

OPINION 6 UPPER HOUSE: TO BE, OR NOT TO BE?

WORLD 8 MYANMAR ANTI-COUP PROTESTERS KEEP PRESSURE ON JUNTA

SPORT 12 WINDIES BEAT B'DESH IN 2ND TEST, WIN SERIES

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2021; PAGES 12 & 4



# The Daily Pioneer

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AJAY BEGINS SHOOT FOR MAIDAAN 10 VIVACITY

## CAPSULE

**14 KILLED AS MINI BUS HIT LORRY IN KURNOOL**  
Kurnool: Fourteen people, including eight women and a child, were killed and four others injured when a mini bus collided with a lorry in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh early on Sunday.

**WON'T LET GOVT SIT IN PEACE, SAYS TIKAIT**  
Kamat: Upping the ante against the Government, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakshit Tikait on Sunday said the farmers won't let it sit in peace till their demands are met.

**DELHI REPORTS 150 COVID CASES, 2 DEATHS**  
New Delhi: Delhi recorded 150 fresh Covid-19 cases and two deaths on Sunday, even as the positivity rate stood at 0.26 per cent, authorities said here. No death related to the disease was recorded in the national capital on Saturday, the second time in February when the single-day fatality count was nil.

**GUJ CM COLLAPSES ON STAGE AT POLL RALLY**  
Vadodra: Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani collapsed on stage on Sunday while addressing a rally for upcoming civic polls in Nizampura area of Vadodra, BJP leaders said. Rupani was given first aid on the stage.

**UP: DOCTOR'S HALF-BURNT BODY FOUND IN FOREST**  
Amethi: The half-burnt body of a 40-year-old doctor, who had gone missing on February 11, was found in a forest area here, police said on Sunday.

# Terror plot on Pulwama anniversary foiled

## 6.5 kg IED recovered from arrested nursing student in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A sinister plot to bleed Jammu on the occasion of second anniversary of "ghostly" Pulwama terror attack was foiled by the alert jawans of Jammu & Kashmir Police after they recovered 6.5 kg explosives from a Kashmir-based nursing college student near Jammu bus stand late on Saturday evening.



Jammu & Kashmir Police personnel display arms and ammunition recovered from a bus stand in Jammu on Sunday. PFI

The IED was to be used for triggering a blast at any one of the major installations in Jammu, including its famous Raghunath Mandir, railway station, bus stand and jewellery market located in the walled city area of Lakhdatta Bazar. Nursing college student from Pulwama, currently studying in Chandigarh, was directed by the Pakistan-based handlers of Al-Badr terror outfit to execute the terror plot.

In a separate development, a consignment of weapons was also recovered from Samba. The weapons could have been air-dropped in the area using Pakistani drones. Meanwhile, J&K DGP Dilbag Singh also made a major revelation on Sunday that terrorist commanders in Kashmir are smuggling weapons from Bihar with the help of their over ground workers network to carry out operations in the region.

He confirmed that chief commander of Lashkar-e-Mustafa, a front organisation of Jaish-e-Mohammad, had conducted a recon of the office of NSA Ajit Doval and had also dispatched the video footage to his handler Ilyas doctor of JeM to plan a major terror strike in New Delhi.

He was carrying a bag on being questioned and checking of the bag around 6.5 kg IED was recovered which was not active. During questioning he said he was a student of nursing college and was studying in Chandigarh. He was tasked by

Al-Badr handlers in Pakistan to place this IED at places," he said. Singh said on further questioning Suhail also revealed that one of the active terrorist Ahsan Nengroo, who used to ferry infiltrators from Jammu to Kashmir Valley via road link, himself used the tunnel route to return to Pakistan along with his family.

He said now Nengroo is working as an active handler and organising logistics support for terrorists across Jammu & Kashmir. During 2017-18 Nengroo had managed to ferry around three dozen terrorists from the International Border to Kashmir Valley.

later became active to carry out terror activities sponsored by Jaish-e-Mohammad. He said Malik was tasked to expand the terror base of the outfit from the South Kashmir areas to Jammu region. Singh said, "Hidayatullah had set up a network of OGWs to ferry arms consignment arriving from across the border to Kashmir Valley. In addition, he was also in touch with terror associates in Bihar from where he was smuggling pistols. So far seven pistols have reached Kashmir via Chapra in Bihar."

"Hidayatullah had also set up a network of Kashmiri students studying in different cities across Punjab and using them to ferry these consignments to Kashmir," he said. Referring to the modus operandi of terror outfits using tunnels, the DGP said during his interrogation Malik had also revealed that one of the active terrorist Ahsan Nengroo, who used to ferry infiltrators from Jammu to Kashmir Valley via road link, himself used the tunnel route to return to Pakistan along with his family.

He said now Nengroo is working as an active handler and organising logistics support for terrorists across Jammu & Kashmir. During 2017-18 Nengroo had managed to ferry around three dozen terrorists from the International Border to Kashmir Valley.

## Trump acquitted as impeachment trial in Senate fails by 57-43

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US Senate has acquitted a defiant Donald Trump in his second impeachment trial in just over a year, after the Democrats failed once again to muster enough votes to convict the former president on a charge of inciting the deadly insurrection at the Capitol on January 6.

The Senate voted 57-43 on Saturday to convict Trump on a single impeachment count — incitement of insurrection. But that majority of all 50 Democrats in the upper chamber of the US Congress, joined by seven Republicans, fell 10 votes short of the 67 needed for a conviction, two-thirds of the 100-member Senate.

The Senate acquitted the 74-year-old Republican leader of inciting insurrection at the US Capitol last month after he urged hundreds of his supporters to confront lawmakers as they were certifying that he had lost the November 3 presidential election to Democrat Joe Biden.

He was accused of inciting riots in the Capitol which left five people, including a police officer, dead. Trump is first president in US history to be impeached by the House of Representatives twice, and first to be tried for impeachment after leaving office.

## 12 bodies pulled out from U'khand site, toll rises to 50

PNS ■ TAPOVAN/DEHRADUN

As massive operation intensified to reach about 30 people trapped inside tunnel began after a flash flood in Chamoli district a week ago, rescue teams on Sunday recovered 12 more bodies, including the first ones to be pulled out from the sludge-choked Tapovan tunnel.



NDRF personnel carry the mortal remains of a flash flood victim near Rainti village on Sunday. PTI

Five bodies were recovered from the Tapovan power project tunnel, six from Rainti upstream and one from the riverbank in Rudrapur, taking the confirmed death toll in the Uttarakhand disaster to 50. Officials said 154 people still remain missing after the February 7 devastation, possibly triggered by an avalanche in the upper reaches of the Alaknanda river system.

A surge of water in Dhuliganga and Rishiganga rivers had ripped through two hydel projects. Bodies of victims were being found at different locations by the river over the past week, but rescuers had so far failed to reach any one — dead or alive — in the tunnel network at the National Thermal Power Corporation's 520 MW Tapovan-Vishnugad

project. Chamoli District Magistrate Swati S Bhaduria and Superintendent of Police Yashwant Singh Chauhan rushed to the tunnel when the first two bodies were brought out in the early hours of Sunday. Three more bodies were recovered later from the tunnel, which is packed with debris brought by the flash flood. Officials said a helicopter has been kept on stand-by at the Tapovan

## Get FASTag by midnight of Feb 16 or pay double: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways on Sunday announced that all lanes in the fee plazas on National Highways will be declared as FASTag lane of the fee plaza from midnight of February 15, 16 of 2021.

Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari made it clear that the deadline for the implementation of FASTag would not be extended further, and the vehicle owners should immediately adopt the e-payment facility. The Central Government had last extended the FASTag deadline for the vehicles from January 1, 2021, to February 15, 2021.

"Therefore, as per NH Fee Rules 2008, any vehicle not fitted with FASTag or vehicle without valid, functional FASTag entering into the FASTag lane of the fee plaza shall pay a fee equivalent to two times of the fee applicable to that category," the Ministry said in a statement.

## Omar claims father and he under house arrest again

PNS ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, along with his father Dr Farooq Abdullah (sitting Parliamentarian from Srinagar), found themselves locked up inside their Gupkar road house early Sunday morning after they noticed a police van stationed outside the front gate had blocked their way.

