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A BIG CAUSE FOR WORRY

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## CAPITAL SIEGE

Tractor rally turns violent, protesters storm Red Fort; 1 dies as tractor turns turtle, many hurt; 86 cops injured; Sanyukt Kisan Morcha blames antisocial elements

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The farmers' tractor march turned violent as protesters broke barricades and violated the agreement on the routes of the rally, creating unprecedented scenes of anarchy in the national Capital as they fought with police, overturned vehicles and delivered a national insult by hoisting a religious flag at Red Fort, a privilege reserved for India's tricolour.

From Rajpath to Red Fort, the day unfolded in scenes of contrasts. One that Indians have seen for seven decades and the other that seared itself into collective memory with its imagery of protesters demanding a repeal of the three farm laws storming the Mughal era monument, the centrepiece of

India's Independence Day celebrations.

While there were no exact estimates of how many farmers were hurt in clashes, Delhi Police officials said 86 police personnel have been admitted to Delhi's LNJ Hospital and one of them is critical.

A protester died after his tractor overturned near ITO. "The farmers began tractor rally before scheduled time, they also resorted to violence and vandalism. We followed all conditions as promised and did our due diligence but the protest led to extensive damage to public property," Delhi Police PRO Eish Singhal said.

After appeals from leaders of farmers' unions, some of the farmers started returning to the border but others stayed put at

ITO Chowk became the main flashpoint where several police personnel and protesters sustained injuries. Thousands of protesters, who even started their parade before the allotted time from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders, deviated from the routes assigned to them by the Police.

"The struggle between the police and farmers continued throughout the day until late evening. Most of the incidents were reported from Mukarba Chowk, Gazipur, A-Point ITO, Seemapuri, Nangloi T-Point, Tikri Border and Red Fort. 86 policemen so far have reported injured and several public and private properties have been damaged in this act of vandalism by the rioting mob," said police in a statement on

Tuesday late evening.

Police have registered seven FIRs, three in Dwarka district, three in East district and one in Shahdara district. The Special Cell of Delhi Police will investigate the incident.

Following the clashes, the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which had agreed with the Delhi Police to hold a peaceful tractor rally on Republic Day said some antisocial elements infiltrated their parade and indulged in violence.

"We dissociate ourselves from all such elements that have violated our discipline. We appeal to everyone to desist from any such acts. We are trying to get a full picture of all the events with regard to the several parades that were planned today and will share a full

statement soon," the SKM statement stated.

The day began after the farmers from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders started their parade two hours before the allotted time, chanting "rang de basanti" and "jai jawan jai kisan" crossing the city on tractors, bikes, horses and even cranes for their proposed parade.

However, soon some groups of farmers deviated from the route, broke barricades and clashed with police. At ITO crossing, the police tried to stop the protesters but they turned violent and damaged police buses with their tractors, prompting the force to use lathicharge and tear gas shells against them.

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## India celebrates R-Day



National Security Guard (NSG) commandoes participate in a parade at Rajpath during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI

## Rioters in farmers' garb tried to reach India Gate

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

While the country celebrated 72nd Republic Day, the national Capital resembled a war zone as protesters masquerading as farmers, took over highly sensitive Central Delhi, East Delhi, West Delhi and Outer Delhi.

There was mayhem on the city roads, as protesting farmers drove their tractors as tanks to bulldoze their way and reach ITO, when the Republic Day Parade was going on. Farmers broke all the promises they had made to the Delhi Police.

It all started with farmers owing allegiance to Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait broke through the police barricades at Ghazipur border and moved towards Akshardham. The Delhi Police personnel tried to prevent them from digressing the given routes to them but they were not willing to listen.

As tempers rose, protesters riding tractors, cars and bikes, breached the police barricades below Akshardham flyover and started moving towards the



Farmers shout slogans as they march to Delhi breaking police barricades during Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on Tuesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

metro station. The Delhi Police was outnumbered as belligerent protesters tried to run over police personnel on duty.

Hundreds of tractors and vehicles reached Vikas Marg and moved menacingly towards ITO crossing. The Delhi Police men and officials

ran to prevent them from moving towards India Gate, where parade was still going on.

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### A TIMELINE

- 7 am: Tikri border:** Farmers break barricades, enter Delhi
- 8.30 am: Singhu border:** Barricades broken by farmers as they enter Delhi
- 9.30 am: Ghazipur border:** Farmers enter Delhi
- 10 am:** Farmers clash with Delhi Police near Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar, tear gas shelled lobbed on protesters
- 10.30 am:** Farmers clash with police near Akshardham, damage vehicles parked on road
- 11 am:** Police fire tear gas shells and resort to mild lathicharge. Some farmers armed with swords clash with police
- The Farmer Ganatantra Rally was scheduled for 12 to 5 pm.**
- 12 pm:** Protesters clash with police near Mukarba Chowk, reach ITO and damage vehicles and DTC buses
- Farmers chase police with their tractors, damage several DTC buses near ITO as they are prevented from moving towards the Red Fort
- Hundreds of farmers riding tractors, bikes and cars reach Red Fort portico and enter its premises and hoist the farmer union flags and saffron pennant with a Sikh religious symbol on the first rampart of the iconic 17th century monument



A protester hangs on to a pole holding a Sikh religious flag at the historic Red Fort monument in New Delhi on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## Morning clashes at Singhu, Tikri said what's in store

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Protesting farmers, including women, dancing on dhols and chanting slogans, began their tractor rally from Singhu and Tikri borders. As scores of tractors entered the city border, the locals showered petals on cavalades.

The groups of protesting farmers camping at Singhu, Tikri broke police barricades on Tuesday morning to force their way into the city, much ahead of the time they were granted permission.

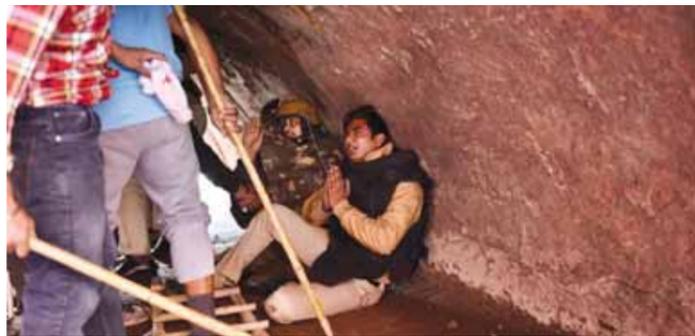
Farmers also marched on foot in large numbers holding flags of different farmer unions and raising slogans Rang De Basanti. Some were seen riding motorcycles and horses. People also perched atop their tractors and sang revolutionary songs. Locals were also seen distrib-

uting food and water bottles to the protesting farmers who were part of the rally.

The group of protesters from Tikri border protest site,

however, tried to deviate from the pre-agreed route to enter Delhi and rammed their tractors into barricades.

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Protesting farmers corner two policemen at Red Fort in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

## MHA orders paramilitary troops to maintain law & order situation in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jolted by the massive intelligence failure that allowed

thousands of farmers to storm the national Capital, the Centre on Tuesday decided to deploy additional paramilitary troops in Delhi to restore peace and maintain law and order.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and attended by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava and senior Intelligence Bureau officials. Additional paramilitary troops will be brought in for deployment in sensitive places in Delhi, a Home Ministry official said.

The way the farmers led their tractor rally in the national Capital and virtually seized the Red Fort has left the security experts stunned.

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## Most Opp parties condemn violence, but rap farm laws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Tuesday condemned the violence in the wake of clashes between police and protesting farmers after thousands of farmers stormed the national Capital riding their tractors.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said violence is not the solution to any problem. "Violence is not the solution to any problem. Irrespective of who gets hurt, it's the country which will suffer. Take back the anti-agricultural law for the sake of the country," Rahul Gandhi tweeted. Rahul and his party have been continuously backing the protest by various farmers' union over the controversial farm laws.

With a large number of protesting farmers from Punjab, Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh appealed for peace and said the country is

with farmers.

"The farm laws are completely wrong as they are against federalism since agriculture is a State subject under Schedule 7 of the Constitution. Be peaceful and the country is with you," Amarinder Singh said in his message posted through social media.

