shashi Tharoor's plea for internal elections has largely been ignored. Though Ms. Gandhi was brought in more as a stopgap arrangement

on August 10 last year, so far the Congress has shown no hurry to settle the leadership question except repeated calls for Rahul Gandhi to take charge. Mr. Gandhi, however, continues to be indifferent to such calls.

Veterans in command

The continuance of Ms. Gandhi, however, has meant that the party's backroom managers and veterans are once again calling the shots. Whether Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh or Ashok Gehlot in Rajasthan or Bhupinder Singh Hooda in Haryana, all are close to strategist Ahmed Patel, who was the real power behind Ms. Gandhi's earlier stint as Congress chief and 10 years of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

The party's old guard is more politically shrewd than those who are hand-picked by Mr. Gandhi, but a section of the younger lot seems to have thrown in the towel rather than fight to the finish for control of the party.

A shell-shocked Congress announces Scindia's expulsion

Before that, the rebel leader posted his resignation letter on Twitter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Moments after rebel Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia drove down to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence on Tuesday morning, party president Sonia Gandhi summoned general secretary K.C. Venugopal to her residence and asked him to announce Mr. Scindia's expulsion.

By then, Mr. Scindia had posted his resignation letter on his Twitter handle. In it, he said it was time for him to "move on and make a fresh start".

His letter was dated March 9 (Monday), though the Congress insisted that it was

hand-delivered at Ms. Gandhi's 10 Janpath residence on Tuesday afternoon.

Aim remains the same

The former Lok Sabha member for Guna made it clear that Tuesday's developments were the culmination of the events that played out over the past one year. "Having been a primary member of the Congress party for the last 18 years, it is now time for me to move on. I am tendering my resignation from the primary membership of the Congress and as you well know, this is a path that has been drawing itself out over the last year," he wrote.

"While my aim and pur-



Rocking the boat: Jyotiraditya Scindia's supporters say the party was indecisive about making him the MPCC chief. ■ PTI

pose remains the same as it has always been from the very beginning, to serve the people of my state and my country, I believe I am unable to do this anymore within this party. To reflect and realise the aspirations of my people and my workers I believe it is best that I now look ahead at a fresh start," he ad-

ded. He also thanked Ms. Gandhi and his other former Congress colleagues for providing him "with a platform to have served the nation".

"The Congress president has approved the expulsion of Sh. Jyotiraditya Scindia from the Indian National Congress with immediate effect for anti-party activities,"

Mr. Venugopal said in a statement.

The breaking point came after all efforts to broker a compromise failed. Sources close to Chief Minister Kamal Nath indicated that the party was willing to offer Mr. Scindia the post of president of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) and a Rajya Sabha seat. But peace efforts failed as Mr. Scindia refused to speak to him saying he had flu, said former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh.

Late on Monday evening, however, Mr. Scindia is learnt to have met Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot in Delhi. Mr. Pilot was reportedly the high command's emissary. This meeting also failed to placate him. Once considered the most

promising star of the party, Mr. Scindia lost out to Mr. Kamal Nath when the Congress chose the veteran for the post of Chief Minister in December 2018. Since then, it has never been an easy relationship. Though Mr. Scindia was the strongest claimant to the post of president of the MPCC, he was ignored because of the reported opposition from Mr. Digvijaya Singh and Mr. Kamal Nath.

From time to time, Mr. Scindia took position that was at odds with his party.

MLAs close to him said he was "pushed" to take such a decision because the central leadership was indecisive about making him the MPCC chief, and Mr. Kamal Nath and Mr. Digvijaya Singh teamed up to marginalise him.

LPG scheme closed, but only 3 States have gone kerosene-free

Parliamentary panel says there is still a lot of ground to cover

SOBHANA K NAIR
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary committee has said only three States and five Union Territories have become kerosene-free, though the government last September met the target of eight crore LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.

The report of the Parliamentary Committee on Petroleum, which was tabled last week, points to the gap between the continuing use of kerosene and the claim of 97% LPG coverage nationwide. The committee is headed by BJP member Ramesh Bidhuri.

The allocation for the scheme has been cut down by 58% from ₹2,724 crore during 2019-20 to ₹1,118 crore during 2020-21. The Petroleum Ministry informed the committee that the government had met the target on September 7, 2019, and 96.9% coverage had been achieved nationwide, except in Jammu and Kashmir. The Ministry said the scheme was no longer running, and the present allocation was meant to meet the arrears in the reimbursement of expenditure.

