

RIOTS IN NORTHEAST DELHI

Take videos, photos of post-mortem: Delhi court as family claims death after detention

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

IN A significant order at a time when questions are being raised over the delay in conducting the post-mortem of those killed in the riots in northeast Delhi, a local court has directed police and a hospital to shoot videos and photographs of the examination of the body of a man who succumbed to head injuries on February 26, a day after he was released from detention.

The order was issued Saturday by a Delhi court on a petition moved by the brother of the 23-year-old victim, whose identity is being withheld on request from the family's lawyers. The family has alleged that the deceased "suffered injuries during police detention, ultimately leading to his death" at LNJP Hospital. Claiming that they were not allowed to see the victim despite repeated visits to the police station, the family had moved the

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY



court with a plea to direct Delhi Police to conduct inquest proceedings under section 177 CrPC to ascertain the cause of death.

Accepting the plea, the court ordered police to follow guidelines laid down by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) "in respect of video filming and photography of

UNION HOME MINISTER AT RALLY IN KOLKATA

Mamata scaring minorities over CAA, but she can't stop us: Shah in Bengal

'Refugees being intimidated in Bengal...will give them citizenship'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MARCH 1

ACCUSING WEST Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee of "scaring" refugees and minorities over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the state government can't stop the BJP-led Central government from granting citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian refugees in the country.

Addressing a rally at Shahid Minar Ground in the city, Shah said, "Modiji brought in CAA,



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the rally at Shaheed Minar in Kolkata, Sunday. Partha Paul

Mamata didi opposed it. In Bengal, riots were carried out, trains were burned... Refugees are being scared that you will have to go to the police station, your right to live here will be

snatched, this will happen to you, that will... that you will have to go to the police station, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Don't preach, apologise for Delhi riots: Trinamool, Oppn hit out at Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MARCH 1

THE TRINAMOOL Congress hit out at Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his remarks in Kolkata, saying that instead of "preaching" to West Bengal he should be "apologising" for the riots in Delhi. "Rather than coming and preaching #Bengal @AmitShah you should have explained and apologised for failing to save more than 50 innocent lives in #DelhiViolence right under your nose. Mr Shah, Bengal is better off without bigotry and hatred

that BJP is trying to spread," tweeted Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee.

In his speech, Shah had, in an apparent reference to Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek, said only a son of the soil and "no shahzada (prince)" would become Chief Minister when the BJP comes to power in the state. The CPI(M) and the Congress, which organised rallies in **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

PARLIAMENT TODAY, CONG TO SEEK SHAH RESIGNATION PAGE 6

EXPLAINED Signals simmering tensions

THE LAST four decades have seen numerous incidents of violence in Meghalaya targeted at non-tribals, including from Bengal and Nepal. The latest bout follows a sustained campaign over the implementation of the Inner Line Permit and unrest in the Northeast over the CAA that led to six deaths in Assam two months ago.

3 more bodies found in drains in riot-hit areas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

DELHI POLICE recovered three more bodies from drains in northeast Delhi Sunday, possibly taking the death toll from the riots in the area last week to 45.

Police Additional PRO, Anil Mittal, said the bodies were removed with the help of divers from the area, and were yet to be identified. Police sources, however, said it was too early to confirm whether the latest recovery was linked to the riots.

Last week, four bodies, including that of IB staffer Ankit Sharma, were fished out from drains in the area in the aftermath of the riots.

Police have so far registered 254 FIRs related to the violence,

CITY



RUMOURS TRIGGER PANIC, FEAR
PAGE 5

out of which 41 have been registered under the Arms Act, while 903 people have been arrested or detained, Mittal said. Police have not received any calls regarding rioting from the northeast district over the last four days, he said.

ABHISHEK SAHA
SHILLONG, MARCH 1

RUPCHAND DEWAN, the 29-year-old from Assam's Barpeta district who was killed in Shillong on Saturday, and his wife had adopted a baby girl only 15 days ago, his relatives said.

Dewan, who used to sell tomatoes in Shillong's commercial hub of Bara Bazar and lived in the Laban area of the city, is among three people who have

In Meghalaya, 3 deaths widen CAA, ethnic faultlines: 'Had machetes... planned attack'

died so far in violence believed to be related to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. On Saturday morning, two men walked up to his small store and stabbed him.

His death followed the killing of a Khasi man, Lurshai Hynniewta, by a mob, allegedly of non-tribals, in Ichamati village in the East Khasi Hills district, close to the Bangladesh border, on Friday. Curfew has been imposed and mobile internet services have been snapped in large parts of the state follow-



Curfew in Shillong, other parts. Abhishek Saha

ing the violence.

"Rupchand was an innocent man. How would killing him give justice to the death of a Khasi in Ichamati?" asked Dewan's cousin Samsul. Dewan is survived by, besides his wife and infant daughter, a paralysed father, an ailing mother and a younger brother.

Parveen Nongrum, at whose house Dewan stayed on rent, said he had been staying and working in Shillong for the last five years. "That day, he went to **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

EXPLAINED



SIMPLY PUT
HOW U.S.-TALIBAN PACT AFFECTS INDIA
PAGE 9

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HOW WE DEFINE THE VIOLENCE MATTERS
BY ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY
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THE GOVERNANCE PAGE
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WORLD



AFGHAN PEACE DEAL HITS FIRST SNAG OVER RELEASE OF PRISONERS

SRI LANKA MAY GO FOR SNAP POLLS
PAGE 13

In Japan, a city prepares for India's Olympians: yoga on TV



Izumi Egami from Tsukuba University helps athlete Hima Das wear a kimono in Patiala

NIHAL KOSHIE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

WHEN MEMBERS of the Indian archery team reach their pre-Olympics training camp in Japan's Kurobe, local TV stations will telecast programmes on yoga and desi food to help residents understand the culture of the visiting athletes.

Seven archers and support staff will train in the city during June-July before the Tokyo Games, which are scheduled to start on July 24. And the mayor and town council members are set to roll out the red carpet to make the Indians feel at home.

But first, a few questions need to be answered as the Japanese want to be the perfect hosts. In Delhi, the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) officials, who scouted for training venues in Japan for various teams, are in the process of mining a detailed questionnaire from Kurobe.

Every box needs to be filled out carefully before the Indian archers land in Tokyo and proceed to Kurobe nearly 400 km away: What time will they sleep, what time will they wake up, time required for the lunch break, free time during the day, possibility of training sessions being open to the public, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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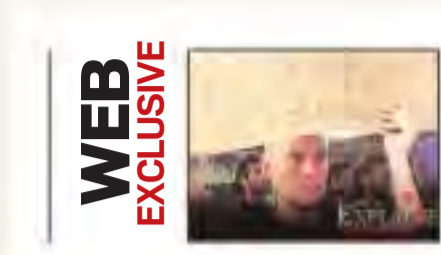
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Virat Kohli reclaims top position in ICC Test Batting Rankings



EXPLAINED: HOW DOES INDIAN LAW DEFINE 'ANTI-GOVT' ACTIVITIES FOR FOREIGNERS?

Ever since the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests erupted across the country, the Ministry of Home Affairs has been quite active in filtering out foreigners among the protesters and serving them with 'Leave India' notices'

VIDEO OF THE DAY



AMIT SHAH LASHES OUT AT MAMATA

Sonar Bangla will not be formed under Mamata, he says

EXPRESS TECH



'MINI NEPTUNE' MAY SUPPORT LIFE

Planet twice the size of Earth, could possibly support life

EXPRESS AUDIO

The questions that Justice Muralidhar's transfer raises

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In today's episode of the 3 Things podcast, we talk about the controversial transfer of Justice Muralidhar, the questions it raises and look at some of his biggest judgments

URBAN HIMALAYAS RUNNING DRY

Water insecurity in the region if timely action is not taken: New study

Associate Professor of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy, Indian School of Business (ISB), told The Indian Express.

This water insecurity is attributed to poor water governance, lack of urban planning, poor tourism management during peak seasons and climate-related risks and challenges.

The study, published in the journal 'Water Policy', also shows that communities in the region are coping through short-term strategies such as groundwater extraction, which is proving to be unsustainable. There is a lack of long-term strategies for water sustainability in urban centres, and this requires the special attention of planners and local governments, the study stipulates.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

GOA

Activist arrested for remarks at anti-CAA rally

ANTI-CITIZENSHIP (Amendment) Act activist Ramakrishna Jalmi was arrested on Sunday over his alleged controversial utterances during a rally in South Goa on Saturday. SP (Crime Branch) Pankaj Kumar said Jalmi has been arrested under sections 295 (A) and 153 (A) of the IPC for hurting religious sentiments.

Jalmi was one of the speakers who delivered speech at the rally organised by various bodies, including the Centre for Social Peace and Justice (CSJP) that is backed by the Goa Church, in Benautilim village. "He was arrested for derogatory utterances," Kumar said.

In a video of his speech which has gone viral, Jalmi can be heard speaking about Parshuram who is considered the creator of Goa. As per mythology, Benautilim village is named after Parshuram.

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- Place of Publication: The Indian Express (P) Ltd., Mezzanine floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002
- Periodicity of its publication: Daily (Monday to Saturday)
- Printer's Name: Mr. R.C. Malhotra
Whether Citizen of India: Yes
Address: The Indian Express (P) Ltd., Mezzanine floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002
- Publisher's Name: Mr. R.C. Malhotra
Whether Citizen of India: Yes
Address: The Indian Express (P) Ltd., Mezzanine floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002
- Editor's Name: Mr. Rakesh Sinha
Editor (Delhi)
Whether Citizen of India: Yes
Address: The Indian Express (P) Ltd., Mezzanine floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002
- Name and address of individuals who own the newspaper AND Shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital: The Indian Express (P) Ltd Express Towers, 1st Floor, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021
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FROM PAGE ONE

Post-mortem

post-mortems". The directions came after police informed the court that the body is still preserved in the mortuary and the post-mortem examination is yet to be conducted.

At least 45 people were killed in the riots in northeast Delhi over three days starting February 24, with families of many victims accusing police and authorities of delaying the post-mortem and handing over of the bodies.

The court's order came on a plea filed by advocate Maneka Khanna on behalf of the 23-year-old's family.

"IO (Investigating Officer) has filed a reply as per which they have received from LNJP hospital regarding death of deceased vide DD No. 38 dated 27 February, 2020 PS Bhajanpura. It is further submitted that the body is preserved in the mortuary of LNJP hospital and post mortem is likely to be conducted today or tomorrow," the judge noted in the order.

"In the view of the above, IO is directed to ensure that guidelines of Honourable NHRIC in respect of video filming and photography of postmortems will be followed in letter and spirit. The medical superintendent, LNJP Hospital to be directed to ensure that the post mortem to be conducted at the earliest," the judge ordered.

In the plea, the victim's family stated that "despite the death having occurred on February 26, police officials have taken no action whatsoever towards conducting legally mandatory inquest proceedings under Section 174 Cr.PC."

"Further, the doctors at LNJP Hospital have so far not conducted any post-mortem to determine the cause of death. It is submitted that conducting post-mortem and an autopsy in the present case is imperative to determine the cause of death and whether the same was caused by any person committing an offence," the plea stated.

"In the present case, as the deceased suffered injuries during police detention, ultimately leading to his death, it is necessary that the post-mortem examination be held as per guidelines issued by the Hon'ble Ministry of Home Affairs, directing that the examination be duly video-graphed and photographed," the plea stated.

In the plea, the brother of the deceased submitted what he claimed was a timeline of the incident. "On February 24, (the victim) left home at around 4 am. At around 8 pm, the family got a call from a relative that the deceased was at GTB Hospital," the plea stated.

"At 9 pm on February 24, the family members of the victim went to GTB Hospital however, they could not locate him and no one at the hospital gave them any information," the plea stated.

At 11 pm, according to the plea, the family members went to the Jyoti Nagar Police Station after coming to know that the 23-year-old had been arrested. "A police officer at the PS informed them that deceased (the victim) was inside and would be released the next day. However, they were not allowed to meet the deceased," the plea stated.

"On February 25, the family of the deceased went to the PS again at 8 am and 11 am but were sent back home. They went to the PS again at 10/11 pm and the police released the deceased at around 1-2 am in the intervening night of February 25 and February 26," the family told the court.

Meghalaya

his shop as usual. We were told that his body had multiple stab wounds," she said.

Classifieds

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'Mamata scaring minorities over CAA'

go to the *patwari*. I am telling you, don't go anywhere. Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, Christian, all those who have come here, the BJP's Central govt will give them all citizenship. Mamata didi can't stop us."

He also said, "Earlier nothing was done to grant citizenship to refugees. When Mamata Banerjee was in the Opposition, she had herself taken up this issue, and had stalled Parliament. When she came to power, she started the politics of vote-bank and appeasement. And when Modiji brought CAA, Congress, Communists, Mamata and others started opposing it."

Reassuring minorities that their citizenship won't be "taken away", Shah said, "Is *desh mein woh minority ko darate ke minority ki nagarikta chahi jayegi. Musalman bhaiyon-belno ki nagarikta chahi jayegi* (The Opposition scares the minority community that they will lose their citizenship, that Muslims will lose their citizenship). But I am here to assure all the minority brothers and sisters of Bengal that you will not lose your citizenship under CAA. CAA is a law to give citizenship, not to take away citizenship."

At the rally, Shah virtually kick-started the BJP's campaign for the 2021 Assembly polls in the state, asserting that the party will win the state with two-thirds majority. He also launched a state-wide campaign, 'Ar Noi Amay (No More Injustice)', which, he said, would be against atrocities on the poor, against corruption, against the syndicate, against appeasement politics, against infiltrators and to improve the law and order situation. "Mamata didi goes to every village and asks 'Didi Ke Bolo (Talk to Didi)' and people wonder what to tell her. Today I have come here to tell you, don't sit quiet. Whenever she asks 'Didi Ke Bolo', you say, 'Ar Noi Anyay'... we will not tolerate Trinamool's injustice anymore."

Earlier, BJP workers on their way to the Shahid Minar rally were heard shouting slogans of "Goli maro..."

In an apparent reference to Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek

Don't preach, apologise for Delhi riots: TMC to Shah

different parts of Kolkata against Shah's rally, also attacked the BJP for the "goli maro..." slogans in Kolkata's Esplanade area by BJP workers who were on their way to attend Shah's rally.

Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury said, "After spreading violence in Delhi, the BJP is trying to create the same situation in Bengal. Such slogans just reflect that. We all have to come together to resist them."

Congress MLA Manoj Chakraborty said, "The BJP is trying to bring the Delhi violence to Bengal. This is their culture. By raising such slogans, they are trying to spread disturbance in Bengal. What is Trinamool Congress's police doing? Why are BJP supporters not arrested?"

The CPM said the slogan had struck a chord with followers of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse.

CPM leader Mohammad Salim tweeted, "All it took was one visit of Amit Shah to spread the 'Goli Maar Saalon Ko' slogan in Kolkata. The followers of Godse might be impressed with 'Goli', but Bengal is the land of Vivekananda, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Tagore. #GoBackAmitShah."

As Shah arrived in Kolkata Sunday morning, hundreds of Left and Congress protesters, carrying black flags and anti-CAA posters, demonstrated outside the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport and raised 'Go Back' slogans.

Later in the day, a minor scuffle broke out between police personnel and protesters in the Esplanade area when the latter tried to break the barricades and enter Shahid Minar Ground, where Shah was scheduled

implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Meghalaya and oppose the CAA.

to hold his rally, a senior police officer said.

CP(M) Legislature Party leader Sujan Chakraborty led a rally in Santoshpur in south Kolkata, while Congress activists took out a protest march from Beckbagan to Park Circus and burnt an effigy of the Union Home Minister.

"Kolkata had shouted 'Go Back' slogans during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the city in January. We will not allow Shah to hold a rally here. He (Shah) is not welcome here... The Union home minister is equally responsible for the violence in Delhi," Chakraborty said.

On the "goli maro" slogans by BJP workers, he said, "Kolkata has never heard such a slogan that spreads hatred. We condemn it and demand immediate lawful action against the culprits."

Hynniewta is survived by four children - the eldest is 12 and youngest, one. "My uncle is gone. Will violent retaliation bring him back? We just want justice and peace," Bantiplang said.

The police officer said eight persons - "five Bengalis and three Manipuris" - have been arrested for Hynniewta's death and the attack on KSU members.

At the civil hospital in Shillong were those with multiple stab wounds from the recent attacks.

Jaddu Choudhury, 52, who hails from Assam's Silchar and has been selling vegetables in Bara Bazar since 1982, was stabbed twice in his shoulders on Saturday. "I could not see the attackers' faces. They stabbed me and then attacked Dewan. I survived but he died," he recounted.

Akash Ali, 27, also from Barpeta, who works for a local courier company, was attacked - "hit on his head with a hammer", according to his brother - in another incident at Langsning on Saturday. "He had to deliver some item at Bara Bazar. He was driving a tempo. They first broke the vehicle and then dragged him out and thrashed him. He hasn't spoken since then," said Moghrab Ali, the brother.

In another ward of the hospital lay T Wanwar, 39, a Khasi and headman of a village near Ichamati. He had gone to calm down tempers when the confrontation between KSU members and locals was underway. But he was attacked, his relatives said.

Dewan's funeral was held at his village in Barpeta on Saturday. His relatives

going investigations into alleged acts of corruption by the previous BJP government in the state.

The party accused the government of using the CRPF for "executing its political vendetta" and said the use of CRPF without the express consent of the state government, violates not only the constitutional scheme of fed-

Yoga on TV

whether or not archers from the area can train with the visiting team, etc.

The camp kitchen has, meanwhile, asked for information on athletes with food allergies or diet restrictions because of religious beliefs. In a country where it is compulsory for children to join a sports club, the archers will be welcomed by elementary school students.

"An analytical mind and attention to detail are the hallmarks of the Japanese. The Japanese don't want to make a mistake. Making a mistake is not in their system and is frowned upon," says Randeep Rakwal, a professor who coordinated between the Kurobe town officials and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs in India.

Rakwal has been in Japan for nearly three decades and is a member of the faculty at the health and sports sciences wing of the University of Tsukuba. He was in Delhi and Patiala last week to conduct a Japan cultural sensitisation workshop for the Tokyo Games-bound athletes and coaches.

When in Kurobe, Indian archers will be introduced to the food and culture of the region, invited for meals to the homes of local residents, taken on guided visits to the natural hot springs in the area and taught how to wear the yukata, a casual kimono worn during summer, as temperatures touch a high of 30 degrees centigrade just before and during the Games.

If archers want a yoga instructor at the camp, all they have to do is let their hosts know in advance. The highlight of a sight-seeing tour, which is being planned, is a train ride through green mountains to the Kurobe Gorge.

When the idea of Indians staying in Kurobe was first floated to the mayor, officials drove seven hours to Tsukuba to meet Rakwal, to build trust and understand the nitty-gritty of hosting the Olympic team before saying 'yes'. Multiple meetings took place over months before Kurobe officials were convinced they could meet all the requirements from the Indian side.

"The first two months were about discussion, what we really want, what India wants and after that they finally trusted me. Power-point presentations were made, drone images of the area were studied. When the MoU was signed, the whole town came. Once that was done, they said 'let us start' and made a detailed Excel file which the Sports Authority of India is deconstructing," says Rakwal.

Rajesh Rajagopalan, chief executive officer of TOPS, has been left impressed by the meticulous approach. "Kurobe has become the host city. Other than accommodation of the archers, everything else is being taken care of by them. The mayor is fully engaged and has met officials of the Indian embassy in Japan. They have organised meet-and-greet programmes, taking the archers in the evening for cultural programmes, meeting with families there. They want the archers to be relaxed, too," he says.

"We wanted our teams to go earlier and acclimatise before the Games. We had looked for options for all teams. As on date, the archery team will be based in Kurobe and the weightlifting team in Tokyo," says Rajagopalan.

The TOPS team had first done a recce of potential training bases for Indian squads in July 2018 to coincide with the month when the Olympics would begin. This was followed by a second visit, which also comprised Sports Ministry officials before the MoU was signed in October last year.

The TOPS team also has a few questions of their own on the dos and don'ts while in Tokyo and Kurobe. But going by the exchanges so far, a detailed reply from the Japanese should be in the Sports Ministry's official inbox shortly.

Congress slams govt over I-T searches in Chhattisgarh

communication department head Randeep Surjewala told reporters.

Addressing a press conference, he and AICC in-charge of Chhattisgarh P L Punia claimed the searches were conducted in a "clandestine, cloak and dagger" manner without any information being provided to the state government or to the state police."



A boy returns to his house which was set ablaze during the riots at Chand Bagh, Sunday. Gajendra Yadav

Uttarakhand man dead in riots came to city six months ago

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

SIX MONTHS ago, Dilbur Negi had left his village in Uttarakhand to look for work in the country's capital. On Friday, based on a rough idea of his features, his younger brother identified his charred body.

Twenty-year-old Dilbur, whose family lives in a village in Uttarakhand's Pauri district, was working as a waiter at Anil Sweets in Shiv Vihar.

He lived and slept in the eatery itself, while his brother Devender, less than a year younger to him, lived and worked in Ghaziabad.

According to Shyam Singh, who worked with him, Dilbur had been missing since last Monday when a mob had broken into the eatery in the afternoon.

"Dilbur was resting in the godown when a mob entered the shop. The other staff fled but it seems Dilbur did not realise soon enough. He was nowhere to be found after that incident and impossible to contact," he said.

Singh also claimed that police did not turn up despite repeated PCR calls.

Devender said that when the mob broke in, Dilbur had made a call to his brother-in-law to say



Dilbur Negi worked as a waiter at Anil Sweets in Shiv Vihar

he was trapped inside. His phone became unreachable after that.

Singh claimed that a charred body was found by police amongst debris of the shop's godown, which was torched Thursday morning. Imagining the worst, he contacted Devender.

When Devender arrived at the mortuary, he did not have much to go by as the body was completely charred and the arms were missing.

"I just had to understand by the short height and shape of the face," said Devender as he prepared to take the remains back to his parents.

'FURTHER DELAY WILL AFFECT ADMISSIONS IN PROFESSIONAL COURSES'

Board exams in Northeast Delhi resume today, students can choose to appear later

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said on Sunday it would hold examinations for students in Northeast Delhi from March 2 since further delay could hamper their "chances of admission in professional courses". However, it also stressed that students who are unable to give exams would be allowed to do so at a later date.

The riots that hit Northeast Delhi last week have affected

many students, with many saying they have lost their books, admit cards and uniforms, among other things, in the fire that engulfed many homes. Even those who escaped the arson said they were under trauma and, therefore, unable to study.

"The Board is of the view that further delay in conducting class XII examinations may hamper the chances of admissions in professional courses i.e. medical, engineering, law and other UG admissions. Few entrance examinations are conducted in accordance with the timelines fixed

by the Hon'ble Courts and therefore dates are sacrosanct. Similarly, JEE (Main) is also scheduled from April 3-19. The Board is also clear that for candidates who are in a position to appear for the board examinations, it would be very stressful and cause immense anxiety if the examinations are further postponed," CBSE said.

The CBSE said it was in touch with Delhi Police, and the police have conveyed that exams "can be held smoothly and safely now for those students who are in a position to appear for the board

examinations". CBSE said it has also written to the Commissioner of Police and requested him to make "adequate security arrangements in and around examination centres located in Northeast Delhi for the safety of the students".

"CBSE is concerned about and is sensitive to the needs of both categories of students -- those who can appear in the examinations as per schedule from tomorrow onwards, and also those who may face some difficulty in appearing due to difficult circumstances," it said.

"CBSE will hold examinations of both classes X and XII in the district Northeast Delhi from March 2 as per schedule given in the datesheet. At the same time, considering the difficult situation that continues with some of the candidates, CBSE is prepared to hold examinations at a later date for such candidates who would not be able to appear for the examinations upto March 7," they added.

The Directorate of Education and school principals will have to provide a list of all such students to the CBSE.

"Those candidates who would not be able to appear are requested to contact their respective school principals, who would then send the report to the CBSE. The board is committed to take care of the interests of all its students," the CBSE said.

While board exams in the rest of the country began on February 15, in Northeast Delhi, exams for both classes X and XII were postponed till February 29, keeping in mind the violence that began on February 23. Schools in the area are shut till March 7.

Class X student was attacked night before board exam, says family

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

HIS DECISION to quietly slip out and take a breather after having spent the day preparing for the English exam, scheduled for February 26, proved costly for Rahul Giri, a resident of Shiv Vihar.

A student of Class X enrolled in a CBSE-affiliated private school, Giri suffered serious burn injuries to his face, hands and feet after being attacked with hazardous substances, unspecified so far, during the violence in the area on the night of February 25.

The area was on the boil since morning, but he failed to gauge the intensity of the situation and ventured out in the evening. "Suddenly, something burst in front of my face and I started running through the lanes. I didn't know what to do and where to go," Giri said, lying on a bed surrounded by family members.

The boy's mother Puja Giri said he came running, dashed



Rahul Giri stepped out of his house for a break when he was attacked with hazardous substances

straight into the washroom and opened the taps. "Aise toh ye nahata hai nahi. One has to constantly be after him to ensure he takes a bath. So I was a little sur-

prised," she said.

Vinod Giri, his father who works with a jagran, said the boy was so traumatised that he refused to come out of the washroom. "Then we entered and found out what had happened," he said.

However, the family claimed that fearing attacks on the road, they could not take him to the hospital and got him treated by a local doctor instead. An ointment, used in cases of non-serious burn injuries, was being applied.

While Rahul is a direct victim, students across the area, dotted with private schools, are all suffering due to the violence, which has left three schools located within a one-kilometre radius at various levels of devastation.

The DPR convent school, located near the Shiv Vihar Tiraha, a tri-junction of Shiv Vihar, Mustafabad and Karawal Nagar, Rajdhani Public Sr Secondary School and another private school in Khajuri Khas are among the ones that were ransacked and

torched.

The destruction at the DPR convent school appears to be the highest among the three with arsonists not just ransacking its premises, but also setting rooms on fire, which gutted admit cards and other valuables, said Sunil Sharma, who manages the institution.

"I got a call from the peon around 3 pm on February 24. The students had left by 1.30 pm. They came sliding down ropes from the roof of the Rajdhani school. They damaged the CCTVs and then went on a rampage. The next day they returned and torched the classrooms," Sharma said.

The gates of the Rajdhani school were locked and police stood guard in front of it. Its window panes were broken and the courtyard, as seen through the iron grills, carried signs of intense vandalism as well. On Sunday, the school administration deployed workers to repair the damage and clear the premises off debris.

Youngest casualty of riots, 15, was out to buy chowmein

SHIVAMPATEL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

WHEN THEY brought him to the hospital, he was breathing. They don't know what hit him, maybe it was a stone, maybe it was a tear gas shell. But they know it killed him.

The youngest casualty in the riots that broke out in the city last week is 15-year-old Nitin Kumar, a Class VIII student at a government school in Gokulpuri.

His father Ram Sugarak (48) said Nitin had gone out of his house at 2.30 pm on February 26 (Wednesday) to buy chowmein. "The place where you buy chowmein from is barely 100 feet from our house in Gokulpuri. The lane where we live had not seen violence till then, but the neighbours told us that things suddenly turned violent when Nitin stepped out. We don't know what exactly happened but people told us that there was



Ram Sugarak, father of Nitin Kumar

stone pelting and firing, and a tear gas shell was lobbed there," he said.