In response, a Twitter handle, Omar Abdullah immediately took to Twitter to vent his ire against the security establishment. In a series of tweets Omar wrote, "This is the 'nayan' J&K after Aug 2019. We get locked up in our homes with no explanation. It's bad enough they've locked my father (a sitting MP) & me in our home, they've locked my sister & her kids in their home as well."

## Congress-called Odisha Bandh today

### Protest against rising fuel prices

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the Odisha Bandh called given by the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) on Monday (February 15), all schools across the State would remain closed on the day, informed School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash on Sunday.

The decision was taken to ensure the safety of students. This apart, all schools would also remain closed on Sarawati Puja on Tuesday (February 16), the Minister said. Besides, all private buses would stay off roads from 6 am to 1 pm. Private Bus Owners' Association Treasurer Barada Acharya, said the services would resume after 1 pm. Notably, the bandh call has been given by OPCC against the rising prices of petrol, diesel and natural gas. The bandh would be observed for six hours from 7 am to 1

pm. Congress workers are likely to stage road blockade at various road junctions. However, OPCC president Niranjan Patnaik on Sunday said emergency services including ambulances, vehicles carrying milk, mediapersons and examinees of educational institutions and brides and grooms would be exempted from the purview of the bandh.

All State Government employees working in Bhubaneswar have been advised by the Home Department to reach their respective offices by 9:30 am on February 15 in view of the bandh call.

"Officers and employees of Lok Seva Bhawan, Karavela Bhawan, Rajiv Bhawan and Heads of Department Building, etc., may be advised to reach office latest by 9:30 am to facilitate their smooth entry," the Home Department said in a notification.

## Stuck in house in lockdown, couple ties knot on V-Day

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

Four days prior to the announcement of a nationwide lockdown due to the Covid-19 outbreak last year, Namita Majhi of Mahuldhik village under Raggampur block of Sundargarh district had come to visit her friend Babul Majhi's house at Panchara village under Kutra block in the district.

Little did she know that her visit would turn into a fairytale and lead to marriage with Babul on the Valentine's Day this year. Both got to know each other when Namita came to Panchara for attending a wedding, two years ago. She and Babul shared their contact numbers and were regularly in



touch over phone during the next one year. Being invited by Babul, Namita came to his house last year. However, Namita couldn't return to her village after the announcement of the lockdown. The two started living in the same house and subsequently fell in love. Their relationship was also approved by their family members. The elated couple tied the nuptial knot on Sunday in the presence of their kin, well-wishers and friends.

## 73 new Covid cases in State

Total rises to 3,36,174

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State registered 73 new Covid-19 positive cases in 19 districts and from the State pool, taking its total caseload to 3,36,174 on Sunday. Of the new cases, 44 were reported from quarantine centres while 29 were local

contact cases. Bargarh district recorded the day's highest 14 cases followed by Angul with eight and Sambalpur six. Besides, one case was reported from the State pool. Currently, the number of total active cases in the State stood at 760 and the cumulative samples tested were 80,23,978. However, 103 more recoveries were reported on the day taking the total recoveries to 3,33,354.

# PM launches job-creating projects in poll bound TN, Kerala

PNS ■ CHENNAI/KOCHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's day out on Sunday to Tamil Nadu and Kerala saw the dedication and commissioning of a slew of development projects in both the poll-bound States which would result in creation of thousands of jobs and savings in foreign exchange.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K Palaniswami and Deputy CM O Panneerselvam during the inauguration of Chennai Metro Rail Phase-I extension, that will link North Chennai with the Airport and Central Railway Station in Chennai on Sunday. PTI

The Prime Minister also laid foundation stones for projects meant for farming, development of innovation for youths, strengthening of skill of technically qualified youths and development of tourism projects. One of the important functions presided over by the Prime Minister was the handing over of Arjun Mk-1A the

state-of-the-art main battle tank to Indian Army. The high performance tank was developed by the scientists of Chennai-based Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (CVRDE), a unit of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and

other allied institutions. General MM Naravane, Chief of Army Staff, received Arjun Mk-1A from Prime Minister Modi in an elegant function held at Chennai's Indore Stadium. Paying tributes to the soldiers ambushed at Pulwama two years ago, the Prime Minister said, "No Indian can forget this day. Two years ago, Pulwama attack happened. We pay homage to all the martyrs we lost in that attack. We are proud of our security forces. Their bravery will continue to inspire generations."

Quoting the verses of Mahakavi Subramania Bharati in Tamil, Modi said, "Let us make weapons, let us make paper, let us make factories, let us make schools; let us make vehicles that can move and fly — also let us make ships that can shake the world." Inspired by this vision of Subramania Bharati, India has undertaken a massive effort to become self-reliant in the defence sector.

Later, Modi inaugurated the Chennai Metro Rail Phase-I extension project completed at a cost of ₹3,770 crore which would ease traffic flow in the city. A long time dream of the farmers in the Cauvery Delta districts (the five districts on the banks of Cauvery river) got a boost as the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the extension, renovation and modernisation of the Grand Anicut Canal System to be completed at a cost of ₹2,640 crore. The works would

improve the water carrying capacity of the canals which distribute water meant for irrigating the farm lands. The Prime Minister also launched the electrification of the railway track between Villupuram - Cuddalore-Mayiladuthurai-Thanjavur and Mayiladuthurai-Thiruvavur stretch which is expected to save Indian Railway Rs 14.61 lakh per day in fuel cost on the Chennai-Egmore Kanayakumar stretch.

It turned out to be a golden day for Kerala as the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation the Rs 6,000 crore propylene derivatives petrochemical complex at Kochi Refinery which would save the country foreign exchange worth Rs 4,000 crore per annum and generate thousands of job opportunities. This is the first unit in the country to produce acrylic acid and acrylates hitherto imported at high costs. The acrylic acid unit commissioned by the Prime Minister is world's largest single train unit.

Prime Minister Modi also inaugurated the Ro-Ro vessels at the historic Willingdon Island which will reduce distance from 30 km by road to 3.5 km on waterways. This will help us to bring down the transportation cost, transit time, pollution, and congestion on road in Kochi," said the Prime Minister. Sagarika, the international cruise terminal, built at a cost of Rs 25.72 crore was thrown open to service by the Prime Minister marking

# 'Bylaws on 2 BBSR temples to be withdrawn soon'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In the wake of a huge uproar over the controversial bylaws prepared by the National Monuments Authority (NMA) for two ancient temples in Ekamra Kshetra here, the Central Government has reportedly ordered to withdraw the draft notification.

Union Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism Pragrah Singh Patel in this regard and an order has been given to the NMA for withdrawal of the draft, Sarangi told media. Opposing the bylaws, he said the draft notification should not have been circulated in this manner. A draft notification was prepared seeking public opinion for enforcing construction restrictions around national monuments.

Before preparing the draft, the NMA should have consulted others. However, the Union Culture Minister has already ordered to withdraw the bylaws, he said. Sarangi's statement came amid widespread protests by servants of the Lingaraj Temple as well as residents of Ekamra Kshetra demanding immediate withdrawal of the heritage bylaws on the two temples.

## Kotia border row

# 'Take timely action before situation worsens'

## Dharmendra urges Odisha Government

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The border disputes with Andhra Pradesh and other States at many times are triggering serious problems. Besides, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also urged the Centre for rollback of the bylaws for two ancient shrines.



Pradhan said Andhra Pradesh's efforts to involve Odisha people in its panchayat polls by crossing the geographical border in Koraput, Ganjam and Gajapati districts are a matter of great concern.

brothers and sisters residing in the bordering areas with us," Pradhan said. The State Government which has taken legal recourse over the Kotia issue is expected to take the battle to a logical conclusion.

# Fire breaks out at Botanical Garden



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Panic gripped visitors at the State Botanical Garden near the Nandankanan Zoological Park near here as a fire broke out there on Sunday.

However, no casualty or major damage was reported in the fire mishap. On being informed, Fire Service personnel rushed to the spot and initiated efforts to douse the flames.