Shiv Sena leader and a Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "It is saddening that people are defending the sacrifice that we witnessed at Red Fort, dear apologists there is only one flag and that is the Indian Flag that should fly high from the ramparts of our historic monument however strong a cause for protest one might have."

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury however attacked the Delhi Police for "excess" and said, "using tear gas and lathicharge on kisan is unacceptable."

Continued on Page 5

## Covid wake-up call: Govt likely to double health budget

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of coronavirus pandemic, the Government is likely to double the health spending in the next fiscal year with an aim to raise expenditure in the sector to 4 per cent of gross domestic output in the coming four years, sources in the Union Health Ministry have said.

In the forthcoming Budget, health spending is likely to be raised to ₹1.2-1.3 trillion in the fiscal year starting April 1, from the current year's projected spending of ₹626 billion,

the sources said, adding the new healthcare plan is likely to be unveiled on February 1 when the Budget is presented.

The country's spending on healthcare has been a meagre 1.3 per cent of GDP, much less than the neighbouring nations like Bangladesh and BRICS countries.

Experts in the sector too feel that healthcare should be accorded 'national priority' status and Covid-19 should be treated as a wake-up call. They feel that going forward in health sector shall be significantly measured by sanitation,

hygiene and preventive healthcare.

Dr Alok Roy, Chair, FICCI Health Services Committee and Chairman, Medica Group of Hospitals, said "Expectations are running much higher this time (from the Budget). The year that's ending has been a year of pandemic disrupting lives and livelihoods and causing economic turmoil. From being one of the fastest-growing economies, we are still battling with the pandemic gloom. In the 2021-22 Budget, prioritisation of the healthcare sector should be of utmost impor-

tant."

DS Negi, CEO of Delhi-based Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute & Research Centre (RGCIRC) echoed similar views saying, "In the wake of the pandemic, our expectations from the Budget 2021 centre around higher allocation towards healthcare and policies for incentivising a robust healthcare infrastructure."

He called for higher allocation for preventive healthcare so as to meet the rising challenge of lifestyle illnesses. "Ayushman Bharat is no doubt a highly positive step

towards attaining the objective of universal healthcare; however, more budgets need to be apportioned for its continued success," he added.

Saumyajit Roy, founder of Emoha Elder Care felt it was high time for the Government to address the needs and concerns of India's highly vulnerable population. He cited the latest reports that point out "the share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from around 7.5 per cent in 2001 to almost 12.5 per cent by 2026, and surpass 19.5 per

cent by 2050."

Continued on Page 5

## WHO warns of risk of continued transmission over fewer Covid jobs

New Delhi: The WHO on Monday warned of the risk of continued transmission of the novel coronavirus even after large-scale vaccinations in the foreseeable future as the coverage is not likely to reach a point where it can stop transmission.

## IMF projects impressive 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The IMF on Tuesday projected an impressive 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021, making the country the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth this year amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

The International Monetary Fund's growth projections for India in its latest World Economic Outlook

Update released on Tuesday reflected a strong rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In its latest update, the IMF projected a 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021. This makes India the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth in 2021, it said.

Detailed report on P9

# Bengal Left-Cong rally against kisan 'assault'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Left and the Congress on Tuesday took out tractor and foot rallies in West Bengal protesting alleged "police atrocities" on the agitating farmers in Delhi.

While the Congress held a number of road blockades, the Left parties took out long marches in Kolkata, Burdwan and other places.

"The way the police lathi-charged and tear-gassed the agitating farmers at the instance of the Central Government and Home Minister Amit Shah is to be condemned in strongest possible words... we are protesting this attack on the farmers and demanding immediate rollback of the three draconian anti-farm laws," Congress Lok Sabha leader

**While the Congress held a number of road blockades, the Left parties took out long marches in Kolkata, Burdwan and other places**

and Pradesh Congress chief Adhir Chowdhury said.

Elsewhere the peasants' front of the CPI(M) and other Left parties held rallies with tractors, motorcycles, autorickshaws across all the 23 districts, demanding withdrawal of the anti-farm laws. Long rallies were taken out in East Burdwan, Hooghly, Murshidabad and East Midnapore districts.

In Kolkata CPI(M) polit-

buro members including Left Front chairman Biman Bose and party state secretary Surjya Kanta Mishra on Tuesday led a huge road show. Members of the Sikh community too took part in the rally.

CPI(M) Peasants' front leader Amal Halder, said, "More than 600 tractors and two thousand motorcycles took part in the rally that passed through Burdwan town," adding the BJP and the TMC will be rejected by the farmers throughout the country.

"The Central Government has been suppressing the farmers in the interest of the big corporate houses... but this cannot go on for eternity... the farmers have today proved that Dilli door nahin hai (Delhi is not far away) by hoisting their flags on the Red Fort."

# FARM PROTEST VIOLENCE Pawar holds Centre responsible for Delhi violence

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Holding the Centre squarely responsible for the violence that broke out during the farmers' tractor rally in Delhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said here on Tuesday the Narendra Modi Government should have intervened, held talks and persuaded the farmers from going ahead with the rally in the national Capital.

Talking to media persons here, Pawar charged that the Centre had failed to maintain law and order in the national Capital. "Nobody will support whatever happened in Delhi today, but we cannot ignore the reason behind it," he said.

"The Government had known that 25,000 to 30,000 tractors would enter Delhi. That being the case, the Centre should have intervened, held talks with the farmers and prevailed upon them against going ahead with their rally. But, the

Government chose not to intervene," Pawar said.

Pawar said that the farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh had for the past 50 to 60 days been agitating peacefully and in disciplined manner. "The Government did not take the farmers seriously and resolve their issues. The farmers' patience ran out and they took out tractors' rally in Delhi. The Government has failed its responsibility of maintaining law and order in the national capital," the NCP chief said.

Dubbing the Modi government as "arrogant" and "insensitive" to the farmers' concerns, Pawar said: "If an agitation takes a violent turn because of the use of power, then the consequences of such a movement will be very serious. We have seen what happened in Punjab in the past. The Modi Government should not commit the sin of turning



Government into turning Punjab into an unpeaceful state once again."

"When the Government rushed through the three farm bills without sending them to the joint select committee of parliament, I had a feeling that it might trigger a sharp reaction from the farmers. The farmers from Punjab took a firm stand against the three farm law and have been agitating peacefully for the past 50 to 60 days. To maintain patience for such a long time is indeed unprece-

dent. But, the Government has consistently refused to budge from its stand. That's why the talks have failed so far," Pawar said.

In a related development, Shiv Sena MP and spokesperson Sanjay Raut slammed the Modi government for its failure to maintain law and order in the national capital. "What was the government doing when the farmers entered the Red Fort? The whole world has watched something unprecedented. Who will we hold accountable for the anarchy witnessed in the national capital? Whose resignation will we demand? Sonia Gandhi, Mamta Banerjee, Uddhav Thackeray or Sharad Pawar? Is baat par tyaga pater... rajinama banta hain saheb (This definitely calls for resignation)."

Maharashtra Congress president and Revenue Minister Balasahb Thorat said it was the sheer "arrogance" of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government which resulted in the farmers' agitation taking a violent turn and leading to the death of a farmer in Delhi.

"As the head of the country's government, the PM did not acknowledge this historic struggle by the farmers. Though what happened was inappropriate and cannot be supported, the government ignored the demands of the country's 'anna-daata' (food-providers) for so long," Thorat said.

All India Kisan Sabha state Vice-President Uday Narkar charged that the violence that erupted during the farmers' tractor rally was the handiwork of some 'agent provocateurs' in the violence and said that the Delhi Police must probe how this happened given that the violence broke out after one section of the tractor rally had passed off peacefully.

# UP CM not yogi as he doesn't understand farmers' pain: Akhilesh

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was not a real yogi who "understands others' pain".

"When we see actions of the CM, we don't feel that he is a real yogi. If you read teachings of Lord Krishna, Guru Nanak ji and others you understand the real definition of a yogi. The real yogi is one who understands others' pain as his own (Jo dusron ke dukh ko apna samjhe). Does he understand the pain of youths, farmers and others. He is not a yogi," Yadav said.