Around half-an-hour later, Ram received a call from his family saying Nitin can't be found. He came back and looked for him but couldn't find him. Locals then told Ram that police had taken Nitin to GTB hospital.

"I reached the hospital to find Nitin bleeding from a wound on his head. He was still breathing," Ram said. Doctors tried to save him, but Nitin died three to four hours after being admitted to hospital.

The hospital authorities handed over his body to the family on Saturday.

SRI RAM COLONY

Team of 31 scrambles to provide relief: 'Our aim is to restore normalcy'

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

"WE THINK it is our duty to help the needy, especially in times like these. People have lost their family members, houses, shops. They are still scared and shocked. My aim is to bring back normalcy in their lives," said 20-year-old Naseem Ahmed, who has been working at relief camps in Northeast Delhi and helping hundreds of people. Ahmed and a team of 30 young volunteers are working

over eight hours every day at Sri Ram Colony.

Ahmed lives near Karawal Nagar and also works at a sports equipment manufacturing unit. As new people entered through the main gate at the facility, he helped them settle and provided them with bedding and water. He picked up a pack of five mattresses and laid them on the floor for the new members.

Mohsin (30), who had left her home in Sonia Vihar Saturday, said she had no time to pack her clothes and other

belongings while escaping from the mob. She was sitting with her two daughters as volunteers brought them clothes and toiletries.

Suhail (20), a volunteer of Delhi government's Civil Defence, picked up cartons of utensils and clothes from a truck and checked them with the police.

He said, "People give food, clothes, mattresses, and many other things. We have to check everything before it reaches the members here." Suhail helped elderly men fill out their entry



The team works over eight hours a day, providing relief to riot-affected people at Sri Ram Colony. Express

and compensation forms while he fed a six-year-old child bread and milk.

Suhail lives in Sonia Vihar and said he has not seen his parents for two days.

"I return home late. By then my parents are asleep. During the day I get texts from my father about the tense situation in the area. I want to help them too but these people need us. There are people who have lost their mothers and don't have homes. Some people have not had proper food in days. I can't leave them," he said.

At 4 pm, the volunteers brought biscuits, tea and snacks for the people at the facility.

As a group of four girls fought over biscuits, Yogita, also a Civil Defence volunteer, intervened and brought more food for the children.

Yogita and three other volunteers have taken care of over 60 women by themselves. She said, "I have never seen riots like these. Two days ago, we tried to distribute food near Karawal Nagar. There were locals who kept questioning us. It was a bit scary. A lot of women don't have

extra pair of clothes -- we first give them clean clothes and food. We also give them their prescribed medicines and see to it that they follow the routine."

Yogita has made a list of things to be distributed to the members and handed it over to senior members.

The volunteers also cleaned the floor and toilets with help from a few workers. They had supplied aid to locals in the Northeast district earlier and have recently shifted to the relief camp.

6 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



IN GOOD HUMOUR

IVANKA TRUMP, US President Donald Trump's daughter and senior advisor, on Sunday evening retweeted a post by actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh — a morphed picture of him with her on a bench in front of Taj Mahal. Ivanka's post read: "Thank you for taking me to the spectacular Taj Mahal, @diljitosanjh! It was an experience I will never forget!" She retweeted another post which had morphed pictures of her on someone's bicycle among others, and tweeted, "I appreciate the warmth of the Indian people... made many new friends!!!" Ivanka visited the Taj Mahal, along with her husband Jared Kushner, and father President Donald Trump on February 24, during their visit to India.

THE VISITOR

THE SECURITY guard at the Congress headquarters was startled the other day when an Englishman arrived at the gates with his wife, saying his father was once a resident of the 24, Akbar Road building. Not many were in the Congress office at that time. Since it was minutes after a press conference, AICC secretary in charge of media Pranav Jha was around. The man told Jha he was Alan Braithwaite. He said he is the grandson of Sir Reginald Maxwell, who was the Member, Home in Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's Executive Council. He told him that his grandfather used to live in 24, Akbar Road. He choked when he recalled his family's connection with the bungalow. He said his family album has pictures of the portico and the lawn where his brother played. Braithwaite is apparently on a tour of India.

NEW BUZZ

AFTER THE whole controversy over cadre merger, Railway bureaucracy is now abuzz about another possible "disruption". The transfer policy of Railways that was put on paper a few years ago, is in talks again. It says any officer who has been in one place for 10 years at a stretch or 15 years altogether, should be transferred out. There are talks that those facing retirement in two years will be spared. Names of those "eligible" are said to have been compiled in each department. But as in the past, officers are said to be wondering what real purpose does this policy achieve vis-a-vis the well-being of Indian Railways.

House today, Cong to demand Shah resignation over Delhi riots

MANOJ C G
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE SECOND leg of the Budget session of Parliament that begins Monday is likely to start on a stormy note with the Congress deciding to raise the issue of the riots in northeast Delhi last week and demand the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah.

Top Congress leaders met at party chief Sonia Gandhi's residence to decide the strategy to be adopted in Parliament. Sources said notices have been given in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha seeking suspension of all business to discuss the situation in Delhi.

"We will certainly raise the Delhi issue vigorously. The unprecedented communal violence which we have seen in the

heart of the Capital... is an utter failure of this government... it is because of their laxity, if not conspiracy," Congress leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, told *The Indian Express*.

He said the Congress was in touch with other opposition parties for evolving a common strategy. "We will demand the resignation of the Home Minister," he said. The first signal that the Congress would be aggressive over the violence in Delhi came last week when the party's Working Committee said there was deliberate inaction on the part of the Central and State governments. The CWC had argued that the responsibility for the riots must be borne by the Central government and particularly the Home Minister.

A day later, a high-level

Congress delegation led by Sonia Gandhi met President Ram Nath Kovind and urged him to call for the removal of the Home Minister, saying he "abdicated his duty and allowed the situation to escalate through his inaction".

The Opposition, so far, has not come together on the Delhi riots. The Congress, for instance, has attacked both the BJP government and the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi, accusing both of inaction.

The other parties, however, have not attacked the Arvind Kejriwal government. It was perhaps because of this that the Congress approached the President alone while a group of other parties, which included the AAP, CPM, CPI, NCP, DMK and the RJD, wrote to the President separately. The Trinamool Congress too has been silent on the

Kejriwal government, and the SP and BSP too. It is to be seen how the opposition parties forge a common strategy in Parliament against this backdrop.

Meanwhile, in a series of tweets posted hours after Shah's speech in Kolkata, senior Congress leader and former Union minister P Chidambaram wrote: "Home Minister says that no one belonging to the minorities will be affected by CAA. If that is correct, then he should tell the country who will be affected by CAA. If nobody will be affected by CAA, as it stands at present, then why did the government pass the law?"

"If the CAA is intended to benefit all minorities (no one will be affected says the HM), then why were Muslims excluded from the list of minorities mentioned in the Act?"



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar at a party workers' meet in Patna on Sunday. ANI

Will ensure each farm gets irrigated: Nitish poll promise

Says NDA will win over 200 seats in polls

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, MARCH 1

BIHAR CHIEF Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar on Sunday said he would ensure every farm is irrigated if he returns to power in the 2020 Assembly election.

Addressing JD(U)'s booth-level functionaries at a party meeting, Nitish reiterated that the NDA would win over 200 seats in the upcoming polls. Without explicitly mentioning his recent meetings between RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, Nitish said not much should be read into meetings and that they are needed to create consensus on some subjects.

"If I return to power, I will ensure that every farm gets irrigated," he said at the meeting. Ahead of the 2015 state polls, Nitish had promised electricity to every home in the state — a promise his government fulfilled by December 2018. According to government sources, farmers will be provided electric connections for irrigation at subsidised rates and the exercise will cost Rs 1,300 crore.

"In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, we won 39 out of 40 seats. NDA will win over 200 seats in the coming Assembly elections," he said.

Nitish said his party was working for all sections of the society. "Let us co-exist and live peacefully," he said. On the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, he called "patience" as the matter was sub-judice. Anxieties in some sections of the society, particularly among the minorities, have been addressed with resolutions passed by the Assembly against the National Register of Citizens and insertion of contentious clauses in National Population Register (NPR) forms, he said.

He also pointed out that the

law providing for citizenship to refugees fleeing adjoining countries due to religious persecution was conceptualised when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister.

Targeting the RJD-Congress combine for their agitations over the citizenship law, Kumar said, "I was a member of Parliament then. And, what I am saying can be verified from the records of the proceedings of the time. Leaders like Pranab Mukherjee, Manmohan Singh and Lalu Prasad all were in favour of such a legislation back then."

Further attacking the Opposition parties, he referred to the 1989 Bhalgalpur riots. "It is well-known who was in power when the riots took place and how justice eluded the victims for 15 years thereafter. We brought the guilty to book and justice was ensured to the victims. I am more concerned about working for the minorities than getting their votes," said Nitish.

Indirectly referring to his recent two meetings with Tejashwi, Nitish said, "Do not get confused if someone is meeting someone. We need such meetings to bring consensus on certain issues as we did by passing the unanimous resolutions on NPR and NRC in the Assembly recently."

Nitish said it was "dirty" on the part of some people to say that migration had increased in Bihar. "In fact, it is decreasing. The Punjab CM recently said lesser number of people are going to Punjab from Bihar now. And if someone wants to work in other parts of the country, it is a secular country and anyone can go anywhere. We will train some people in such a manner that they should go abroad to work."

The booth-level workers' meet saw modest attendance.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Centre, state must work to win minorities' trust: Badal

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, MARCH 1

FORMER PUNJAB Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) patriarch, Parkash Singh Badal, Sunday called upon the state and the Union government to address the feeling of insecurity among minorities and take concrete steps to win their trust.

"There is a growing climate of fear, insecurity and uncertainty in the minds of the members of the minority communities which must be addressed," he said while addressing a Rosh (protest) rally against the state's Congress government in Bathinda.

While talking about Delhi violence, he added: "I had never imagined that such an incident can happen again in our country after 1984. I am in deep pain even now. We need to win the trust of minorities... Whether it is Centre government or the state, every one should take people of all religions along and should win the trust of minorities... In this hour of pain and grief, I request all our workers, Akali leaders to maintain communal harmony and brotherhood. We must contribute the maximum in helping those who need our support the most. Our gurus have taught us to fight against injustice but at the same time they told us to live in peace with each other."

Claiming that the nation was going through a "worrying



Former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal at a rally in Bathinda on Sunday. Express

phase", the former CM said, "Fight over religion is grave and worrisome. We need to remember — 'manas ki jaat sabhe ek hi pehchanbo' (mankind is recognised as a single caste of humanity). Even our Constitution talks about communal harmony, socialism, equality and secularism. I don't want to go in detail as we all know that secular status of the country must be maintained."

"We need to save the country as it is passing through a tough time. Party workers must strengthen the party whether we form government or not, it is immaterial," he said.

Badal also hit out at the Congress over 1984 riots. He said, "One needs to remember who are our own. Sikhs need to understand the loss Congress

has caused to our community and they need to shun this party. They need to understand as who is their well-wisher."

Badal also spoke about the Dhindsas, father-son duo who had recently rebelled against SAD. Calling them traitors, he said: "Now they are questioning leadership of Sukhbir whom they themselves had made president of the party. For me, it is party first and I will do anything to safeguard the interests of the party."

At the rally, SAD chief Sukhbir Badal focused his speech on the Congress, accusing it of failing to deliver its poll promises. Former Minister Sikander Singh Maluka, SAD MLA Rozy Barkandi and many others were also present on the during the rally.

Paswan sends LJP leader to Ajmer Sharif to pray for peace

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

AGAINST THE backdrop of the Delhi riots, Union Minister and leader of BJP ally LJP Ram Vilas Paswan on Sunday sent a party representative to Ajmer Sharif Dargah with a prayer for peace and harmony in the country. On Saturday, Paswan called the Delhi riots a "national disgrace" and demanded the strictest action against the rioters and those who delivered hate speeches.

Through a series of tweets, Paswan on Sunday informed that he had sent party national secretary Mohammed Sabir Khan to the dargah of Khwaja Moineddin Chishti at Ajmer to offer prayers. "On the pious occasion of 808th Urs of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz, LJP national secretary Mohd Sabir Khan today offered a chadar at Ajmer Sharif dargah along with prayers of peace, love, harmony and brotherhood..." he tweeted.

On Saturday, Paswan had said, "The Delhi riots are a national disgrace... It's not just the deaths, but the manner of killings. Colonies after colonies have been burnt. What can be a greater disgrace than that?"

On being asked about hate speeches by political leaders, Paswan said, "...These are being investigated. I believe, and others should believe as well, that the probe will be impartial... Whoever is found guilty... should be dealt with strictly..."

ENCEPHALITIS VACCINATION DRIVE LAUNCHED

Flu not a disease, people catch cold during weather change: Yogi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MARCH 1

STATING THAT "flu is not a disease" and people catch cold due to a change in weather, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday urged the media to "not create panic" over the disease and focus on finding solution.

Inaugurating the fifth Mukhyamantri Arogya Mela here, Adityanath said, "By creating panic over disease, there cannot be a solution. Instead, by having a systematic plan, solution could be found. In this regard, I will request even the media that there is no need to sow fear of diseases in the minds of people. Yesterday, I found that there was information of some number of people dying of swine flu in Meerut. Flu is not a disease. When the weather changes, some people catch a cold. It is flu in itself. Based on what it causes, we call some as swine flu or bird flu or by any other name."

"That is why there is no need to create panic. Instead, people should be made aware about it. People should be told about the ways of prevention and cure, and the health department needs to be alert," he added.

Launching a month-long, state-wide vaccination drive for children to prevent recurrence of Japanese encephalitis (JE) and acute encephalitis (AE) syndrome, the CM said the govern-



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at the inauguration of the international yoga festival in Rishikesh on Sunday. PTI

ment is taking further inter-departmental programmes for controlling and eradicating communicable diseases.

Recalling the deadly grip of the two diseases, largely in eastern Uttar Pradesh as an annual malady, Adityanath said, "From 1977-78 to 2016, around 500 to 1,500 children died of encephalitis within three to four months every year. But through massive campaigns conducted by our government, we have been successful in reducing the incidence of this disease from 56 to 60 per cent and reducing the death toll by 90 percent." He added that other diseases such as dengue and kalazar too can be controlled like this.

He said that through previous four arogya melas in the state, more than 17 lakh people received treatment.

'AAP silence raises questions... political eclecticism won't last'

CPI GENERAL secretary **D RAJA** speaks to **MANOJ C G** on the Delhi government's decision to sanction Kanhaiya Kumar's prosecution

Were you surprised by the Arvind Kejriwal government's decision to give prosecution sanction to Delhi Police in the sedition case against CPI national executive member and former JNU students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar and nine others?

The way Arvind Kejriwal is presenting his politics is surprising. Kejriwal had said in 2016 that these videos are all doctored. Suddenly, how he relied upon the evidence? What is this change of mind and change of politics? More than surprising, it raises questions about Kejriwal. We are confident that Kanhaiya Kumar will come out unscathed as the charges are false and politically motivated. It is unfortunate that the Kejriwal government has succumbed to political pressure and granted permission to prosecute Kanhaiya.

How will this move impact Opposition unity. The AAP, for instance, was a signatory to the letter CPI(M), CPI and some Opposition parties wrote to the President on Friday over the situation in Delhi?

It seems Aam Aadmi Party is not united. That is what I understand. A case has been registered



against their own man (councillor Tahir Hussain). I think there are differences in the AAP.

The AAP had maintained silence on the anti-CAA protests during the Assembly election. Now its government has given the go-ahead. How do you see it?

Exactly. It raises several questions. This political eclecticism — on one side Bharat Mata Ki Jai and Vande Mataram and on the other, Inquilab Zindabad — will not survive. Temporarily, Kejriwal may think it gives him advantage but it would not last. The chief minister, as I said, has in the beginning said that there is no case of sedition against Kanhaiya and the videos were doctored. We are yet to ascertain

why this sudden change of heart has happened.

The Delhi government's standing counsel had advised against giving police the go-ahead just seven months ago?

That is what we have come to know. We are seeking that report also. We will release it to the media to prove our claim. Moreover, sedition (Act) is a colonial law. In 2011, when I was in Parliament, I had moved a private member's Bill, seeking deletion of the sedition law from our statute.

How do you plan to fight the case?

We will fight, legally and politically. We don't have a problem. Communists cannot be intimidated like this. We fought against the British.

We were the first party to face conspiracy and sedition cases under British rule. Even when my party was founded in 1925... Kanpur conspiracy case was put... many leaders could not reach Kanpur for attending the first Congress... but our party was founded. And our party was at the forefront of the freedom movement. There was the Meerut conspiracy case... the Madurai conspiracy case... the Tirunelveli conspiracy case... Communist party faced many conspiracy and sedition cases during the British rule... we could fight the British raj, now we will fight the BJP raj.

5 killed in Sonbhadra mine mishap

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MARCH 1

RESCUE WORKERS have recovered the bodies of five labourers, who were trapped inside a stone-quarrying mine in Obra area of UP's Sonbhadra district on Friday evening, police said on Sunday.

On Saturday, two injured labourers were rescued. An FIR has been registered and mine owner Suresh Kesari and others have been charged with causing death by negligence.

According to police, which conducted the rescue operation with National Disaster Response Force, a heavy boulder slipped during drilling of the mine on Friday and seven labourers were trapped inside. "The dead labourers have been identified as Sulendra (27), Gulab (27), Chhote Lal (28), Ram Prahlad (33) and Shiv Charan (45)," said Shailesh Kumar Rai, SHO, Obra Police Station.

Expressing his condolences, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a relief of Rs 4 lakh each to the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 each for those injured.

Pope expels Kerala priest convicted of raping minor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 1

POPE FRANCIS has defrocked Kerala priest Robin Vadakkuncheril who is undergoing 20 years of rigorous imprisonment after a court in 2019 found him guilty of raping and impregnating a minor.

An official communication from the Catholic diocese of Mananthavady, where Vadakkuncheril had worked as a parish priest, on Sunday said the Church had initiated steps to dismiss him from priesthood soon after he was

sentenced to imprisonment by a court on February 16, 2019.

Vadakkuncheril had been under suspension since March 2017 after he was arrested on charges of the sexual abuse of a minor girl, who belonged to the parish where he was serving as a priest.

The Vatican had also asked Vadakkuncheril to present his side. On December 5, 2019, the Pope issued the order to defrock Vadakkuncheril. The process of dismissal concluded last month after the diocese of Mananthavady handed over the order to Vadakkuncheril, who is lodged in the Central Prison in Kannur.

India has developed proactive defence policy, says Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MARCH 1

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the country has zero tolerance towards terrorism and that it has developed a "proactive" defence policy under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shah also said India has now joined the league of countries like the US and Israel that can carry out surgical strikes.

"After Modiji became Prime Minister, we have developed a proactive defence policy for which the country had been waiting for a long time. For 70 years, there was no segregation between our foreign policy and defence policy. Under Modiji, there has been a fine distinction between the two policies," he said after inaugurating the 29 Special Composite Group complex of the National Security Guard (NSG) at Rajarhat.

"Under Prime Minister Modi, we are following the policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism and NSG should take the leading role in delivering upon it. I request you to make your presence felt in such a way that they (terrorists) should



Home Minister Amit Shah serves lunch to NSG commandos. PTI

be scared to come here and stop coming," he said. "We want peace in the entire world. In our history of 10,000 years, India has never attacked anyone. But we would not allow anyone to disrupt our peace, wouldn't allow anyone to violate our borders. And anyone who takes the lives of our soldiers will have to pay a very big price."

On the government's plans for security personnel, the Home Minister said, "The government is working on a policy to improve the housing satisfaction ratio to enable

jawans to stay with their families for at least 100 days in a year. We will try to fulfil it within five years. We can provide you good accommodation, the government can take care of the needs of your families, we can provide you with modern equipment and technology, but wars are won by bravery and not equipment," he said.

Besides inaugurating the complex, Shah inaugurated NSG's residential clusters in Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai. He said the projects cost Rs 245 crore.

IAS officer among 2 held by CBI in arms licensing case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

THE CBI has arrested an IAS officer and a former deputy commissioner from Kashmir in connection with a case pertaining to fraudulent issue of gun licences in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The agency arrested IAS officer Rajiv Ranjan and Irit Hussain Rafiqi after investigation revealed that they had allegedly issued gun licences through fraudulent means. Both are former district magistrates of Kupwara district.

The CBI had registered a case in the matter after taking over a state police FIR in 2018. The FIR had alleged that during the 2012-2016 period, then deputy commissioners of various districts of Jammu and Kashmir, including Kupwara, "fraudulently and illegally issued bulk arms licenses in lieu of monetary consideration".

"During further investigation conducted by CBI, the alleged role of Sh. Irit Hussain Rafiqi and Sh. Rajiv Ranjan, IAS, both posted then Distt. Magistrates Kupwara, J&K has been surfaced during their tenure as Distt. Magistrates, Kupwara, J&K from the year 2013 to 2015 and from 2015 to 2016 respectively," a statement from CBI said. The CBI in December last year conducted searches on the premises of both the officers.

These searches were part of searches at 17 locations in Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi NCR and Punjab. "CBI conducted searches at locations spread over Srinagar, Jammu, Gurgaon, Mohali and Noida at the premises of then DC/DM Kupwara, Barmula, Udhampur, Kishtwar, Sopian, Rajouri, Doda, Pulwama, in an on-

going investigation of two cases related to allegations of issuance of around two lakh Arms Licences from different Districts of Jammu & Kashmir by their respective DC/DM, "CBI spokesperson Nitin Wakankar had then said. Alleging corruption on part of these bureaucrats, Wakankar had said, "It was also alleged that the then Public Servants in this conspiracy of issuance of Licences to non-residents of J&K in violation of rules, allegedly received gratification."

CBI sources said the searches led to recovery of several documents, including bank statements. Rajasthan Police in 2017-18 unearthed a gun licence racket and found that thousands of licences had been issued by authorities in various districts of Jammu and Kashmir in a fraudulent manner. It was found that many of the people who received the gun licences had criminal records.

The then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir N N Vora handed over the probe to CBI. On July 12, 2018, the Governor revoked individual gun licences issued between January 2017 and February 2018.

According to Rajasthan ATS officials, 1,32,321 of the 1,43,013 licences in Jammu region's Doda, Ramban and Udhampur districts were issued to those residing outside the state. The figure for the entire state is 4,29,301, of which just 10 per cent were issued to residents in the state.

A sample survey of licences issued from Kupwara, a frontier district in north Kashmir, showed that no files or registers were maintained by the district authorities and many of the arms licences may have been issued to outsiders on the basis of forged documents.

China at helm, India faces tough month at UNSC

Beijing's Permanent Representative to assume presidency today, Delhi intensifies engagement with members

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

INDIA IS bracing for a tough month ahead, as China is going to assume presidency of the United Nations Security Council for the month of March. Beijing's Permanent Representative Zhang Jun will assume the presidency on Monday.

This is the first time China will be holding the presidency of the UNSC since the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 was revoked in August last year. The UNSC follows a system of rotational presidency among its 15 members — five permanent and 10 non-permanent members. Since then, the issue of

protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have occupied centerstage and has grabbed headlines in the global media. The riots in Delhi over the past one week has further caught global attention.

Sources said that New Delhi has "intensified" its engagement with the UNSC members in the past few days, with diplomats at the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York meeting their counterparts to gauge the intention of the UNSC members.

Since August last year, Beijing has raised the issue of Kashmir twice — in August and in January, while it had withdrawn its attempt once — in December. This

time, South Block is going to be on its toes, sources said, so that they can counter any Chinese diplomatic gambit.

In January this year, China's attempt to raise the situation in Jammu and Kashmir — at Pakistan's behest — had failed to yield an outcome as an "overwhelming majority" had said that it was not the right forum. New Delhi had asked Beijing to "seriously reflect" on the global consensus and "refrain" from taking such action in the future.

Besides France and the US, sources had said that UK, Russia and Germany also joined in along with other members to block Beijing's attempt to get an outcome.

Sources said that while the

UK's ambivalent position in the UNSC closed-door consultations in August had surprised many — a claim strongly denied by the UK — London's decision to block Beijing's attempt sent an important signal to Delhi.

For the third time since August, Beijing had raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at a closed-door meeting of the UNSC in mid-January. Vietnam, which was the UNSC president for January, had allowed the issue to be brought up by China.

"Today @UN, our flag is flying high. Those that launched a "False Flag" effort got a stinging response from our many friends," Syed Akbaruddin, India's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to

the UN, had tweeted then.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar had made a sharp comment at Beijing. "China should seriously reflect on this global consensus, draw proper lessons and refrain from taking such action in future," Kumar said, replying to a question on why India has not reacted strongly to Beijing raising the Kashmir issue at the UNSC. "I suggest that this question should be posed to the Chinese side as well," he said.

He also slammed Pakistan for trying to internationalise the Kashmir issue with the help of China, saying Islamabad's "desperate" measures to "peddle" baseless allegations and presenting an alarming scenario about

the Valley lacked credibility.

"Pakistan can avoid this global embarrassment time and again by putting their energy in something constructive," the MEA spokesperson had said.

This was the third time, China, Pakistan's 'all-weather ally', had demanded discussion on the Kashmir issue.

In August, China had raised it in an informal and closed-door consultations, but the meeting did not lead to any outcome. In December, France, US, UK and Russia — the remaining P-5 members — had foiled an attempt by China to discuss Kashmir at a closed-door meeting of the UNSC. Beijing, which had earlier requested for a meeting, withdrew its request.

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Minister of Road Transport & Highway and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India

Smriti Zubin Irani
Minister of Women & Child Development and Textiles, Government of India

Thaawarchand Gehlot

Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India

IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF

Krishan Pal Gurjar
Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India

Rattan Lal Kataria
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TELLING NUMBERS

Many birds on decline in India, a few species found thriving

THE 'STATE of India's Birds 2020' report, the first comprehensive assessment of range, abundance and conservation status of birds in India, has underlined concerns about some bird species and good news about a few others. Released during CMS COP13, the international conference held recently in Gandhinagar, the report was prepared as a partnership among 10 organisations including the World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Institute of India and Nature Biodiversity Authority-India. Much of its data is based on citizen science — information provided by bird-watchers through various platforms.

867 The number of bird species whose status was assessed. This assessment is based on three indices: long-term trend in abundance (over 25+ years); current annual trend in abundance (last 5 years); and distribution range size.

261 The number of species for which long-term trends could be determined. Of these, 52% species have declined since 2000 (with 22% declining strongly), 43% showed a long-term stable trend, and 5% showed an increasing trend.

146 The number of species for which current annual trends could be estimated. Nearly 80% are declining (almost 50% declining strongly), 6% are stable and 14% are increasing.

RANGE: For all but 6 species, range size estimated — moderate sizes for 46% species, large/very large for 33%, restricted/very restricted for 21%.