The 97% coverage has



Left out: Large segments of people in various States still use kerosene and wood for cooking.

been calculated by dividing the number of households — it stand at 2,850.5 lakh as on February 1 this year — and the domestic LPG consumers, at 2,772.2 lakh.

The committee was upset at the closure of the scheme, and said there was still a lot of ground to cover. "There are poor households in the general category in urban and semi-urban localities that also need to be covered. The committee, therefore, recommends that the scheme be extended to poor households in urban and semi-urban slum areas, and achieve a higher LPG coverage of the population by providing connections to households that do not have LPG," the report said.

At the same time, the committee said, large segments of people in various States still depended on kerosene for cooking and household lighting. The Ministry has justified the low number of 'kerosene-free' States and Union Territories, saying their consent is critical. Karnataka, Telangana, Haryana, Nagaland, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh and Puducherry have gone for a voluntary cut.

Only three States — Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh — and the Union Territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Andaman & Nicobar Island and Puducherry have become kerosene-free.

'Amarinder making false claims on jobs'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

While the verbal spat between the ruling Congress and the Opposition Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in Punjab continued, former Education Minister and senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema has hit out at Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, asking him to explain why Punjab was lagging behind in providing jobs to youth.

"It seems that either the Chief Minister is not aware of the standard procedure adopted by the Economic Survey throughout the country or he is trying to mislead the people again. Will the Chief Minister deny the fact that 2.69 lakh applicants have registered themselves with the unemployment bureau, of whom 91% are categorised as skilled and 85% are [Class] X pass or above?" he said.

Mr. Cheema said that in his recent statement, the Chief Minister had accepted that only 57,905 youth had been provided employment and his [the Chief Minister's] "claim made in Delhi" during the recent election campaign, on giving employment to 12 lakh youth, was "false and baseless".

Stop anti-Muslim violence: Iran's Assembly of Experts

Take quick steps to restore peace, says the body considered close to Khamenei

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An important legislative body of Iran has called upon India to stop violence against Muslims. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Assembly of Experts, an 88-member body considered close to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,

urged for quick measures to restore peace.

"Similar incidents have taken place in India before, but the latest one took place in the backdrop of the visit of the U.S. President. We call upon the Indian government to take immediate measures to ensure protection for the Muslim citizens," said Ayatollah

Ahmed Jannati, leader of the Assembly of Experts. Traditionally the Assembly of Experts is considered to be a powerful body of legislators as it has among its functions the task of electing the Supreme Leader.

The Assembly of Experts is considered to be a bastion of the ultra orthodox clerics.

The statement was part of a series of criticism by Iran's top-rung leaders after the killings of February 24-26.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the group of Shia organisations had criticised India for the riots that left at least 53 persons dead.

U.P. yet to decide on moving SC over posters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday said it was yet to decide on approaching the Supreme Court against the Allahabad High Court's order to immediately remove the posters of those accused of vandalism during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

The posters, bearing the photographs, names and addresses of those accused of vandalism during the protests in December last,

had come up at major road crossings in Lucknow last Thursday.

'Highly unjust'

The High Court on Monday ordered the Lucknow administration to remove them.

It had termed the posters "highly unjust," saying it was an "absolute encroachment on the personal liberty of individuals."

"Nothing has been decided on this yet. We will decide what we have to do," Awanish Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary, Home,

said when asked about reports that the State government would challenge the High Court's order in the Supreme Court.

Asked about any meeting Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had with senior officers, Mr. Awasthi said: "No such meeting was held."

A Bench of Chief Justice Govind Mathur and Justice Ramesh Sinha of the High Court also directed the District Magistrate and the Lucknow Police Commissioner to submit a report in this regard by next Monday.

Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture
(MPEDA, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India)
3/197, Poompuhar Road, Karaimedu Village,
Sattanathapuram Post, Sirkali - 609109,
Nagapattinam District, Tamil Nadu. Phone: +91 4364 265200.

ADVT. No. RGCA/2/2020 Date: 11.03.2020

Applications are invited by RGCA for Consultant posts on Project Manager (Personnel & Administration) -1 No. & Finance Officer-1 No. & IT Support Professionals (RGCA, HQ, Sirkali-1 No. & MPEDA, HO, Cochin -1 No.) on Temporary basis.