He was addressing a programme at his home town Saifai in Etawah district on Republic Day, where party workers gathered at the venue on tractors to show their support to farmers agitating against the Centre's new agri laws.

Yadav said due to the coronavirus pandemic everyone had covered their mouths and nose with masks, but he could



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav takes part in a tractor rally on Republic Day in support of farmers agitation against farm laws, at Saifai in Etawah on Tuesday

not understand from which "disease" the BJP was suffering as it has closed its "eyes and ears" and could not hear the woes of farmers and the common man.

He said that the three contentious agri laws were passed

without a majority in the House. Yadav said when the Bills were presented in the Rajya Sabha, SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav had said "this is not a bill but a death warrant of farmers".

"They are giving every-

thing in the hands of a few people. The real India lies in our villages. When we demand withdrawal of the farm laws, they (BJP) say we are political people and agitating for coming to power. I congratulate farmers of Punjab and Haryana

due to whom farmers of the entire country are now aware of their position," he said.

The protesting farmers are being termed as "terrorists" and "Khalistani", Yadav said and asked the BJP why its members were eating food grains produced by farmers if they were terrorists.

He accused the BJP of spreading "hatred and lies" and not discussing their work.

"They talk of religion and caste and create hatred by spreading lies when we ask them to discuss works done by them," he said. Like in the US, where politics of "hatred and lies" got defeated, in India too such politics will taste defeat, Yadav said, adding that the BJP does politics by "threatening" the opposition.

"Whenever the Government is surrounded by opposition, they resort to lighting diyas and ringing bells to avoid discussion on core issues," he said.

"In 2017, SP was defeated by spreading lies through mobile. Now, this time everyone is aware," he said.

# Never in country's history farmers had to protest so long for their demands: Gehlot

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Continuing his attack against the Centre over the new farm laws, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday said it has never happened in the history of the country that the farmers had to protest so long to get their demands fulfilled.

He said the central government has insulted the farmers and claimed that the process adopted while enacting the farm laws was faulty since the beginning. In Parliament too, the opposition was not heard," he said.

"The basic reason for this situation is distrust," he added.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting against the Centre's new agriculture laws, demanding that they be repealed. When asked if the central government was afraid of Congress getting the credit for the agitation, Gehlot said neither the farmers' unions nor the party want to politicise the movement.

not change its decisions.

"Changing or withdrawing decisions given public sentiments shows a big heart," the chief minister said.

Gehlot said there are reports of deaths of about 150 people during the ongoing farmers' agitation but the government was not bothered.

"Demands can be made by any section of the society and there can be a way out. But the process adopted while enacting the farm laws was faulty since the beginning. In Parliament too, the opposition was not heard," he said.

"The basic reason for this situation is distrust," he added.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting against the Centre's new agriculture laws, demanding that they be repealed. When asked if the central government was afraid of Congress getting the credit for the agitation, Gehlot said neither the farmers' unions nor the party want to politicise the movement.

"It is the duty of the opposition parties to show unity," he added. Gehlot claimed that a situation has arisen in the country where all institutions like judiciary, CBI, income tax and enforcement directorate are under pressure.

"Conspiracies are made to topple elected governments. It happened in Goa, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh but they failed in Rajasthan as the public was united," he said.

The Chief Minister said disagreements should be respected in a democracy.

He also targeted the opposition BJP in Rajasthan and claimed that he has never seen such factionalism in the party before. Targeting BJP state president Satish Poonia, leader of opposition Gulabchand Kataria and deputy leader of opposition Rajendra Rathore, Gehlot alleged that their statements are the part of a process to establish themselves in the party.

# WHO official warns of continued coronavirus transmission after inoculation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A senior World Health Organization (WHO) official has warned of the risk of continued transmission of the novel coronavirus even after large-scale vaccinations in the foreseeable future.

Michael Ryan, executive director of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, told a virtual Press conference on Monday that he didn't believe the world should start setting elimination or eradication of this virus as the bar for success.

"That is not the bar for success. The bar for success is reducing the capacity of this virus to kill, to put people in the hospital, to destroy our economic and social lives," Ryan said according to a news agency.

Asked whether Covid-19 will become endemic, he emphasised that "for the foreseeable future, the coverage of vaccines will not reach a point where it will stop transmission. So we're likely to have continued transmission".

Noting that countries should probably not expect to get rid of the virus by 2021, Ryan reminded that so far in human history "we've only ever eradicated one disease on this planet: smallpox".

"We have to reach a point where we're in control of the virus," he added.

Experts have called for the continued use of strict control measures to be adopted to reduce the evolution and spread of new Covid-19 variants, both existing — such as the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants — as well as those yet to come.

The experts from the University of East Anglia (UEA), Earlham Institute in the UK and University of Minnesota in the US warn

**The experts from the University of East Anglia (UEA), Earlham Institute in the UK and University of Minnesota in the US warn that stronger action now is the best way to mitigate more serious outcomes from such virulent strains later**

that stronger action now is the best way to mitigate more serious outcomes from such virulent strains later.

In an editorial published in the journal Virulence, the scientists said "continuing public health efforts to encourage vaccination as well as continued use of proper personal protective equipment (PPE), such as proper masking and maintaining safe social interactions, is of utmost importance."

"Humanity is faced with a new reality. The faster we adapt, the better our long term prospects. We must stop the evolution and spread of more virulent virus strains now," said the experts, including Professors Cock van Oosterhout, Neil Hall, and Hinh Ly.

"We, therefore, support public health policies with strict control measures in order to protect our public health system, our individual wellbeing, and our future," they said.

The researchers highlighted the roll-out of economic stimulus packages and related activities in many countries appear to have fuelled the rate of person-to-person transmission.

# 157 fresh Covid cases reported in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 157 fresh cases of Covid-19 reported in Delhi on Tuesday while the daily positivity rate stayed at 0.24 per cent.

The total number of people infected with life-threatening Covid-19 has reached 6,34,229. With this, the death toll rose to 10,820 with seven new fatalities reported on Tuesday, according to the health bulletin issued by the Delhi Government.

The number of cases and the single-day fatality count now indicate a marked improvement in the situation since the third wave of the pandemic had hit the city in November.

The highest single-day spike of 8,593 cases till date was reported on November 11. The situation in Delhi has improved

in the last several days, with a low number of cases and reduction in death count.

Besides fall in active cases, the count of home isolation cases have also registered a sustained fall, dropping to below 703-mark, indicating improvement in the Covid-19 situation, as per the bulletin.

These 157 new cases came out of the 64973 tests conducted the previous day, including 36236 RT-PCR tests and 28737 rapid antigen tests.

According to the bulletin issued by the Delhi health department, out of the total number of 8949 beds in Covid hospitals, 8203 are vacant.

It said that 102 beds in Covid care centres are occupied by persons under quarantine, including travellers who have returned by the Vande Bharat Mission and bubble flights.

# Stalin reboots campaign style, to visit all 234 Assembly constituencies

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

DMK President M K Stalin has "rebooted" his election campaign with an offer that the voters may find irresistible to refuse. The coming days will see the DMK chief visiting all the 234 Assembly constituencies in the State as part of his campaign for the upcoming elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly and would collect petitions from the voters.

"The first thing I will do after my swearing in as Chief Minister would be to attend to these petitions and resolve the woes in the first 100 days of my tenure," said Stalin about the revised strategy. The DMK president would begin his campaign "Ungal Thogidhiyal Stalin" (Stalin in your constituency) on Friday. Sources close to the DMK leader said the new strategy was chalked out by Prasanth Kishore, the

specialist in election campaigns, who has been hired by Stalin to ensure DMK's victory.

The first hint about the change in campaign style was mooted by Stalin himself in a recent meeting with the district secretaries of the party which he had convened to discuss the possibilities arising out of the rebellion by his elder brother M K Alagiri. The first phase of Stalin's campaign titled Let Us Join Together evoked only a lukewarm response from the electorate.