# Prafulla Samantara denounces Odisha Agri Ordinance

## Hints about farmers' protest

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Describing re-promulgation of the Odisha Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and



Facilitation) Ordinance as deplorable, unwanted and betrayal to farmers who are on warpath along with farmers of rest of country against the three anti-farmer laws, Lok Shakti Adivasi movement leader Prafulla Samantara on Sunday warned Government to stop passing of Bill in Assembly;

otherwise, farmers of Odisha would resort to agitation. While speaking to Press here, Samantara pointed out that Odisha Government's ill intention is clearly visible. "After Cabinet approval, the design is to bring a draft Bill in form of an ordinance for legislation in forthcoming Budget Session

of State Assembly," he said. According to him, when farmers are prepared to die demanding withdrawal of three Central legislations and when at least 220 farmers have already died for cause, it is unfortunate Odisha Government is attempting to bring a Bill to introduce a pri-

vat mandy system and demolish Government-controlled Agriculture Produce Marketing Cooperatives (APMCs). "The State Govt has a moral and Constitutional responsibility to ensure MSP as the agriculture is under the State list. He also demanded a legislation to protect rights of sharecroppers.

anteed," Samantara argued. He added that at least the Odisha Government should follow the Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan Governments to bring a legislation to counter Central law to ensure MSP as the agriculture is under the State list. He also demanded a legislation to protect rights of sharecroppers.

# State gets 11 more IAS officer posts

TATHYA ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the Union Government allowing one more post in the Apex Scale, the Odisha Government would now have four such posts in the IAS Cadre.

While Chief Secretary, Member of Board of Revenue, Chief Administrator KBB posts were in the Apex Scale, now the post of Development Commissioner-cum-ACS & Secretary to Planning and Convergence Department has been allowed in this category. So, now, four more posts can be created by the State Government making it to eight in the Additional Chief Secretary rank, said an official. The Union Government has increased the cadre strength of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers by allowing 11 more posts in a recent review of

# 'Need to digitise State Archives documents'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Principal Secretary, Odia Language, Literature and Culture, Bishnupada Sethi has stressed on strengthening Odisha State Archives and focusing on digitisation of paper records. Sethi was speaking at a ceremony organised to celebrate the Archives Week.

He stressed that the crucial documents need to be preserved and the records in shape of volumes, loose sheets, files, old gazettes, maps and newspapers housed in the archives need to be digitised. Sethi said the documents contain the most valuable information on the history of formation of Modern Odisha such as freedom struggle, creation of Odisha province, national calamities like setting up of the State and account of the social customs prevailing during earlier times such as Sati and human sac-

# 'Kiss Day' celebration 2 youths hurt in brawl at city bar

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Two youths sustained critical injuries after they were allegedly attacked by bouncers with sharp weapons at a bar in the Kharavel Nagar area in Bhubaneswar on Saturday night. Both injured youths had come to the bar to celebrate the 'Kiss Day' with their friends. Sources said bouncers of bar intervened when the group created nuisance after having drinks. The bouncers attacked the two youths with knives following an altercation with them. The youths sustained multiple injuries on necks, faces and other parts of their bodies. A case was registered at Kharavel Nagar police station on Saturday. Police started investigation and took CCTV footages of the bar for scrutiny, sources said.

# Book review 'Bliss of Ignorance' a bold account of dozen plus issues

BHASKAR PARICHHA

Over the past few years, India has been experiencing widespread changes and developments in its society, polity and economy, resulting in a variety of social movements. Combined with this is the information explosion and mass media outbursts going in tandem. More than anyone else, sociologists have an exacting role in deciphering these movement issues and the forces behind them. This book does precisely that.

'Bliss of Ignorance' by Dr Abash Parida (Vishwamukti Publication/Bhubaneswar) is a refreshingly bold account of a dozen plus issues that have inflamed Indian society in the past few months. Parida is an Assistant Professor in Sociology and Development Studies, Sophitorium Group of Institutions, Khordha. He is also a blogger - 'Social Pixel' - and a columnist for various newspapers. This is his first book and a fascinating one at that. In the 200-page hardback, the writer has expressed a yawning disquiet with the existing social structure and its blotchy contours.



An incisive observer of contemporary events, Parida's book, as it says in the introduction, tries to provide a 'blanket' analysis of certain social issues which are less discussed, misrepresented and less valued. Yet another goal of this book is to 'clear the dust' on several information that have been disseminated to us. Focusing specifically on India, the book delves into the concept and definition of several social movements from diverse perspectives and offers a critical insight into the fundamentals. He also picks up the ongoing debates and treatises on these movements. It covers the dialogue on a wide range of crusades varying in locus and the spatial spread - from gender to women's body rights and the civil society. The latitude of the book is vast, and the author has engaged himself in some very controversial issues. From female genital mutation to witch hunting, from the new religion and the god-men to mob lynching, from transgender identity to homosexuality, the treatment is absorbing. We are confused not because of some contents in the book are comments and some have a perceptive analysis. Having worked in various universities abroad and in India, Parida has been an observer of many events that have been unfolding across the countries. He substantiates his viewpoint with facts and figures. In chapter on witch hunting, for example, Dr Parida has done a brilliant job in all its ramifications. He catches witch hunting a 'culturally induced murder' and concludes that this practice is 'unethical, harmful and no modern society can afford it. Termining it as a spontaneous expression of anger, hate and superiority which are discussed, misrepresented and less valued. Yet another goal of this book is to 'clear the dust' on several information that have been disseminated to us. Focusing specifically on India, the book delves into the

# 2nd anniv of Pulwama attack Utkal varsity students pay tributes to martyrs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On the 2nd anniversary of the Pulwama attack, a mega rally was organised by the students' association of the Utkal University here as a mark of respect to the CRPF personnel who were martyred in the incident. Carrying a 120-metre-long Tricolour, hundreds of students marched from the Vani Vihar Square to Master Canteen Square recalling the supreme sac-



# 'Sabuja Sakala' annual issue unveiled

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The annual issue of the Forest Park Morning Walkers' Association's publication 'Sabuja Sakala' was unveiled at the Forest Park premises here on Sunday. The invited guests highlighted the benefits of a healthy morning walk. The function, presided over by association president Durga Charan Das, was inaugurated by senior journalist Pradyuman Shatapathi and Prof Birendra Kumar Tripathi.

Those present included Alekh Chandra Nayak, Prashant Kumar Patra, Umesh Khandelwal, Kulmani Nayak, Lilavati Sahu, Ranjit Kumar Mohanty, Lingaraj Sahoo, Debrabatra Patra and several dignitaries of State capital city.

# CONTEMPORARIES Let's say a big 'no' to online vigilantism



S JYOTIRAJAN

The new programme to invite citizen volunteers for policing over online contents is one of the most unwise and regressive decisions taken

by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). This will not yield the desired results and shall lead to further confusion and overreach on multiple aspects. To begin with, the MHA circular states that the scheme will start as a pilot project in Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir, wherein citizen volunteers will be asked to flag and report rape, terrorism, child sexual abuse, rape, "radicalisation" and "anti-national" activities. However, ironically, under the prevalent laws, it is nowhere defined as to what constitutes an 'anti-national activity'. There are unmet examples of as to how such ambiguous terms without any

precise definition can prove lethal to social harmony, especially when common people without knowledge in law or subject to any special order are empowered with such power to decide what can pass the muster to be paraded online and what fall within the reportable category. Apart from that, without an ordinary people, authorising any locus standi, to decide what qualifies for the reportable label or flag shall ultimately land us in a scenario of rampant misuse of the provisions of the scheme and harassment of common man by the common man. The other objectionable aspect of this, scheme is that there is no

statutory foundation for creating such a volunteer force and there is no plan as to how they will be judiciously utilised in the process and how will they be controlled. To take the discussion further, even if we accept that the MHA's mission is actually to counter cybercrimes, it is not understood as to why and how a fundamental state responsibility could be delegated to such citizen volunteers, who in all probability, shall be unregulated and unaccountable to any authority and cannot be completely relied upon regarding how judiciously they would screen and scrutinise fellow citizens. This, therefore, may by all chances

turn into ammunition in the hands of the vested interest groups to satiate their agenda of political or personal vendetta and may also deepen distrust and polarisation and loosen the social fabric. Most importantly, the whole exercise of making citizens subject to such surveillance and scrutiny without the proper sanction of law and exercise of due process of law is an infringement of their fundamental rights to freedom of speech and expression and privacy. Moreover, the act of the MHA is a blatant violation of the law laid down by the Supreme Court of India regarding criminalising online

speech, as the court, had cautioned while striking down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2008 that there needs to be a distinction between speech that is simply 'offensive or annoying' and between that which is capable of inciting a 'disruption of public order, or violence'. And under the MHA's scheme, it is not practicable to expect citizen volunteers to exercise such prudence capable of drawing a distinction as discussed. This programme seems to be an extension of the idea of blanket gag on online criticism of the State Government in Bihar, the Uttarakhnad police's drive to scrutinise social media for 'anti-national' posts. It is

true that social media today is the new platform to initiate and lead revolutions, political battles, campaigns, electoral contests and even the ongoing farmer protests. Social media seems to be all pervading and deeply penetrating into the social psychology, but such unprincipled overreach by the Government authority to 'scrutinise social media posts' to the volunteer's corps from amongst the common man without due regulation mechanism in place and where scrutiny by technical and legal experts is required is both disturbing and against rule of law. The move will only pave the way for raising a permanent

army of vigilantes with a right to infringe on the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression and privacy of the fellow citizens and shall only strengthen the growing public perception that this Government is in favour of persecuting citizens daring to disagree and dissent, which is unwelcome in a presumably robust democracy like that of ours. (The writer is a lawyer and public policy expert and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law & Media Studies at School of Mass Communication, KIIT University. He can be reached at sjyotirajan3@gmail.com.)