For details please refer RGCA website: www.rgca.org.in
Last date for submission of application: 30.03.2020. PROJECT DIRECTOR

राष्ट्रीय इस्पात निगम लिमिटेड
RASHTRIYA ISPAAT NIGAM LIMITED
(A Government of India Enterprise)
VISAKHAPATNAM STEEL PLANT
WORKS CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT
REGISTRATION OF CONTRACTORS

Ref. No. VSP/WC/REGM/M/2019-20 Date: 29.02.2020

- Free applications are invited online for Registration of Contractors for various works in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.
- Registered Agencies having valid up to 31.08.2020 also need to apply for renewal of Registration, on line.
- Last date for submission of 'ONLINE' application on or before 4th April, 2020. The applications will be processed on first-cum-first serve basis.
- Print out of the filled in online application, duly signed, with all supporting documents alongwith DD/B/C for Rs.1,10,000/- in favour of RINL-payable at Visakhapatnam towards Registration application cost & processing fee, shall be submitted in a file to the office of CGM/Works Contracts, 1st floor, Works Contracts Department, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Visakhapatnam-530 033 on or before 15th April, 2020.

Contact: Sri T Jagadishwara Rao BGM & Convenor - CRC, Works Contracts, Ph:0891-2518755/PP: Ce:13177131869 CGM (WC)

For online Application form, other details & corrigendum please visit regularly www.vizagsteel.com / Contracts / Common Contractors Registration. **HAR EK KAAM DESH KE NAAM**

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(Jalbhavan), # 5 & 6, I Stage, I Phase, Bannerghatta Road, B.T.M. Layout, Bangalore-29. Tel: 080-41106504. E-mail: cekwbbng@gmail.com, Website: kuwsdb.org.

CORRIGENDUM-4
(Through e-Procurement Portal Only)

Tender No. in e-Procurement Portal (KUWSDB/2019-20/EL/WORK_INDENT2484)

The Revised calendar of events for following tender which was published in Daily Newspapers "The Hindu" English Daily, All India Edition and in "Vijaya Karnataka" Karnataka Edition on 17.01.2020 is as follows: Name of Work: "Supply, erection, electrification and commissioning of pumping machineries at head works, WTP at Bangarpet and Kolar along with allied accessories under providing CWSS to Kolar City, Bangarpet, Malur and 45 en-route villages with Yargol Dam as source".

Revised Calendar of Events: 1. Last date and time for submission / uploading of the tender in the e-procurement portal: 16.05.2020 upto 17.30 hours. 2. Date and time for opening of Technical tenders: 20.05.2020 after 11.30 hours. 3. Date and time for opening of Financial bids: 26.05.2020 after 11.30 hours. The other terms and conditions in the Tender Notification remain unaltered.

Sd/-, Chief Engineer (B),
K.U.W.S. & D. Board, Bengaluru.

Wuhan 'turned the tide' in virus battle: Xi

China reported just 19 new COVID-19 cases as it shut last of 14 makeshift hospitals in the city

REUTERS
BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday made his first visit to Wuhan since the COVID-19 outbreak forced a lockdown of the city of 11 million people, in a sign that authorities' efforts to control the spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) are bearing fruit.

Mr. Xi's arrival on the same day that Wuhan shut the last of 14 temporary hospitals that had been opened to manage a surge in COVID-19 patients, news website The Paper reported.

Earlier on Tuesday, China said it had just 19 new infections on Monday, down from 40 a day earlier. That also marked the third straight day of no new domestically transmitted cases in mainland China outside of Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, even as the disease spreads rapidly in other countries, including Italy and the United States.



Ground zero: Chinese President Xi Jinping waving at a COVID-19 patient and medical staff via a video link at the Huoshenshan hospital in Wuhan on Tuesday. •AFP

ised patient by videolink. Residents of Wuhan were shown cheering Mr. Xi from their apartment windows, while negative comments on China's heavily censored social media were quickly removed.

"Why only come now when the epidemic is almost over?" one comment on the official People's Daily's Weibo feed said before disappearing.

Stocks lifted
News of Mr. Xi's Wuhan visit gave a lift to Chinese stocks, with the blue-chip index ending the day 2.1% higher after falling into negative territory in morning trade.