Alagiri who was expelled from the DMK in 2013 by Stalin and his associates had recently declared that the former's aides would not allow the party to win in the upcoming election. "Stalin has been portrayed as the future chief minister and he would remain in that position throughout his life," Alagiri, who was the for-

mer party organizing secretary for South Tamil Nadu, had declared early this month. The Madurai strong man who is addressed as Anjaneyan by the DMK cadre, is turning 71 on January 30 and is expected to declare his future course of action on that day.

Meanwhile, the three day whirlwind tour by former Congress president Rahul Gandhi MP came as a shot in the arm for the party as well as the electorate in south west Tamil Nadu, according to CD Meyyappan, AICC member who accompanied the Nehru-Gandhi scion throughout the tour.

"The Congress leader toured the three districts of Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode to take stock of the mood of the electorate. He interacted with entrepreneurs representing the MSME sector, farmers, women and youth

**The first phase of Stalin's campaign titled Let Us Join Together evoked only a lukewarm response from the electorate**

and the response was really encouraging," Meyyappan told The Pioneer after seeing his leader off from Madurai airport on Monday.

He said Rahul Gandhi had unscheduled meetings with many villagers in these districts as well as in parts of South Dindigul district. "He gave a patient hearing to all the villagers and promised them to return soon," said Meyyappan. The Tamil Nadu Congress leader also said it was a morale boosting tour.

Vijayadharini MLA, who played a key role in mobilising women for the meetings said the notion that south west Tamil Nadu was a stronghold of the AIADMK has been broken by Rahul Gandhi. "I could see enthusiasm faced everywhere and the turn out was beyond our expectation," said Vijayadharini, two time MLA from Vilavancode.

# JAI SHRI RAM SLOGAN TMC for censure motion in Assembly

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In an apparent bid to embarrass the BJP which allegedly instigated its men to raise Jai Shri Ram slogan in a Government event to celebrate the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose the ruling Trinamool Congress has decided to bring a censure motion in the State Assembly.

The motion is likely to be moved on Thursday, party sources said.

A major controversy had erupted on January 23 when BJP supporters present in the event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata

Banerjee at the iconic Victoria Memorial shouted Jai Shri Ram slogans prompting an irked Chief Minister to refuse to deliver a speech "in protest" against the incident.

"There can be political differences, but you can't insult the Chief Minister after inviting her to a government programme," Bengal Minister Partha Chatterjee said adding "Jai Shri Ram slogan has been politicized by the BJP which is why we protest against its use in Government programmes which in any case has to be secular."

He said, the TMC was "thinking of bringing a censure motion against this in the upcoming session."

**MEANWHILE, REBELLION CONTINUED IN THE RULING OUTFIT AS YET ANOTHER LEGISLATOR ON TUESDAY RESIGNING ALL HIS PARTY POSTS ALLEGING NON-COOPERATION TO CARRY OUT HIS WORKS**

Meanwhile, rebellion continued in the ruling outfit as yet another legislator on Tuesday resigning all his party posts alleging non-cooperation to carry out his works.

Ghoshal who represents Uttar Para constituency in Hooghly district said he was resigning as the district core

committee member and party spokesperson as "there is no point remaining on these posts because of the kind of non-cooperation you face every day."

When asked as to whether he brought things to the notice of Chief Minister and party supremo Mamata Banerjee he said, "I have already brought these to her notice... she also gave directions... but it seems that the lesser leaders do not pay heed to what she says."

The leader who earlier was conspicuously absent from the Chief Minister's meeting at Purusa in Hooghly, alleged "there are people who are trying to defeat me and it seems

that the party leadership is in the know of this... but they are telling me that I will be offered a ticket from different place... I want to work from my place and my constituency which voted me."

On whether he would continue as a party MLA, Ghoshal said he would add "the people need my service... whatever I can I will do for them."

When asked as to whether he would quit his party he said "not as of now."

When asked whether he would join the BJP he said, "he had not received any offer from that party and so he had not taken any decision about that," adding that his future was "bright."

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# MSMEs, Ayodhya redevelopment among UP Govt's poll planks

RAKESH K SINGH ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government is preparing the ground to fight the next Assembly polls early next year on the plank of the MSME sector, construction of four expressways, one each connecting the underdeveloped Purvanchal and Bundelkhand regions, and also developing industrial/defence corridors along them besides the mega redevelopment of the temple town of Ayodhya.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme of the State Government has yielded in exports worth ₹1.16 lakh crore in just one year and the expressways in the eastern region which will serve as engines of growth even as the developmental changes on the ground in Ayodhya is visible.

Elaborating on the employment generation capacity of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, the CM said while initiatives and incentives are afoot to attract big investments in the industrial sectors, the Government is simultaneously focussing on the MSME Sector.

"Every opportunity is being used to promote the ODOP

Scheme as it has given a new boom to the MSME Sector and helped in generating more employment. Support from the administration has delivered a very good result. Exports of products under the ODOP Scheme has led to exports worth ₹1.16 lakh crore in just one year is a testimony of the success of the Scheme," the CM said while interacting with journalists at his residence here on Sunday, a day after celebration of UP Diwas.

"While support is being given at every level to the MSME sector and linking the ODOP with various schemes of the State and Centre, even a little hand holding acts as a catalyst to the ODOP as people are ready to work for such initiatives and take them forward," he said.

The ODOP Scheme launched in 2018 involves identification of at least one special product or enterprise endemic to one of the 75 districts in the State and incentivising the production to leverage exports of the handicrafts. In districts where there was no product of speciality, certain products were linked to those districts to bring them under the ambit of the ODOP, he said.

"To attract big investments, the Government has to grant big incentives but the bigger level of incentives do not help in

generating employment on a large scale. In the case of local products, a small incentive contributes in creating large scale employment and promoting Atma Nirbharta," he said, adding bigger investments have been attracted successfully but the local products are also being promoted on a big scale.

Unlike the western UP and Awadh (South Central region), the Purvanchal and Bundelkhand regions were left behind on the development map, he said and added the work is underway on the construction of three expressways and another one is being worked out. Industrial corridors along these express ways will help serve these areas as growth engines, he said.

"The age old dispute over Ayodhya, as you all know, has ended completely and not only Ayodhya but entire Uttar Pradesh is relaying the message of peace and amity by linking with the new system of development," he said.

The works on various infrastructure projects like the expressways, industrial and defence corridors besides the support to the MSME sector and improved law and order have all contributed in a creating constructive approach about the state's potential to attract investments, he added.

## Int'l airport, ring road: Ayodhya set for facelift

### ALSO IN PLAN: TWO BUS TERMINALS, DOUBLING OF RAILWAY LINE

RAKESH K SINGH ■ AYODHYA

The temple town of Ayodhya is set for a major facelift with approvals in the pipeline for an international airport, a ring road, two bus terminals, doubling of the railway line and a new township in 1,200 acres for institutional establishments like holiday inns and cultural trusts, among others.

Ayodhya District Magistrate Anuj Kumar Jha said a lot of proposals for development of the temple city are under consideration of the administration. Works have already begun in certain projects and are on the threshold of completion.

"Our idea is to complete the developmental projects for improving the access and facilitation of the pilgrims before the completion of the Ram Mandir. The projects include construction of a multi-level parking, a ring road, widening of the approach roads, flyover over the railway line and doubling of the railway tracks among others. A bus depot with the capacity of parking



150 buses is ready for inauguration any time."

The daily footfall of the pilgrims has already doubled from the earlier 5,000 to 6,000 to 10,000-12,000. When the Ram Mandir is complete, the footfall of pilgrims is expected to be 1-1.5 lakh pilgrims and infrastructure is being planned accordingly, he said.

Sixty to seventy per cent of the land for the international airport in Ayodhya has been identified and consent of the land holders have been obtained. As much as 1,200 acres of land for development

### The National Highways Authority of India is in the final stages of finalising the alignment of the Ring Road for the temple town

widened, four-laning of the highway from Rai Bareilly connecting the town has been approved besides the construction of the highway from Varanasi. Construction of the highway from Prayagraj is under consideration of the government.