The tawny eagle. Rahul Singh/State of India's Birds 2020

ABUNDANCE TRENDS

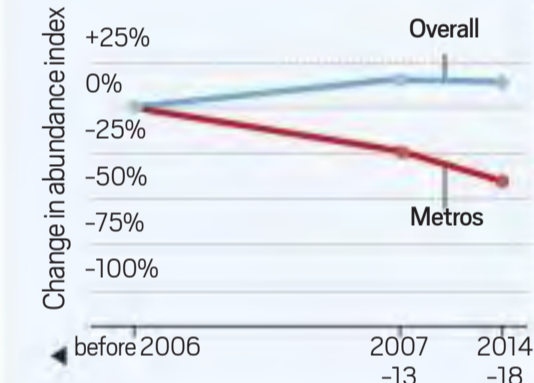
Category	Species: Long-term	Species: Current
Data deficient	375	185
Uncertain	226	531
Strong decline	58	72
Moderate decline	77	44
Stable	114	9
Moderate increase	5	6
Strong increase	7	15
Total	862*	862*

*5 of the 867 species have been combined

SPECIES ON LONG-TERM DECLINE

- Small minivet; common woodshrike; short-toed snake eagle; cotton teal; large cuckoo-shrike; common greenshank; Rufous-tailed lark; oriental skylark; yellow-fronted pied woodpecker; Indian thick-knee; little pratincole; little stint; Sirkeer malkoha; blue rock thrush; crested treeswift, etc

SPARROW STABLE, PEAFAWL GROW



HOUSE SPARROW
 While the house sparrow has been in the news due to concerns about declining populations, with many people reporting seeing fewer sparrows than before, the report cites new analysis to show that the house sparrow has been fairly stable overall during the past 25+ years. While data do indicate a gradual decline in their abundance in urban centres, the species has an extremely large range across the country. Due to lack of evidence for countrywide decline, it is classified as of low conservation concern, the report says.

INDIAN PEAFAWL
 The national bird since 1963, the species finds itself under the highest level of legal protection, placed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and further amendments. Peafowl are spread across plains and hills of India, except in extremely dry or wet regions. The abundance trend is that of a general increase, both long term and currently. This trend appears to result from a combination of range expansion (eg into Kerala, where it was formerly absent), and a population increase virtually throughout its distribution.



SIMPLY PUT

Reading US-Taliban pact

India attending, US and Taliban have signed a peace deal. What are the takeaways for the Afghan government and for India, given its bitter equations with Taliban and closeness to Ghani regime?

SHUBHAJIT ROY
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

ON SATURDAY, the US and Taliban signed an agreement for "Bringing Peace to Afghanistan", which will enable the US and NATO to withdraw troops in the next 14 months. India attended the signing ceremony in Doha, and was represented by Ambassador to Qatar P Kumaran.

The pact is between the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban" and the US. The four-page pact was signed between Zalmay Khalilzad, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, political head of the Taliban.

Separately, a three-page joint declaration between the Afghan government (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) and the US was issued in Kabul.

The key elements

Former Acting US Special Representative for Afghanistan & Pakistan Laurel Miller pointed out the following elements in the US-Taliban deal:

TROOPS WITHDRAWAL: The US will draw down to 8,600 troops in 135 days and the NATO or coalition troop numbers will also be brought down, proportionately and simultaneously. And all troops will be out within 14 months — "all" would include "non-diplomatic civilian personnel" (could be interpreted to mean "intelligence" personnel).

TALIBAN COMMITMENT: The main counter-terrorism commitment by the Taliban is that "Taliban will not allow any of its members, other individuals or groups, including al-Qaeda, to use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies". While Miller said the pact is silent on other terrorist groups — such as anti-India groups Lashkar-e-Toiba or Jaish-e-Mohammed. Again, India, not being an US ally, is not covered under this pact.

SANCTIONS REMOVAL: UN sanctions on Taliban leaders to be removed by three months (by May 29) and US sanctions by August 27. The sanctions will be out before much progress is expected in the intra-Afghan dialogue.

PRISONER RELEASE: Miller identified it as a "possible trouble spot" because the US-Taliban agreement and the joint declaration differ, and it is not clear whether the Ashraf Ghani-led government is on board with this "pretty big up-front concession to Taliban".



US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban delegation leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar sign the peace agreement in Doha on Saturday. AP/PTI

The joint declaration says the US will facilitate "discussion with Taliban representatives on confidence building measures, to include determining the feasibility of releasing significant numbers of prisoners on both sides". While there are no numbers or deadlines in the joint declaration, the US-Taliban pact says up to 5,000 imprisoned Taliban and up to 1,000 prisoners from "the other side" held by Taliban "will be released" by March 10 — which is when intra-Afghan negotiations are supposed to start, in Oslo.

CEASEFIRE: Identified as another potential "trouble spot". The agreement states ceasefire will be simply "an item on the agenda" when intra-Afghan talks start, and indicates actual ceasefire will come with the "completion" of an Afghan political agreement.

Challenges ahead

The joint declaration is a symbolic commitment to the Afghanistan government that the US is not abandoning it. The Taliban have got what they wanted: troops withdrawal, removal of sanctions, release of prisoners. This has also strengthened Pakistan, Taliban's benefactor, and the Pakistan Army and the ISI's influence appears to be on the rise. It has made it unambiguous that it wants an Islamic regime.

The Afghan government has been completely sidelined during the talks between the US and Taliban. The future for the people of Afghanistan is uncertain, and will depend on how Taliban honours its commitments

and whether it goes back to the mediaeval practices of its 1996-2001 regime.

Much will depend on whether the US and the Taliban are able to keep their ends of the bargain, and every step forward will be negotiated, and how the Afghan government and the political spectrum are involved.

"This is only the first step towards peace... Peace in Afghanistan will be predicated now on how the Afghans talk to each other, independent of outside pressures. Like in 1989, 1992, 1996, and in 2001, Pakistan has the opportunity to play a constructive role. It frittered away the opportunities in the past. The most point is, will this time be any different?" said former Indian ambassador to Afghanistan Jayant Prasad.

India and Taliban

For New Delhi, too, it is a tough task ahead. Quite predictably, Mullah Baradar did not name India among the countries that supported the peace process, but specially thanked Pakistan for the "support, work and assistance" provided.

India and the Taliban have had a bitter past. New Delhi nurses bitter memories from the IC-814 hijack in 1999, when it had to release terrorists — including Maulana Masood Azhar who founded Jaish-e-Mohammed that went on to carry out terror attacks on Parliament (2001), in Pathankot (2016) and in Pulwama (2019). The Taliban perceived India as a hostile country, as India had supported the anti-Taliban force Northern Alliance in the 1990s.

Russian Dream Island vs US Disneyland

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

ON SATURDAY, Russia opened a grand theme park that is being seen as its answer to the United States' Disneyland. Called Ostrov Mechty (Dream Island) and built at \$1.5 billion, it spans 30 hectares in southern Moscow.

It is the culmination of six decades of ambition to rival Disneyland, opened in California in 1955. The *Moscow Times* described it as a "fairy-tale theme park" and said all the stories, characters and attractions in Dream Island are Russian-themed.

Dream of 1959

The Soviet Union's first proposal to build such a theme park came way back in 1959. A 2018 article in the publication *Russia Beyond the Headlines* (RBTH) recounts what happened during the Cold War atmosphere.



Artist impression of the theme park. Govt of Russia Press Centre via Wikipedia

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev travelled to the US in 1959 but was barred from visiting Disneyland. Very upset, he decided to build a better Soviet version.

The project, named "Wonderland", was meant to be very different from Disneyland with its American characters. Wonderland, spanning 260 hectares beyond western

Moscow, was planned to showcase the Soviet Union. The plot was to match the map of the Soviet Union, with specific zones.

The best architects and even leading Soviet science fiction authors Aleksander Kazantsev and Ivan Yefremov were involved in the project. Specialists were sent to the US on fact-finding missions, *RBTH* says.

The budget was 600 million rubles, enormous for those times. The first tranche of funding was allocated. But when Khrushchev was removed from power in 1964, most of his projects were cancelled, the article says.

So, what is in it?

In another article, published last week, *RBTH* looks at how Dream Island compares with rivals in other countries, particularly Disneyland. The assessment is by RBTH's "own expert — a parent of three, who's visited every Disneyland and Universal park, a few Six Flags, Legolands and Thorpe Park, as well".

The verdict: it is "not very" Russian after all.

"The park looks and feels like it could have been anywhere in the world and was built clearly to mimic a typical theme park, such as Disneyland or a Universal theme park... Hello Kitty and Smurf themes are used as theme zones for smaller children, with rides typical for such a park worldwide. One ride in the Hello Kitty zone is quite similar to Disney's well-known spinning teacups, but there will also be a beauty salon for little princesses," the article says.

The *New York Times*, too, observes that Dream Island may remind some visitors of Disneyland. In place of Elsa from *Frozen*, there will be the Snow Queen, while *The Jungle Book* is replicated by a version in which the jungle is populated by talking dinosaurs. *The NYT* quoted Alena Burova, a publicist for the site, as saying: "The word Disneyland is on people's tongues. In Russia, we say Disneyland when we mean just a theme park."

How geologists detected gold in Sonbhadra, estimated its value

AVANEESH MISHRA
 LUCKNOW, MARCH 1

IN A recent statement (*The Indian Express*, February 23), the Geographical Survey of India (GSI) provided estimates for the amount of gold that can be extracted from a site in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. The probable resource is 52,806.25 tonnes of ore, with an average grade of 3.03 grams per tonne, which means the total gold that can be extracted is 160 kg, it said. The statement came after news reports stated that the gold available is 3,350 tonnes; the GSI clarified that its estimates are 160 kg.

What is this site with ore?

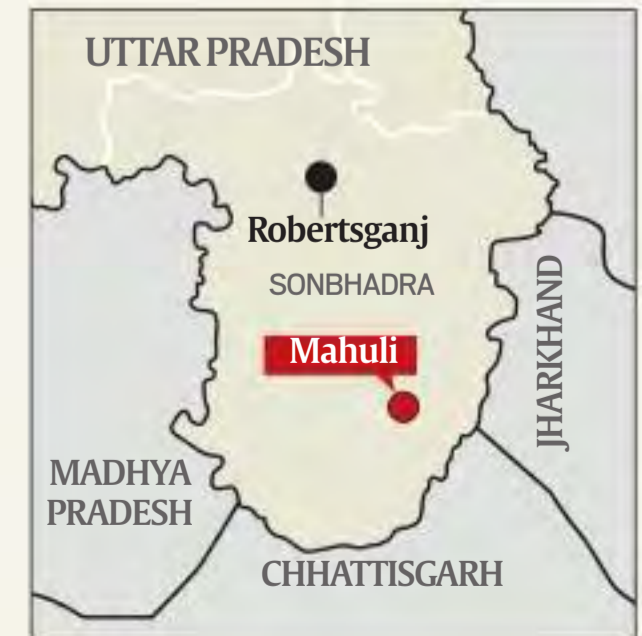
It is near a village called Mahuli, around 70 km from Sonbhadra district's headquarters of Robertsganj, and just 10 km from Jharkhand. The land is mainly forest area and inhabited mostly by tribals and members of backward classes. Locals said stories

of gold underground have been passed down generations, giving rise to the name Sonpahari, the hill where the reserves have been estimated.

The site is part of the Mahakoshal region that includes parts of UP, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. It is known to be potentially mineral-rich, said GSI Lucknow director Ghanshyam Tiwari. "This is something we also know through the geological map we keep updating, and that is why this whole Mahakoshal region has always interested us. We keep studying the rocks here and search for potential mineral reserves. That is what exactly what the GSI is for," he said.

How long has the GSI known about the ore and its mineral content?

The GSI Northern Region carried out exploration in 1998-99 and 1999-2000, GSI director general M Sriidhar said. The results, however, were not encouraging enough to suggest major resources for gold in Sonbhadra. "We found that there is an es-



timated resource of 52,806.25 tonnes of ore with 3.03 grams per tonne gold. This information was not significant for us as we know that extracting 160 kg gold, or even less, from more than 52,000 tonnes can cost a lot," said Ashish Kumar Nath, director & PRO, GSI Central Headquarters.

The GSI compiled a report but did not forward it to the state government at the time. It submitted the report in 2019, following an amendment to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act in 2015. "(It) had a clause that we have to share all our reports with the state government. As we had thousands of such reports, this particular report was sent to the UP government last year," said Ashish Kumar Nath, director & PRO, GSI Central Headquarters.

How does the GSI arrive at such estimates?

Two basic processes are involved — a study of rocks, and drilling of the ground. Laboratory analysis of the rocks indicates the possibility of these containing a particular mineral, in this case gold, said Tiwari, the GSI Lucknow director.

Another indicator is the age of the rocks, which is determined by radiometric dating processes. For high possibility of containing such metals and minerals, the rocks

need to be at least 700 million years old, Tiwari said, while also citing exceptions. "The rocks in Sonbhadra are in the Mahakoshal region and from the Proterozoic era, which started 2,500 million years ago," Tiwari said.

The GSI drilled the ground at some 30 places between 1998 and 2000, before compiling the report. This eventually provides a three-dimensional image of the area, which is necessary for determining the quality of the resource and the amount available.

Will it be worthwhile to extract the gold from the ore?

The GSI classifies ore into categories based on the viability of extraction, which is determined from density. Tiwari said the gold ore found in Sonbhadra is in the "economic" category, which means that extraction will cost less than the cost of the gold that is extracted. The cost of extraction also depends on the grade of gold; the higher the gold concentration, the easier its extraction.

At the same time, GSI officials pointed out that the findings are two decades old and the possible gold present is just 160 kg. GSI director & PRO Nath said they have thousands of such findings, and this particular report was never a priority.

So, what happens to the ore now?

Once the GSI gives an estimate, the state government conducts an auction and the winner undertakes the extraction. UP government officials said that before e-auctioning, a team of officials from the state mining department and the district administration have been asked to conduct a survey of the area and identify the land containing ore, by superimposing GSI's geological maps on *khasra* maps from revenue records.

District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam said that reserves of other minerals — andalusite, potash and iron ore — have been estimated in various parts of Sonbhadra. A preliminary survey also suggested a possibility of uranium deposits, he said.



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HATE CANNOT DRIVE OUT HATE.
— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AN UNEASY PACT

As curtains fall on moderate political order in Kabul, Delhi must prepare for turbulence ahead

THE AGREEMENT SIGNED in Doha on Saturday between the United States and the Taliban marks the beginning of a potentially dangerous phase in the unfortunate recent history of Afghanistan. Although it has been billed as a "peace agreement" it is more a phased "withdrawal schedule" for the 12,000 US forces currently stationed in Afghanistan. The promise to end America's "endless wars" in the greater Middle East region was one of the central themes of US President Donald Trump's election campaign in 2016. He is eager to demonstrate progress on that front in his bid for re-election later this year. Although he deployed additional troops in Afghanistan during 2017, Trump's conviction that America's longest ever war in Afghanistan is unwinnable was reinforced by the continuing US inability to put the Taliban under serious military pressure.

In agreeing to withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan over a period of 14 months, Washington has got Taliban's promise to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any group that threatens the security of America and its allies. The Taliban has also agreed to join talks with various Afghan groups, starting later this month, to discuss a permanent ceasefire and a road map to install a new political regime in Kabul. The US has certainly made its promise of withdrawal conditional upon the Taliban holding up its commitments. This conditionality is unlikely to survive the diminishing political support in Washington for further military involvement with Afghanistan. The biggest casualty of the US withdrawal is the Kabul government that was kept out of the US talks with the Taliban. Growing internal squabbling in Kabul has further marginalised the government. The imminent intra-Afghan talks will involve many Afghan groups but the Taliban will be the most powerful player at the table and is bound to set the terms for the final agreement.

The Taliban, whose strength lies among the Pashtuns, is not known for a politics of accommodation with other ethnic groups that constitute more than half of the Afghan population. The return of a unilateral Taliban could set the stage for the next round of civil war that has hobbled the nation since the late 1970s. The lifting of the US military footprint and the uncertain political future of Kabul provide a fertile ground for meddling by other regional actors, especially the Pakistan army, which sees Afghanistan as its backyard. India, which has seen its influence grow in Afghanistan since the US intervention at the end of 2001, has never been enthusiastic about Washington's engagement with the Taliban. It has chosen to keep its political lot with Kabul, which is growing weaker by the day. Delhi has also held itself back from any formal contact with the Taliban. Critics say this policy is too rigid to cope with the dynamic Afghan situation. Supporters, however, argue that it is better to hold on to the allies you have rather than looking for new friends among the Taliban. Either way, Delhi must prepare for prolonged turbulence in Afghanistan as the curtains fall on Kabul's moderate political order.

DELHI ENDURES

Acts of solidarity, empathy and bravery in Northeast Delhi hold out hope

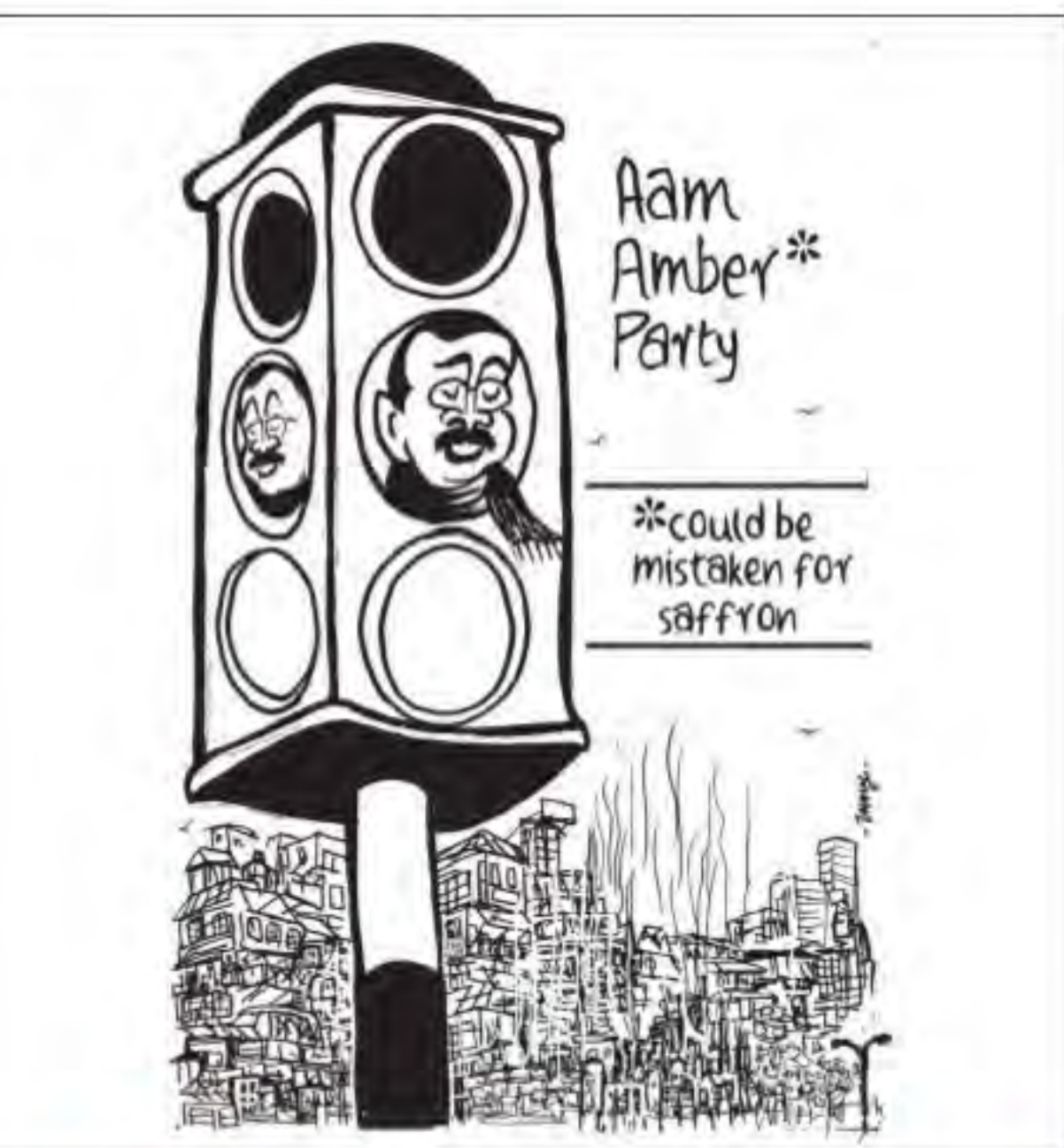
THE IMAGE OF Premkanth Baghel, 29, bandaged and suffering from serious injuries as a result of rushing into a burning building and rescuing six of his neighbours in Maujpur in Northeast Delhi, has become a symbol of hope for the city. Baghel's selfless act is just one among the scores that have come to light over the last week, even as the death toll, and stories of chilling brutality, seemed to have kept pace. In Mustafabad, where three mosques were burnt by rioters, both communities came together to ensure the Shiv temple did not suffer a similar fate. In Lalita Park, Hindus checked on their Muslim neighbours and protected them. And Mandir Masjid Marg in Maujpur lived up to its name — a group comprising members of both communities stood guard and kept the peace. Across the affected areas, many Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims have banded together to ensure that they can protect their neighbourhoods, and provide relief — material, social and emotional — to those who have suffered as a result of bigotry on the rampage.

The local solidarities, and acts of bravery shown by Delhites, are intrinsic to the city's social fabric. Before slogans like "Goli maaro..." could be heard at metro stations, the capital had absorbed the trauma of Partition, of the 1984 riots, and emerged stronger because of a network of inter-religious solidarities. For those in Delhi, and outside it, despairing at a political idiom that is perceived to have encouraged the othering of Muslims, and made violence against them permissible, these stories of hope from the capital must provide some succour.

The humanity and humanism amid polarised communities engulfed by violence also hold a lesson for broader society, the state and the political class. Individual acts of empathy are simply not enough. This is why the founding fathers of India decided to enshrine fraternity in the Constitution. In recent times, that value seems to have come to attention only in its breach. The political class must recognise its responsibility. It can encourage and embolden the best in society, or the worst. Leaders can engage in oratory or demagoguery. And society at large must decide what behaviour it will reward in its politicians. Hopefully, as it has done before, the city will ensure that selflessness and concern beat out the bigotry.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

Delhi and after

How we define and categorise the violence matters — for the future of the city, and a pluralist India

IN THE HISTORICAL scale of rioting, where do the recent Delhi riots belong? And what is their larger political significance?

The first question is statistical. During early to mid-1990s, Steven Wilkinson, now teaching at Yale, and I, set up a database for all recorded Hindu-Muslim riots between 1950-1995. We did not know then that our dataset would become standard statistical reference for scholars and journalists. We simply put together the best available numbers to lend a systematic empirical base to our own books, published by Yale and Cambridge University Presses in the 2000s. Our dataset, since then, has been extended till the 2010s by younger scholars, based in the US and UK.

These statistics show that the recent riots — let me call them Delhi 2020 — are Delhi's biggest Hindu-Muslim riots since 1950. During Partition, the city was the site of gruesome communal violence, and we also have narratives about leaders like Nehru jumping into rioting crowds trying to stop the violence. But we don't have reliable numbers. After 1950, we do.

During the Nehru years, Delhi had several small riots, but given how resolutely the state fought what it called the "communal poison", the sparks did not become fires. It is only in November 1966 and May 1974 that riots led to more than 5 deaths. Delhi's largest Hindu-Muslim riots took place after the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque. We recorded 39 deaths in December 1992.

Delhi 2020 has already gone beyond Delhi 1992, even though the numbers are not yet final. Its scale is only exceeded by Delhi 1984, when horrific anti-Sikh violence rocked the city. Scholars are convinced that the anti-Sikh riots were pogroms, defined by social sciences as a special class of riots when the police, instead of acting neutrally to crush riots, looks on while mobs go on a rampage against minorities, or it explicitly aids such violent mobs.

This takes us to the larger political significance of Delhi 2020. A raging issue in the ongoing debate is whether Delhi 2020 is a pogrom, not simply a riot. To some, this is a merely academic debate, which will not alleviate the pain and suffering of the victims. There is considerable merit in this claim, but only if we only confine our analysis to the

current victims. If we think of the future, the significance of how to categorise the riots will become transparent. In case Delhi 2020 is a pogrom and it reappears elsewhere, let us be clear that the future victims will be abjectly helpless. Those committed to a pluralistic India must be ready for an eventuality of the worst kind.

After reading and watching about 50 reports, I am convinced that the first day of Delhi violence was not a pogrom. Rather, it met the classic description of a riot, defined by conflict scholarship as a violent clash between two groups or mobs, in this case one in favour of the Citizenship Amendment Act and another against. But the next two days began to look like a pogrom, as the police watched attacks on the Muslims and was either unable to intervene, or unwilling to do so, while some cops clearly abetted the violence. Luckily, before such behaviour turned into the gruesome horrors of Delhi 1984, the violence came to a halt.

Three elementary political points are worthy of note. First, outside Kashmir, Delhi is India's most heavily policed city. Delhi is also extensively covered by the media, national and international, capturing every newsworthy slice of the unfolding reality. Delhi is not comparable to the villages of Muzaffarnagar where, in September 2013, rioters could overwhelm the meagre police presence. If such violence can happen in Delhi, it can easily take place elsewhere. Muslims in the BJP-ruled states are especially vulnerable. Leaving aside Delhi, India's police is under state, not central, control. If the BJP states push the police against the Muslims, only the conscientious and brave police officers will resist. Can one imagine the cruelties and the suffering, especially in the distant outposts, away from the media gaze?

Second, the argument about police failure, raised in some quarters, is highly suspect. It implies that the cops were committed to neutrality as a functioning principle, and to maintenance of law and order as a professional imperative, but could not deliver, even though they tried. This is hardly an inference one can draw, if cops allowed the lower-level politicians of the ruling party to spew hateful provocations in their presence and also told the reporters they had no

instructions to act, even as violence took control of the streets. Legally, no instructions from the government are necessary for the cops to stop killings. The police can intervene on its own.

Third, why would India's top leadership allow riots in its great moment of diplomatic glory? The leader of the world's most powerful nation was in the country to pay tribute to India, the pictures of Trump, his family and India's leader were on the front pages, and it seemed as though India's rising power was given an exuberant broadcast all over the world. Even Beijing was paying attention. Within the next 48 hours, Delhi's riots ruled the front pages. Glory quickly metamorphosed into concern, even shame. Is this how a rising India deals with its citizens?

We witnessed what social scientists call the principal-agent problem in its ugliest form. When bigoted leaders are chosen to lead state governments, when terror-indicted foot soldiers are picked to run for Parliament, when ministers shouting in campaigns "goli maaro saalon ko..." (shoot the traitors) go unpunished, a recognisably clear incentive structure is created within the party. Those displaying larger communal bigotry, those publicly abusing political dissenters as seditious traitors, think that they will be rewarded by the party. The tap can be turned off by the bosses, as happened after three days last week, but the agents below can also turn on the tap without any explicit instructions from the principals above.

Violence is thus built into a project that legitimises bigotry and equates dissent with national disloyalty. India's rulers want to overturn the constitutional order. Regime partisans are already calling it a "civilisational war" — to hell with the Constitution, they imply. India's citizenry is well and truly into a battle for constitutional values, which must be fought, most of all, with non-violent determination and vigour.