14 killed, 4 hurt as mini bus hits lorry in Kurnool

Kurnool (AP): Fourteen people, including eight women and a child, were killed and four others injured when a mini bus collided with a lorry in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh early on Sunday, police said.



Police inspect the mangled remains of a traveller van after it collided with a truck on the Hyderabad-Kurnool highway, near Veldurti in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh, Sunday early morning. PTI

The incident took place at around 4 am when a group of people hailed from Chittoor district of the state were travelling in the mini bus towards Hyderabad. A senior police official told PTI.

Army personnel killed by unidentified men in UP

Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh): An Army personnel on his way to his home, was attacked and killed by unidentified miscreants. His body was found on Saturday with severe head injuries in his car from the Neem Sarai area here.

The woman informed the victim's kin that she was accompanying Ashutosh to check on a plot of land when they decided to buy mooms but lost the way and ended up at Neem Sarai.

Devendra Kula Vellalar community to get delisted from SC soon, announces PM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI A long pending demand of the Devendra Kula Vellalar community to delist from the Scheduled Caste and put them in the Other Backward Community would soon become a reality, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

to merge the seven sub sects Pallar, Kudumbar, Pannadi, Kaaladi, Kadavyar, Devendra Kulaatar and Vadhriyar and rename the integrated entity as Devendra Kula Vallalar, according to Dr Krishnasami, party president.

80 Shia orphans donate money for Ram Temple

IAN S ■ LUCKNOW Over 80 orphans from the Saadatganj orphanage of the All India Shia Orphanage in Lucknow and people from the minority community donated more than Rs 1.5 lakh for the construction of the Ram temple.

Girl thrown off terrace after failed rape bid

Pilibhit (Uttar Pradesh): A 16-year-old girl was allegedly thrown off a terrace after a failed rape attempt by two of her neighbours, police said on Sunday.

the two youths who are now absconding. According to reports the incident took place on Saturday.

Tributes paid to late Malti Mohinder on her second death anniversary

New Delhi: On the occasion of second death anniversary of late Malti Mohinder Singh, the inspiration and guide to teachers in the field of education, it was resolved to follow the path always paved by them.



Sonia Rajesh Khullar and other dignitaries paid homage paid to late Malti Mohinder Singh.

73 new Covid cases in J&K

Jammu: J&K saw 73 new Covid cases on Sunday while 65 patients were discharged from different hospitals after recovery during the last 24 hours.

Army helps douse major forest fire along China border in Arunachal

Itanagar: Army troops successfully doused a major forest fire in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley district along the China border, officials said on Sunday.

Yogi assures seers of development in Braj region

Mathura: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday met saints and seers in Vrindavan town and assured them of the development of the Braj region.

Three held in UP for making fake HSRP

Meerut (UP): Three persons have been arrested in Meerut for allegedly manufacturing and selling fake high security registration plates (HSRP).

Fancy garb, gowns, siblings in fray in Andhra panchayat polls

Amaravati: Being held under the Covid shadow, the ongoing panchayat polls in Andhra Pradesh are witnessing the same colour, theatrics and human interest stories that accompany elections in India at all levels.

Piduru Venugopal Reddy contested the election in Nellurupali village while his younger sister, Sannareddy Rajani fought for the Nellaballi panchayat.

luge volunteer from Muthyalacheruvu village in Ananthapur district, had filed her nomination for the sarpanch post and so did three others. However, all three withdrew them, recognising the service Subhalekha rendered as a volunteer, enabling her to win unanimously.

prospects for the sarpanch post. Meanwhile, Gundepudi village in Krishna district has emerged as one of the smallest panchayats in fray during the second phase of elections which happened on Saturday.

Eluru Aruna was suffering from an ailment related to the nerves. She even had to be put on a ventilator but on the last day of nominations and in a better condition after treatment, she drove down to Chamallamudi office to file her papers.



Artists perform Jhumur dance during a workshop of Folk Salar festival at Mohor Kun in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Halfway through

### Round one of first-phase COVID-19 vaccination drive over, India gets its act together to accolades

India has begun the second round of its phase one COVID-19 vaccination drive. The first round that began on January 16 saw 58,65,813 healthcare workers and 19,00,506 front-line workers being inoculated till February 12. Once India administers both the shots, the vaccination process for the first lot of chosen people will be complete. Thankfully, from the time the venture got underway, the number of infections and casualties has seen a downward spiral. According to the Union Health Ministry, on February 11 the country reported 12,923 new infections in 24 hours, taking the number of those infected to 10,871,294. There are 142,562 active cases and 10,573,372 recoveries as India's death toll stood at 155,360 with 108 deaths during the same period. India is witnessing a consistent decline in the number of infections reported daily since the peak in mid-September 2020. This has earned the Government a pat on the back from the World Health Organisation (WHO), as has the fact that over seven million people have been inoculated since the world's largest vaccination drive began in January. "It's the fastest rate of vaccination happening," Roderico Ofrin, the WHO's India representative, has said. However, despite its relative success, the first round was not without challenges. For instance, there was the issue of procuring enough vaccines, which still remains. AstraZeneca's Covishield, which is the main vaccine being administered, is given in two doses, four weeks



Govt. Of India Office of M.S. No.

apart. This means that India needs 60 crore shots for the first phase.

The Serum Institute of India (SII), which makes Covishield, has said it has a stockpile of five-seven crore doses and aims to produce 50 crore shots by July 2021. So, by the SII's own admission, there will be shortages in the first half of 2021. However, this shortage will ease when other vaccines are cleared for use. But other issues like inadequate cold storage facilities will continue to haunt the system in the second round too. The fact that more than 52 per cent of the country's 29,000 cold chain points and 40 per cent of the equipment are concentrated in just six States doesn't help. As the drive speeds up, the Government will have to increase the number of cold chain facilities, keeping in focus the States without an adequate infrastructure. Plus, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, the other approved vaccine, can be kept at room temperature for at least a week. So the Government needs to ensure that going forward the campaign has a healthy mix of both the vaccines. But, for that to happen, the people's hesitation in using Covaxin needs to be overcome by releasing its efficacy data. Also, with the registration process being mostly electronic till now, the Government should ensure some amount of "on-the-spot" registration as not everyone has a mobile phone and internet connection in a poor country like ours. With Indians developing antibodies faster than the Government can get the jobs, there is hope for the country. But for a lot of people, as for the economy, it would have come a bit too late.

## PICTALK



Wreckage at the scene of a bombing in Mogadishu, Somalia

## Foolhardy acts

### Uttarakhand's fragile ecosystem is being abused by the builders' lobby in cahoots with babus and netas

One calamity leads to another and if it is a man-made disaster it most certainly will, unless extraordinary steps are taken to forestall the impending danger. What is happening in Uttarakhand is a case in point, if aerial surveys are anything to go by. The debris accompanying the deluge earlier this week has blocked a stream that joins the Rishi Ganga river, forming a temporary lake which if it breaches can cause further devastation. With the threat still looming, if authorities fail to take timely and adequate precautionary measures, the loss to life, property and flora and fauna may be colossal.