On a question on the pace of the construction of the temple, he said a riverine patch has been found beneath the foundation of the proposed temple complex and complete excavation of 10-12 metres on the surface is being undertaken on the side where the sub-strata has been identified to be that of the Sarayu river. Top engineers are on the job on the site and a decision will be taken to prepare the base with either a mix of lime or concrete. Upon this

bed of lime or concrete mix, a layer of stones will be laid to support the 1,200 pillars of the new temple, he said, adding 40 per cent of the work or about one floor of the temple has been readied at workshops, both onsite and offsite. Once the pillars are laid, the stone structures will be enjoined to create the structure, he said.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is in the final stages of finalising the alignment of the Ring Road for the temple town.

Widening of the Panch Kosi and 14-Kosi Parikrama and development of pilgrims parks are also part of the redevelopment projects as over 25 lakh pilgrims traverse these routes on certain festive occasions like Ram Navami, he said.

"Ten years down the line, there will be a complete makeover of the temple town and it will not only emerge as a major attraction of pilgrimage from around the globe but will also serve as an engine of growth in the region," he added.

## COVID-19 Less than 10,000 cases reported first time in 8 months



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time in nearly eight months, India reported less than 10,000 coronavirus cases. With 9,102 fresh cases of coronavirus infections in the last 24 hours, the overall tally now stands at 1,06,76,838.

Also, this is the lowest daily tally in the last 237 days, said the Union Health Ministry.

Consequently, the number of active coronavirus cases in the country has dropped to 1,77,266 on Tuesday, constituting just over 1.60 per cent of the total infection count, the Ministry said.

In a statement, it said active cases declined by 6,916 in a 24-hour period.

"Active cases per million population is lowest in the world (128). Germany, Russia, Brazil, Italy, the UK and the USA have much higher cases per million population," it said.

The ministry said India has crossed a crucial milestone in its fight against the global pandemic as the daily new

cases have touched a new low, dropping below 10,000 on Tuesday. It said that 83.68 per cent of the new recovered cases were observed to be concentrated in 9 States/UTs with Kerala reporting the maximum number of single day recoveries at 5,606. Maharashtra follows with 3,080 new recoveries. Karnataka recorded another 1,036 daily recoveries.

"With a sustained, proactive and calibrated strategy of the Centre based on 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach, the daily new cases have seen a consistent decline. This has ensured a steady fall in daily fatalities too. The country has recorded less than 120 (117) fatalities in the last 24 hours after more than 8 months (8 months 9 days)," it said.

The Ministry also said 20,23,809 beneficiaries have received coronavirus vaccine shots as on January 26 till 8 AM. "In the last 24 hours, 4,08,305 people were vaccinated across 7,764 sessions. 36,378 sessions have been conducted so far," it said.



Defence Research and Development Organisation tableau passes Rajpath during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi on Tuesday



President Ram Nath Kovind, First Lady Savita Kovind, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during At Home reception, on the occasion of 72nd Republic Day celebrations, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan



BSF Director General Rakesh Asthana offers sweets to soldiers during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations at the Attari-Wagha border, about 35 km from Amritsar

## India banks on fisherwomen to achieve seaweed production target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is banking on fisherwomen from across the country's several coastal States to help it not only achieve the eco-friendly seaweed production target of 11.5 lakh tonnes from the current levels of 2,500 tonnes in the next five years but also make presence felt in the growing global market.

"When fishermen are out in the ocean to catch fishes, their female folks can take up the seaweed vocation which has a huge market, domestic as well abroad. It is a profitable livelihood option for fisherwomen, who can earn a substantial income for the household with little effort," Fisheries Secretary

Rajiv Ranjan said recently here.

The idea is to make the coastal communities particularly women to become self-reliant through these eco-friendly business practice of macro algae which needs little investment and technology, he added.

He knows better. Globally, seaweed production is USD12-15 billion and is expected to grow to USD26 billion by 2026. Currently, China and Indonesia have 80 per cent of the market share.

"Even if India aims only for the low-hanging fruits in the sector, it can easily achieve the target itself. Currently, seaweed production in India is primarily confined to the Gulf of

Mannar and Palk Bay in Tamil Nadu," Ranjan said at a curtain raiser event here for an international webinar on entrepreneurship development on seaweed business to be held on January 28.

This can be achieved by using just 1 per cent of its 8,000-kilometre-long coastline, the official added.

The government has already setup a fund of around Rs 640 crore for boosting seaweed cultivation in the country, a part of the Rs 20,000-crore flagship scheme PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

Seaweed farming in India has minimum capital and technological requirements, Ranjan said adding that currently

around 25,000 people are involved in the vocation, the target is to increase it to 4 lakh persons.

The webinar, to be organised by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), together with Department of Fisheries, will dwell on how fisherwomen cooperatives can be created for encouraging seaweed cultivation at a large scale across several coastal States in the country, said NCDC's Managing Director, Sundep Kumar Nayak.

He said, if the available resources are harvested to its optimal level, it can provide employment to many women from the coastal communities in harvesting sector and an

equal number in post-harvest activities.

He also said that the webinar will be attended by the experts from verticals of the seaweed sector which is used in plethora of products whether it is pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, human food, animal feed, agriculture, production of bio-fuel, and wastewater management. They are often termed as the 'Medical Food of the 21st Century' due to their use in treatment of goitre, cancer, bone-replacement therapy and cardiovascular surgeries.

Indicating that seaweed is going to become way of farming soon in the coastal region which is highly vulnerable to climate change threats, Dr Ranjan had last week inspect-

ed seaweed cultivation in the coastal areas of Mandapam and Rameswaram island and held discussions with stakeholders particularly to industry and SHGs to formulate a plan of action for promotion of seaweed cultivation in the region.

In the last four months, the Fisheries Department has sanctioned a few seaweed projects in Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshdweep, Andaman while talks are on with Kerala. These are low hanging fruits, he said adding that a three-pronged strategy is being adopted at production level, industrial level and marketing level. Idea is to produce and market to industry, he added.

### CHINESE ATTACK IN GALWAN VALLEY

## Martyr Santosh Babu's father: He deserved Param Vir Chakra

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The father of late Colonel Santosh Babu on Monday said he was "not 100 per cent satisfied" with the Mahavir Chakra posthumously awarded to him for his acts of gallantry against the Chinese attack in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh in June 2020, and that he should have been honoured with the Param Vir Chakra.

"It is not that I am unhappy. But I am not 100 percent satisfied (with the award of Mahavir Chakra). There is scope for honouring him in a better way. But my opinion is that Santosh Babu should have been named for the highest military award Param Vir Chakra for the gallantry he displayed while discharging his duties," Babu's father B Upendra told PTI.



by his son had inspired many people, including those working in the defence forces.

Colonel Babu, the commanding officer of the 16 Bihar regiment, was among 20 Indian

soldiers who laid down their lives in the fierce hand-to-hand combat on June 15 last

year in the Galwan Valley, an incident that marked one of the most serious military conflicts between the two sides in decades.

Upendra said his son, overcoming the challenges posed by the climatic conditions of the area where he was posted, fought with Chinese troops.

My son and his men fought barehanded. He proved that India is superior and stronger than China by killing more enemy soldiers," he said. According to him, Col Babu's family did not get anything more than the departmental benefits that are usually given to the families of martyred soldiers, from the Centre.

The Telangana Government gave ₹5 crore ex-gratia to Santosh Babu's family, besides Group-I post to his wife and a residential plot.

## Bhawna Kanth becomes first female fighter pilot to be part of IAF's tableau

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Flight Lieutenant Bhawna Kanth became the first female fighter jet pilot to be part of the Indian Air Force's tableau during the Republic Day parade on Tuesday.

She was part of the IAF's tableau that featured scaled down models of the light combat aircraft, light combat helicopter, Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jet and Rohini radar.

Three other male pilots were standing along with her on the tableau. Kanth is one of the first three fighter pilots, others being Avani Chaturvedi and Mohana Singh, who were inducted into the IAF in June 2016. Flight Lieutenant Tanik Sharma led the IAF marching contingent comprising 96 airmen and four officers during the parade.