The writer is director, Center for Contemporary South Asia, Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and Social Sciences, professor of political science, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University



GEETA CHAUDHARY

LANGUAGE ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Sanskrit must be popularised, it is endangered in its own land

LANGUAGES NEVER BELONG to a particular religion. But members of various religious communities do speak different languages to foster understanding among themselves. It is a cultural bond that unites people rather than divides them. In the past, if the Hindus had spoken only one language, India would have been deprived of its proverbial diversity. From the time of Alberuni down to Ram Mohan Roy, India has seen Muslims learning Sanskrit and Hindus mastering Persian. Today, English is a widely spoken language in India and Indians have as much claim over it as any American, Australian, British or Canadian. If a Muslim teaches Sanskrit and a Hindu learns Arabic, it is not going to change the demography of India.

One of the reasons for Sanskrit being limited to a small circle of people was the narrow outlook of pandits. They never allowed the language to reach the common people. So, India today does not have Sanskrit as its first language, like French in Francophone countries and Arabic in West Asia. When a language is not used by common people, it dies a natural death. If Sanskrit is not made popular among Indians, it is likely to become an endangered language in its country of birth.

Fortune smiled upon me and I became a student of Persian language and literature in



ONE OF 800 MILLION

A VOICE, UNDER 35

India. This language revealed to me the rich literary culture of the Subcontinent. Many pandits were great scholars of Persian during the Mughal period. Chandra Bhan Brahmin, Mathura Das, Varastami Sialkoti, Bindraban Das Khushgool, Laxmi Narayana Shafiq Aurangabadi to name but a few. Similarly, Sanskrit texts like the Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Upanishads were translated into Persian by Muslim scholars. Many Sanskrit texts that are not available today in their original language survive in Persian. The domain of learning is open for all and goddess Saraswati blesses every seeker of knowledge irrespective of caste, creed, colour or clime. Hence, Alberuni could learn Sanskrit and Ram Mohan Roy mastered Arabic and Persian.

It is difficult to say whether Mirza Ghalib was a Sanskritist. But one can be certain that he had a better understanding of the Sanskrit culture and ethos than those in the Sanskrit department of the Banaras Hindu University who were protesting the appointment of Firoze Khan to the faculty. Ghalib's poem, *Chiragh-e-Dair* (The Lamp of the Temple) in Persian is a glowing tribute to Banaras. It consists of 108 couplets, like the rosary of the Hindus. These 108 couplets conjure Banaras silhouetted against the Ganga along with the beautiful arrays of the idol-worshippers,

Brahmins and Hindu temples. Ghalib was on his way to Kolkata in 1827 and had halted in Banaras for four months. He saw the city of the conch blowers as the Mecca of India — "Hamana Kaaba-e-Hindostan ast".

Since ancient times, Sanskrit has been an important language in India. It contains great wisdom and knowledge. Iranians and Arabs in the ancient and medieval period and Europeans in modern times showed an interest in its classical texts and translated them. They did not disgrace Sanskrit by doing so. On the contrary, they internationalised it — something pandits failed to do. Their conservative outlook will ensure that the language never gains mass popularity. Perhaps this is the reason Sanskrit did not travel beyond India's frontiers and become a vehicle for it culture and civilisation.

Indians often cite "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" to establish their catholicity and the magnanimous ethos of the Indian civilisation. The evolution of Sanskrit once exemplified this spirit, it should do so again.

Kabir Das rightly said, "We must not ask a saint his caste. If we have to know anything about him that must be his knowledge."

The writer, 24, is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Persian and Central Asian Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University

MARCH 2, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO



ASSAM AGITATION
THE ALL-PARTY MEETING on Assam unanimously appealed for the withdrawal of the Assam agitation "so that an atmosphere conducive to finding practical solutions to the problems of Assam can be found and implemented and normal activities resumed". The meeting said: "We agree that the genuine grievances of all sections of the people of Assam should be removed and their apprehensions allayed... No constructive steps can, however, be taken as long as an atmosphere of agitation continues to prevail".

CCP CHANGES
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE of the Chinese

Communist Party announced that party vice-chairman Wang Tung-shing and three other prominent members of the Politburo had been removed from their posts. This is seen as a major purge. The move is seen generally as a further strengthening of the position of Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping over Chairman Guofeng.

SOVIET INCURSION
A SOVIET AIRCRAFT violated Pakistan's air space, according to Radio Pakistan. The Pakistan ambassador in Moscow has been asked to register a strong protest with the Soviet Union about the incident, the radio said quoting a foreign office spokesman in

Islamabad. The spokesman said President Ziaul Haq ordered that the aircraft was not to be harmed.

EXPRESS BUILDING
THE LT-GOVERNOR OF Delhi, Jagmohan, has ordered an inquiry into the construction of the new building of *The Indian Express*. Announcing this at a press conference, Jagmohan said the inquiry had been ordered following complaints that extra space was sanctioned for the building in disregard to provisions of the master plan, zonal regulations and municipal by-laws. Jagmohan said an extra 10,000 square feet had been sanctioned under the Janata government.

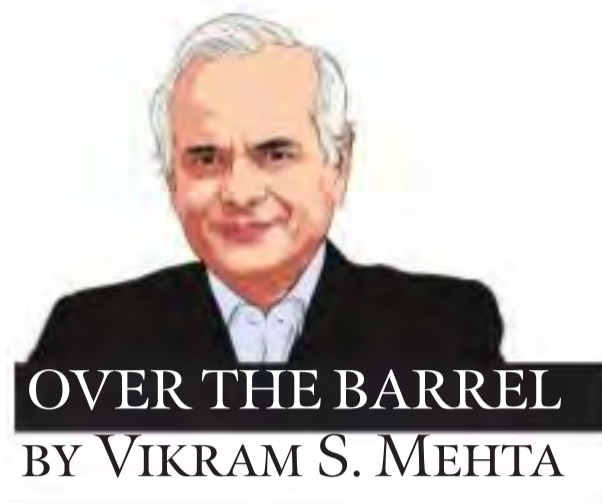
11 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"A year after the Indian Air Force helped Narendra Modi lead a successful assault on the truth to guarantee re-election, Prime Minister Imran Khan praised Pakistan's response to Indian aggression as being indicative of the nation's maturity."
— EXPRESS TRIBUNE, PAKISTAN

Yes, Greta Thunberg can

The Swedish teenager's protests have inspired a new response to the climate challenge. Developed world must take the cue



SPEND A FEW days in Europe and one cannot help but be struck by the change in the tenor of the discussion on global warming. It is no longer about the credibility of the scientific data on the trajectory of global temperatures: Whether the data does no more than generate a lot of hot air, as people like US President Donald Trump would aver, or whether it is indeed a harbinger of an existential crisis. The consensus view is that the world is on a pathway towards disaster. The discussion is now all about what must be done, by whom and by when. It is about the steps that must be taken by firms, sectors and governments to reduce carbon emissions, the mix of regulations and incentives that must be put in place to hasten the transition to a decarbonised future and the tests that entities must pass to counter the charge of "greenwashing". It is about tackling an immediate threat, not about an unfolding crisis with indeterminate future implications.

What is missing in this Eurocentric debate are the tough questions. Will these efforts by the developed world be sufficient to alter the trajectory of global warming? Who will pay the costs of the sustainable development of poorer nations? Does the current UN-led multilateral effort offer any prospect of a consensus around an appropriate and urgent global action plan?

The movement towards decarbonisation in the West has built up strong momentum. There are tangible markers. The most impactful is technology and innovation. Together, they have almost bridged the competitiveness gap between the current fossil fuel dominant energy system and a renewable clean energy alternative. Many reports provide supportive data of this trend. Let me cite data from one by Bloomberg. The global average levelised cost of electricity generated from solar (PV) per MW/hour has fallen from approximately \$360 in 2010 to around \$60 in 2019. The cost of electricity from offshore wind has reduced from \$190 to around \$90 over the same period and for onshore wind from \$100 to just under half at \$50. The cost of storage has also reduced comparably. A lithium ion battery cost approximately \$1,000 per kW of storage in 2010. These costs fell to around \$380 by 2015 and last year they averaged \$180. Bloomberg's forecast assumption is that costs will fall to \$100 by 2024 and around \$30 by 2030. The message is clear. There will be many obstacles to the creation of a non fossil fuel, clean energy system. But competitiveness will not be one of them. Technology will overcome that obstacle.

A second marker is the conspicuous shift in the "decarbonisation" strategies of companies and financial institutions. These entities have for long affirmed their green credentials but few have provided details of

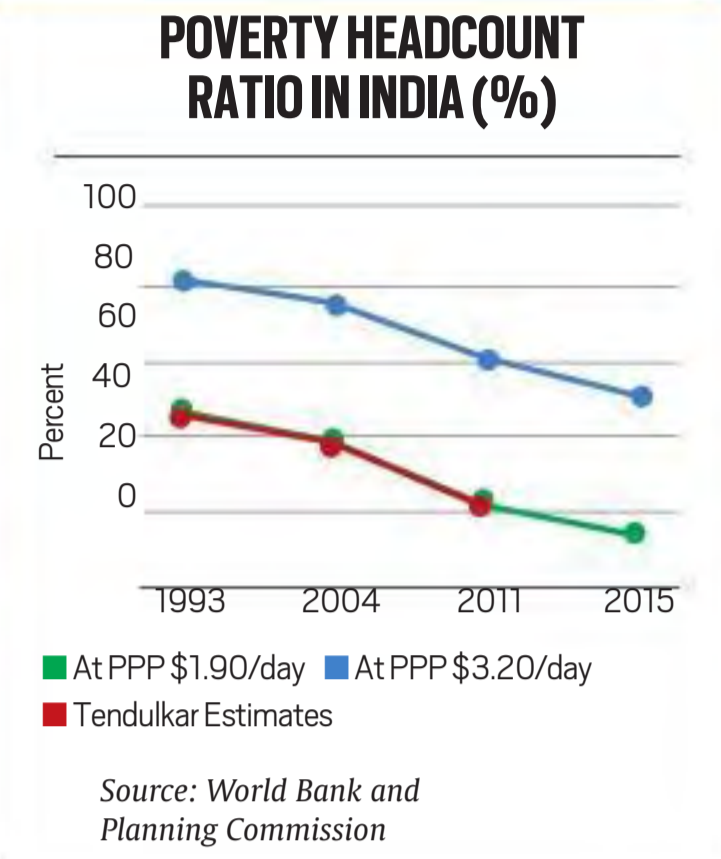
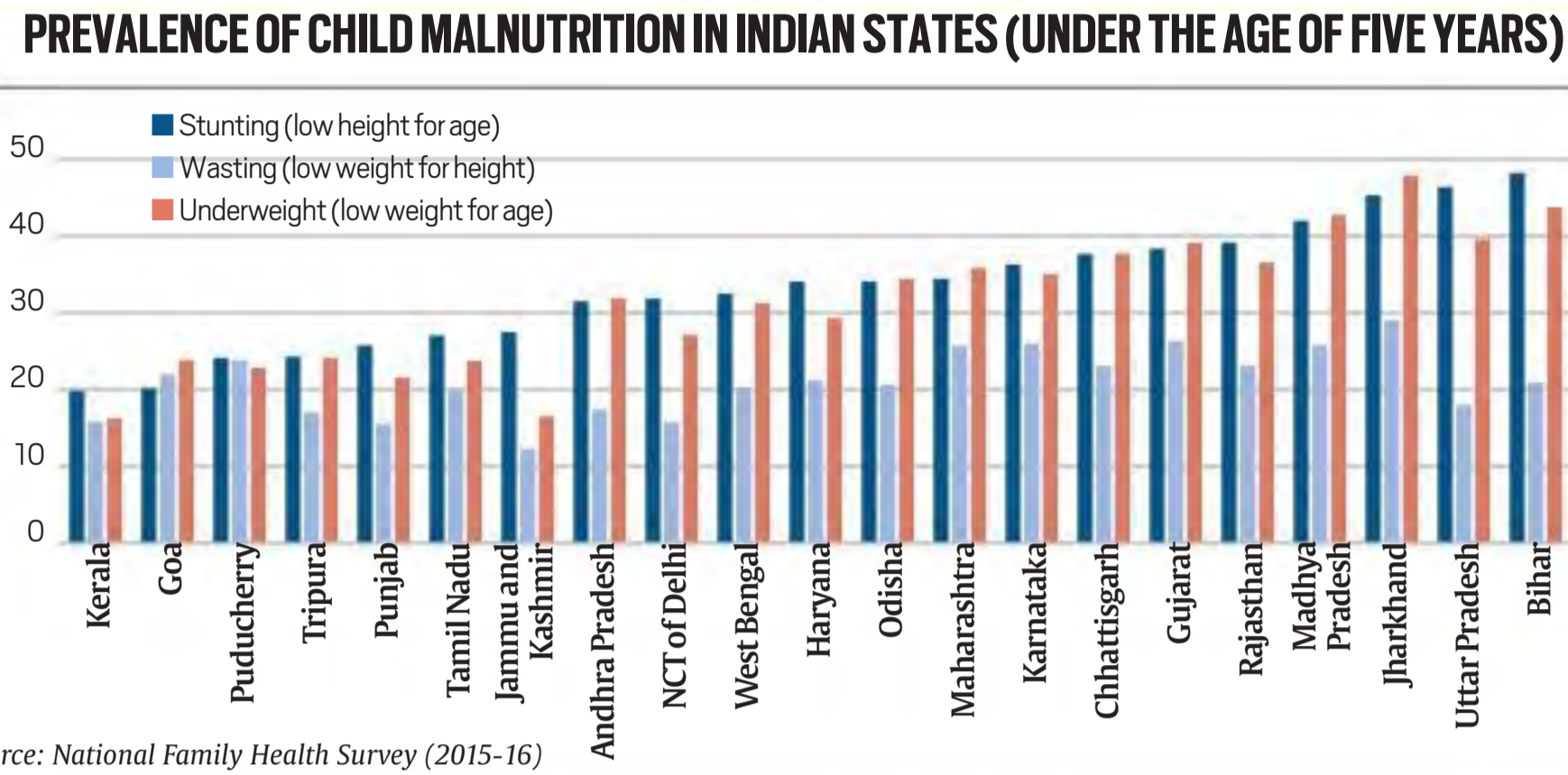
how they plan to achieve their clean energy targets. Now, they are filling in these gaps. For instance, BP has announced that it will achieve net zero carbon emissions across all of its operations by 2050 and Shell has said it will become a major electricity company — it has invested in solar battery manufacturing and charging solutions for electric vehicles. Goldman Sachs has stated it will not finance any new coal power plants unless these plants have incorporated carbon emission reduction technologies and AXA, the insurance giant, has indicated it will not insure new coal construction. These are just a few examples of the paradigm shift in the corporate and financial world.

A third marker is the mix of regulatory, pricing and fiscal measures that Western governments have put in place to contain the growth of fossil fuels in the energy mix, incentivise investment in technologies like carbon capture and sequestration and, in general, reduce the per capita stock of GHG emissions. These are heartening and necessary developments but they are not sufficient to move the world off the global warming treadmill. Two-thirds of global carbon emissions come from the emerging economies particularly China and India. Whilst these countries have made tremendous strides down the pathway of decarbonisation, they are not moving fast enough. And for good reasons. They are impeded by the trilemma of generating growth, providing their citizens access to affordable energy as well as protecting the environment. The global challenge is to help them resolve this trilemma and accelerate the pace of decarbonisation.

Can this challenge be met through the current UN-led multilateral effort? The world is fractured by resurgent nationalisms and hardened boundaries. To expect, therefore, the COP 26 to be held in Glasgow in November to forge an international consensus around a climate change mitigation and an action plan that results in the developed world making good on its financial commitments — the *sine qua non* for resolving the above trilemma — is perhaps a chimera. The world needs to find another avenue, one that does not take off from the current international system but draws on the power of global society — an avenue that leads towards new sovereigns defined not by conventional post-World War II national and political boundaries but by identities that are forged to tackle cross-border issues like global warming and/or health pandemics.

This may sound too idealistic. But then who would have expected the efforts of Greta Thunberg, the 18-year old Swedish schoolgirl who skipped class every Friday to sit in front of the Swedish Parliament week after week, to attract not just the attention of the country's parliamentarians but also that of the world? She offers an example of what is possible if society deems that "enough is enough" of "politics as usual". The world is headed over the cliff. There is much to be done but a crucial next step is to integrate the developing world more firmly into the search for a global response. This requires society to pressure the developed world to help finance the sustainable development of the developing world.

The writer is chairman and senior fellow, Brookings India



CR Sasikumar

Tackling the big three

India is on track to achieving top two Sustainable Development Goals: Elimination of poverty and hunger. To ensure good health and well being by 2030, focus on agriculture, female literacy



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH BY ASHOK GULATI AND KRITI KHURANA

achieve the third goal of good health and well-being by 2030. India's performance in this regard, so far, has not been satisfactory.

In 2015-16, almost 38.4 per cent of India's children under the age of five years were stunted, 35.8 per cent were underweight and 21 per cent suffered from wasting (low weight for height), as per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2015-16). The situation in some states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh is even worse (See figure: Prevalence of child malnutrition in Indian states). No wonder, the Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranks India at 102 out of 117 countries in terms of the severity of hunger in 2019.

How can India overcome this colossal challenge of malnutrition? The National Nutrition Strategy, 2017, aims to reduce the prevalence of underweight children (0-3 years) by three percentage points every year by 2022 from NFHS 2015-16 estimates. This is an ambitious target given the decadal decline in underweight children from 42.5 per cent in 2005-06 to 35.8 per cent in 2015-16 amounts to less than 1 per cent decline per year. Similar targets have been set by the National Nutrition Mission (renamed as POSHAN Abhiyaan), 2017, to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and low birth weight by 2 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent per annum respectively.

Our research at ICRIR tells us to focus on four key areas, if India has to make a significant dent on malnutrition by 2030. First and foremost, is the mother's education. It is one of the most important factors that has a positive multiplier effect on child care and access to healthcare facilities. It also increases awareness about nutrient-rich diet, personal hygiene, etc. This can also help contain the family size in poor, malnourished families. Thus, a high priority to female literacy, in a mission mode through liberal scholarships for the girl child, would go a long way towards tackling this problem.

Second is the access to improved sanitation and safe drinking water. From that angle, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Jal Jeevan

Global experience shows that with the right public policies focusing on agriculture, improved sanitation, and women's education, one can have much better health and well-being for its citizens, especially children. In China, it was agriculture and economic growth that significantly reduced the rates of stunting and wasting among the population and lifted millions of people out of hunger, poverty and malnutrition.

Mission would have positive outcomes in the coming years. Third, there is a need to shift dietary patterns from cereal dominance to the consumption of nutritious foods such as livestock products, fruits and vegetables, pulses, etc. But they are generally costly and their consumption increases only by higher incomes and better education. Diverting a part of the food subsidy on wheat and rice to more nutritious foods can help.

Finally, India must adopt new agricultural technologies of bio-fortifying cereals, such as zinc-rich rice, wheat, iron-rich pearl millet, and so on. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has to work closely with the Harvest Plus programme of the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to make it a win-win situation for curtailing malnutrition in Indian children at a much faster pace — and, at a much lower cost than would be achieved under a business as usual scenario.

Global experience shows that with the right public policies focusing on agriculture, improved sanitation, and women's education, one can have much better health and well-being for its citizens, especially children. In China, it was agriculture and economic growth that significantly reduced the rates of stunting and wasting among the population and lifted millions of people out of hunger, poverty and malnutrition. According to FAO, Brazil and Ethiopia have transformed their food systems: They have targeted their investments in agricultural R&D and social protection programmes to reduce hunger in the country. Despite India's improvement in child nutrition rates since 2005-06, it is way behind the progress experienced by China and many other countries. According to the Global Nutrition Report, 2016, at the present rates of decline, India will achieve the current stunting rates of China by 2055. India can certainly do better, but only if it focuses on this issue.

Gulati is Infosys chair professor for agriculture and Khurana is research assistant at ICRIR

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

PAKISTAN AND DELHI

WHEN THE EYES of the world are on India's capital, it comes as little surprise that the media in the Subcontinent has followed suit. Between US President Donald Trump's visit and the deeply disturbing acts of large-scale communal violence that have gripped the city, a connection is being drawn — one that is far from flattering to India.

On February 27, the editorial in *Dawn* — in line with what was being said across much of the Pakistani media — remarked that the "images coming out of the Indian capital are truly chilling". The newspaper draws a connection that many in the international media already have made — between the rhetoric against and political marginalisation of Indian Muslims by the ruling BJP and the violence that has unfolded in Delhi. *Dawn* writes: "In Prime Minister Narendra thoroughly exposed Modi's India, the country's much-trumpeted claims of being a secular republic have been as the storm troopers of the Sangh Parivar have rampaged through New Delhi."

The editorial acknowledges that communal violence did not begin with the current dispensation — it cites the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the post-Babri demolition riots and Gujarat 2002 — but also argues that "this

time, things are different". Why? "...because the dispensation that rules New Delhi has amidst its ranks some virulently anti-Muslim elements, while hate material can spread like wildfire through social media."

Two days later, *Dawn* expressed concern at the reported defence deals between India and the US sealed during US President Donald Trump's visit. Some of the editorial expresses concern at the strategic implications of such a deal — points that are well taken.

But what is of interest — and substance — is the fact that New Delhi's rhetoric, communal violence in India, the ruling dispensation's constitutional adventurism are being used to call into question whether or not India is a responsible power: "However, while both the US and India champion their status as 'great democracies', as the events over the past few days have shown, those who run India today are wedded to thoroughly undemocratic principles. Not only is the Hinduva-inspired administration bent upon demonising and oppressing India's minorities, particularly its Muslims, the fanatical elements in New Delhi have also threatened Pakistan numerous times in the recent past. Such threats have come from senior Indian military as well as civilian officials. Hence, in such a scenario, when the US chooses to empower the Indian

war machine, Pakistan has very legitimate concerns. The deal will only further spur the arms race in South Asia and scuttle any chances for peace. The US should take a more responsible and balanced approach in this region, especially when two nuclear-armed states are involved."

HYPOCRITES IN ARMS

While the chagrin in Pakistan's media can be explained away by many as stemming from a history of animosity to the idea of India, few would make the same argument for Sri Lanka. Yet, the editorial in *The Island* on February 27 is in some ways more of an indictment, and unmitigated expression of Schadenfreude at India's fall from its moral high-ground: "Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during PM Mahinda Rajapaksa's recent state visit to India, exhorted Sri Lanka to ensure that the rights of its minorities, especially the Tamils, were safeguarded. In an interesting turn of events replete with irony, close on the heels of Modi's much-publicised exhortation, ethnic violence erupted, in New Delhi; the riots which have left about 30 dead are being described by the media as a chilling reminder of the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim violence".

The thrust of the editorial is that both

Modi and Trump — and New Delhi and Washington — have criticised Sri Lanka for the alleged atrocities and human rights violations against the country's Tamils. Now, the paper argues, the rank hypocrisy of both countries stands revealed, the unstated corollary to which is that it makes the easier to revile: "The irony of US President Donald Trump being in New Delhi, hugging Modi, when racial violence broke out, in New Delhi, may not have been lost on the discerning public. The US and India are two of the self-righteous nations that have joined forces to pillory Sri Lanka, in Geneva, over alleged human rights violations. Curiously, neither the US State Department, which is a self-proclaimed defender of human rights, the world over, nor the New Delhi-based American Embassy issued a statement, censuring the Modi administration for its failure to prevent ethnic violence. There have been reports that some rogue elements within the ranks of the Indian police encouraged the perpetrators of violence, the way their Sri Lankan counterparts did during the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom."

The editorial ends on a direct note: "When Trump and Modi undertake to defend human rights, in other countries, one sees them as two recalcitrant patients posing off as physicians."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ANSWER FIRST

THIS REFERS TO the article, "The guilty of Delhi" (IE, February 28). The author writes: "In Delhi, the opposition (Congress, AAP etc) has stoked fears." Even if one were to accept this, it is still the responsibility of the BJP-led Union government and Home minister Amit Shah to rein in the violence. Were intelligence agencies sleeping when the Opposition was planning to spread violence? Why did the government take 4-5 days to respond? Why is the Delhi Police commissioner not facing the media? Why did the NSA have to step on to the streets of Delhi? The author should answer for the government and ruling party, not blame others.
Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

COURT, DO MORE

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Dishonouring a pledge" (IE, February 28). Although there are constitutional provisions for minorities, they are still prey to injustice. The article draws a connection between the current situation and the larger politics at play with the passing of the CAA. The argument that the Supreme Court could have stalled the social unrest by putting a stay on the implementation of the CAA is well taken. If the Court had been more proactive, especially when accusations of violence and negligence on part of the Delhi Police were made with regard

to Jamia and JNU, such a situation could perhaps have been avoided.
Yashwantraje Pawar, Pune

NDA CHURN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "The Bihar model" (IE, February 28). The JD(U)-BJP government in Bihar must have got the resolution against the proposed NRC and for an NPR in its 2010 format passed with PM Narendra Modi's knowledge or understanding. It will be interesting to know how Union Home Minister Amit Shah reacts to this development. He was intent on the implementation of the NRC.
Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

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IMPROVING HEALTHCARE

Maharashtra overtakes Tamil Nadu, Telangana in organ donation, transplants

Thanks to the efforts of regional and state organ transplant organisations, 449 patients benefited in 2019

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, MARCH 1

"A SINGLE organ donor can save or improve the lives of more than eight people" is their opening statement as a team from Pune's Zonal Transplant Coordination Centre (ZTCC) along with a local NGO visit a minimum of 15 colleges to inspire youngsters to pledge their organs. They do this every month. At Nagpur's ZTCC, even a gathering of 25 or so people is sufficient — say youngsters queuing up for a driving license at the Regional Transport Office — for the team to talk about brain stem death and then expand on how the gift of donating one's organ is a precious and noble deed.

And such has been the impact of such sensitisation drives and the meticulous efforts of Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation — State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (ROTTOT-SOTTO) along with four ZTCCs in Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Aurangabad that the top performers in the field of organ donation — Tamil Nadu and Telangana — were edged out by Maharashtra for contributing the highest number of organs donated and, as a result, giving a new lease of life to 449 patients last year.

On the occasion of the 10th Indian Organ Donation Day, the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation presented the best state award to Maharashtra in the field of deceased organ donation at an event held in November last year.

ROTTOT-SOTTO was set up by the Directorate General of Health Services, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and, in Maharashtra, it works with the state Directorate of Health Services, while networking with private hospitals through ZTCCs. As the regional organisation, it also oversees Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

Dr Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, Director, ROTTOT-SOTTO for the western region and Maharashtra, said that there were several factors that contribute to a successful transplant programme.

"There are a number of myths surrounding organ donation — like the fear that the body will be disfigured or that there will be



A rally to raise awareness about organ donation in Pune *Express*

costs involved or even whether their religion prohibits it — and these have to be dispelled," Dr Gajiwala said.

From rallies, talks, padayatras, marathons, stalls at religious festivals, competitions on organ donation to programmes for societies, corporates, security forces and police the ZTCC's in association with local NGOs were able to conduct 387 such awareness driven activities. Training programmes for 200 volunteers and activists from more than 20 NGOs last year then helped them conduct awareness programmes in their own associations and workplaces — thus multiplying the outreach.