Due to (often illegal) rampant construction, mining and blasting activity in the hills — to most of which the complacent babus and their political masters turn a blind eye — the fragile local ecosystem is facing an existential crisis. We might pompously bellow about our sustainable development goals but the reality is to the contrary. In our quest for development, we have messed up the region's biodiversity and pushed many exotic and indigenous varieties of plants and animals to the verge of extinction.

Not only that, we have been quite an ignoramus people with respect to the importance of knowledge as passed down by the local generations. The villagers and tribals have traditional wisdom to foresee any catastrophe by studying the signs of nature, changes in the behaviour of domestic and wild animals, insects, change in wind speed and direction and so on. This begs the question as to how many times have successive Governments made serious attempts to tap this traditional knowledge base as a means of forewarning against natural or man-made disasters? But, more importantly, what should be done for now? Should the authorities work on a contingency rehabilitation plan, or should a safety valve be drilled to drain out the water from this temporary lake? Are the authorities in a position at all to regulate the flow? Or will the Government leave the people to their fate, only to announce compensations later? These and other such questions will keep crossing our mind. According to a report by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, an autonomous research institute under the Department of Science and Technology, the assessment of the actual magnitude of risks involved due to this impoundment of water requires a detailed survey. However, the scientists, NGOs and the Government must put their heads together and work out an action plan before it gets too late.

# Upper House: To be, or not to be?

### Political parties need to realise and decide whether they wish to make serious use of the Upper House or exploit it for their convenience



PRAFULL GORADIA

As expressed in this journal, others have voiced, from time to time, doubts about the utility of the Upper House of legislature whether in the States or at the Centre. The cause of these doubts is the not-so-infrequent misuse of the Rajya Sabha as well as the Vidhan Parishads. As Sanjay Gandhi's influence grew in the 1970s, many of his friends were lifted into the Rajya Sabha. Fortunately for them, the election rule-framers prescribed the minimum age for such candidates as 30. Hence, like the minimum age of 25 years for the Lok Sabha, anyone who was over 30 years was eligible for the Upper House. In many ways, this was the first reason of misuse.

The Upper House was never meant for the young woman or man to get into. They, being young and fit, should cultivate the common folk, broaden the party base and, in due course, contest the Lok Sabha seat. The young and raw individuals reflected on the House discipline as well as the quality of debates and their contribution to Parliament. The purpose of the Upper House, whether at the Centre or in States, was the exact opposite: Older, mature individuals, preferably well educated who could devote time to study issues and then speak on them in an informed manner. They may or may not relate to the common folk of a constituency, nor perhaps may the mass voters relate to such members.

The Upper House should be used to accommodate leaders who made competent Ministers and had to get elected within six months of their appointment by the Prime Minister or a Chief Minister.

One recent example is that of Yogi Adityanath. He was in the Lok Sabha when the Uttar Pradesh elections were held in 2017 and he had not contested from any constituency. Yet he was selected to be the Chief Minister and,



therefore, had to enter the Assembly. He could have requested an MLA to give up his seat. But instead of doing that, he chose not to disturb anyone; there was a Vidhan Parishad seat vacant which he used to become an Assembly member. In 2001, when Narendra Modi was in a similar situation in Gujarat, he could not do the same. There being no Vidhan Parishad in his State, Modi had to get elected from an Assembly seat vacated by an MLA.

Having been a member of the Rajya Sabha, I found that the level of debates and discussions was, on the whole, more sober and mature than in the Lok Sabha. Generally, the speakers in the Upper House ensured that they had studied and reflected on the subject they spoke on whereas, in the Lok Sabha, more members spoke off the cuff, most of them had spent time in their constituencies over the weekend. Many of them regularly left Delhi on Friday afternoons, if not on Thursday evenings, to return on Monday mornings. The Rajya Sabha members could afford to spend the weekends

“THE UPPER HOUSE SHOULD BE USED TO ACCOMMODATE LEADERS WHO WOULD MAKE COMPETENT MINISTERS AND HAVE TO GET ELECTED WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THEIR APPOINTMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OR A CHIEF MINISTER

in Delhi and read up before speaking the following week.

The Communist parties had a commendable system; most of their Upper House members spent the weekends in Delhi. They not only studied the contemporary subjects but also collected the Bills coming up for debate and passed on their notes to their Lok Sabha colleagues. I offered to organise a small secretariat at my cost for all my party members so that all of us could be better prepared for discussions. Being in power after long and with a lenient leadership, the general mood in the party was one of overconfidence. Little wonder then that the 2004 general election was lost on a manifesto which projected "India shining". To every Indian shining, there were citizens not shining.

In India, our constituencies are large and the voters are much more varied than, say, in western countries. Moreover, our diversity makes it useful for the Members of Parliament and even Assemblies to know other parts of the country. The Upper House members would have the leisure to do

this kind of work during the weeks when the House does not sit. The Lower House members cannot normally have much leisure; their focus has to be on their own voters. If the legislators do not take their knowledge side seriously, they would yield helplessly to the dominance of the Executive or the Ministers.

It is for the political parties to realise and decide whether they wish to make serious use of the Upper House or exploit it for their convenience. But, truly, these chambers can be useful as knowledge-cum-wisdom banks for the parties as well as for the country. They can help raise the quality of politics.

Getting elected by lakhs of people is related to popularity or, at least, acceptability whereas knowledge depends on education and experience. Both are necessary virtues; the Lower House more for the party while the Upper House more for the country in the long run, if used wisely.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INDIA CANNOT BE A SURVEILLANCE STATE

Sir—The Union Home Ministry's call for citizens to become "cyber volunteers" and identify, flag and report illegal, unlawful and "anti-national" online content is perhaps the most brazen and dangerous sign of an attempt to turn our democratic and free society into a "surveillance State".

Though vigilante activities directed against individuals, social groups and communities have increased in the past few years and the Government has ignored and sometimes even patronised these, it was not expected of it to move towards setting up a virtual vigilante force. The pilot project is to be implemented in Jammu and Kashmir and Tripura, and then extended to other States. This will have dangerous consequences for citizens, as it will curtail their rights and will jeopardise freedom of society. It is illegal as it violates the basic tenets of the Constitution which guarantee freedom of speech and privacy to every individual.

These volunteers will act like secret police service agents reporting to the Government and its machinery about any post or comment which they dislike or disapprove of. Where we are moving? It's really a matter of great concern. A time will come when these volunteers will dictate terms to the common man and will assume the role of courts. They will pronounce judgments on social media and will lynch anybody they feel like without any fear. We are building a "Taliban" State.

Shovanlal Chakraborty | Kolkata

### FUEL PRICE RISE WILL HIT POOR FARMERS

Sir—In March 2020, international oil prices were raised due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Government is not taking immediate steps to reduce taxes on oil or petroleum. The retail petrol and diesel rates are governed by international prices. India is 85 per cent dependent on oil imports to meet its needs. Of course, it is well known that Central and State taxes account for about 60 per cent of retail prices. But the Union Budget included petrol and diesel among those products,

## TMC is shaken to the core



are making all-out efforts to weaken the TMC when State Assembly elections are round the corner. These will likely prove a grave setback to the TMC and will diminish its prospects of making to the power corridors in one of the most politically sensitive States.

The BJP, which enjoys power at the Centre, knows that winning the battle of West Bengal is easier said than done. However, if the old guard and most trusted lieutenants of Chief Minister Banerjee are leaving the party's fold at such a crucial time, it indicates that something is not well internally. The fault lines are now apparent. Not to mention, these leaders are disgruntled by the party leadership and the alleged dictatorial manner of Didi who is the party supremo.

These defections will also be a setback to the BJP's image in the long run as the saffron party is already infamous for creating rifts and fanning defections in opposite camps.

Yash Pal Raihan | Jalandhar

on which a new agricultural structure and development cess has been imposed.

Fuel prices are increasing time to time in Pakistan and Nepal but in India, relatively high rates will trouble the oil consumers or end users. By increasing the rates of petrol and diesel, the Central and State Governments will generate more revenue from taxation. But this will only enrage the common people as the prices of commodities would increase. The oil expenditure of a farmer who operates various agricultural apparatus and machines like diesel pumps, generators and so on, will increase but the income will not rise proportionately. Hence the Centre and the State Governments should reconsider relaxing the prices keeping in mind the interests of marginal farmers and common oil consumers.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

### DON'T IMPOSE MORALITY ON CHILDREN

Sir—Parents must stop telling their children that the attraction they feel towards

the opposite gender is merely infatuation and love has nothing to do with it. By doing so they are suffocating their children, demoralising their spirit and also doubting their sense of judgment. Most of the parents do it because they think that in this way they would prevent the young minds from getting distracted. They are unaware of the fact that by imposing sanctions and unnecessary high moral principles on their children, they are actually making them weak from within.