"It is obvious that Mr. Xi could not have visited Wuhan earlier because the risk of him contracting the virus there was initially too high," Zhang Ming, a professor at Renmin University in Beijing, told Reuters.

"He is there now to reap the harvest. His being there means the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) may declare victory against the virus soon," Mr. Zhang said.

'Containment zone' in New York to halt spread

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALBANY

New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo announced on Tuesday he is sending the National Guard into a "containment area" in New York City suburb to help fight what is believed to be the nation's biggest cluster of coronavirus cases - one of the most dramatic actions yet to control the outbreak in the U.S.

The move came as health authorities contended with alarming concentrations of the disease on both sides of the country and scattered cases in between.

Schools, houses of worship and large gathering places will be shuttered for two weeks in a "containment area" in New Rochelle, and the troops will scrub surfaces and deliver food to the zone, which extends a mile in all directions from a point near a synagogue con-

nected to some of the cases, Mr. Cuomo said.

"It is a dramatic action, but it is the largest cluster of cases in the country," Cuomo said. "The numbers are going up unabated, and we do need a special public health strategy."

The virus has infected over 700 people in the U.S. and killed at least 27, with one state after another recording its first infections in quick succession. New Jersey recorded its first COVID-19 death.

In California, the evacuation of passengers from Grand Princess began on Monday with several hundred people let off the ship. About two dozen people who needed acute medical care were taken off first, though it was unclear how many of them were infected. About 2,000 passengers were still aboard on Tuesday morning.

168 die in Italy, highest single-day toll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

Italy recorded 168 deaths on Tuesday from COVID-19, its highest single-day toll to date, pushing the number of fatalities outside China to more than 1,000.

Overall in Italy, 631 people have died from the disease and 10,149 have been infected in just over two weeks.

Tuesday's toll raised the total number of deaths outside China to 1,115, according to an AFP tally. The Italian government has imposed a nationwide ban on public gathering and travel restrictions until April 3.

It's beginning of epidemic for France: Macron

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron warned on Tuesday that France was "just at the beginning" of the COVID-19 outbreak that has killed 30 people in the country and infected more than 1,600.

"We're just at the beginning of this epidemic," he said in Paris, urging the French not to panic.

France is the second-worst affected country in Europe after Italy. Culture Minister Franck Riester and five MPs are among those who have tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Putin backs amendment that will let him remain in power

Constitutional changes will let him seek re-election in 2024

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday backed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow him to seek re-election after his current term ends in 2024, ending uncertainty about his future.

Putin gave his support to the amendment put forward by lawmaker Valentina Tereshkova, who as a Soviet cosmonaut in 1963 became the first woman to fly to space. She proposed either scrapping Russian's two-term limit for presidents or resetting the clock so Putin's four terms wouldn't count.

Lawmakers in the Kremlin-controlled State Duma quickly endorsed Ms. Tereshkova's proposal, along with a sweeping set of constitutional changes proposed by Mr. Putin.

In a speech to lawmakers on Tuesday, Mr. Putin spoke against scrapping presidential term limits altogether but backed the idea that if the Constitution is revised, the two-term limit only would apply from 2024 on.



Vladimir Putin

The President's current six-year term expires in 2024.

Mr. Putin, 67, has been in power for more than 20 years, becoming Russia's longest-serving leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. After serving two presidential terms in 2000-2008, he shifted to the Russian Prime Minister's office while protégé Dmitry Medvedev served as a placeholder President.

Mr. Putin reclaimed the presidency in 2012 and won another term in 2018.

A series of constitutional amendments Mr. Putin proposed in January were widely seen by Kremlin foes as part of his efforts to stay in

power. However, it wasn't clear until Tuesday how Putin could achieve that goal.

"I propose to either lift the presidential term limit or add a clause that after the revised constitution enters force, the incumbent president, just like any other citizen, has the right to seek the presidency," she said to a raucous applause.

After Ms. Tereshkova spoke, Mr. Putin quickly came to Parliament to address lawmakers.

"The President is a guarantor of security of our state, its internal stability and evolutionary development," Mr. Putin said. "We have had enough revolutions."

Then he dropped the bombshell, saying he positively viewed Ms. Tereshkova's alternate proposal to restart the term count when the revamped constitution enters force.

Mr. Putin's statement came as lawmakers were considering the amendments in a crucial second reading when changes in the document are made.