In 2019, Maharashtra has raced ahead of Tamil Nadu and Telangana (see box). The sustained effort towards awareness was acknowledged by the National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation or NOTTO, which also felicitated the family members of six-year-old Rivyani Rahandale from Nagpur. Her parents donated her organs after a road accident left Rivyani brain dead. Her heart gave new life to a three-year-old girl in Mumbai, her kidneys saved a 14-year-old boy in Nagpur, her liver was sent to another

recipient in Nagpur and her corneas opened up a new world for two other recipients.

"In 2017 at a fancy dress competition Rivyani had played a visually challenged girl and said a few lines on organ donation. In death she helped save several lives," recalled Dr Gajiwala.

Doctors in the ICU (intensivists) are crucial to the programme as they identify and maintain potential donors. They are the ones who prepare the family for the tragic news of the death of their loved one, explain brain stem death, counsel the relatives and present the option of organ donation. They are helped by transplant coordinators. Last year, 73 transplant coordinators, doctors nurses and medical social workers were trained.

"Awareness about organ donation has improved over the years but it is still a challenge," admits Surekha Joshi, head of the medical social work department at Pune's Ruby Hall Clinic.

As of January 1, there are 6,631 patients on the waiting list. "This year we are even doubling our efforts to encourage organ donation," said Aarti Gokhale, Central Coordinator of ZTCC, Pune.

EXPLAINED

Why donating organs matters

When Rivyani Rahandale, a Nagpur girl who believed in organ donation, died in 2019, and her organs were donated, her heart gave the gift of life to a three-year-old girl in Mumbai, her kidneys saved the life of a 14-year-old boy in Nagpur, the corneas of her eyes made this world visible to two blind people and her liver was sent to yet another person. Rivyani was just six-year-old.

HOW MAHARASHTRA RACED AHEAD

- In 2019, in Maharashtra, out of 237 who were identified as potential donors, relatives gave consent in 193 cases.
- From November 2018 to October 2019, a total of 447 organs were retrieved and allocated.
- A total of 449 organs (including those donated by other states) were transplanted.
- A total of 193 brain stem deaths were identified, of which 153 were converted for transplant.
- Tamil Nadu was able to convert only 93 such brain stem deaths for transplants while Telangana was able to do so in 117 brain stem deaths.

'With more than 3 lakh artisans participating since 2016, Hunar Haat to go international'

BY WALKING into the Hunar Haat unheralded last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had elevated the status of this periodic fair for artisans from the minority communities to the league of a happening destination in the national capital. Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi talks to ABANTIKA GHOSH about Hunar Haat and how it plans to go international.

Tell us about the genesis of Hunar Haat and what has it achieved?

It all started about three-and-a-half years ago when PM Modi was very keen for a forum that would promote and market the world-class products of Indian artisans and craftsmen working from Kutch to Cuttack, Kashmir to Kanyakumari. We have a programme called Ustaad that works with artisans to train and help them so that traditional arts do not die out. We worked with Ustaad to start Hunar Haat. The first one happened at the India International Trade Fair in 2016 with participants from 19-20 states. There has been no looking back since then; we have been to Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad. This (at India Gate) was the 20th edition of Hunar Haat, there is one on right now in Ranchi. There have been more than 3 lakh participants so far.

How much business has been transacted in these haats?

Our estimate is more than Rs 100 crore. Of course, we do not ask them and they do not tell us. But that is a reasonable estimate. Apart from this, there are international orders that they get at these fairs. At India Gate, for example, there was a footfall of 17 lakh; it's not ticketed but this is the figure we have from the metal detectors. I would say that translated into business of Rs 25-30 crore. We also trained the craftsmen in packaging, a government PSU set up a stall just for that. The importance of good packaging, the need to shun single-use plastic — all of that was taught to the participants.

Tell us about the PM's visit.

It was all very sudden, there was no word whatsoever, he took all of us by surprise and spent so much time at the venue, interacting with participants, tasting the food. There was a stupendous increase in visitors after that.

Do you have many women participants?

As a matter of fact, we have a 50% reservation for women. It started at 20%, but over the years we have increased that to ensure more women's participation. There are a large number of women self-help groups associated with Hunar Haat. There is one from Moradabad that makes yoga mats, it started



THE POLICY INTERVIEW
MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI
Union Minister of Minority Affairs

with 20-30 women but there was so much demand that there are 500 women now who are a part of that SHG and making yoga mats. In addition, we also have food stalls — the varied cuisine of the South, of the Northeast. The idea is to showcase unity in diversity — the culinary way.

How much does Hunar Haats cost the government?

Very little, believe me. We have spent only about 10-12 crore till date. We give the stalls for free, we give second class return train tickets to two people for every stall and, given that sales are unpredictable, we also give them TA/DA.

Any plans to go international?

We have been getting requests. There is a person of Indian origin — an NRI who wants to take Hunar Haat to London. We have a request from the Indian Embassy in Jeddah. There are also queries from Dubai and Kuwait. We have formed a task force under an additional secretary to look into it and develop a plan. We are also in talks with the Export Promotion Council and the Commerce Ministry. There were teams from both at India Gate.

Talks are on with Indian Institute of Packaging for effective methods to ensure attractive packaging for products of artisans. A 5-day workshop was held by Indian Institute of Packaging during recent Hunar Haat at India Gate lawns.

IN NUMBERS

TOTAL UNPAID DUES UNDER THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT HAVE RISEN SHARPLY

YEAR	TOTAL MGNREGA DUES (IN RS CR)
2014-15	591
2015-16	520
2016-17	938
2017-18	1127
2018-19	4193
2019-20*	6430

* As of January 1, 2020. Source: Centre for Policy Research

FROM STATES REFORMS TRACKER

HARYANA Improving Ease of Doing Business

EVEN THOUGH the state ranks number 1 across north India and third overall in the country, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal has announced that his government would be further simplifying regulations and streamlining procedures to further attract foreign investors. The CM was speaking during the Budget session in the Vidhan Sabha. The five key areas that the Haryana government prioritises in this regard are agribusiness and food processing, textile, warehousing and logistics, pharmaceutical, and MSMEs.

BIHAR Ration card portability in March

FOOD AND Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Friday that Bihar will implement the ration card portability scheme in March. The move is part of the "One nation, one ration card" initiative that plans to cover all the states in the country by June 1. Under the initiative, eligible beneficiaries would be able to avail their entitled food grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) from any Fair Price Shop in the country using the same ration card.

ODISHA Two investment proposals approved

THE ODISHA government has approved two investment proposals worth Rs 563 crore which will create employment for 1,273 people. The project proposals got the nod of the state government at the State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) meeting chaired by the chief secretary.

Madhya Pradesh starts providing doorstep delivery of govt documents within 24 hours

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, MARCH 1

WHEN NEETU Jindal, a Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharma) student, applied for a domicile certificate she had no idea how long would it take to get it. At the kiosk, there typically was a long queue and a long waiting period but she could not wait that long. Then, as she was filling the form, she was informed that she could get the document delivered at home within 24 hours. Of course, she had to pay a little extra but it was a meagre amount. "It was delivered at my home two hours later," she says.

Similarly, Jagat Singh Kushwah, a computer operator, needed an income certificate and a domicile certificate for his children's school admission. The 38-year-old did not want to venture out because it would have meant a day's leave from his private job. He



Chief Minister Kamal Nath at the Dwar Praday Yojana launch *Express*

had seen a video of the scheme's inauguration by Chief Minister Kamal Nath and applied online.

"I registered with my Aadhaar number, followed the instructions and ticked the

home delivery option," he says. He paid Rs 100. He got the documents the next day.

These youngsters are beneficiaries of the Dwar Praday Yojana, a pilot project that was started in Indore last month.

Applicants living within the boundaries of Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) get five types of documents — domicile certificate, income certificate, birth certificate, death certificate and copy of Khasra-Khatauni (a land ownership document) — delivered at their home within 24 hours of applying. They are required to pay just Rs 15 extra for the home delivery of the document.

Indore's District Collector Lokesh Jatav said the pilot project was conceived in October and the central idea was to improve government's service delivery.

The administration has engaged a local courier agency, which delivers the documents after collecting them from public service centres.

KERALA/AGRICULTURE EXTENSION

Better soil health, market linkage, revives paddy cultivation

SHAJU PHILIP
KANNUR, MARCH 1

IN KERALA, paddy production and area under paddy cultivation have been shrinking over the years, but farmers at Mayyil village panchayat in Kannur district have reversed their fortunes.

Paddy cultivation had turned into an unremunerative activity mainly due to increasing labour costs, low yields and poor returns from the final produce. This resulted in farmers shifting to other crops and leaving paddy fields untilled.

When fallow paddy fields grew at Mayyil, the local self-governing body and agriculture department made its first intervention in 2016. The village panchayat launched a Total Rice Campaign or "Sampoorna Nettu Krishi" to revive paddy farming.

P Jayaraj, Director of Krishi Vigyan Kendra

(KVK) in Kannur said "the initial step was to improve the soil health to show that soil treated properly with required nutrients can work wonders. With the help of a few farmers, we went for scientific paddy cultivation on a demonstration basis. It yielded a bumper crop, igniting keen interest and confidence among farmers".

The KVK, with the help of local farmer groups, went for an awareness drive. The first step was to rope in local libraries. Mayyil has 35 libraries registered with the state library council and using these libraries, around 25 paddy farming groups were constituted. Each group was given blocs of fields, with lands taken on lease, ranging from 15 acres to 170 acres.

NABARD and three-tier local self-governing bodies extended financial support for paddy farmer groups. In June 2017, the farmer-producer organisation, Mayyil Rice Producer Company (MRPC), was formed



A farmer with a mini rice mill *Express*

with 300 farmers from various groups as members.

MRPC Chairman K K Ramachandran said "we prepared a standard operating procedure, a farming calendar for every farmer groups. The health of the soil was improved and a protocol was fixed".

To reduce labour cost, agri-machinery was hired and supplied to all groups as per the calendar. When average paddy production in Kerala was 2,400 kg per hectare in 2016, the farmers at Mayyil were given a target of 7,500 kg.

Jayaraj said uniform practice among all farmers made the whole soil healthier and resulted in surprisingly high yields. The production in 2017 ranged between 6,500 kg to 11,500 kg. The production costs had already halved, thanks to the adoption of scientific farming practices.

The next task was finding a market. Earlier, farmers were at the mercy of private mills,

which offered less than Rs 20 per kg of raw paddy. State-run Supplyco used to procure at Rs 23 per kg, but the dampener was delayed payment. At this stage, MRPC stepped in to procure the paddy and convert it into rice under a new brand called "samruddhi".

The most innovative intervention of the company was to provide mini rice mills to farmers. Powered with a 3 HP motor, it can convert 120 kg of paddy into rice in an hour. It was the first time in Kerala that such mini rice mills were provided to farmers.

The company supplied mills to farmers and fixed Rs 9 as the charge for converting 1 kg of paddy into rice. At present, 55 such mills are being operated by farmers inside their homes, apart from a few common mills run by MRPC.

Over the last three years, the number of farmers involved has gone up from 1,100 to 2,380 and the area under paddy cultivation has shot up from 850 acres to 1,480 acres.

MEANWHILE

COUGHING POPE CANCELS PLANNED RETREAT

Pope Francis said he was cancelling a planned six-day spiritual retreat south of Rome after coming down with a "cold". The 83-year-old pontiff coughed a couple of times during his weekly Sunday appearance from a Vatican window in front of supporters. The cancellation of the retreat came as Italy battles Europe's worst outbreak of the new coronavirus.



U.S.-TALIBAN DEAL

Afghan peace agreement hits first snag over release of prisoners

Ghani says won't free thousands of Taliban prisoners; partial truce to continue with 'full ceasefire' goal

AGENCIES KABUL, MARCH 1

AFGHANISTAN'S PRESIDENT said Sunday that he will not free thousands of Taliban prisoners ahead of all-Afghan power-sharing talks set for next week, publicly disagreeing with a timetable for a speedy prisoner release laid out just a day earlier in a US-Taliban peace agreement.

President Ashraf Ghani's comments pointed to the first hitch in implementing the fragile deal, which is aimed at ending America's longest war after more than 18 years and getting rival Afghan factions to agree on their country's future.

Still, the US has said a planned US troop withdrawal over the next 14 months is linked to the Taliban's counter-terrorism performance, not to progress in intra-Afghan talks.

The US-Taliban deal signed Saturday envisions the release of up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners by



Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani said the release of Taliban prisoners was not a promise the United States could make. AP

the Afghan government ahead of talks between Afghan factions meant to begin March 10 in the Norwegian capital of Oslo. The Taliban would release up to 1,000 prisoners.

Ghani told a news conference in the Afghan capital of Kabul on Sunday that this wasn't a promise the United States could make.

He said the release of prisoners was a decision for his government to take and that he wasn't ready to release prisoners before the start of negotiations.

"The request has been made by the United States for the release of prisoners and it can be part of the negotiations but it cannot be a precondition,"

EXPLAINED

Hitch a sign of the bumpy road ahead in govt-Taliban talks

WITH THE signing of the US-Taliban peace deal, NATO forces are set to leave Afghanistan over the next 14 months. But the next stage of the Afghan peace process is the talks between the Ghani-led government and the militant group. These talks are likely to involve difficult negotiations over a number of issues, especially as the Taliban have refused to recognise the government, which it terms a puppet of the West. The release of its prisoners is a key demand of the Taliban, but the Afghan government is likely to use this as leverage to secure their own interests — most importantly a lasting ceasefire.

Ghani said.

Aso-called "reduction in violence" period, which saw attacks plummet across Afghanistan and ran for the week preceding the signing of the accord, would continue, the Afghan President said.

"The reduction in violence will continue with a goal to reach

a full ceasefire," Ghani told a press conference.

"General (Scott) Miller has told Taliban to do so. It is expected (to continue)," he added, referring to the US commander in charge of foreign forces in Afghanistan.

A Taliban source did not immediately comment.



People photograph cherry blossoms in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, China. Reuters

Gatherings banned, travel restricted as coronavirus cases grow worldwide

STEVE HOLLAND & JULIA HARTE WASHINGTON, MARCH 1

LEADERS IN Europe, the Middle East and the Americas rolled out bans on big gatherings and stricter travel restrictions as cases of the new coronavirus spread around the world.

The United States on Saturday reported its first death from the disease, a man in his 50s in Washington state, where officials said two of the state's three cases have links to a nursing home with dozens of residents showing disease symptoms.

Although most Americans face a low risk from the virus, more US deaths could be imminent following the nation's first, CNN quoted Vice President Mike Pence as saying.

Travellers from Italy and South Korea would face additional screening, Trump and top officials told a White House news briefing, warning Americans against travelling to coronavirus-affected regions in both countries.

Ecuador on Saturday reported its first case, in a woman who had traveled from Madrid, while Mexico reported four

CHINA TOLL 2,870

China reported 573 new confirmed coronavirus cases, up from 427 the previous day. The number of deaths stood at 35, taking the toll in mainland China to 2,870.

cases, all in people who had visited Italy.

As governments worldwide stepped up efforts to halt the spread of the virus, France announced a temporary ban on public gatherings with more than 5,000 people in confined spaces. It reported 16 new cases for a total of 73, and canceled a half-marathon of 40,000 runners scheduled for Sunday.

Switzerland said it is banning events expected to draw more than 1,000 people.

Tehran has ordered schools shut until Tuesday and extended the closure of universities and a ban on concerts and sports events for a week. An Iranian lawmaker has died from the disease along with more than 40 other Iranians, and several officials have tested positive for the virus. REUTERS

Sri Lanka's Parliament set to be dissolved, paving way for snap elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO, MARCH 1

SRI LANKAN President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is likely to dissolve the Parliament later on Sunday, paving the way for snap elections in the country months ahead of the schedule, a top minister said.

Gotabaya in December named his elder brother and former strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister of the caretaker Cabinet until the general election in August 2020. He can now legally dissolve Parliament and call an election.

The President could issue the dismissal order on the Parliament Sunday night, the earliest he could force a fresh parliamentary poll. The current Parliament was appointed on September 1, 2015.

"Yes we will definitely look to dissolve, we were prevented from going for early polls due to the 19A mistake of the previous government," Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena told reporters.

The 19A amendment was a key reform pledge of the previous government headed by then president Maithripala Sirisena and PM Ranil Wickremesinghe.

It aims to curtail excessive powers of the presidency, leaving more power for the Parliament.

Gunawardena said Gotabaya, despite his clear win in the elections, was clamped by the 19A to call for a fresh election to have his own government.

"Previous presidents were able to dissolve the Parliament after a year," he said.

Political sources said the dissolution order could be issued Sunday midnight, making the way for the fresh polls by April end.

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

In South Carolina, Biden scores first win, adding new life to his candidacy

JONATHAN MARTIN & ALEXANDER BURNS COLUMBIA, MARCH 1

JOE BIDEN scored a decisive victory in the South Carolina primary Saturday, reviving his listing campaign and establishing himself as the leading contender to slow Senator Bernie Sanders as the turbulent Democratic race turns to a slew of coast-to-coast contests Tuesday.

Propelled by an outpouring of support from South Carolina's African American voters, Biden easily overcame a late effort by Sanders to stage an upset. The victory in a state long seen as his firewall will vault Biden into Super Tuesday as the clear alternative to Sanders for establishment-aligned Democrats.

With almost 100% of the vote counted, Biden, the former vice president, had won just under 50% of the vote, well ahead of Sanders, who had 20%. Tom Steyer, the California billionaire, was a distant third, followed by Pete Buttigieg and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. The victory enabled Biden to significantly narrow Sanders' pledged delegate lead, but he did not appear poised to overtake him.



Joe Biden with supporters at his South Carolina primary night rally in Columbia. Reuters

SOUTH CAROLINA RESULTS

Candidate	Biden	Sanders	Buttigieg	Warren
Votes	255,662	105,070	43,484	37,285
Pct.	48.4%	19.9%	8.2%	7.1%

Source: NYT

abled Biden to significantly narrow Sanders' pledged delegate lead, but he did not appear poised to overtake him.

Biden, in an exuberant victory speech Saturday night, said voters

ers faced a momentous choice in the coming days. Democrats, Biden argued, wanted results rather than revolution, improvements to the Affordable Care Act rather than a disruptive transformation of the health care system, and a candidate who would "take on the NRA and gun manufacturers and not protect them".

As much as the results here offered new life to Biden, the one-time front-runner, they dealt a perhaps fatal blow to two moderates, Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and Senator Amy Klobuchar. Both had been hoping to overtake Biden as the candidate of the party's centre, but again proved unable to win nonwhite voters.

Perhaps even more consequentially, Biden's triumph here also increased pressure on Michael Bloomberg to best Biden in the 15 states and territories voting Tuesday — or consider exiting the race.

Steyer fell far short of the breakthrough his campaign believed was possible in South Carolina, and after the polls closed, he dropped out of the race. NYT

Trump: May not be excited by a crowd again after India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WASHINGTON, MARCH 1

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has said he would "never be excited about a crowd again" after his visit to India where he addressed a rally of over 1,00,000 people.

During his maiden visit to India on February 24-25, President Trump and First Lady Melania were given a rousing welcome in the presence of more than one lakh people at the Motera stadium in Gujarat's Ahmedabad city.

Addressing a rally in South



Carolina on Saturday, the US President recalled the mega 'Namaste, Trump' event at the Motera stadium and said, "In India, I hate to say this to you,

"In India, I hate to say this to you, they actually have a 129,000-seat stadium. Did you see it? The place was packed, and they did better than most."

— DONALD TRUMP U.S. PRESIDENT

they actually have 129,000-seat stadium. Did you see it? The place was packed, and they did better than most."

Trump also praised Prime

UK's PM ANNOUNCES THAT HE AND HIS PARTNER, CARRIE SYMONDS, WERE EXPECTING A CHILD

For Boris Johnson, Britain's baby boom starts at 10 Downing Street

MARK LANDLER LONDON, MARCH 1

OF ALL the glad tidings that Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised would flow from Brexit, one of the most far-fetched was a baby boom. But at least in his own case, Johnson has actually delivered on that pledge.

The 55-year-old prime minister and his partner, Carrie Symonds, 31, said on Saturday that they had become engaged and were expecting a child in early summer. A spokeswoman for the couple told the BBC they were

"very pleased" to share the news. Johnson will be the first prime minister since Tony Blair to have a child while living in No. 10 Downing St. Blair and his wife, Cherie, had a son, Leo, while there in 2000.

Johnson and Symonds were the first unmarried couple ever to move into the prime minister's residence. The child will be the first for Symonds, a former communications chief for Johnson's Conservative Party.

For the twice-married Johnson, whose private life is as untidy as his appearance, news that he is again becoming a father



Johnson and Symonds were the first unmarried couple ever to move into the prime minister's residence. Reuters

inspired a fit of good-natured humor on social media. With four children from his second marriage and possibly at least one from an extramarital relationship, the exact number of Johnson's progeny remains somewhat mysterious.

"Congratulations Boris Johnson on your 5th or 6th kid," said one wit on Twitter. "Congratulations to Boris Johnson on his 4th, 8th or 17th child," another chimed in.

During a radio interview in 2019, Johnson declined to say how many children he had. He also deflected a question about whether he and Symonds, with whom he

has been romantically linked since last year, planned to start a family.

But he waxed enthusiastically in another interview about the beneficial effects that leaving the European Union would have on Britain's birthrate. He predicted that Brexit would bring a surge in births similar to what he claimed happened when London hosted the Olympics in 2012, when he was the city's mayor.

"Cupid's darts will fly once we get Brexit done," he said in an interview with the Sunday Times of London last year. "Romance will bloom across the whole nation. There was one af-

ter the Olympics, as I correctly prophesied in a speech in 2012."

A report by the Office of National Statistics appears to cast doubt on the claim. Births in England and Wales fell 4.3% in 2013, the year after the Games. The couple's news comes two weeks after a court approved a financial settlement formally ending Johnson's marriage to his second wife, Marina Wheeler.

Sajid Javid, who was pushed out of his job as chancellor of the Exchequer by Johnson this month, was among the first to congratulate the couple. "Wonderful news," Javid wrote on Twitter. NYT

14 ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH

FPIS INVEST ₹6.5K CR IN FEB

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIS) invested only Rs 6,554 crore in Indian markets on net basis in February, as they adopted a cautious stance amid coronavirus scare, subdued economic data and disappointing corporate earnings. **PTI**

**PHARMA WATCH
GENERIC MEDICINES**

Pact inked by Mylan allows new Hep C drug to be made in India, but no sales in local market

**PRABHARAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1**

DRUGMAKER MYLAN Laboratories in India recently signed an agreement to develop, manufacture and supply the first generic version of a crucial drug for Hepatitis C patients, especially those who don't respond to existing treatment. The catch, however, is that the drug can be manufactured in India, but patients in the country will not get access to it.

Some health activists feel the development could set a potentially dangerous precedent for other companies to use India as a manufacturing and export hub for medicines, while excluding patients here from the benefits. The drug in question, a combination of glecaprevir and pibrentasvir (G/P), was developed by US biopharma company AbbVie and is sold in America under the brand name Mavyret.

The World Health Organisation included it in its (WHO) model list of essential medicines last year as a recommended Hep C treatment.

According to the sub-licence signed by Mylan with United Nations-backed public health organisation Medicines Patent Pool (MPP), India is listed as a "manufacturing-only" country, and is the only country to be listed in this category. India also does not figure in the 96 countries listed under the category "Territory", which are eligible to access the drug.

Pursuant to MPP's own licence with AbbVie, Mylan has been granted a "non-exclusive, non-transferable license under the AbbVie Patents to manufacture and develop the licensed compounds and licensed products in the manufacturing-only countries solely for the purpose of commercialization of licensed products in the field and in the territory". Nearly half of Mylan's global manufacturing capacity is in India, and it employs around 15,000 people here.

Queries sent to Mylan, AbbVie and MPP about the development remained unanswered by press time on Sunday. Excluding India from the list of eligible territories could leave thousands of patients in need of salvage treatment in the lurch, as patients in various parts of the country have stopped responding to regular Hep C treatment.

"Failure rate of existing therapies in cirrhotic patients is around 10 per cent, while patients without liver damage have better success, so their failure rate is around 4 per cent," said Dr Praveen Malhotra, head—gastroenterology, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS), Rohtak.

"It may be sounding a little less but, with the prevalence of Hep C coming out across certain belts in the country, the number is actually more. For instance, around five per cent of the population of Haryana would have Hep C, according to our estimates," he told *The Indian Express*.

"This is an extremely flawed

'DANGEROUS PRECEDENT'

■ **The drug, a combination of glecaprevir and pibrentasvir, was developed by AbbVie**

■ **Activists feel the development could set a potentially dangerous precedent for other companies to use India as a manufacturing and export hub for medicines, while excluding patients here from the benefits**

and unethical licence. You are using India as a manufacturing country in order to produce these drugs and you're not even giving them to Indian patients," said Leena Menghaney of the Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) Access Campaign. The body, in the past, attempted to procure the drug for compassionate use in India but was denied permission by AbbVie, she said.

"The model... being built for India is that you can do business with Indian companies and have these agreements, where you can get these drugs manufactured here, but you leave the very people living here out of it. In this case, it's one treatment, but if this model is allowed to be replicated by the MPP in other therapeutic areas, it can completely undermine access for Indian patients in the future," she added. This would need to be challenged by the Indian government "more vigorously", Menghaney said.

Hep C is more prevalent in states like Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and the North East as well as certain parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. PGIMS Rohtak has treated around 25,000 patients as part of a dedicated screening programme since 2013, making the number of patients estimated to have failed such treatment around 1,450 in Haryana alone.

Malhotra also expects a rising number of patients developing resistance to first- and second-line treatment. "There is a good chunk of patients across the country who would require this drug (Mavyret generic)," he said.

From 2011 to 2018, AbbVie also submitted five patent applications related to the drug in India. However, one of the applications was opposed in June 2019 by the Delhi Network of Positive People and Initiative for Medicines, Access and Knowledge, Inc, claiming it was "unmerited".

These patent applications, if granted, would allow AbbVie to drag to court any company wanting to make a generic G/P in India without a similar licence to Mylan's as well as those making it for the Indian population, said a pharmaceutical lawyer.

JANUARY NON-FOOD CREDIT GROWTH DECELERATES TO 8.5%

Credit growth to industry, farm sector falls despite RBI rate cuts

**GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MARCH 1**

WITH SLOWDOWN in the economy taking a toll and the central bank policy rate cut not fully getting transmitted to productive sectors, non-food credit growth in the banking system has declined to 8.5 per cent as of January 2020, against 13.1 per cent in the same period last year. While most of the sectors — including industry, agriculture and housing — showed a fall in credit growth, credit card outstandings registered a 31.6 per cent growth.

According to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest sectoral data, total non-food credit outstandings amounted to Rs 89,00,136 crore as of January 2020. Credit growth to agriculture & allied activities decelerated to 6.5 per cent at Rs 11,53,386 crore in January 2020 from 7.6 per cent in January 2019.

The RBI had slashed the repo rate by 135 basis points (bps) in 2019, but the cut was not fully transmitted into productive sectors. The one-year median marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) declined by just 55 bps during February 2019 and January 2020. The weighted average lending rate (WALR) on fresh rupee loans sanctioned by banks declined by only 69 bps and the WALR on outstanding rupee loans by 13 bps during February-

EXPLAINED E. LTRO could boost credit growth to productive sectors

RBI GOVERNOR Shaktikanta Das had recently remarked that banks have shifted their focus away from large infrastructure and industrial loans towards retail loans, which is in line with the slowing growth seen in credit to industry.