# India showcases military might on Rajpath

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The newly inducted Rafale fighter aircraft was the show-stopper as India displayed its military might and vibrant cultural heritage on Rajpath on the 72nd Republic Day on Tuesday, with the ceremonial event this year being drastically scaled down in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

India also displayed its key assets from the Army, including T-90 tanks and BrahMos missile system, BMP-II, two Pinaka multiple launch rocket system, two bridge laying tanks, electronic warfare equipment 'Samvijay' and one upgraded Schilka air defence weapon system, the last one being Captain Preeti Choudhary from 140 Air Defence Regiment (Self Propelled).

The Rafale fighter aircraft featured for the first time in the Republic Day flypast as it carried out the 'Vertical Charlie' in a fitting finale. Besides, it also flew as part of the 'Eklavya' formation with two Jaguar jets and two MiG-29 aircraft. A total of



Army tanks and other weapon systems being showcased during the 72nd Republic Day parade at Rajpath in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI

38 IAF aircraft participated in the flypast.

The ceremony began with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the nation in paying homage to the martyrs by laying a wreath at the National War Memorial. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, Army chief Gen M M

Naravane, Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh and IAF chief Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria were also present on the occasion.

The parade, commanded by Lt Gen Vijay Kumar Mishra, with Maj Gen Alok Kacker as the second-in-command, began with President Ram Nath Kovind taking the salute.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at people during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations at Rajpath in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI

The national flag was unfurled followed by the national anthem, synchronised with a 21-gun salute.

Another first at the ceremony was a 122-member marching-cum-band contingent of the Bangladesh armed forces taking part in the parade.

The Bangladeshi tri-services contingent was the first marching contingent to walk down the ceremonial boulevard. Lt Col Abu Md Shahnoor Shawon of the Bangladesh army, who spearheaded the parading contingent said, "It was an honour for us to be part of this august ceremony of

India, and that too in the 50th year of our Independence. And, India gave us the honour to lead the parade."

The Bangladeshi military band right behind the marching contingent played six tunes in all, including some of the iconic ones like war song "Chal Chal Chal" by poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, and "Shono Ekti Mujiborer".

Known otherwise to witness huge bustling crowds across many age groups, the annual ceremonial event at Rajpath was scaled down this time in view of the coronavirus pandemic, with spectators' size



Indian Air Force Rafale fighter jet flies past Rajpath on Tuesday PTI

drastically cut to 25,000 from about 1.25 lakh last year.

From members of contingents to spectators, everyone wore masks, the audience maintained the mandated distance while sitting, and standing spectators were not allowed. The marching contingents' route was also curtailed and they stopped at the National Stadium this year instead of following the regular route all the way to the Red Fort.

The size of the marching contingents was also reduced from regular 144 to 96 so that they could maintain social distancing, a senior official said.

Due to Covid-19 safety norms, gravity-defying stunts by motorcycle-borne men — a major attraction for the crowd at Republic Day celebrations on the Rajpath — were also missing this year.

Depicting the nation's rich cultural heritage, 17 tableaux from states and Union territories, and nine from different Union Ministries and paramilitary forces took part in the 72nd Republic Day celebrations. Six tableaux from the defence arm, including one each from the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Navy, were also part of the parade. Flt Lt

Bhawana Kanth, the first woman pilot of the IAF was part of its tableau, which depicted scaled down models of Light Combat Aircraft, Light Combat Helicopter, Su-30 MKI and Rohini radar.

The Navy's tableau displayed models of Indian naval ship (INS) Vikrant and naval operations that were conducted during the 1971 India-Pakistan war. India is currently celebrating the Swarnim Vijay Varsh — the Golden Jubilee year — commemorating the country's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh.

Young Union territory of Ladakh made its debut in the extravaganza on Rajpath with a beautiful tableau depicting the iconic Thikse Monastery and its rich cultural heritage.

The Union Territory of Ladakh was created in 2019 after the central government bifurcated the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Other states and Union territories which showcased the diversity of India included Gujarat, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Tripura, West Bengal, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Delhi.

## R-DAY DURING COVID

### Socially distanced contingents, less spectators instead of bustling crowd

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chairs neatly placed apart in a grid in enclosures, no standing spectators allowed, people wearing masks and pocket sanitizers kept handy. The Republic Day celebration at Rajpath this year, while upholding most traditions, was unusual due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Known otherwise to witness huge bustling crowds across many age groups, the annual ceremonial event at Rajpath has been scaled down this time in view of the coronavirus pandemic, with spectators' size drastically cut to 25,000 from about 1.25 lakh last year.

While the number of daily incidences has come down in the national capital in the last few weeks, the Covid-19 restrictions are still in place especially at public gatherings.

As per the advisory issued by authorities before the event, persons below 15 years of age were not allowed this time, and the number of enclosures were



Chair are kept at a mandatory distance as a precaution against the coronavirus at Rajpath for the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Tuesday AP

cut down from 38 to 19.

From members of contingents to spectators, everyone wore masks, the audience maintained the mandated distance while sitting and standing spectators were not allowed.

The marching contingents' route was also curtailed and they stopped at the National Stadium this year instead of following the regular route all the way to the Red Fort.

The size of the marching contingents was also reduced from regular 144 to 96 so that

they could maintain social distancing, a senior official said. Due to the Covid-19 safety norms, gravity-defying stunts by motorcycle-borne men — a major attraction for the crowd at Republic Day celebrations on the Rajpath — was also missing this year.

Members of the tableaux contingents from a total of 32 states and UTs, ministries and government departments had undergone multiple Covid-19 tests at a cultural camp at Delhi Cantonment, the last one being on January 22.

## Celebrations pass off peacefully in J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Republic day celebrations passed off peacefully amid tight security arrangements across Jammu & Kashmir on Tuesday. The internet services remained suspended in parts of Kashmir valley while markets wore a deserted look during the day.

According to official sources, "No untoward incident of violence was reported from anywhere in the region".

The main function was held in Jammu where Lt-Gov Manoj Sinha hoisted the National Flag and inspected the parade. In Srinagar, Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan, unfurled the Tricolor and took salute at the march-past during Republic Day celebration at SK stadium, Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, Advisor said that Jammu & Kashmir is marching fast



Lt Governor Manoj Sinha during Republic Day function at MA Stadium Pioneer photo

towards rapid growth and development and the Government of India is leaving no stone unturned to make the UT progressive and prosperous.

Before arriving at the venue, the Lieutenant Governor laid a wreath at Police Martyrs Memorial and Balidan Stambh. He paid homage to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the honour of the country. "We are

eternally indebted to our men in uniform for their supreme sacrifices towards ensuring integrity and sovereignty of India", said the Lt Governor.

In his maiden speech after unfurling the tricolor, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha declared that nefarious designs of the neighbouring country, a reference to Pakistan, will never be allowed to succeed in Jammu & Kashmir and maintained that security

agencies have effectively controlled the violence.

Sinha also lauded bravery of police and security personnel saying they are working day and night to create a conducive atmosphere for smooth day-to-day life and maintaining peaceful environment in Jammu & Kashmir.

Without naming Pakistan, the Lieutenant Governor issued a stern warning to the neighbouring country.

"We want to assure all citizens that the "political conspiracies and nefarious designs" of a neighbouring country will never be allowed to succeed in this land of great persons and warriors. Security agencies have effectively controlled violence and those who are trying to fulfil their political motives with the help of proxy war, are being given a befitting reply," he said.

Describing the year 2020 as an year of unprecedented

change in Jammu & Kashmir, Sinha said through a continuous process of change, the roots of progress have been planted in new Jammu & Kashmir.

"With the Constitution of India in one hand and tricolour in the other, all people of villages and towns, with dreams of progress in their eyes, have started building a new Jammu & Kashmir to fulfil their ambitions and those of the nation," he added.

Referring to successful conduct of the District Development Council (DDC) elections, the Lieutenant Governor assured all elected representatives that with their support, the Jammu & Kashmir administration will bring fruits of development to the last person in the queue.

He said the Government is determined to enable honourable return of Kashmir Pandits to the Valley.