'Russia meddling in MH17 probe'

REUTERS
AMSTERDAM

Dutch prosecutors accused Russia on Tuesday of trying to sabotage the investigation into the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 in Ukraine in 2014, saying this cast "a dark shadow" over the impending trial of four suspects in the crash.

Pre-trial hearings began in Amsterdam on Monday. Prosecutors say the defendants, three Russians and a

Ukrainian, helped arrange the Russian missile system used to shoot down MH17, a civilian aircraft, killing all 298 passengers, most of them Dutch, on board.

"The sum of all the facts casts a dark shadow over this investigation because there is strong indicative evidence that Russian government is keen to thwart the investigation," prosecutor Thijs Berger said.

"Several witnesses in this

investigation have said that they fear for their lives if their identities would come to light... The use of Russian security services to discover the identity of witnesses in the investigation is a very real scenario," he said.

MH17 was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur on July 17, 2014, when it was shot down by a missile fired from territory held by pro-Moscow rebels. Russia has denied any involvement.

ELSEWHERE



Pope tells priests to go out and meet the sick

VATICAN CITY
Pope Francis urged Catholic priests on Tuesday to "have the courage" to visit those sickened by the COVID-19 and help medical staff and volunteers in the work they do, hours after Italy was placed on a lockdown. AFP

Alcohol poisoning kills 44 in virus-hit Iran

TEHRAN
The death toll from alcohol poisoning in southwestern province of Khuzestan rose to 44 on Tuesday, state news agency IRNA reported, over misguided efforts to ward off COVID-19 by drinking bootleg alcohol. AFP

Michigan primary decisive for Sanders' campaign

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DETROIT

Bernie Sanders proved his 2016 presidential bid was serious with an upset victory in Michigan powered by his opposition to free trade and appeal among working-class voters. Four years later, the State could either revive the Vermont Senator's campaign or relegate him to the role of protest candidate.

Michigan and five other States already began voting early Tuesday morning in what will be a critical point in the Democratic race.

Former Vice-President Joe Biden is looking to quash Mr. Sanders' hopes and cement his own front-runner status just a week after re-surrendering his beleaguered White House bid with a de-

legate victory on Super Tuesday. He played up his underdog story on Monday as he campaigned across Michigan, reflecting on his stutter as a child and the deaths of his first wife and young daughter.

And Mr. Biden wasn't alone. The former Vice-President courted the State's influential African American voters alongside the two most prominent black candidates previously in the 2020 race, Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, who endorsed Mr. Biden in recent days as part of a broader consolidation of support among party leaders.

They all appeared hand-in-hand at Mr. Biden's final Michigan rally on Monday night.

After keeping a low profile, MBS is back

The detention of senior royals and the decision to cut oil price show Crown Prince is back in action

DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

First he ordered the detention of at least four senior members of his own royal family. The next day he plunged Saudi Arabia into a price war with Russia that sent energy and stock markets around the world into free fall.

For a while, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia had appeared to be living down his reputation for dangerous aggression.

Perhaps chastened by the blowback over his connection with the killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the 34-year-old Crown Prince had kept a low profile for more than a year.

Now his power plays are

back. His sudden, steep cut to the price of oil has rocked a global economy already at risk of falling into recession, threatened to burn through Saudi Arabia's cash reserves and undermined his grandiose promises of new investments to lessen the kingdom's dependence on oil.

Mutual destruction

"It is mutually assured destruction for any oil exporting economy, certainly including Saudi Arabia and Russia and probably the United States as well," said Greg Brew, a scholar of the region and a fellow at Southern Methodist University.

"But this is typical MBS, right?" he added, referring to the Crown Prince by his



Mohammed bin Salman

initials. "He is a risk taker, and he is prone to impulsive decisions."

The detention of the senior royals, which began to leak out on Friday, has not been acknowledged or explained by the Saudi officials. Two of the detained princ-

es - Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, the younger brother of the Crown Prince's ageing father, King Salman, and Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, the former Crown Prince and Interior Minister - had once been seen as possible rivals for power. Their arrests stirred anxious speculation among cowed members of the royal family that Crown Prince Mohammed might be sidelining opponents in preparation for taking the throne from his father, who is 84 and has sometimes appeared forgetful or disoriented.