However, the long-term repo operations (LTRO) announced by the central bank to boost credit growth could give a leg-up to productive sectors in times of slowdown.

December 2019.

The RBI data shows that credit growth to industry decelerated to 2.5 per cent (Rs 28,17,525 crore) in January 2020 from 5.2 per cent in January 2019. With new investments yet to take off, loan offtake growth by the large industry segment declined to 2.8 per cent at Rs 23,37,662 crore from 6.1 per cent a year ago. Within industry, credit growth to paper & paper products, rubber plastic & their products and construction accelerated. However, credit growth to textile, food processing, chemical & chemical products, basic metal & metal products, all engineering and infrastructure decelerated/contracted. The medium industry showed only 2.8 per cent credit growth against 7 per cent a year ago.

The data further said credit

growth to the services sector decelerated to 8.9 per cent (Rs 24,31,975 crore) in January 2020 from 23.9 per cent last January. However, personal loans grew by 16.9 per cent in January 2020, the same rate as January 2019.

Significantly, credit card outstandings shot up by over Rs 26,000 crore to Rs 1,10,864 crore, showing a growth of 31.6 per cent as against 29 per cent a year ago.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had recently said the overhang of non-performing assets (NPAs) "remains relatively high which is weighing on credit growth". "In view of subdued profitability and deleveraging by certain corporates, risk-averse banks have shifted their focus away from large infrastructure and industrial loans towards retail loans," Das had said.

Rating agency Crisil said the prolonged slowdown in bank lending may be bottoming out this fiscal, with gross credit offtake set to rise 8-9 per cent on-year in FY21, a good 200-300 bps over the 6 per cent likely growth in FY20.

"A gradual pick-up in economic activity, continuing demand for retail loans, and strong growth in lending by private sector banks should drive the uptick. As for this fiscal, some growth momentum is expected in the fourth quarter, after a subdued three quarters — due to traditional fiscal year ending growth. The RBI's move to exempt banks from cash reserve ratio requirement for incremental credit to certain sectors for up to five years will also support lending. Incremental net domestic credit this fiscal up to December 2019 is just a fifth of what it was a year ago," Crisil said.

The RBI had recently announced Rs one lakh crore of long-term repo operations (LTRO) to boost credit growth. Analysts said LTRO is a bold measure which would help banks kickstart credit growth and help them reduce their cost and improve margins.

LTRO has led to a rally in the short end of the gilt yield curve post monetary policy in February. The RBI has been increasingly focusing on improving monetary transmission to boost bank credit to productive sectors using unconventional measures.

FM: Direct benefit transfer, GST being talked about as silent revolution



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the 44th Civil Accounts Day function at Ambedkar Bhawan, in New Delhi, on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1**

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman Sunday asked civil accounts officers to focus on bringing in more efficient and adaptive technologies to further smoothen the working of the Public Financial Management System. PFMS is designed to help government agencies in processing payments, tracking, monitoring, accounting and reconciliation. It tracks funds disbursement and ensures that state treasuries are integrated with the Centre to ensure money is sent as and when required.

Speaking at the 44th Civil Accounts Day function, Sitharaman said PFMS has saved Rs 1 lakh crore for the country and left a real and lasting impact on public service delivery system. She said the accounts officers are not only competent accounts persons but also competent technology professionals.

"Even as we are talking of technology, that itself is a challenge. Every day it changes, newer versions come in, rapid changes are happening and therefore, to keep on top of it is a big exercise. You have to constantly keep changing the milepost, bring in more and more efficiency and adaptive technology," she said.

The minister added technology-driven PFMS has empowered India to be accountable, responsive and transparent. "Today all over the world, DBT (direct benefit transfer) and GST (goods and services tax) are being talked about as one of the silent revolution that democracy can show off

to the world," she said, adding that officers have shown that public finance is not opaque, but efficient and responsive to the public. "This is the biggest revolution. The Rs 1 lakh crore you have saved through DBT, these are not just symbolic."

She added these savings are through efficient use of technology, and have proven that corruption and wrongdoing can be removed from the system.

Speaking at the function, Expenditure Secretary TV Somanathan said the integration of PFMS with railways, defence and postal service needs to be taken forward. I am aware that in most of these systems, there are multiple agencies involved and you are often at the tail end and the delay can be for various reasons beyond your control. But there is one element of the system which is in your control and what I would like you to do is to make sure that that element of system is never a source of delay or complaint," he added.

In 2019-20, a total of 64 crore transactions, amounting to Rs 19.64 lakh crore, were executed via PFMS. DBT payments worth Rs 1.53 lakh crore were done through the PFMS. PM-KISAN is one of the major schemes being implemented through the PFMS.

"Till date, the total amount of benefit paid is Rs 49,250.77 crore through 24.63 crore transactions covering a total number of 8.12 crore farmers. On 2nd January, 2020 at Tumakuru (Karnataka), the Prime Minister announced the release of an additional tranche of Rs 12,000 crore to cover 6 crore farmers' families," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

'India's crude steel production drops 3.26% to 9.28 MT in Jan'

At 9.288 million tonnes (MT), India's crude steel production registered a decline of 3.26 per cent in January this year, according to World Steel Association (worldsteel)



9.591 MT: Crude steel produced by India during corresponding month last year

84.3 MT OUTPUT OF CHINA, THE WORLD'S LARGEST STEEL PRODUCING COUNTRY, IN JANUARY; A RISE OF 7.2 PER CENT COMPARED TO A YEAR-AGO

8.2 MT PRODUCTION OF CRUDE STEEL BY JAPAN IN THE PERIOD UNDER CONSIDERATION, FALLING 1.3 PER CENT FROM JANUARY 2019

5.8 MT SOUTH KOREA'S CRUDE STEEL PRODUCTION IN JANUARY 2020, POSTING A DECREASE OF 8 PER CENT FROM THE YEAR-AGO MONTH

~85% SHARE OF WORLD'S STEEL PRODUCTION ACCOUNTED FOR BY MEMBERS OF WORLD

COMPOSITION OF WORLDSTEEL:

- More than 160 steel producers across the world
- 9 of the 10 largest steel companies
- National and regional steel industry associations
- Steel research institutes

Source: worldsteel/PTI

154.4 MT: Crude steel production for the 64 countries reporting to worldsteel in January 2020, a 2.1 per cent increase compared to January 2019

Feb GST mop-up rises 8% over last yr, but below Jan figures

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1**

GROSS GOODS and services tax (GST) collections stood at Rs 1.05 lakh crore for February (for sales in January), a rise of 8 per cent over last year but lower than Rs 1.10 lakh crore in January, a Finance Ministry release said Sunday. Compliance rate was at the same level as last month, with total number of GSTR-3B returns filed for the month of January — till February 29 — being recorded at 83 lakh, the release said.

GST revenues from domestic transactions for February posted a growth of 12 per cent over the same month last year, while GST revenue from imports posted a

contraction of 2 per cent against February 2019. With this, the total gross GST revenue now stands at Rs 11.25 lakh crore as against the approximate full year aim of Rs 11.26 lakh crore.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of February, 2020 is Rs 1,05,366 crore of which CGST (Central GST) is Rs 20,569 crore, SGST (State GST) is Rs 27,348 crore, IGST (Integrated GST) is Rs 48,503 crore and cess is Rs 8,947 crore," the release said.

The government has settled Rs 22,586 crore to CGST and Rs 16,553 crore to SGST from IGST as regular settlement.

"The total revenue earned by Central Government and the State Governments after regular settlement in the month of

Compliance rate was at the same level as last month, with total number of GSTR-3B returns filed for the month of January — till February 29 — being recorded at 83 lakh

February, 2020 is Rs 43,155 crore for CGST and Rs 43,901 crore for the SGST," the release stated.

Tax experts, however, raised concerns saying the recent blocking of input tax credit has led to increase in GST collections and it may not be a sustainable trend. Pratik Jain, PwC India partner & leader—indirect tax, said while the GST collection again looks impressive considering the overall economic scenario, one will have to see how much of it is due to restriction and blockage

of input credits which has been happening in the last three months or so.

"The issue of blockage of input credit from the back-end (on account of alleged difference between credit claimed and that disclosed by vendors) is becoming a concern for the industry and the GST Council should look into this. Otherwise, we may see lower collections later, when the credit is actually utilised," Jain added.

EY tax partner Abhishek Jain

said one possible significant reason linked to reasonable collections is the differential liabilities discharged by businesses in reference to the observations in GST annual returns and audit for FY 2017-18, which was due in January 2020.

Deloitte India partner MS Mani said with the monthly collections now stabilising at over Rs 1 trillion per month, GST authorities would now go all out to enhance the March collections so that the deficit is reduced to the extent possible.

"These numbers indicate that the GST collections are becoming stable. With new changes like e-invoicing and new returns slated for next month, more stability is expected in future," he said.

Free voice calls no excuse for poor service quality, says Trai Chairman

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE, MARCH 1**

TELCOS ARE citing free voice calls to duck action on poor quality of service, but that will not pass regulatory muster, Trai Chairman RS Sharma said on Sunday, assuring users that the issue of call drops remains on its agenda. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) head said the watchdog's earlier provision for a penalty on telecom firms for call drops was successfully challenged in the Supreme Court, but the regulator will continue to work for improving the quality of service.

"Most of the telcos are offering voice free, their argument is that if something is free, how much can you (Trai) punish me because I am not getting anything for that, which may not be correct because they are essentially cross-subsidising," Sharma said at the Asia Economic Dialogue here. The comments come amid continuing call drops being experienced by subscribers across the country.

After the entry of Reliance Jio in 2016, voice calling has become virtually free as it is getting embedded in the data plans. This has resulted in entrenched operators losing their biggest revenue stream, which has led to financial troubles.

Sharma acknowledged the problem of call drops and added that "hopefully" the service quality will get better over time.

FUNDS TO BE AVAILABLE FOR ALL DEVELOPING MEMBER COUNTRIES IN UPDATING AND IMPLEMENTING PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLANS

ADB to provide \$4 mn to member countries to contain virus outbreak

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1**

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT Bank (ADB) will provide a total of \$4 million (about Rs 29 crore) to help developing countries in Asia and Pacific to fight the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Manila-headquartered multilateral funding agency had earlier in February announced \$2 million for fighting the disease and approved another \$2 million in late February.

The Asian Development

Bank has approved a further \$2 million to help developing countries in Asia and the Pacific contain the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and improve resilience to this and other communicable diseases, it said in a release last week.

The funds will be available for all ADB developing member countries in updating and implementing their pandemic response plans.

ADB said the assistance will be for purposes including buying emergency supplies and equipment, assessing health system and economic impacts to



Medical personnel attend to a patient at a hospital designated for coronavirus patients in Wuhan, China, Sunday. AP

improve future resilience, and coordinating better regionally to prevent, detect, and respond to animal and human disease outbreaks.

The work will be conducted in close collaboration with the World Health Organization.

"The severity of the COVID-19 outbreak is escalating, and past disease outbreaks have had large impacts on social and economic development," ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development Bambang Susantono said.

"ADB's funding will help

countries catalyze efforts to mitigate further damage to the health of families and economies and position them to better respond to the current and future outbreaks," he added.

The first tranche assistance was to strengthen the immediate response capacity in Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The monetary institution said over the longer term, it can be scaled up to focus on supporting pandemic preparedness and building resilience.

ADB also provided a private sector loan of up to Chinese yuan

130 million (\$18.6 million) to Wuhan, PRC-based Jointown Pharmaceutical Group Co Ltd to enhance the distribution and supply of essential medicines and protective equipment.

"Past epidemics have shown that impacts can rapidly extend to all areas of a country's economy, triggering fiscal shocks with long-term negative consequences that threaten stability and economic growth," the regional development bank said.

Countries and businesses that rely on tourism are particularly vulnerable. Trade and supply chains also suffer, it added.

THE PANDEMIC

The virus is coming

Governments have an enormous amount of work to do



At the Japan Olympic Museum in Tokyo on February 26. Following an outbreak of the coronavirus, a broad guess is that 25-70% of the population of any infected country may catch the disease. Reuters

IN PUBLIC health, honesty is worth a lot more than hope. It has become clear in the past week that the new viral disease, covid-19, which struck China at the start of December will spread around the world. Many governments have been signalling that they will stop the disease. Instead, they need to start preparing people for the onslaught.

Officials will have to act when they do not have all the facts, because much about the virus is unknown. A broad guess is that 25-70% of the population of any infected country may catch the disease. China's experience suggests that, of the cases that are detected, roughly 80% will be mild, 15% will need treatment in hospital and 5% will require intensive care. Experts say that the virus may be five to ten times as lethal as seasonal flu, which, with a fatality rate of 0.1%, kills 60,000 Americans in a bad year. Across the world, the death toll could be in the millions.

If the pandemic is like a very severe flu, models point to global economic growth being two percentage points lower over 12 months, at around 1%; if it is worse still, the world economy could shrink. As that prospect sank in during the week, the S&P 500 fell by 8%.

Yet all those outcomes depend greatly on

what governments choose to do, as China shows. Hubei province, the origin of the epidemic, has a population of 59m. It has seen more than 65,000 cases and a fatality rate of 2.9%. By contrast, the rest of China, which contains 1.3bn people, has suffered fewer than 13,000 cases with a fatality rate of just 0.4%. Chinese officials at first suppressed news of the disease, a grave error that allowed the virus to take hold. But even before it had spread much outside Hubei, they imposed the largest and most draconian quarantine in history. Factories shut, public transport stopped and people were ordered indoors. This raised awareness and changed behaviour. Without it, China would by now have registered many millions of cases and tens of thousands of deaths.

The World Health Organisation was last week full of praise for China's approach. That does not, however, mean it is a model for the rest of the world. All quarantines carry a cost—not just in lost output, but also in the suffering of those locked away, some of whom forgo medical treatment for other conditions. It is still too soon to tell whether this price was worth the gains. As China seeks to revive its economy by relaxing the quarantine, it could well be hit by a second wave

of infections. Given that uncertainty, few democracies would be willing to trample over individuals to the extent China has. And, as the chaotic epidemic in Iran shows, not all authoritarian governments are capable of it.

Yet even if many countries could not, or should not, exactly copy China, its experience holds three important lessons—to talk to the public, to slow the transmission of the disease and to prepare health systems for a spike in demand.

A good example of communication is America's Centres for Disease Control, which issued a clear, unambiguous warning on February 25th. A bad one is Iran's deputy health minister, who succumbed to the virus during a press conference designed to show that the government is on top of the epidemic.

Even well-meaning attempts to sugar-

coat the truth are self-defeating, because they spread mistrust, rumours and, ultimately, fear. The signal that the disease must be stopped at any cost, or that it is too terrifying to talk about, frustrates efforts to prepare for the virus's inevitable arrival. As governments dither, conspiracy theories coming out of Russia are already sowing doubt, perhaps to hinder and discredit the response of democracies.

The best time to inform people about the disease is before the epidemic. One message is that fatality is correlated with age. If you are over 80 or you have an underlying condition you are at high risk; if you are under 50 you are not. Now is the moment to persuade the future 80% of mild cases to stay at home and not rush to a hospital. People need to learn to wash their hands often and to avoid touching their face. Businesses need conti-

nunity plans, to let staff work from home and to ensure a stand-in can replace a vital employee who is ill or caring for a child or parent. The model is Singapore, which learned from SARS, another coronavirus, that clear, early communication limits panic.

China's second lesson is that governments can slow the spread of the disease. Flattening the spike of the epidemic means that health systems are less overwhelmed, which saves lives. If, like flu, the virus turns out to be seasonal, some cases could be delayed until next winter, by which time doctors will understand better how to cope with it. By then, new vaccines and antiviral drugs may be available.

When countries have few cases, they can follow each one, tracing contacts and isolating them. But when the disease is spreading in the community, that becomes futile. Governments need to prepare for the moment when they will switch to social distancing, which may include cancelling public events, closing schools, staggering work hours and so on. Given the uncertainties, governments will have to choose how draconian they want to be. They should be guided by science. International travel bans look decisive, but they offer little protection because people find ways to move. They also

signal that the problem is "them" infecting "us", rather than limiting infections among "us". Likewise, if the disease has spread widely, as in Italy and South Korea, "Wuhan-lite" quarantines of whole towns offer scant protection at a high cost.

Scrub up

The third lesson is to prepare health systems for what is to come. That entails painstaking logistical planning. Hospitals need supplies of gowns, masks, gloves, oxygen and drugs. They should already be conserving them. They will run short of equipment, including ventilators. They need a scheme for how to set aside wards and floors for covid-19 patients, for how to cope if staff fall ill, and for how to choose between patients if they are overwhelmed. By now, this work should have been done.

This virus has already exposed the strengths and weaknesses of China's authoritarianism. It will test all the political systems with which it comes into contact, in both rich and developing countries. China has bought governments time to prepare for a pandemic. They should use it.

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A good example of communication is America's Centres for Disease Control, which issued a clear, unambiguous warning on February 25th. A bad one is Iran's deputy health minister, who succumbed to the virus during a press conference designed to show that the government is on top of the epidemic

THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

This way out

America and the Taliban have struck a deal

AFGHANISTAN HAS been at war for more than 40 years—longer than most of the world's population has been alive. America and the insurgents of the Taliban have been battling for close to 19 years, making the conflict the longest America has ever fought. Some 2,500 American soldiers have died. The direct cost to American taxpayers is approaching \$1trn. For Afghans, the toll is much higher. Roughly 3,500 civilians die every year, and their ravaged country is the poorest in Asia.

It can be only a good thing, therefore, that America and the Taliban plan to sign a peace agreement on Leap Day (February 29th), provided relative calm prevails until then. America will undertake to send home most of its 12,000 troops in Afghanistan. In exchange, the Taliban will promise not to grant sanctuary to foreign terror groups such as al-Qaeda, and to begin talks with Afghan politicians that will bring an end to the civil war.

This arrangement is far from perfect, in lots of ways. America could not force the Taliban to end hostilities altogether before the signing of the deal. Either because central commanders cannot control their disparate fighters or because they are unwilling to, the best the insurgents would offer was a "significant" reduction in violence. In

addition, nobody can be sure what will emerge from the inter-Afghan talks. Elements of the liberal democracy that America attempted to build in Afghanistan are bound to be dismantled. By making peace with the Taliban on such woolly terms, America is in effect conceding that it cannot win the war, and that the very group that sheltered Osama bin Laden and repressed Afghans with a brutal form of Islamic government should once again have a big say in how the country is run.

Such a humiliation will be worth it as long as bloodshed decreases and the lot of ordinary Afghans improves. That, in turn, depends on the seriousness and sincerity of all involved. Many fear that the Taliban are feigning interest in peace, and intend to seize control of the government by gun or guile as soon as the GIs are gone. Others fear that President Donald Trump doubts the Taliban's trustworthiness, too, but is pushing on regardless so as to secure a foreign-policy "victory" to burnish his re-election campaign. The entire peace agreement, by this interpretation, is a figleaf to disguise an abject American surrender.

That would not just be the crowning humiliation for America; it would consign

Afghanistan to even greater misery. The civil war would intensify, as regional powers sought to take advantage of America's absence by funneling arms to their Afghan allies. And the Taliban could revert to their old ways, barring girls from school, banning music, stoning adulterers and so on.

The peace agreement tries to guard against such a dismal outcome by stringing out America's departure. The withdrawal will stop, America's generals insist, if the Taliban appear to be taking them for a ride. America will keep warplanes in Afghanistan during the talks, to support government forces if the Taliban resume the offensive.

The deterrent has to be credible for this week's agreement to have any value. Mr Trump's last-minute disavowal of a previous version of the accord may have helped, by showing that he is not prepared to accept peace on any terms. But even on its way out, America will have to maintain an active role in Afghan politics to see the inter-Afghan talks to a fruitful end. At the moment, it is not clear who leads the government: two candidates have claimed the job of president after a disputed election. America will not only have to knock heads to get civilian politicians to present a vaguely united front, but also cajole them to give the Taliban concessions that they have been hoping to avoid.

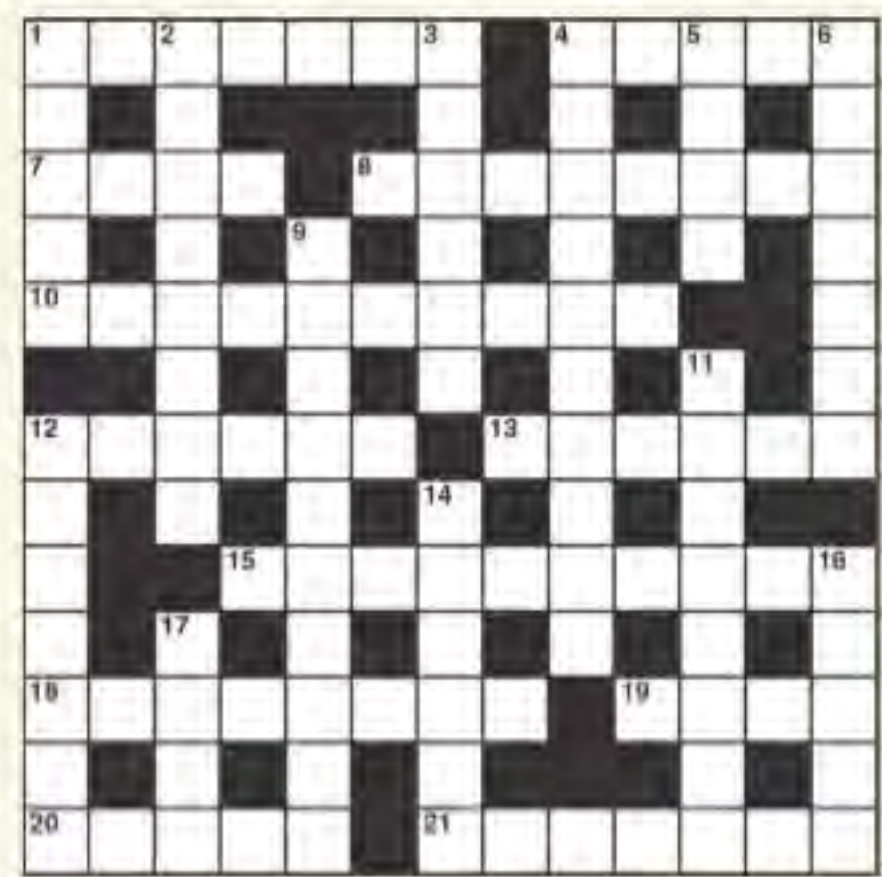
The signing of the peace accord, in short, is more of a beginning than an end. It does at least put an end in sight. But America will have to stick to its guns if it is to have any hope of persuading the Taliban to lay down theirs.

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US troops at their base in Afghanistan in 2018. America and the insurgents of the Taliban have been battling for close to 19 years, making the conflict the longest America has ever fought. AP

CROSSWORD 4055



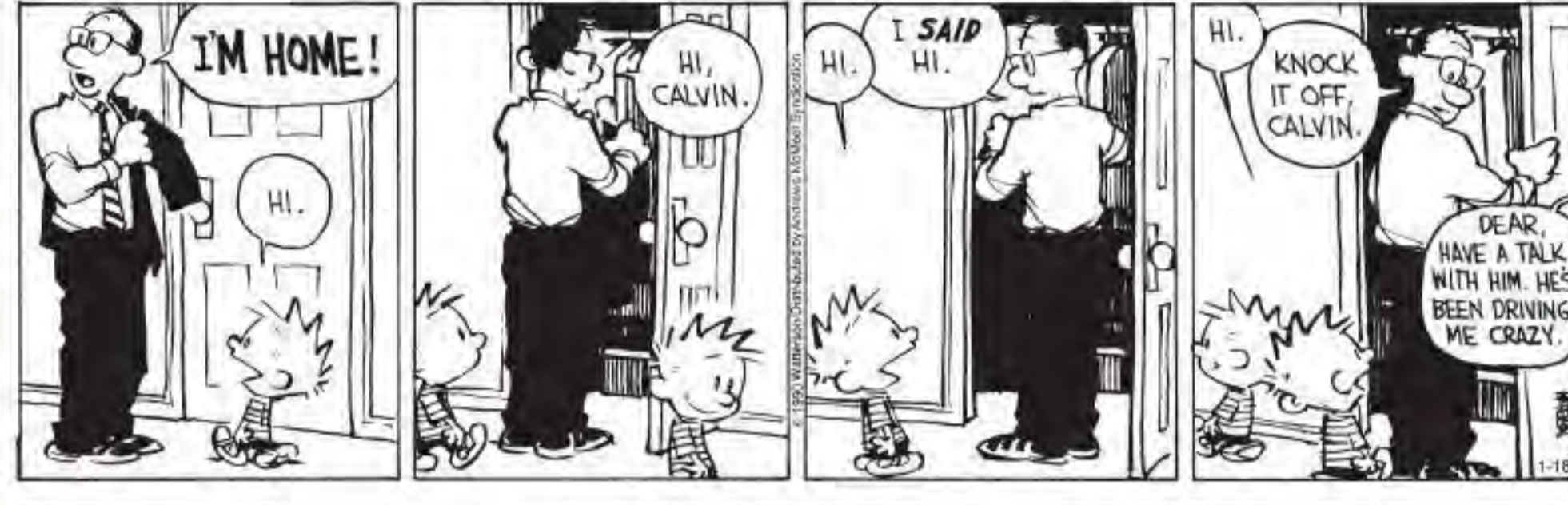
- ACROSS 1 Date and remove (4,3) 4 Impose a ban on fresh bread (5) 7 Deposits of Ancient Rome perhaps (4) 8 Sadly, they lack an opener (8) 10 Though possibly original, it is less than novel (5,5) 12 A diminutive person - or a ten-footer? (6) 13 Sandy hair? (6) 15 Robust shoes will be (4,2,4) 18 It may be pressed to gain an admission (8) 19 New line that starts from Victoria (4) 20 Lamps set out in church perhaps (5) 21 Did it take the theatre by storm? (7)

Solutions Crossword 4054: Across: 1 Stage fright, 9 Holdall, 10 Plant, 11 Ruse, 12 Guide dog, 14 Heehaw, 16 Snore, 18 Open mind, 19 Oder, 22 Smack, 23 Traffic, 24 Shareholder. Down: 2 Talls, 3 Good, 4 Fold up, 5 Impudent, 6 Hoarder, 7 Church mouse, 8 Stage-struck, 13 Haymaker, 15 Eyelash, 17 Satchel, 20 Defoe, 21 Fall

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLD WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue. An ideal is any woman who has an ideal. - Booth Tarkington (4,7)

Word jumble puzzles with shaded squares and empty boxes for letters.

ANSWER: An ideal wife is any woman who has an ideal husband. - Booth Tarkington

SUDOKU 4137

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

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 1-9.

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4136

Solved Sudoku puzzle grid.