## Most Opp...

From Page 1

"Why, after the Delhi Police and Samyukt Kisan Morcha agreement? Why is the Government provoking a confrontation. They must allow the peaceful, agreed tractor parade to continue," he said in a reaction prior to the hooliganism at Red Fort. Opposition parties, which tried to block the farm Bills in Parliament last September, had requested President Ram Nath Kovind not to sign on the Bills. The Bills, they had said, were passed in the Rajya Sabha in an undemocratic manner. The President, however, had given his assent to all three Bills. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) too condemned the violence seen in tractor rally protest and blamed the Centre for leading to such a crisis in the national Capital. "It is regrettable that the Central Government allowed the situation to deteriorate to such an extent. The movement has been peaceful for the last two months," said AAP in its message. Congress leader and former Union Minister Shashi Tharoor expressed concern over the death of a protesting farmer. "Saddened to learn about the death of a protester in police firing. Authorities must urge the police to observe restraint. Violence resolves nothing and resorting to it reduces the State to the level of its enemies. We must resolve this crisis through democratic means, not force," he said.

Rajya Sabha member Abhishek Singhvi said there is a sheer anarchy, utter lawlessness, and an absolute mess. Congress spokesperson Jaiver Shergill said the protest will weaken due to such acts. "This Government defines inefficiency, mismanagement, and transgression. The Government has taught the world how to turn a peaceful protest into a mobocracy," Singhvi tweeted.

"Peace is the strength of any protest and gets weakened when you need to bank upon violence - urge both sides (protesters & police) to remain calm, follow the dharma of democracy because when lives are lost and national property is damaged then it is loss of entire nation," said Shergill.

## Morning clashes at Singhu, Tikri said what's in...

From Page 1

The farmers wanted to move towards Delhi however, the see saw scene was witnessed during the day as protesters moved towards Peeragarhi and police pushed them back.

Meanwhile, groups of farmers' protesters from Singhu border on their tractors, on foot and horses breached barricades as tractors moved in prompting the police to fire tear gas at the protesters. Some of the farmers driving cranes removed the cement barricades as some protesters on horses breached them.

At Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar on GT Road,

the protesting farmers had to turn right but they kept on moving ahead. The police requested them to follow the route assigned but protesters pelted stones on security personnel. Some of the protesters moved their tractors into the prohibited route and were on course to the Ring Road as they took over both the carriage-ways of the GT Road.

The protesting unions have also announced a foot march to Parliament on February 1, when the annual Budget is being presented, to press for their demands, including a repeal of the three new agriculture laws.

Heavy security has been deployed in view of the "Kisan Gantantra Parade" that will move into Delhi from the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points.

## Rioters in farmers' garb tried to reach India Gate

From Page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Ram Nath Kovind and hosts of dignitaries including foreign diplomats and Union Ministers were present at the Rajpath. As the angry protesters tried to break-

through and march towards Red Fort, the Delhi Police and Paramilitary forces tried to prevent them from moving. It was here when protesters turned violent as they not only broke the road dividers, they tried to run over policemen. A woman constable was cornered and beaten by the protesters. She was however, rescued by her colleagues from being lynched. While all this was going on, tractor borne pro-

testers moved towards Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg where BJP national headquarters is situated. Meanwhile, hundreds of Sikh protesters had reached Red Fort and they climbed atop the ramparts and hoisted their religious flag. It took some time for the Delhi Police and Central forces to remove the religious flag from the pole.

Police had to deploy more forces to get the Red Fort

## Covid wake-up call...

From page 1

In our view, we think it is significant to view the Central Government Budget estimates of Rs 67,484 crore towards the health sector for the financial year of 2020-2021, in the context of the total spends of less than 0.05 per cent of the total health Budget on mental health-related initiatives.

Hence, the primary expectation from the Government is to give special focus to the elderly and addressing the pressing issues pertaining to their physical and mental wellbeing by creating a robust health infrastructure and making more investments in mental health programmes to support them in general.

Speaking on the expectations from Budget 2021,

premises vacated. While Central Delhi witnessed high voltage drama, protesters at Singu border were moving towards North Delhi via Mukarba Chowk where pitched battle was fought between the protesters and the police forces. Tractor borne protesters marched on the outer ring road and reached Red Fort via Old Delhi Railway station. Protesters were finally evicted from the Red Fort and

ITO by 6.30 pm. According to the Delhi Police officers, farmers have started reaching Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri border, where police presence has been further beefed up. Additional security personnel drawn from Paramilitary forces have been deployed to man security. Atmosphere is quite tense on all the borders as well equipped police personnel are standing guard.

Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson blamed authorities for the violence and said that police created barriers on their routes and misled the farmers in entering Delhi. "What has happened at Red Fort is unacceptable. We reject it. We are identifying who these people were, we will send them back. They don't represent us," said Tikait.

Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several Delhi border points, including Tikri, Singhu and Ghazipur, since November 28, demanding a complete repeal of three farm laws and a legal guarantee on minimum support price for their crops.

Following the violence, the entry

and exit gates of more than 10 metro stations in central and north Delhi were temporarily closed following the trouble. Later Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) also closed entry gates of Uttam Nagar East metro station. The internet services were also suspended at the protesting sites. On Tuesday evening farmers' unions called off the Kisan Republic Day Parade with immediate effect and appealed to all participants to immediately return back to their respective protest sites. The SKM announced the movement will continue peacefully and further steps will be discussed and decided soon. Meanwhile, Rakesh Tikait, Bharatiya

## Delhi CM salutes corona warriors, soldiers, farmers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal marked the occasion of the nation's 72nd Republic Day by unfurling the National Flag at his residence on Tuesday.

Addressing the people on Republic Day, Kejriwal saluted the contributions of the medical fraternity, soldiers, farmers, sanitation workers etc. Kejriwal said that despite such difficult circumstances, the entire nation has witnessed glimpses of bravery of such warriors, and nations' strong unity on different occasions.

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## MHA orders...

From Page 1

For better part of the day, the Centre seemed clueless. No Minister or official even came forward to issue a televised appeal to restrain the farmers. Only in the second half, the Home Ministry swung into action and Amit Shah held a series of meetings to find ways to defuse the situation.

Snapping internet connection at several flash points was one of the first measures announced by the Home Ministry. Beeping up security forces was the second such step. The exact number of additional troops was not known immediately, but officials suggested that it could be around 1,500 to 2,000 personnel (about 15 to 20 companies). Around 4,500 paramilitary personnel were already deployed for law and order duties before the Republic Day. Rapid Action Force personnel have also been repositioned in the national Capital and vigil has been intensified in view of the evolving

situation. Earlier in the day, the Home Ministry decided to temporarily suspend the internet in parts of Delhi like Singhu, Ghazipur, Tikri, Mukarba Chowk and Nangloi and their adjoining areas for 12 hours from Tuesday noon.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 7 of the Indian Telegraph Act 1855 and in the interest of maintaining public safety and averting public emergency, it is necessary and expedient to order the temporary suspension of internet services in the areas in Delhi from 12:00 hours to 23:59 hours on January 26," an order issued by the MHA said.

The Home Minister reviewed the situation after hundreds of protesting farmers on tractors bared through police barricades to enter central Delhi areas, including Red Fort and ITO. The Home Secretary and the Police Commissioner also expressed concern about the steps being taken by the police to maintain peace, another official said.

The Executive Engineer, Kamalpur Division, PWD(R&B), Dhalai Tripura invites e-tender against press NIT No. 18/EE/PWD (R&B)/KMP/DIV/2020-21 Date: 19-01-2021

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## R-Day SHAME

Are we a peace-loving country, the world's largest democracy, or are we Taliban-type warlords?

The morning of the 72nd Republic Day, which saw the sun finally peep through with some glow and warmth after dark and ominous clouds had prevented the sunshine from reaching us for days, was soon plunged into darkness of a different kind. Scenes of chaos and mayhem unfolded on the Capital's border when, mar- rying the spirit of the august day, the protesting farmers' tractor rally turned violent as the participants broke barricades, clashed with the Delhi Police, held the streets to ran- som and, the shame of it all, hoisted their flag atop the Red Fort after veering off the promised, designated route. The police later used batons to remove them from inside the fort. Outside, an army of tractors took over the Ramlila Maidan, the site where the farmers had originally planned their protest. "We came here to deliver a message to the Modi Government; our job is done. We will go back now," a farmer said at the Red Fort, adding: "We managed to reach the Red Fort even though they tried to stop us. We will not stop until we reach our goal — the repeal of the three farm laws." A farmer from Uttarakhand died in an "accident" during the protest at ITO and the Union Home Ministry ordered internet services shut in several areas of Delhi to prevent the spread of rumours, hearsay and misleading news, with Amit Shah taking stock of the situation after the tractor parade violence.