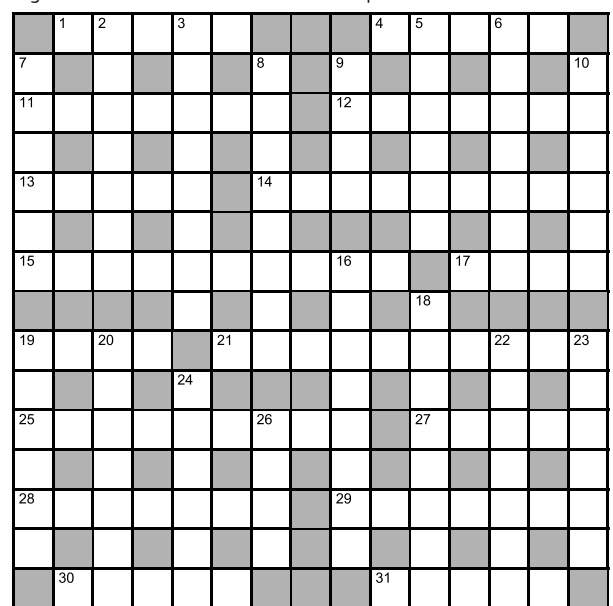
People close to the royal court, though, insisted the Crown Prince had merely lashed out at his uncle and cousins for speaking critical-

ly about him. He wanted to teach the rest of the family a lesson. Crown Prince Mohammed slashed the oil price to punish Russia, which he faulted for failing to cooperate in cutting production and propping up prices. The slowdown caused by the coronavirus was already reducing demand for oil.

The timing of the price war so soon after the roundup of his royal relatives on Friday has aroused speculation that the crown prince sought to contain potential opponents in anticipation of trouble. Perhaps he wanted to pre-empt any foes before economic pain from the downturn made him politically vulnerable, some analysts suggested. NY TIMES

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12880

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Hypatia)

- 13 Lizard in sacred text (5)
- 14 Person who doesn't tidy up is Spooner's "grumpy bear" (9)
- 15 Places outside had everything except any dishes (10)
- 17 Time in place that's not subject to change (4)
- 19 Represent people around area (4)
- 21 Ram morphed animated tool (4,6)
- 25 Study about trapping rodents? Forget it! (5,4)
- 27 Initially kept in trust, equity dealer wrote bad cheques (5)
- 28 Hat trimmed from behind with lace at the edges to make dignified (7)
- 29 Small child needs friend - Absolutely! (7)
- 30 Student checked out fancy blazer and one with stripes (5)
- 31 Home Alone: Do baddies keep coming back? (5)

- 5 Ditch girl, say (6)
- 6 People stop exchanging tips between iOS and Android (7)
- 7 Badger artist tucking into eats, taking seconds (6)
- 8 Queen wearing stuff that is red on top and more showy (8)
- 9 Type of fabric in beatnik attire (4)
- 10 Going north, recollect capturing good soldier (6)
- 16 Old fashioned diet, incorporating work-out and fast (8)
- 18 How to make bats sell down the river? (8)
- 19 Stable or crazy German? (6)
- 20 Promote a varnam, initially depicted in Bharatanatyam, say (7)
- 22 Model model draping model model with a colourful pattern (7)
- 23 Report I studied before long-haul flight (6)
- 24 He tries to corrupt engineer refusing initially to cover crack (6)
- 26 One starts baking with old butter? (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12878

H	O	L	D	O	N	E	S	P	E	A	C	E	
S	H	E	L	L	M	E	A	N	S	T	E	S	T
T	R	I	E	P	E	A	H						
A	R	M	A	G	E	D	D	O	N	E	V	E	R
C	A	N	O	N	I	C	E	V	E	B	R	O	
R	I	O	L	E	A	R	I	P	U	M	A		
G	N	Y	T	O	N	U							
S	L	A	P	J	A	M	S	E	S	S	I	O	
E	S	S	S	H	P	F	O	N	C				
D	U	T	C	H	I	D	L	E	P	O	C	H	
A	W	H	A	L	E	O	F	A	T	I	M	E	

Solution to Monday's Sudoku

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



ACROSS
1 Dull stone in front of diamond (5)
4 Girl gets left in city near Dubai once more (5)
11 Removing Selenium, engineer separated electrical accessory (7)
12 Mark it! Chennai showcases area for food (7)

DOWN
2 Stubborn worker follows lady, scratching head (7)
3 E-book criticizes guts, perhaps (8)