Classifieds

- PERSONAL I, Shabana Sayeed D/o Afzal Ali R/O Sayeed House SB-102, Sector-63A, Noida, confirm that my name has been wrongly mentioned as KM Shavana & (Date-of-Birth is-02/10/1996). All Education Documents. My correct name is Shabana Sayeed & correct Date-of-Birth 02/10/1994, for all purposes infuture. 0040533944-4 I, Wasim Ahmad S/o Makabul R/O B-194 Jawahar Mohalla Patpar Ganj Delhi-110091, have corrected my father name Buddoo to Makabul for all purposes both are same persons Passport No: L0004202. Affidavit Notary Public Certificate No. IN-DI24985103833948. Dated 17/02/2020 Before Notary Madan Lal Gupta Delhi. 0040534003-1 I, Vedanshi Parashar W/o Anupjeet Singh R/O 3/42 Single Storey Ramesh Nagar New Delhi have changed my name to Vedanshi Kar for all Purposes. 0040533993-1 I, Bilma Rai Bhasin S/o Ranjit Bhasin Flat No-165C, Second Floor, Block-AC, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-110088, have changed my name to Vimal Bhasin for all purposes. 0077000977-1 I, Kaumudi Joshi Dadhich (D/o Arvind Joshi) W/o Mehar Dadhich, R/O G-39, 11nd Floor, Behind IDBI Bank, Kirti Nagar, Delhi-110015 have changed my name Kaumudi Joshi to Kaumudi Joshi Dadhich vide affidavit dated 25.02.2020 for all future purposes. 0040534005-1 I, Yudhishtar Lal S/o Raghunath Chand R/O S-249 Greater Kailash Part-2 Delhi-110048 Have Changed My Name To Yudhishtar Lal Pal For all Purposes. 0040534038-1 I, Shikuntla Chhikara w/o Late Sh. Kanwar Singh Chhikara R/O H.N.O.587, Sec-39, Gurugram inform that I have changed my name from Shikuntla Chhikara to Shankuntla Devi for all future purposes. 0040534050-1 I, Sheikh Asim Husain, son of Sh. Sheikh Mubashir Husain r/o 1204, Gali Mazar Wali, Kailan Mahal, Darya Ganj, New Delhi - 02 have change my name from Asim Husain to Sheikh Asim Husain for all future purposes. 0040534060-1

TELANGANA FOODS Tender Notification for "Transportation of Wheat" from FCI Sanath Nagar, FCI Cherlapally, FCI Kazipet/Warangal, FCI Nalgonda/ Miryalguda Depots to Telangana Foods, Nacharam, Hyderabad and Poosa Godowns at Chengicherla. For further details, please visit the website https://tender.eprocurement.gov.in and website: https://tfoods.telangana.gov.in from 02-03-2020 from 2.00 PM onwards. Bids submission closing date 15-03-2020 upto 5.00 PM. Bid, DIPR No. 384-PP/CL-Agency/ADVT/11/2019-20, Dt. 29-02-2020 General Manager

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कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं प्रमुख जनगणना अधिकारी, जिला-जांजगीर चांपा छ.ग. क्रमांक 2811/ /2020/ जांजगीर दिनांक: 27/02/2020 रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति भारत की जनगणना 2021 एवं राष्ट्रीय जनसंख्या रजिस्टर अद्यतन करने हेतु जिला कार्यालय जांजगीर चांपा के समस्त तहसीलों व नगरीय निकायों में तकनीकी सहायता हेतु कुल 56 कर्मियों तथा एम.टी.एस. (चतुर्थ श्रेणी) कर्मियों के 2 पदों पर जुलाई 2021 तक के अंतिम तिथि एवं एन.पी.के. के माध्यम से मानव संसाधन की आवश्यकता है। इस हेतु इच्छुक संस्थाओं से आवेदन प्रत आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। नियम एवं शर्तें एवं प्रश्न कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला योजना एवं सांख्यिकी शाखा जांजगीर-चांपा (छ.ग.) से निविदा प्रश्न मूल्य 2000/- जमा कर प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। निविदा प्रश्न जिले की वेबसाइट www.janjgir-champa.gov.in से भी डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। निविदा प्रश्न डाउनलोड किए जाने की स्थिति में कार्यालय में 2000/- जमा करने की पावती संलग्न करना अनिवार्य होगा। 1. निविदा प्रश्न प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय- 18/03/2020, शाम 5:00 बजे तक 2. कार्यालय में निविदा प्रश्न जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय-19/03/2020, अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक 3. प्राप्त निविदायें खोलने की तिथि एवं समय-19/03/2020, शाम 4:00 बजे हस्ता/- जिला जनगणना अधिकारी जांजगीर चांपा (छ.ग.) 77441

दक्षिणांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लि० अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना (ई-निविदा) अयोध्याशहरकरता द्वाारा दो भागों में प्रतिदिन एवं योग्य कार्यदायी संस्थाओं से निम्न कार्य हेतु निविदा शुल्क/धरोहर धनराशि दिनांक 18-03-2020 तक अनिवार्य पोर्टल पर प्राप्त की जायेगी एवं ई-निविदा दिनांक 19-03-2020 को अपराह्न 1:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडर पोर्टल पर प्राप्त कर प्रथम भाग अपराह्न 4:00 बजे से खोला जायेगा। (1) निविदा सं० 93/2019-20-200 के०पी० उपके० सिक्करा आगरा स्थित ज्योति भवन के द्वितीय ताल पर नवनिर्मित को-फ्रेन्स हॉल में आडियो एवं वीडियो उपकरणों की आपूर्ति एवं स्थापना से सम्बन्धित कार्य। कृपया विस्तृत जानकारी के लिये www.dvni.org एवं http://tender.up.nic.in पर देखें। हेल्प लाइन-1800-180-3023। अर्थात् अभियन्ता, विद्युत जानपद मण्डल (वितरण) 64-खम्बा, सिक्करा, आगरा -71 "राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाये" पत्रांक:397/वि०जा०म०(वि०)/आ०/टी -2/दिनांक : 29.02.2020

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BEFORE THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II AT BANGALORE First Floor, Jeevan Mangal Building, No.4, Residency Road, BANGALORE- 560 025. O.A. No.11/2019 Between : PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK AND Ind-Bharath Energy (Utkal) Limited & Others Applicant Defendants

SUMMONS TO DEFENDANTS UNDER RULE 23 (VIII) OF THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (PROCEDURE) RULES 1993 Whereas, the Applicant has instituted an application under Sec.19 of Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 against the defendants for recovery of the sum of Rs.467,49,52,799/- together with current and future interest and other relief's.

By Order of the Tribunal Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal, Bangalore. To: Defendant No.1,2,3,5 & 14 1.Ind-Bharath Energy (Utkal) Limited, Registered Office, H No.8-5-210/43, Plot No.44, Shiva Enclave, Old Bowlipaly, Secunderabad, Rangareddi, Telangana- 500011 2.Sh.K.Raguram Krishan Raju, Plot No.212-O, Road No.76, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad-500096 3.Sh.K.Bharat, Plot No.212-O, Road No.76, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad-500096 4.Power Finance Corporation Ltd., Registered Office At Urja Nidhi, 1 Barakhamba Lane, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001 14 Axis Trustee Services Limited Having its Registered Office at Maker Tower, F wing, 13th Floor, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Mumbai-400005.

EMPLOYEES' STATE INSURANCE CORPORATION MODEL HOSPITAL, BAPUNAGAR, AHMEDABAD-380024 (Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India (ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED) Date: 02/03/2020 No.37/ESIC/MHB/Admn/ESTT/SR/2008/Part-III ADVERTISEMENT FOR RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF SENIOR RESIDENT (CONTRACTUAL) FOR 39 DAYS & PART TIME SPECIALISTS/ PART TIME SUPER SPECIALISTS ON CONTRACT BASIS WALK-IN-INTERVIEW Walk-in-Interview will be held at ESIC Model Hospital Bapunagar, Ahmedabad in the chamber of Medical Superintendent from 09:30 AM onwards as per the following details:-

CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PLASTICS ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY (CIPET) (Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India) Email: cipethaper13@gmail.com Recruitment of Technical & Non-Technical Positions purely on Contract Basis Advt.No.CIPET/HO-AI/CM/A/2020 Date:26.02.2020 CIPET, an Autonomous premier Institute under Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India, is fully devoted to the growth of Plastics & allied Industries with a focus on Skill Development, Technology Support Services, Academics & Research (STAR) - in all domains of Plastics. CIPET offers AICTE approved, Diploma, Post Diploma & Post Graduate Diploma programs with varying levels of entry qualifications in the fields of Plastics Technology, Mould Technology, Mould Design with CAD/CAM, Plastics Processing & Testing. CIPET is in search of dynamic, result oriented personnel in the area of Academics, Skill Training and Technology Support Services for its centres purely on Contract Basis as detailed below:

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) Optimism breeds enthusiasm, which in turn breeds confidence. This is a law of life which is now coming into its own, as Mars, your planetary ruler, approaches the next phase of its relationship to Jupiter. You'll do best if you pay extra careful attention to your intuition. LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) Your ability to reconcile rivals and hold different factions together is one of your undoubted strengths, but this week you must calculate whether your peace-making efforts will be worth it. You've got some pretty strong opinions today, but that doesn't mean that you're always right. TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) Something's going on - but what? The whole tone of the week is likely to be coloured by a vague feeling that some sort of major event is looming, but you'll be unable to put your finger on the details before next weekend. In any case, you're in a strong position today, so with a little effort in the right places you'll make the most of it. SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23) All Scorpios in any way connected to the travel industry or educational world have a great deal of potential, but must play their hand cautiously. Every single one of you must watch out for legal complications this week. Plus, of course, you're busy catching up with jobs that should have been finished a long time ago. GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) Your financial stars are so finely poised that you could make a fortune, but one false move and you'll lose the lot. I've spelt out the risks, so it's up to you whether you go ahead or wait a while. You'll probably feel more confident tomorrow, but guard against complacency. SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22) Sometimes you have to yield to a superior force, if only temporarily. Unfortunately you are no longer in any position to lay down the law or trouble the pace. There seems to be a tiny matter of an issue of principle to sort out first, although a less promising week for getting to the facts cannot be imagined. CANCER (June 22 - July 23) You're now following your stars through the middle stages of a cycle of growth, opportunity and expansion. Looking at the long-term, you must now consolidate. In general, the time for revolution is over, although you can spring a few surprises over the next three days. CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20) Deep down you know that the moment is not yet right to burn your boats. Yet with Mars, the fiery planet, intimately linked with Saturn, planet of limits and boundaries, the symbolism is right for a definite, if rather confused, break. But, of course, you have to do it without letting anyone down. LEO (July 24 - Aug 23) You have so much to offer. In fact, this is your time to save the world. Or at least, that's what you may think. First, you need to make sure that you actually know what other people want. Keep secret ambitions back on review. It may soon be time to break your cover and make your intentions clear. AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19) Optimism at work is one thing but, if you move too fast, then others will be left behind this week. You'll then be on a downward slope of misunderstandings, arguments and eventually a falling out. Take the trouble to explain yourself and keep friends and relations on your team. VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) Although there's still plenty of time to make professional plans and steer other ambitions back on course, the time for glory may have passed, at least for a little while. Your romantic stars are heading for a burst of brilliance in a couple of weeks' time, so you can begin to fill up your diary. PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) Jupiter is your protector, but it is being undermined by various other irritating planets, so you may succumb to confusion and muddles. You have a choice, of course - revert to being a typically irresponsible Piscean for the duration. A little forward planning would help.

17 TALK

ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



MAKING NOTES
Prince Harry and rock star Jon Bon have recreated the iconic cover of famed Beatles album *Abbey Road*. The two are working with the Invictus Games Choir, made up of veterans and serving personnel from the British military.

WEEK AHEAD



The Print Line

EXPLORE THE various facets of print-making and how technology has impacted this process with the exhibition 'The Print: Matter in Matrix'. Curated by Bhavna Kakar and Satyajit Dave, it features works by artists Arpana Caur, Gulammohammed Sheikh (pictured), Jogen Chowdhury, Jyoti Bhatt, Haren Das, MF Hussain, Nandalal Bose and Orjiti Sen, among others. At Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam. The exhibition is on till March 11.



Tuning In

LISTEN TO the Kirk MacDonald Generations Quartet, which features clarinetist Virginia Macdonald with bassist Neil Swainson, saxophonist Kirk MacDonald (pictured) and percussionist Terry Clarke. The quartet is an award-winning Canadian jazz ensemble. At Piano Man Jazz Club, Safdarjung Enclave Market, March 2, 9 pm onwards. Tickets on Bookmyshow.



Maternal Woes

INDULGE IN the antics of Mrs. Gallienne, a temperamental upper middle-class lady who has three children, while watching the French film *Les garçons et Guillaume à Table*. Directed by Guillaume Gallienne, the 2013 film deals with adolescence and teen sexuality in a humane way. At the Alliance Française, Lodhi Estate, March 5, 6.30 pm.

Women in Focus

WATCH A selection of 52 films from 15 countries at the 16th IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival. This year, the festival has been directed by Surabhi Sharma and Priya Thuvassery. It has three sections — 'Her Upside Down Gaze' includes films across genres, from narrative to documentary, experimental and VR films; 'Country Focus' focuses on the Gulf this time; and 'Women and Photography' features works of women photographers and collectives. At India International Centre, March 4 to 7.

This City That Lasts

Poet Akhil Katyal on how cities built him, wearing his politics on his sleeves and his new collection of poems



Poet Akhil Katyal Gajendra Yadav; (below) cover of *Like Blood on The Bitten Tongue: Delhi Poems*

PAROMITA CHAKRABARTI

AKHIL KATYAL suggests a walk in Lodhi Gardens when I ask to meet. Later, straining to hear each other over the cacophony of a kitty-party afternoon in a south Delhi cafe, one gets an inkling why. Like his poems collected in *Like Blood on the Bitten Tongue: Delhi Poems* (Context, Rs 499), Katyal, 34, is a poet and activist most at home amid the chaotic rhythms of the city's streets and public spaces. There — in the crush of bodies in the after-office Metro rush, in the touristy bubble of Humayun's Tomb or the steely resistance of Jawaharlal Nehru University — Katyal captures the city's many faces: "Aditya from Khanpur who was 19 speed/his auto so break-neck I bet I'd be dead/ so I thought I'll talk, that'll slow him/ 'Kab se chala rahein hain?' to bore him/ 'Aaj hi learner's mila hai!' he said, (Limerick for the Danger Boy)"; or, "You can chew the sun here and spit it out/You can make the mighty eat dust/ It's a university that we're talking about/ Not a king's court where we must. (For JNU)".

Cities have built him — first Lucknow, with its Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, where he grew up in a Punjabi family, and where his missionary school insisted on the use of the Queen's English over all others, and then the cosmopolitanism of Delhi, where he had come for graduate studies. "In Lucknow, you were pretty much confined to your family and the city they opened for you, and the school had its own universe. You get to know a city, including your own, only after you leave home. Of course, depending on your gender and your caste, the city opens to you in different parameters, but the fact that a city can stretch, that you can get lost in it, that you can move about in very incipient ways was a revelation. Delhi fascinated me, it still does. Later, I read Ismat Chughtai's autobiography, in which she spoke of *chahalkadmi* — rambling aimlessly through the city, mulling



The fact that a city can stretch, that you can get lost in it, that you can move about in very incipient ways was a revelation

AKHIL KATYAL

over ideas — and somehow, it just made a whole lot of sense," says Katyal, who is an assistant professor at Ambedkar University's School of Culture and Creative Expressions.

Like Blood on the Bitten Tongue — a hat tip to one of his favourite poets, Agha Shahid Ali — follows Katyal's *How Many Countries Does the Indus Cross* (2019). Like a city of many parts, it is tender and hopeful, defiant and dramatic, and wears its politics on its sleeves. From Delhi's landmarks to its many languages, from queer love to friendships to his disdain for the ruling right-wing party, Katyal's bilingual poems — flitting easily between Devanagari and English and set to Vishwajyoti Ghosh's artwork — reference a world that is determinedly situated in contemporary socio-politics but with an intimacy that is born of his life of assimilation.

Over the last couple of years, Katyal, along with a bunch of contemporaries, that now include vernacular poets such as Hussain Haidry and Aamir Aziz, have responded to the ruptures in India's com-

munity life with poetry on social media. Poetry has come to become one of the mainstays of dissent in the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens and against the crackdowns on students in universities. Dark times demand creative responses, says Katyal, and what can be more anarchic than poetry? "I was on duty during the Delhi assembly elections and one of the things I realised over the course of it was that this kind of core, ideological belief, driven by certainty, hatred and prejudice, is not as overwhelming as I'd imagined. There are lots of people who can be made to think with other vocabularies," he says.

When he'd first landed up in Delhi, Katyal's world had opened up in other ways, too. The university space taught him to debate and dissent, but also to listen in and to empathise. He'd known of his queer identity in Lucknow but it would be in university that he'd come out. "In class, we were discussing the imagery of (Christina Rossetti's) *The Goblin Market* (often considered to be indicative of Rossetti's feminist and non-heteronormative sexual politics) and I thought to myself, 'Wait a minute, if we are talking about this, surely it's okay to talk about how I feel.' I had fabulous teachers who made it seem like it was not a big deal. The first person I came out to was my classmate, then my teacher, and then, at the Rhodes interview," he says, with a chuckle, before adding, softly, "Which is why, when university spaces are attacked, when students are told to just study and not concern themselves with the world, it feels strange. There's a beautiful thing that Mukul Manglik, our history teacher at Ramjas College, used to say: 'Where does the word university come from? From the universe, which means, surely, everything under the sun can be discussed here.'" He carries that universe in his poetry now, and in the novel that he hopes to write one day.

ON THE LOOSE

Sinister Shine

Price alone won't determine a successful auction of Nirav Modi's seized goods



LEHER KALA

MUMBAIIKARS turned out in large numbers for a viewing of the pricey possessions of reviled fugitive Nirav Modi that will be up for auction on www.saf-ronart.com in the first week of March. Possibly, it was out of curious fascination to get a glimpse of a wildly duplicitous lifestyle, but there were also some serious shoppers scouting for a future bargain. Up for grabs will be a limited edition Jaeger LeCoultre watch, the first time a professional auction house has been appointed by the Enforcement Directorate to sell the seized assets of an absconder. Perhaps the idea behind it is the message it sends to would-be fraudsters — Nirav Modi's humiliation is now complete (though he has way bigger problems than his reputation right now). It'll be interesting to see what sells and at what price because Indians, at least, tend to have strange money superstitions. I'm guessing the fifteen top-rated artworks will not lose value by having passed through drawing rooms inhabited by the tainted Nirav, their rarity being of huge importance to art connoisseurs. Jewellery is an entirely different matter. For anyone with an overactive imagination, wearing trinkets chosen by an accused scamster is a sure-fire way to attract the wrong spiritual vibrations. People tend to be less inclined

It'll be interesting to see what sells and at what price because Indians, at least, tend to have strange money superstitions.

to see the colourful story of an object as a great talking point, and more concerned that the misfortune of the previous owner may magically get transferred to them.

History is replete with examples of cursed gems and folklore that present the paradox, that a particular stone's lustre may be another owner's downfall. Look no further than the infamous diamond, the Koh-i-Noor, that passed between several rulers in the 17th century, wreaking bloody havoc on all of them. Over the years, documented origins of this legendary stone found their way into popular myth, starting with the richly atmospheric book by Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*. The narrative revolves around a young English lady who suffers immense tragedy after the theft of the stone that she inherits on her 18th birthday (It turns out diamonds are not always a girl's best friend).

The truth is that luxury goods can be so absurdly priced, a true collector will be wholly undeterred by Nirav's scandalous past and focussed on the fact that an Hermes bag that retails for Rs 28 lakh will be going for a minimum of 30 per cent cheaper. However, I did a quick poll with five girlfriends on whether they would buy Nirav Modi's stuff. Besides one, they all said no, because, it's a turn off. I'm pretty sure it's not righteous rage about what he did to India's banking sector that's made them squeamish, it seems they didn't want to be reminded of his unscrupulousness on a daily basis.

Perhaps there is good reason that people fall for the popular delusions of luck and *nazar*, especially in a poor country like India where we know it's impossible to wipe out the inequities spawned by fate. Sometimes human behaviour veers towards respecting the divine mystery of our own circumstances; and suddenly, chasing after the fantastic treasures of a life fallen apart, seems so pointless.

hutkiayfilms@gmail.com

SNAPSHOTS

Ain't No Sunshine



VAN GOGH's iconic bright yellow work, *Sunflowers*, is the latest to suffer from the coronavirus outbreak. It was on its way to

Tokyo's National Museum of Western Art — from London's National Gallery — to be displayed as part of an exhibition comprising 60 famous artworks, when Japan announced a two-week closure of all national art museums. The show has been postponed and several other works will remain in museum storage.



Marvellous Voice

KEVIN FEIGE, president of Marvel Studios, is set to make his acting debut in an upcoming episode of *The Simpsons*. Feige will appear in the episode *Bart the Bad Guy*. He will voice the character of Chinnos. Other guest stars for the episode include *Endgame* directors Anthony and Joe Russo and actor Cobie Smulders, who plays Maria Hill in *The Avengers*. YouTube star Tal Fishman will also be seen in the episode.

The Fabric of Fine Art

Fashion historian Christopher Breward, who will become the director of the National Museums Scotland next month, on how the brocades, silks and chiffons of historical portraiture are good fashion lessons

BENITA FERNANDO

SUITS, DANDYISM and the Londoner's sartorial choices are just some of the fashion topics that Christopher Breward is an expert on. The Edinburgh-based fashion historian and author is currently the director of collection and research at the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS). He is set to take up the role of director of the National Museums Scotland (NMS), the region's national museum service, in April this year.

Breward was in Mumbai last week to deliver a lecture at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) on the history of fashion traced through the artworks in the NGS collection, such as those by society portrait painter John Singer Sargent. Ahead of the lecture, Breward speaks about the close ties between fashion and art, and why historic portraits contain some of the best clues to understanding the history of Western fashion trends. Edited excerpts:

What can Western art history and portraiture teach us about fashion?

We can learn a lot about fashion from

paintings simply because these are the only surviving evidence of what was worn 600 years ago or 300 years ago, before the advent of photography. Historical fashion had disappeared. It was being reused for furniture items or accessories or went into second-hand clothing. So there was nothing really for historians to base their understanding on other than pictorial representations. Obviously, paintings are crucial records of how people in the past wanted to be seen by posterity.

The portraits largely show us the fashions of the elite. The clothes they were wearing were generally more expensive than the cost of the painting they were represented in. So, clothing and adornment were seen as the most important thing that a powerful person could spend their money on, portraiture and painting came much lower down the line, often seen as interior decoration and something more disposable. This shifted when the art market emerged and we have had a turnaround of value.

We can also learn a lot from just listening to

people in portrait galleries. If you walk around and listen closely to what they are saying about the artwork, they are often not talking about the artist or the technique of painting. They often talk about the costume, what somebody looks like.

As a means to show-off the latest in fashion, were the sitters keen that their clothes be represented accurately or did the portrait artist often improvise?

A bit of both, I think. Often artists like John Singer Sargent, painting society women, were the predecessors of celebrity photographers then. They were styling an individual to represent something that was both contemporary and respectable. Sargent almost ruined his career because he painted a famous Parisian socialite in *Portrait of Madame X*. Her black dress caused a scandal because it pushed the direction too far towards nudity and the revealing of the body, so she appeared more like a courtesan rather than a society woman in the salon.

Sargent had to move to the UK from Paris to



Wikicommons/in the collection of Scottish National Gallery

(From left) Christopher Breward; Lady Agnew of Lochnaw by John Singer Sargent; *Portrait of Madame X* by Sargent

resurrect his career. Lady Agnew was one of the first commissions after he moved. Sargent is so deft at suggesting textures in just a few swipes of paint. A light chiffon dress transformed by the power of paint, with highly fashionable mauve and purple in that period.

Lady Agnew was establishing a respectable identity for herself but she looks almost exhausted in the painting. The myth around the painting is that Lady Agnew is looking so floppy because she has just recovered from influenza. Somehow that inspires that late 19th century



Wikicommons/in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art

look of exhausted elegance.

If historical portraits mostly represented fashionable elites, were artists interested in the attire of the working class?

There are examples of painters of everyday life, of non-fashion sitters, of anonymous people, of the labouring poor. More than showing the (figure's) personality or power, they were depicting how society was running as a harmonious whole. So often you find that the

clothes of poorer people, people in great poverty, were made to fit in with the landscape. As much as the rich silks get glamourised, so do the rags of the poor.

Photography starts by the 1840s and begins to undermine this sense of romanticism of the rural scene and you start to get a documentary representation, particularly in terms of European class society.

You trained as an art historian at a time when studying fashion history through paintings wasn't really heard of. Could you tell us more about this?

In the early 1980s, when I was an undergraduate student, art history and the fashion of history rarely combined. Those were hierarchical, segregated times in the academy and the museum world. By the 1990s and early 2000s, with the turn towards postmodernism and cultural studies, scholarly boundaries were blurring and breaking down. New academic journals such as *Fashion Theory* came into being and postgraduate courses in the history and curation of design, fashion and material culture were established in the UK, US and Sweden. These were golden times.

Have fashion designers often sought out art history to inform their designs?

Following the precedent of Yves Saint Laurent, designers at the end of the twentieth century, including Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano, were known for using art historical references in their collections. While Saint Laurent had looked to the abstracted modernism of Mondrian and others, Westwood and Galiano referenced the Rococo period and Romanticism in their work.

(Virat) is a big player for them and we just tried to put enough pressure on him, keep him quiet and soak up those boundary balls, and it was nice to see him make a few errors."

TRENT BOULT, KIWI PACER ON KOHLI'S DISMISSAL

Moments of an eventful day: two peaches and an acrobatic catch

On a day wickets fell in a heap — 16 altogether — it was difficult to pinpoint a specific contest-altering moment. Yet, there were moments that influenced a helter-skelter day in Christchurch.

SHAMI'S SKIDDER

The most dangerous batsman on the day was Tom Latham, who showed resolve and application to complete his half-century, before being undone by a Mohammed Shami peach. The Indian seamer, in a terrific forenoon spell, kept bowling in the corridor, making the ball shape into the southpaw. But the bounce in the surface meant that Latham could leave the ball on length. Then Shami snuck in his skidder, a similarly-pitched delivery to previous ones, but rather than climbing onto the batsman, it skidded on at a lower trajectory. Latham shouldered arms, only to see his stumps rattled.



Ravindra Jadeja completed a spectacular catch to dismiss Neil Wagner. AP

JADEJA'S FLEX

Misjudged catches can look more spectacular than they actually are. As soon as Neil Wagner skied the ball towards deep square-leg, Jadeja began sprinting towards it, but soon realised that he had sort of over-reached it. He made no fuss, just arched his body like a rainbow, flung backward, stretched his left hand at the ball, and it stuck. A superb piece of athleticism and agility of mind. Realising that he had misjudged the catch, Jadeja made quick amends by virtue of his elasticity. It came at a crucial juncture of the match when Wagner and Kyle Jamieson had brought up the second-highest partnership for New Zealand in the innings.



Suvajit Dey

PUJARA CASTLED

Arguably the most important strike of the day, India's lone flickering hope in the second innings was Cheteshwar Pujara. He was batting untroubled, taking India to safety without further dentures. Then came Trent Boult, for his final burst of the evening. The ball, until then, had done nothing untoward. There was movement, but not disconcerting. But Boult produced a moment of magic. He came around the wicket, and from wide of the crease cajoled the ball to seam noticeably into Pujara. The latter had sized up the angle, but did not factor in the movement. He tried to defend, but the space between bat and pad was adequate for the ball to sneak in and disfigure his stumps.