Gradually and slowly, such children will stop discussing their problems with their parents. The distance between them will increase which will have adverse consequences for the family. Adolescents who have reached the age of puberty need to be convinced that their love is real and that if they marry for love, then they will have a great deal of parental support.

Srinivas Reddy | Hyderabad

## SOUNDBITE

I request village panchayat representatives to identify and make a list of all unused Government land in their respective areas. We can restore and renovate them.

GOA CM —Pramad Savant

The overriding priorities of 2021 are to defeat the pandemic, accelerate the country's economic recovery, implement economic reforms and fight corruption.

South African President —Cyril Ramaphosa

I'm truly overwhelmed with the love that I'm receiving from the people here in the Northeast. I have met all those who have been kind enough to come to our sets to wish me luck.

Actor —Ajayshann Khurrana

It is disappointing not to get 100 but I have been working hard on my batting. There will be other opportunities for me to get that score.

Cricketer —Joshua Da Silva

The reign of suppression and terror in Kashmir is the unvarnished and unpalatable truth that Government of India wants to hide from the rest of the country.

Former J&K CM —Mehbooba Mufti

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## FIRST COLUMN

### UNDERSTANDING ENERGY CONCERNS

A grasp of the methods of transition in the past, from one energy era to another, is important



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Each social grouping has its mythology. The sense in which the phrase social groupings is being used in this text refers to human aggregations popularly clubbed as a category, such as "the rich", "the poor", "the professional", "the sailor" and so on. The rich have a sub-category that is derisively referred to. This sub-category is called "the nouveau riche," which is supposed to be loud in its display of recently-acquired wealth. Whether as a characteristic this is true or not has never been empirically tested, however it is believed to be true. Similarly, many professional groups such as engineers, doctors, et al look down upon history as a discipline. A professional historian is neither taken seriously nor referred to with the mellowness which any "serious" professional would have. So be it!

Applying this yardstick of traits to the profession of energy specialists, the same kind of syndrome can be found. Unexplained professional myopia prevents many of them from recognising that the need for green energy is not a first energy shift that has ever touched the human civilisation. Energy shifts are as old as humanity. When the physical energy of human beings was used to break down aggregations of natural material, such as branches or boulders, the substitution of physical human energy by power of draft animal energy was a major energy revolution. For any kind of traction or movement being substituted with the use of animal energy, there was an equally big revolution.



Ostensibly human beings took a long time to recognise that they need not walk to move from one point to another but they could instead ride an animal. This too was nearly as big a revolution as any. Lions remained untameable, elephants lost on speed what they gained on bulk. The horse was the clear winner and its popularity became so much that horse power became the unit of measurement and even today the strength of an engine is explained in terms of how many horse powers it represents. The message is simple. Each source of energy was a process which had its era of dominance. The shift from one era to another was as fundamental, drastic and dramatic as the shift one talks of today for an aspirational or needed change from fossil fuel to green energy.

Be that as it may, any such shift needed a change in technology. Other collateral followed in the process of evolution: Size of the circle (often referred to as the wheel) and the concomitant size of the case which would contain the machinery (called the equipment). This meant change in the service industry and indeed the full gamut of ancillary skills. Hence, to understand green energy and the era in which many front-edge communities are locked in today, in a module of learning, is a complicated process. In the prevailing dominant social culture of "fast food", few have the time to pause and consider the nature of the problem.

There isn't any serious dissertation available on how long any era lasted before it gave way to the next era of energy and usage. To recognise and change this framework of reference to a more holistic one is the need of the hour. The present obsession with one form of green energy or another, be it solar, wind, hydro, oceanic or biomass is proving good almost only for talking shop and the industry. There is a clear need to get our perspective right on the significance of power, per se. Energy is the underpinning of human civilisation. Its characterisation determines the periods of history. Understanding the methods of transition in the past, from one energy era to another, will help us to find solutions to the current energy concerns better.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

# Need for affordable housing and microfinance for all



MOIN ZAZI

### While India continues to record improvement in dealing with poverty, homelessness has elicited a poor response from our policymakers

Among the many challenges that need urgent attention, more so after the COVID-19 pandemic invaded our lives, is housing. This vital segment needs a scientific and creative intervention to make it a sustainable proposition. Lack of proper housing is one of the reasons, apart from loss of jobs, that led to the mass migration of labourers from cities to the villages, during the initial days of the countrywide lockdown. Hence, expanding access to affordable housing is essential not just for equitable development but also for social stability.

Looking at the gravity of the issue, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech announced the extension of the tax holiday on affordable housing projects for one more year. The Government has done this to ensure affordable housing for migrant workers. The affordable rental housing projects are part of the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)*.

While we continue to record improvement in dealing with poverty, homelessness has elicited a poor response from our policymakers. Consequently, slums constitute 17 per cent of urban households in India and in Mumbai they make up 42 per cent of the households. These slum clusters lack necessary amenities like private toilets and potable water. A high population density and a weak public healthcare system mean more susceptibility to COVID-19 and other diseases and epidemics. Necessary precautions like social distancing to stay safe of the Coronavirus cannot be practised under such deplorable living conditions that prevail in slums and *jhuggi jhopri* clusters.

Human health and well-being depends on a range of interconnected social, economic and physical factors that impact the environment in which we live and sustain ourselves. The key to good housing is to ensure that residents have access to transportation, affordable healthcare, jobs, education as well as other essential services. A decent habitat and shelter can contribute in not just individual or societal well-being but also have the potential to catalyse overall economic growth. It is, thus, critical to recognise housing investment as a basic, fundamental building block of economic activity.

Housing is not a standalone issue and is closely intertwined with other factors and lack of sustainable housing is often the cause of a slew of health and developmental problems. Poor ventilation and the inability to maintain basic hygiene are major causes of poor health. Fragile building structures undermine safety and increase vulnerability to disaster. Lack of lighting and space limits the ability of children to study. Inadequate privacy and lack of sanitation contribute to a host of diseases, hence perpetuating poverty.

For many people in the developing world, the land on which they live is their only asset. If that property is not recognised as legally theirs, they lose out on several social benefits. Land ownership is often the bedrock of other development interventions. Owning land boosts nutrition, educational outcomes and gender equality. The converse is equally true. Where land security is absent or weak — when men and women do not have recognised legal rights to their land and can thus be easily displaced — all other development efforts



MANY LOW-INCOME VILLAGERS HAVE OWNED THEIR LAND FOR GENERATIONS BUT LACK FORMAL OWNERSHIP DOCUMENTS. HENCE, THEY DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO FORMAL FINANCIAL SERVICES. ONCE THEIR INHABITED LAND GETS FORMALLY TITLED, THEY COULD OBTAIN ACCESS TO SEVERAL PUBLIC BENEFITS, INCLUDING LOANS

The writer is a well-known development professional. The views expressed are personal.



go in vain and conflict arises.

Many who live in slums have little or no control over the ownership of the property they live upon. The lack of official land titles is a major impediment to the acquisition of housing finance. People do not have documentary proof of being owners of the land on which they live and are, therefore, legally insecure.

Many low-income villagers have owned their land for generations but lack formal ownership documents. Hence, they do not have access to formal financial services. Once their inhabited land gets formally titled, they could obtain access to several public benefits, including loans.

Traditional housing finance has not been able to offer much help to people in the low-income group. But a range of financial institutions are applying good microfinance practices, thus promoting housing. The increased provision of housing microfinance has resulted in safe and healthy housing conditions for millions. Successful housing microfinance providers have married the core principles of micro-credit — peer-based borrower selection and repayment enforcement, close follow-up on repayment and so on — with the technical expertise required to investigate land ownership and other classical housing finance principles.

This model has been highly successful wherever Governments are offering long-term tenancies

and shared-ownership housing. But the sector is still in need of more sustainable business models to get legitimacy in mainstream finance.