These Kiwis hunt in a pack

New Zealand bowlers work together for a common goal, and there's more than one plan up their sleeve



EXPRESS IN NEW ZEALAND

SANDIP G

CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH 1

WHEN COLIN de Grandhomme wheeled away in celebration after pinging Virat Kohli in front, his fellow fast bowlers piled over him, nearly burying him in a rugby scrum. The usually mild-mannered Tim Southee was the most exuberant, ruffling his hair and high-fiving like kids in a park on Sunday afternoon, as if they'd extensively pre-planned the dismissal.

A plan it was. Just before the over, Kane Williamson seemed to be in a dilemma. He had signalled Neil Wagner to warm up, before Southee, prowling long-leg, walked up to him and whispered something in his ear. Promptly, Williamson asked Wagner to stay where he was and gestured de Grandhomme to resume his spell. It was just his third over, but with Kohli batting, it was logical enough to introduce a frontline bowler. Wagner has more strings to his bow than de Grandhomme, the fifth bowler. But Southee had detected something in the way de Grandhomme was bowling and convinced Williamson.

And de Grandhomme struck with the very first delivery of the over, a viciously seaming-in-ducker, that threatened to swing away changing its course, nearly tracing an S shape in the air. All this while, he was curling the ball away, but this one just deviated in, surprising Kohli. The aforementioned incident was not only an example of Southee's wits but also the collectivism that's the bedrock of New Zealand's bowling.

They're like board puzzles, pieces moved in a methodical and deliberate manner, always employed at the right time. The tactical tweaks have invariably worked out.

Each bowler is different in craft and persona. Southee is soft-spoken and unassuming, but the leader of the pack. Trent Boult is loud and cheery, a bundle of energy, the hangman. Wagner is mean and stony, embodies on-your-face aggression. Kyle Jamieson is shy and self-effacing, the enforcer; Grandhomme is the henchman. But their camaraderie is blatantly explicit.

Southee swings and seams; so does Boult. Wagner can relentlessly pound the deck hard, Jamieson could extract skiddy bounce even from a good length, de Grandhomme is the utilitarian man. Two of them, Boult and Wagner, are left-handed bowlers who are chalk and cheese in every facet. Boult is versatile enough to probe any length, but is at his deceptive best when plying full or good length. Wagner is the short-ball hangman, who gets under the batsmen's skins with sheer grit. The equivalent of a bowling stonewaller, Jamieson, for a man standing at six-foot-eight, can bowl the good length as potentially as he does the short stuff. De Grandhomme could dry up an end and if conditions ally, manage movement off the surface. In short, New Zealand have a man or more than one man for every condition, making them arguably the finest, if not the most heterogeneous, bowling firm in the world. At least in their own conditions.

In his time, Kohli and Co have faced competent and diverse bowling units. In South Africa in 2018, they tilted lances against Morne Morkel, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi and Vernon Philander. In England, they were tasked to neuter James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Sam Curran and Chris Woakes. Australia had Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon. But never a retinue of bowlers as distinct as New Zealand's.

Adaptability

Pertinently, the Kiwis don't go with fixed mindsets. If the bouncer was the key weapon in Wellington, it was deployed sparingly but effectively here, mostly through Jamieson and Wagner, while the rest bowled fuller by default to make the best use of some movement in the air and some off the surface.



Trent Boult produced a moment of magic to dismiss Cheteshwar Pujara. AP

However, they kept the Indian batsmen guessing and pre-empting, and the visitors cracked under the unremitting pressure.

Remarkably, they think out of the box and on their feet. When the usual tricks don't work, they are not reluctant to hatch new plots. The Wellington surface was slow with spongy bounce, so they mixed up the angles and conceived a short-ball strategy. It was hard work, but with persistence they coerced the desired results. In Christchurch in the second innings, they went on full-throttle attack, comprehending that a defensive ploy would drift the match away from them. The urgency and body language were perceptible, as they stormed the Indian batsmen like a bunch of hounds unleashed.

What's even more remarkable is the planning. Every fast bowler or fast-bowling firm plans, but few with the collectivism of New Zealand bowlers. Not the usual tying an end up and attacking the other end, or the usual inswing-outswing double-bluff, but a more radical method of setting up. They don't stick to a particular plan, but it's sometimes a deliberate ploy to entrap the batsmen. For instance, in an over to Kohli, Boult bowled two deliveries around the stumps, both times he was beaten, but then instead of persisting with the ploy, he slipped in a bouncer, which Kohli barely expected. Thus, he spectacularly debunked the myth of keeping the ball in one area. And when Plan A doesn't work, the Kiwis dial Plan B or C or D. There seems to be a made-to-fit plan for every contingency. Sometimes old-fashioned, sometimes radical, but seldom out of place.

Often, they deliberately concede a sense of confidence to the batsmen. For example, Boult repeatedly bowled the away-swing on length at Mayank Agarwal, before he pitched one fuller and made it swerve late into the pads. Southee dangled the short, wide ball carrot at Shaw, before bowling a short ball that climbed into his throat.

Likewise, Williamson knows exactly the moment to move the pieces. If it's Kohli, bring on Southee. If it's Ajinkya Rahane, Wagner is the man. If it's Cheteshwar Pujara, wink at Boult, who nabbed him with a devilishly swerving in-swing on Sunday.

As one surveyed the ruins of India's batting card, it also told a tale of New Zealand's thoroughness to achieve a collective aim. And the puzzle remained unsolved for India throughout the day. Rather, throughout the series.

How the mighty were cut to size

SANDIP G

CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH 1

AS SHARP as New Zealand bowled in the second innings, the Indian batsmen's lack of application and confusion in approach were exposed. A look at how some of them succumbed:

Ajinkya Rahane

Rahane looked like India's most competent batsman in Wellington, where he seemed like batting on a different surface from his colleagues. In the first innings here, he got arguably the best, and the only wicket-deserving, delivery in India's innings. But something snapped in the second. Right from the start, he was inexplicably attempting uncharacteristic shots, like backing away and slapping the bowlers over point, and shuffling across to flick them. It was a high-risk, low-percentage innings. Twice, he got hit on the helmet, once dropped off a miscued pull. There were enough warning signs that the counter-punching enterprise was doomed from the start.

But Rahane kept attacking the short ball, despite seldom looking in control. While he is an excellent player square on the off-side, he's not as controlled square on the leg-side. Yet, he shuffled across to make room to pull a Neil Wagner delivery. The ball didn't bounce as much as he expected and Rahane ended up chopping it onto his stumps.

It's not the sloppy execution that rankles, but the rationale behind it. India had just lost Virat Kohli, and circumstance dictated a cautioned approach — sticking with Cheteshwar Pujara and seeing India through the day without further damage. Instead, Rahane was looking to pull the Kiwi bowlers into submission. He's usually an attacking batsman, but here he was trying to over-attack, wafting at anything marginally short, without learning the lessons from colleagues' downfall on the first day. Also, he was pre-meditating before every delivery. It's a classic case of muddled thinking. Rahane embodies the flaws in India's guiding philosophy of "intent", translated into aggressive batsmanship. Or translated into silliness, to put it mildly.



Rahane was twice hit on the helmet and once dropped off a miscued pull. Reuters

Virat Kohli

His worst series in three years, wherein he failed to cross the three-figure mark in four innings combined (38 runs at 9.50). Kohli has looked not necessarily out-of-touch but out of sync. He was sucked by back-benders on both occasions. Playing for out-swing, but deceived by the inward seam movement. The movement was late, but shouldn't hoodwink a batsman of his class. Kohli's footwork tells the story. At his best, it's precise and decisive, he's seldom crease-stuck. But here, on several instances, one could spot him premeditate and make a noticeable sideways step as the bowler releases the ball. It could be to annul the threat of the out-swing, but it has made him vulnerable to the one that nips back, as his bat has to come around the front pad. The shuffle also ends up in Kohli reaching for the ball. So he meets it not under his eyes, but in front of them. The trouble is an extension of his over-eagerness to impose himself on the bowlers.

Prithvi Shaw

Kiwi bowlers have identified and exposed two glaring weaknesses in his technique. First, his susceptibility outside the off-stump, he can't resist a poke. The next is his propensity to get into a tangle when defending the short ball. Shaw's an instinctive puller of the ball, but not the most authoritative one. He tends to

play a lot of pulls in the air, so when the fielders are stationed in the deep, he's caught between attack and defence. The instinct kick in, he shapes up for the pull, common sense knocks next, he decides to defend or just twirl his wrists over it. But the bounce is often steep and he gets into awkward positions.

Mayank Agarwal

Rinse, repeat, rewind. In both innings, Agarwal got out in similar fashion. In the first, he played across, in the second, he failed to gauge the degree of swing. In both instances, he was looking to play around the ball, rather than straight. He was playing the angle of the ball rather than the line, a fatal misjudgement for an opening batsman. Consequently, he gets opened up and loses shape.

Umesh Yadav

Yadav did nothing wrong. He got a corker from Bolt. But to designate him as nightwatchman was a terribly wrong decision. Hagley Oval was lurking into darkness, Boult was raging in, and even the top-order batsmen were struggling to put wood on ball. And Yadav is not the pesky nightwatchman who can hang around and conserve his wicket. He likes to throw the proverbial kitchen sink at the bowler. In the end it hardly mattered, but it was yet again indicative of India's confused and baffling approach throughout the series.

SCORECARD >>

NZ vs India

2nd Test | Christchurch | Toss: NZ

INDIA 1ST INNS 242 ALL OUT

NZ 1ST INNS 235 IN 73.1 OVS

OVERNIGHT 63/0

T Latham b Shami 52 (122b, 5x4)

T Blundell lbw b Yadav 30 (77b, 4x4)

K Williamson c Pant b Bumrah 3 (8b)

R Taylor c Yadav b Jadeja 15 (37b, 1x4)

H Nicholls c Kohli b Shami 14 (27b, 1x4)

BJ Watling c Jadeja b Bumrah 0 (16b)

C de Grandhomme b Jadeja 26 (44b, 4x4)

T Southee c Pant b Bumrah 0 (2b)

K Jamieson c Pant b Shami 49 (63b, 7x4)

N Wagner c Jadeja b Shami 21 (41b, 3x4)

T Boult not out 1 (2b)

Extras: (b 20, lb 4) 24

Fall of wickets: 1-66 (Blundell, 25.3 ov), 2-69

(Williamson, 28.1 ov), 3-109 (Taylor, 38.4 ov),

4-130 (Latham, 43.6 ov), 5-133 (Nicholls, 45.4

ov), 6-153 (Watling, 50.3 ov), 7-153 (Southee,

50.5 ov), 8-177 (de Grandhomme, 60.2 ov),

9-228 (Wagner, 71.6 ov), 10-235 (Jamieson,

73.1 ov)

Bowling:

J Bumrah 22-5-62-3

U Yadav 18-2-46-1

Md Shami 23.1-3-81-4

R Jadeja 10-2-22-2

INDIA 2ND INNS 90/6 IN 36 OVS

P Shaw c Latham b Southee 14 (24b, 2x4)

M Agarwal lbw b Boult 3 (6b)

C Pujara b Boult 24 (88b, 2x4)

V Kohli lbw b de Grandhomme 14 (30b, 3x4)

A Rahane b Wagner 9 (43b, 1x4)

U Yadav b Boult 1 (12b)

H Vihari not out 5 (12b, 1x4)

R Pant not out 1 (1b)

Extras: (b 9, lb 10) 19

Fall of wickets: 1-8 (Agarwal, 1.5 ov), 2-26

(Shaw, 8.1 ov), 3-51 (Kohli, 17.1 ov), 4-72

(Rahane, 30.3 ov), 5-84 (Pujara, 33.1 ov), 6-89

(Yadav, 35.1 ov)

Bowling:

T Southee 6-2-20-1

T Boult 9-3-12-3

K Jamieson 8-4-18-0

C de Grandhomme 5-3-3-1

N Wagner 8-1-18-1

NUMBER PLATE

0 There have been no centuries hit in the series so far. Kane Williamson's 89 in the first innings at Wellington is the highest individual score.

38 The number of runs scored by Virat Kohli in the series, at an average of 9.50. Even Mohammed Shami has scored a run more despite one knock fewer.

3 The top three wicket-takers in the series are all Kiwis. Tim Southee has 12, followed by Trent Boult with 10 and Kyle Jamieson with 9.

Hockey: Olympic bronze medallist Balbir Singh Kullar no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

FORMER INDIA hockey player Balbir Singh Kullar, who was a part of the 1968 Olympics bronze-winning team, has died after suffering a heart attack at his home in Punjab. He died on Friday afternoon at the age of 77. Kullar is survived by his wife, one son and two daughters.



"My father was to travel with me to the US but suddenly he had a massive heart attack and he died on Friday afternoon at our family home in Sansarpur in Jalandhar district," his son Kamalbir Singh said. Kullar's cremation will be conducted on Monday. "His last rites will be done on Monday because my son and his grandson just arrived from the US. One of my elder sisters is based in Canada and the other is in US, they also arrived on Sunday," he added.

Born at Sansarpur village of Jalandhar district in Punjab, Kullar made his India debut in 1963 in Lyon in France. He gained reputation as an inside forward in the Indian team and toured several countries like Belgium, England, the Netherlands, New Zealand and West Germany. He was also a member of the Indian team that won the Asian Games gold in 1966 (Bangkok) and the Olympic Bronze in 1968 (Mexico). Balbir was also part of the gold medal winning Indian team in 1966 Bangkok Asian Games. Hockey India condoned the death of Kullar, who also served as an Indian national team selector. "We are deeply saddened by the demise of our former hockey player and... Olympic medallist, Balbir Singh Kullar," Hockey India said on its official Twitter handle. "We send out our heartfelt condolences to his family. On behalf of Hockey India, our thoughts and prayers are with Mr. Balbir Singh Kullar's family and friends at this time of grief."

Camp probables named

Hockey India on Sunday named a 32-member core probable group for the men's national camp which begins at the Sports Authority of India in Bengaluru on Monday.

The coach minced no words in expressing that the camp will be a good foundation ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Games.

"The four-week camp will bring focus back on our skill — tackling, goal shooting, trapping. We also need to work on our attacking abilities, especially to move the ball from attacking 25 into the circle. "After this camp, we will go to Germany and England to play which we help us further assess improvements required as we work towards 2020 Olympic Games," men's hockey team coach Graham Reid said. Reid also said he was happy with his team's performance in the recently-concluded FIH Pro League matches against the Netherlands, world champions Belgium and Australia. "One of the takeaways from the FIH Hockey Pro League was that we have proven that we can produce good results against the best in the world. It's a step forward in building self-belief," he said.

THE LIST: P R Sreejesh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Suraj Karkera, Harmanpreet Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Surender Kumar, Birendra Lakra, Rupinder Pal Singh, Gurinder Singh, Amit Rohidas, Kothajit Singh Khadangbam, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Simranjeet Singh, Akashdeep Singh, Ramandeep Singh, SV Sunil, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Gursahibjit Singh, Shamsher Singh, Varun Kumar, Jarnanpreet Singh, Dipsan Tirkey, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Jaskaran Singh, Rajkumar Pal, Gurjant Singh, Sumit, Chinglensana Singh.

My father was to travel with me to the US but suddenly he had a massive heart attack and he died on Friday afternoon at our family home in Sansarpur in Jalandhar district. His last rites will be done on Monday...

KAMABIL SINGH
SON OF BALBIR SINGH KULLAR



BUG HITS THE ROAD

A combination of pictures showing the start line of the Tokyo Marathon in 2019 (right) and this year's edition where only elite athletes were allowed to run. *Kyodo/via Reuters*

Keep calm and stay prepared

With coronavirus playing havoc with Tokyo qualification, Gopi wants his shuttlers to remain focussed and deliver on court

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, MARCH 1

NATIONAL COACH Pullela Gopichand has asked his shuttlers to cut through the clutter of uncertainty over tournaments being cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, and focus on the only variable within their control: their own performance.

A host of shuttlers in singles - Saina Nehwal, K Srikanth, HS Prannoy, as also Sourabh Verma, Parupalli Kashyap and Lakshya Sen - are chasing Tokyo Games qualification. And owing to either injury, recuperation, wretched form or plain schedule planning, have left it till late. The qualification period ends April 30 and with the alarming spread of the virus, are staring at unprecedented last-gasp jitters with tournaments facing cancellations. Gopichand insisted staying focused on delivering when they take to the court would be the viable approach.

"I think for us to think too much would be very difficult in an environment where tournaments are not sure. Your performances are the only thing you can think of. Prepare well. And hopefully, when you get the chance be at the peak of your performance," on Sunday. This was after stating that there were no plans currently to alter the rules: basically, finishing in Top 16 by April 30 helps two shuttlers qualify in both singles. "With particular reference to Olympic Qualification, BWF is not at this time planning to make any adjustments to the regulations related to the Olympic Qualification period," it had said earlier.

Gopichand says it's not going to be an easy call to take for the world body. "BWF has mentioned that any change would mean that it'll benefit somebody and somebody else loses (out). So it's gonna be a tricky situation how they deal with it. Because any decision will have pros and cons and will benefit some and not the other. It'll be detrimental to somebody or the other. So it's gonna be a



Chief national coach said changing the qualification schedule won't be easy now.

tough call for them."

Kashyap, himself in contention, but also worried about Saina's fortunes given he believes she's two good tournament results away from qualifying, has said that the home stretch has assumed humongous importance.

He had written: "We all had 7 events starting from Spain masters until the Singapore Open n few have the Asian Champs too. Now that German open is cancelled and Swiss Open looking doubtful and Singapore n Malaysia opens also with the same worries, it'll be completely unfair for so many athletes who are on the borderline of qualification at this moment. 7 events are a lot of events considering the best 10 performances in a qualifying period are chosen."

For those who took a chance by nursing their injuries at the start of the qualification period, hoping a sprint in the end could make up for the lost points earlier, the virus outbreak has hit them hard. If these were the precise 7 tournaments a shuttler had targeted out of the 10 planned, their campaign could lie in tatters.

Kashyap's lament came after BWF had taken a not inconsiderate call, saying, "Any

change to the existing Olympic qualification rules will affect different players both positively or negatively, and with the present level of postponement and cancellation, BWF does not believe that making changes is appropriate."

The world body, with a chunk of its top players coming from east Asian countries, is currently trying to salvage its European spring swing of events including the All England and Swiss Open after the German event was cancelled.

Public health authorities are dictating tournament schedules more than the governing body.

However, players feel hard done by because beyond the cancellations, certain tournaments like the continental Championships are unevenly poised. The Asian Individual Championship looks in trouble, but its European equivalent in Ukraine offers equal points and might just go ahead.

Cancellations can hit players from all countries hard, and this isn't just a problem limited to Indians hoping Srikanth can rally and shore up his chances on the last stretch. Equally on the borderline is China's No. 2 singles player Shi Yuqi, who missed out a bulk of late last year to injury but is defending a lot of points. He was amongst the few Chinese not opting out of the India Open scheduled for March 24 even as Chen Yufei withdrew.

Even amongst Indians, cancellations can work both ways. Should the rules stay intact, status quo without threat of losing points helps Sai Praneeth, but not the others. While it's a lot of defending of points for Srikanth, others like Verma, Kashyap or Sen can look for one or two freak jumps to leapfrog the rest.

Gopichand has stayed stoic throughout the qualification period almost presaging the uncertain nature of these races where multiple wards of his are having a stab at heading to Tokyo. While the Covid-19 threat has completely blindsided shuttlers and could not have been factored in a year ago, the coach believes fundamentals will apply going ahead. "As far as players are concerned - (they need) to keep it simple and try to do their best preparations and then whatever chances they have they should try and perform their best," he said.

UPCOMING TOURNAMENTS

All England Super 1000 (MARCH 11-15)

The number of cases in the UK stands at 35 and the government is expected to pass legislation next week to tackle the emergency after those who hadn't travelled abroad were also detected to have caught the infection. The tournament is on as of now.

Swiss Open Super 300 (MARCH 17-22)

Current known cases 22. The federal government expects a rise in cases given those travelling in from Italy and is likely to enforce its stricter law on communicable diseases which might restrict travel.

India Open Super 500 (MARCH 24-29)

Seems to be on in Delhi as of now,

though exact number of withdrawals will be known on Monday. Three cases in Kerala have been discharged after treatment, though organisers have fingers crossed and hands sanitised.

Malaysia Open Super 750 (MARCH 31 - APRIL 5)

Total cases 29. Malaysia is monitoring its land borders.

Singapore Open Super 500 (APRIL 7-12)

Reported cases 106, of which 74 have fully recovered. The transit hub has enforced strict regulations.

Badminton Asia Championship, China (LATE APRIL)

Not on.

Why changes in qualification rules now would be unfair

THE BWF is not keen on changing the qualification rules trying to maintain fairness, given the rules were known to everyone and almost everyone has played the minimum 10 tournaments that'll be computed in the best results. However, should they entertain complaints from hereon, they will have a couple of options to go about changing the norms of qualifications. If it is clear that most events will be cancelled going forward (which doesn't seem the case - no reason why India won't host), rankings of this cancelled period can be frozen i.e. consider the 2019 results and allow players to take forward the points.

Alternatively, the qualification period can be extended beyond April to take in the Thomas and Uber Cups in May, and Australia, Thailand, Indonesia, Canada and USA in June.

This will be a lot of headache for Tokyo organisers needing to work out the draws and other allotments of Olympic berths, though qualifications in Track & Field do run deep into June. However, changing rules this late into the process will be unfair to those who put in the hard yards earlier. However, there is no guarantee extending the qualification period will definitively ensure events won't get cancelled. The Olympics itself faces the ultimate threat.



REMEMBERING 'SAINI SAHAB'

Saini sir was a father figure I looked up to



PT USHA

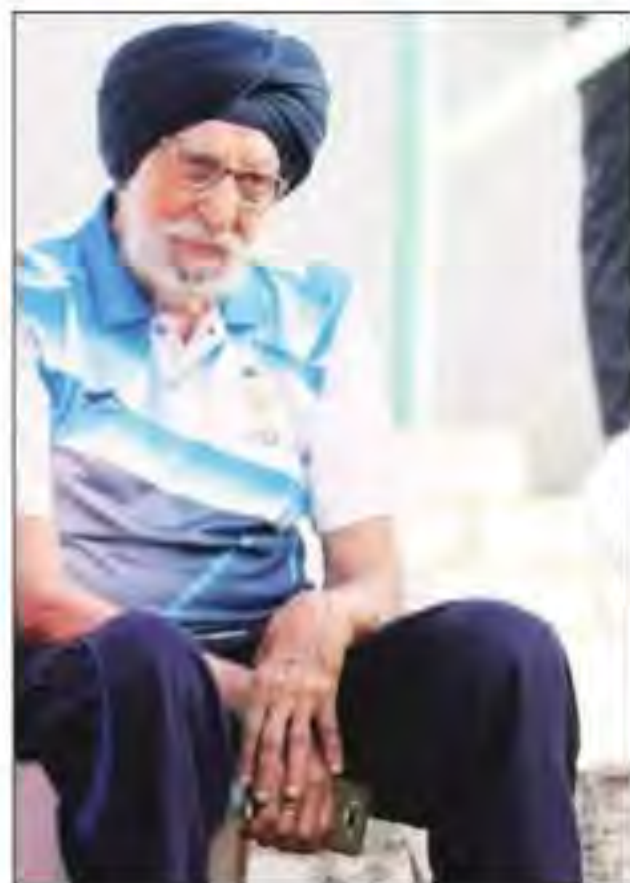
I WAS just 16 when I went for my first international meet in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1980. I was the youngest member of the squad and didn't have my personal coach (OM) Nambiar sir travelling with me. I was a little nervous but Saini sir ensured I did not face any difficulty. He took care of me like a father and guided me at every moment. I returned with four gold medals around my neck.

I went to the 1980 Moscow Olympics too without my personal coach and again Saini sir took care of me. He took me to the stadium, helped me with the warm-ups and guided me throughout. After the 100m

event, I was really disappointed and my shoulders dropped. I had to compete in the 200m event, too, but I did not have the courage. Saini sir, however, wasn't going to let me give up easily and motivated me to run in the 200m event.

The job of a chief coach is really difficult with so many athletes to take care of but Saini sir made sure he gave attention to every single athlete. I haven't seen anyone as passionate about Indian athletics as him. He genuinely wanted to see every athlete excel and was very active. He was 24X7 on the ground. I always made it a point to meet him whenever I visited Patiala and his love of athletics never diminished.

I remember after the 1988 Seoul Olympics, where I could not make it to the finals due to a heel injury, I faced a lot of flak. Some people were really harsh and wrote things about me that were difficult to take. I could not give my best only because of the injury. It was a really challenging time for me. The very next year, I won four gold and two silver medals at the Asian Track and Field meet in Delhi and silenced them.



Coach JS Saini guided PT Usha during the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Those who wrote against me suddenly became my admirers. I was happy with my performance and although I did not announce my retirement, I went back home to Kerala. I stopped training completely. The humiliation and trauma I faced after the Olympics defeat was something that I never wanted to face again.

In Delhi, I had proved who Usha was and that was enough for me. I quit and just sat at home. Saini sir travelled all the way to my home in Kerala and said 'no, you can't quit'. He convinced me to start running again and I won three silver medals at the 1990 Beijing Asian Games despite the limited time I had for preparation. If it wasn't for sir, I would have called it quits in 1989 itself.

I am deeply grieved at the loss of such a great coach and human being. He always took my call for any guidance or help. He was like a father to me and his contribution to the sport is immeasurable. It hurts me when people tell me he's no more. I cannot accept it because he continues to live in my memory and heart.

AS TOLD TO ANDREW AMSAN

Dronacharya awardee athletics coach Saini dies

NEW DELHI: Veteran athletics coach and Dronacharya awardee Joginder Singh Saini, who mentored greats like PT Usha and GS Randhawa, breathed his last on Sunday after age-related complications. He was 90. Saini was the chief national coach for over two decades starting from the 1970s, and was an active member of the national federation's selection committee. The Dronacharya awardee was known for his helpful nature and effective pep talks.

Gurbachan Singh Randhawa credits his decathlon gold in the 1962 Jakarta Asian Games to his former coach Saini.

"I think no athlete was as close to him as I was. In Jakarta, I had fallen sick and did not want to compete but fortunately, my coach Saini sir was there. He said 'not only will you compete but also win a gold for the country'. He motivated me to give it my all. I won that medal for our country solely because of him," Randhawa told *The Indian Express*.

Born on January 1, 1930 in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, Saini was a science graduate and became an athletics coach in 1954 after completing a diploma in physical education and a course in coaching at the National Institute of Sports Patiala.

He became chief coach of the then Amateur Athletics Federation of India in 1970. Saini was conferred the Dronacharya Award in 1997 for his contribution to Indian athletics. He was the chief coach of the Indian team which won 18 medals, including eight gold, at the 1978 Asian Games.

"I spoke to him just 10 days back when he was supposed to come to Delhi for a selection committee meeting. He called me up and said he could not make it. Over these years, he became a very close friend and is now a part of my family. The grief is unbearable. I have lost my former coach, a colleague and a family member," added Randhawa.

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