Housing micro-finance can include a range of financial services that support improving or upgrading housing such as home repair and expansions, additional cooking space, water and sanitation services, energy efficiency upgrades, the purchase of inhabitable land or permanent structures and the construction of new housing. The demand for housing micro-finance is high. The clients are already channelising a good portion of micro-enterprise loans for home improvement; micro-entrepreneurs also use their homes as productive assets for generating income. A home can be a place to store inventory, produce goods and run a business. A home is also a personal asset that usually appreciates in value over time. Home improvement, thus, not only enhances living conditions but is also an investment.

The Government also needs to use creative approaches for making rental housing a safe option for house owners. Its share in overall housing has been steadily declining. There is a need for replacing current rent control laws with a modern tenancy law, which would give full freedom to tenants and owners to negotiate the rent and the length of the lease.

Rules with respect to eviction also need to be reformed to restore

the balance between the rights of tenants and the owners.

We need a differently structured and more professional market rental sector. A model Rent Act is needed to promote rental housing. There should be mutual agreement between the landlord and the tenant for a stipulated lease period prior to which the tenant can't be evicted and after the expiry of the lease period, the tenant will not be permitted to continue in the housing unit.

However, rent control laws give tenants so much security that landlords worry that they may not regain possession of their property at the end of the lease period. People often leave their properties vacant until they get a tenant they are comfortable with.

It is time the Government puts rental housing to use. Its share in overall housing has been steadily declining. There is a need for replacing current rent control laws with a modern tenancy law, which would give full freedom to tenants and owners to negotiate the rent and the length of the lease.

Policymakers, financial institutions and housing experts also need to evaluate their current policies, cultures and ways of working. With a thoughtful approach, they can be better prepared to tackle this humongous problem. The Government will have to change course and shift away from the legacy mindset before the problem gets out of hand.

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT

NOT JUST DINESH TRIVEDI, WHOEVER WANTS TO DO HONEST WORK CANNOT STAY IN THE TMC. IF HE WANTS TO JOIN THE BJP, WE WILL WELCOME HIM. —BJP NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY

KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA



I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO THE BJP AND ITS SENIOR LEADERS. I WAS TOLD THEY HAVE SAID THAT I AM WELCOME. BUT LET ME SETTLE DOWN FIRST.

—FORMER TMC MP

DINESH TRIVEDI

# China in a tizzy to prevent 'feminisation' of male adolescents

This will eventually be resolved, as these things usually are, by the magic of generational turnover. The young will outlive the old and become the majority

I seemed innocent enough at the start: Just a surge in the number of boys coming to school with notes from doctors saying they were excused from playing contact sports. But pretty soon high schools all over China were having trouble finding enough willing young men to make up a football team. It was around the same time that attendance at the compulsory classes in Marxist-Leninist Xi Jinping Thought crashed. Even when boys started talking about their feelings and trying to look like K-Pop stars, people tried to laugh it all off and dubbed them "little flesh meats." But some far-sighted people understood that the nation's soul was at stake here.



GWYNNE DYER

Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work'. The views expressed are personal.

Consultative Conference's National Committee and chairman of Harbin Electric Corporation, was warning that many of China's young males had become "weak, timid and self-abasing." From not playing football to not wanting to be an "army hero" is a short, slippery slope. This "feminisation", Si harrumphed, "would inevitably endanger the survival and development of the Chinese nation unless effectively managed." And even as he spoke, limp-wristed young men with flowers in their hair were spotted lolling about in the street outside.

Just as Oscar Wilde heralded the fall of the British empire and hippie "peace and love" caused the US to lose the Vietnam War and start its long decline, so too, young Chinese men wearing make-up...Stop! Are you sure

that the Party wants you to go down this particular rhetorical oak? Well, okay, maybe not exactly those examples. But what would the veterans of the Long March say about these effeminate young gily-men? You can't turn them into proper soldiers. China will be easy meat for the first manly country that comes along. Harrumph!

China has a very big bureaucracy, so it takes a while for an issue to come to the top of the pile but by early this year it had arrived. It's not clear if President-for-Life Xi Jinping took a personal interest in the issue but his enthusiasm for football as a symbol of national strength and manliness is well-known, so the policy-makers knew they were on a safe track.

The Education Ministry took the lead, with the pub-



lication of a policy document last week entitled, 'Proposal to Prevent the Feminisation of Male Adolescents'. No, really, I swear I'm not making this up. Check it out online.

The document claims that China needs to hire more male teachers to serve as role models (at present four out of five teachers in urban

areas are women) and "vigorously develop" sports like football to "cultivate the students' masculinity."

The official Chinese news agency Xinhua instantly took up the cause, condemning "androgynous" young men as "slender but weak as willows," and there was a suspiciously instant chorus of support on social media for the notion that traditional forms of masculinity are the foundation of national military strength.

It probably sounds fresh to an adult generation of Chinese who don't even know their own country's real history. To people elsewhere, it sounds like a bunch of early 20th Century Englishmen in wing collars declaring that "the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." (No, it wasn't. It was won when Blücher's Prussian

army joined the battle in the afternoon after a forced march.)

It sounds like a bunch of late imperial claptrap, because that's what it is. Playing football sometimes makes you better at playing football. It does not make you better at dominating foreigners or fighting wars — and why do you want to do that anyway? It's, therefore, pleasing to report that the response in Chinese official and social media was far from unanimously enthusiastic.

"Is feminisation now a derogatory term?" one Weibo user asked and received over 200,000 likes, and the *People's Daily*, no less, published an opinion piece arguing that diversity and tolerance should be encouraged among feminine and masculine men alike. There is probably no

country on Earth where the generational divergence of opinions, especially among the male half, is greater than it is in China. From an almost entirely hierarchical society as late as the 1980s (Confucianism reinforced by the 'democratic centralism' of Communism) to a younger generation that is egalitarian and gender-fluid (at least in the big cities) is one hell of a leap.

It will eventually be resolved, as these things usually are, by the magic of generational turnover. The young will outlive the old and become the majority. And here is the authentic voice of the young, summed up in a single tweet: "There are 70 million more men than women in this country. No country in the world has such a deformed sex ratio. Isn't that masculine enough?"









# PLAY YOUR MIND

Positive mental health helps athletes handle the pressure and boosts their performance on ground. AMRUTA KARKHANIS DESHMUKH shares how



Sports players are considered as fit individuals who showcase their strength, endurance and flexibility to flex their bodies through tough circumstances and pull through their sport performance. They train day in and out to have command over their body and techniques. Every sport has their own demands and likewise a training schedule is devised by their coaches and followed by players and their parents for optimal performance. Long ago it was identified that despite best body and technique, something was stopping the players to achieve their best. On deeper investigation it was found that mind

had a role to play in performance which was often not understood. With time, coaches, parents and players recognised this gap and started understanding the need for mental training.

Despite increased awareness, the taboo of visiting a mental health professional acts as a huge barrier to adopt a positive and progressive change. Over years sport psychology (area of specialisation that uses psychological interventions in sports set up) has found its space and parents, coaches and players are reaching out to professionals for performance enhancement.

Winning is still the biggest moti-

vator for everyone involved in sports. Even after having an emphasis on participation and excellence, achieving success and avoiding failures takes centre stage for one and all. Whether one is playing an individual sport or a team sport, chief coach to subordinate coaches, sport science experts along with player's parents make a crucial part of the team which together influences the course of action for long.

Management of sports players involves binding the entire team

strongly and keeping them on the same page. In this competitive world, increased exposure to international competitive events, advances in support from corporate and government sectors has led to increased performance. With time, sports has moved from mere joy, sense of satisfaction to pride and professionalism. The demand to perform is so strong that it comes with the tag of "Success at any cost." But do we really need success at the cost of our mental peace?

Mental health when disturbed

affects one's ability to recognise the self-potential and gets bogged down by stress. Talent wasted due to lack of professional help at right time can never stand the spirit of sports. Hence, it becomes essential to learn the mind-body connection and mental toughness to become resilient in testing moments of matches.

It's scientifically proven that exercise promotes positive mental health but sometimes this observation doesn't hold true. With increasing competition, competitive stress, pressure of expectations, financial crisis, logistic issues and infrastructural concerns, the challenges to perform good are not just vested in talent but in things beyond one's control too.

Anxiety, depression, personality disorder, mood disorders, panic, PTSD, eating disorders as well as more serious mental health issues are coming to surface in population as young as age 10. The peak years of sport performance and the onset of multiple mental health issues coincide and thus, this fact of understanding the underlying issues which need attention are simply side-lined. While the mind of a player is most important, even the mind-set of their coaches and the parents are equally important. It is essential to create a holistic approach in bringing a change in their perspectives towards winning and success. Lack of time, resources, myths that it is only for elite players has been wiped-out; the need of the hour is mental health training for all. (The writer is a sports psychologist.)



## WEBBED



**BEHIND HER EYES (SEASON 1)**  
A single mother enters a world of twisted mind games when she begins an affair with her psychiatrist boss while secretly befriending his mysterious wife. Starring Simona Brown, Eve Hewson and Tom Bateman, the TV drama releases on February 17 on Netflix.



**I CARE A LOT (2021)**  
A court-appointed legal guardian defrauds her older clients and traps them under her care. But her latest mark comes with some unexpected baggage. Starring Rosamund Pike, Peter Dinklage and Ezra Gonzalez, the film releases on February 19 on Netflix.



**PELÉ (2021)**  
Against the backdrop of a turbulent era in Brazil, this documentary captures Pelé's extraordinary path from breakthrough talent to national hero. It releases on February 23 on Netflix.

Arjun Kapoor and Ranveer Singh's on-screen bromance in the film *Gunday* was a hit as audiences really loved their camaraderie. Past the seventh anniversary of the film's release, Arjun shares his love for the role and will always be one of his favourite films.

What did you love about the film that made you sign it instantly?

At the time I was starting my career, I was hardly six months old in the business and Adi sir (Aditya Chopra) offered me a film which was a two-hero ensemble, big commercial set-up. When I met Ali (Abbas Zafar), I loved his energy and excitement towards treating it like a larger-than-life adventure. It was like a throwback and a tribute to the 70's & 80's cinema that I grew up watching. The 'Mukul Anand, Subhash Ghai space of cinema' and at the same time a film about brotherhood and gangsters. When you are a young actor starting out, these are all trappings that you love to play around doing in mainstream cinema. You want to establish yourself at the beginning. You want to do mainstream stuff with a sense of heightened reality and that's what *Gunday* was all about. I got really excited about doing something so front footed and mainstream.

Your bromance with Ranveer in the film was an instant hit. Tell us what made the bonhomie so special.

I think it was the off-camera love and respect we had for each other because we realised we have too much in common. In fact we are born just ten days apart from each other. It was much simpler for us to bond than we realised. And when you are starting out, you are not thinking about your career and rivalries. You are just trying to make the best film possible and have the most fun. Ranveer and I also knew each other before the film so it made it a little simpler to break the ice on set. Credit to Ali for writing a film that allowed us to be best friends. He was a big factor for bringing me and Ranveer closer. It just happened, it was just the flow. It's like chalk and cheese where even



## Larger than life

Past the seventh anniversary of *Gunday*, actor ARJUN KAPOOR shares his love for the role and how his on-screen bromance with RANVEER SINGH instantly became a hit

though we are poles apart, we still manage to fit together. It's like sugar and spice, they are opposites but both have gotten me and it was cool, unique and exciting. You usually feel that you need to work a lot, before you get that kind of scale but here I was immediately, in the third film, within the first six/eight months of my career.

What do you think was the film's USP?

I think the camaraderie between Ranveer and me and the big star cast coming together, was special. After a long time, there was a two-hero film and the youth loved the music. I know for a fact that the music and trailer made all the difference.

landing on a coal train and much more. I think the presentation was way bigger than any third film could have gotten me and it was cool, unique and exciting. You usually feel that you need to work a lot, before you get that kind of scale but here I was immediately, in the third film, within the first six/eight months of my career.

What do you think was the film's USP?

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Here are five common myths around organic skincare products

Today consumers have become more aware and conscious of harmful chemicals hidden in their skincare products. They are skeptical of using skincare that wear the claim of being "organic" and "all natural", often questioning if these claims are just marketing gimmicks. Dr. Jagvir Singh, Founder and President, Refresh Botanicals lists five common misconceptions about organic skincare that will make you rethink your regimen.

**MYTH 1: Using DIY masks is same as using organic products**

People believe that whipping up a yogurt and honey smoothie in your blender and using it as a face mask will benefit their skin as much as an organic face mask. While we're all up for a DIY face treatment once in a while, the ingredients you find in your kitchen can't really compare to the active ingredients found in organic skincare products. These special ingredients are usually extracted at the molecular level leaving behind the most active and potent part for your skin care.

**MYTH 2: Organic products are ineffective**

Many people are afraid of change and stick to a product that they are familiar with and have used for years. Unfortunately, many drugstore products have been diluted, watered down, and filled with an abundance of chemical preservatives to extend the lifespan. This means that while the product may offer quick results, you shouldn't hold your breath waiting to see any real long-term benefits for the health of your skin.

Organic products, on the

## TREND TOOL



other hand, are jam-packed with vital nutrients, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals at high concentrations that truly feeds your skin. You'll instantly get that radiant, hydrated and clear skin.

**MYTH 3: Organic products need preservatives to last longer**

Highly organic products often require premium packaging that are equipped with airless pumps. This prevents the highly organic plant material from oxidising, thus spoiling. When looking for organic skincare, look for airless pumps — meaning that the product is being pumped through literally being pushed out of the container.

**MYTH 4: Eating healthy is enough for great skin**

There is no argument with the benefits of eating clean, antioxidant-rich foods and drinking tons of water. However,

a healthy diet alone is not necessarily enough for great skin. While everything you eat does have an impact on your skin, food cannot cleanse away impurities and environmental toxins the way a good face wash can, or provide a protective barrier on the skin the way a moisturiser can. For truly beautiful skin, be sure to eat healthy, exercise regularly and practice safe, organic skincare. Organic skincare products should accompany a healthy lifestyle for a more youthful and fresher complexion.

**MYTH 5: All "Natural Types" of skincare are created equal**

There is a thin line between organic and natural products. Note that we use the word natural here, and not organic. While many products may claim to be "all-natural" on their labels, it doesn't mean that their ingredients are in fact "organic." Natural products often contain natural

ingredients but may contain pesticides and other harmful chemicals.

For a skin care brand to be able to wear the claim of "organic," ingredient suppliers have to undergo a rigorous process where they are monitored for many years to ensure that their farming methods are free of pesticides, herbicides and chemicals. Additionally, skin care brands must ensure that their manufacturers follow stringent practices to ensure there is no cross contamination of organic and inorganic materials.

In today's time awareness about chemical-laden products is gaining momentum, which is highlighting the importance of natural organic skincare products. This increased awareness is making more people to switch to organic products. While more people are making the transition, more become mindful about the use of chemicals in regular everyday products and are adapting to the natural organic skincare regime.

## TRENDBLAZER



### AJAY BEGINS SHOOT FOR MAIDAAN

AJAY DEVGN began shooting for the final schedule of his forthcoming sports film *Maidaan* on Valentine's Day in Mumbai. The film is slated for a Dussehra release this year. The film is inspired by the true story of Indian football coach Syed Abdul Rahim, who coached and managed the Indian national team from 1950 till his death in 1963, and is considered by many as the man who changed the face of modern Indian football. Major portions of the film, helmed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma, have been shot across Lucknow, Kolkata and Mumbai.

### fairtalk

TANVI AZMI



'At home, I tend to create a lot of drama. So, my daughter says that I am dramatic about everything. I tell her that is because of my profession. I feel as an actor, you play various characters. You leave a part of yourself in every character, and a bit of every character stays back in you. So you are really not the person that you are claiming to be.'

### dailytalk

GULSHAN DEVAIAH



'Every time there has been an adversity, my life seems to fall in place rather than fall apart. From failing exams, getting fired to heartbreaks, major sickness and serious injuries, my life has only fallen in place after every such event. I'm not exactly a super positive about everything kind of person but if it can happen to me, it can happen to you too.'

### JANNEY PRAISES HER CO-STARS

Actress ALLISON JANNEY enjoyed working with Mila Kunis, Regina Hall and Awkwafina in the film *Breaking News In Yuba County*, and has praises to shower on each of them.

"The script really grabbed me from the start. It was incredibly exciting, dark, funny, and violent — a great mix," said Janney.