But why did the farmers' protest, which had largely been peaceful during the past two months while tens of thousands of them camped on Delhi's borders, suddenly shatter peace and the people's trust at large? If videos from the shameful incident at the Red Fort are to be believed, a "farmer" who had slithered up a pole to hoist the flag of his union, threw down the Tricolour and reached out instead for the banner of his outfit. Now if this was not an act of hatred and malice, and that too on Republic Day, what is? If anything, these acts of wanton destruction and running amok by the growers would only alienate them and shrink the number of their sympathisers. The farmers forced their way into the Capital much ahead of the promised hour, they deviated from the routes agreed upon, they went back on their word given to the police that they would remain disciplined and peaceful and to the Government to "celebrate" the day and its spirit; now who would dare to defend these "annadatas"? The sad and shameful memories of January 26, which was roughly a repeat version of the Capitol Hill incident of January 6, will continue to haunt Indian democracy for decades to come. It would only be apt for the police, other authorities and the Government to hunt down the last of the goons masquerading as farmers and bring them to book. Hopefully, it will also wash off some of the taint the "real farmers" have been dabbed with in the unfortunate incidents, though they still remain guilty of allowing the hoodlums to infiltrate their ranks and being taken for a ride.

### PICTALK



Residents wearing masks queue up at a popular food stall in Wuhan, China, on Tuesday

## Dangerous order

The Bombay HC's verdict may be against harsh punitive action but it's likely to embolden sexual predators

In a shocking verdict that will have far-reaching implications for women/child safety, their emotional well-being and the way sexual predators perceive and twist the law to their advantage, the Bombay High Court has ruled that there must be "skin-to-skin contact with sexual intent" for an act to be considered sexual assault. So, according to the verdict that was unbelievably delivered by a woman judge, "mere groping will not fall under the definition of sexual assault". This judgment will set a dangerous precedent for defining sexual assault in the courts, and most offenders will be safe in the knowledge that as there was no "skin-to-skin contact with sexual intent", they can get away with lighter punishment as it will not be deemed sexual assault. Instead, it will constitute the offence of outraging a woman's modesty under the IPC's Section 354, which carries a lighter punishment. This will be particularly detrimental in POCSO cases because minors will then be subjected to questions on whether the touch was over the clothes or under which, at the best of times, can be a traumatising question for a child who has already been subjected to sexual abuse. And the person being let off with light punishment just because it was not skin to skin, will leave the child feeling outraged and helpless. It is irrational to say that sexual assault does not take place with clothes on. Ask all the women/girls who get groped and molested at public places.



In terms of its offensive nature, absurdity and ability to infuriate, this observa- tion falls in the same category as victim-shaming and is downright sad as it comes from the gender which is the most common victim of such heinous assaults that have the capacity to leave the victim bruised, afraid and under-confident with major trust issues with the opposite gender. As it is, crimes against women saw a rise of 7.3 per cent in 2019 as compared to 2018. Even though experts feel that the order is an attempt to highlight the need for a second look at the way the law punishes sexual abusers, and is a verdict against harsh punitive action for sexual crimes, the fact remains that reforms cannot come at the cost of safety of the victims. Particularly for crimes that leave them scarred for life.

# Arunachal intrusions a big cause for worry

The Chinese troops have been intruding with impunity into India's territory across the undefined LAC and unrecognised McMahon Line



ASHOK K MEHTA

The ninth round of mil- itary commanders' dialogue last week — after an unusually long gap of nearly three months — confirmed the stale- mate in east Ladakh, though a new commander who has never served on the India front, Gen Zhang Xudong, was appointed last month replacing the hawkish Gen Zhao Zongqi. That tensions remain high was apparent from the wounding brawl last week between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Indian Army in Sikkim. The latest intrusion in Arunachal Pradesh's Subansiri district was exposed last week by TV channels, not revealed by the Government, causing a flutter in the Opposition's ranks but for the Narendra Modi Government it was water off the duck's back. China is salami slicing territory along the borders in Bhutan, Nepal and India with impunity. Its most brazen successes in land grab are in east Ladakh where the nine-month-long standoff has entered the winter freeze.

Chushul councillor Kinchon Stanzin told a newspaper on January 11 that China holds mil- itary positions on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), their tents and bunkers have crept closer to Chushul vil- lage and the Chinese have been nibbling territory since 2018. This is not the first Ladakhi com- plaint about China's creep tactics. The same paper reported on January 25 that the Chinese are using Indian roads for trespass into Ladakh. Last November, China established Pangda village two km inside Bhutan's border close to Doklam in Chumbi valley, breaching its sovereignty, but India, though bound by a treaty with Bhutan, chose to ignore it unlike confronting the PLA at Doklam in 2017. The latest five-km-deep infringement in Arunachal Pradesh — a full blown cluster of 120 houses with 2,000 people — went unchallenged for nearly a year. Even if in disputed territory, it is flagrant violation of the exist- ing protocols and should have been resisted by the Kolkata- based Eastern Command. But not a word was uttered until it was



detected by the US-based Planet Lab satellite imagery.

Former ally Shiv Sena has questioned the Centre on the latest intrusions in Arunachal and elsewhere, especially the land lost to China since the BJP Government came to power, and the plans to recover it. The Congress said it hopes the Government will not again give a clean chit to China. Surprisingly, the Government merely "took note of the con- struction along the border" and ramped up its infrastruc- ture development projects, adding that "the area is dispu- ted and under Chinese posses- sion since 1959". But it does not entitle China to alter the status quo, converting a disputed area into permanent settlement in violation of border protocols. It was vital and necessary for the Government to resist the year- long construction activity and take up the case with Beijing instead of its leaders stating uncharitably that the areas were gifted to China by Nehru. Why then has Home Minister Amit Shah pledged to retake Aksai Chin, which is under Chinese possession and was lost during Nehru's time? A parliamentary resolution requiring the Government to retake all land lost to China was displayed in Udhampur's Northern Command till the mid-eighties!



THERE ARE AROUND 24 DISPUTED AREAS ALONG THE LAC/McMAHON LINE OVER WHICH SURVEILLANCE AND MILITARY VIGIL HAS TO BE TIGHTENED. INTRUSIONS TOOK PLACE IN KARGIL WHEN PATROLLING OVER THE UNHELD AREAS CEASED

China has issued a strong rebuttal saying the construction of a village across the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh is beyond reproach because it had never recognised Arunachal, adding: "China's position on Zangnan (south Tibet) is clear. Our development and construction activities within our own territory are normal." *Global Times* has said the border has not yet been demarcated. The Indian Military Operations Directorate records show that China had attacked an Assam Rifles post in 1959 (Longju incident) at the intrusion site. Developing the border areas is part of Xi Jinping's plan to populate the disputed borders to legitimise claims to additional territory. Vast stretches of the LAC in Arunachal are inaccessible while they are within easy reach of China. Chief Minister Pema Khandu has been pushing for an 1100-km highway along the LAC with what he says is the India-Tibet border. This road, when built, will allow troops to switch quickly astride the LAC but it will be a geolog- ical challenge for the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). Besides the multiple intru- sions in east Ladakh under the Northern Command's watch, two intrusions in Eastern Command over the same peri- od are worrying. There are

around 24 contested/disputed areas along the McMahon Line/LAC over which surveil- lance and military vigil has to be tightened. Intrusions took place in Kargil when patrolling and aerial surveillance over the unheld areas ceased. The Chinese have been intruding across the undefined LAC and unrecognised McMahon Line. This coercion has to be coun- tered effectively.

Xi's aggressive land grab in disputed territory has become political football in India instead of it being addressed in strate- gic union. The Government has to stop blaming Nehru and the Congress for their myopic China policy. Instead, take the blame for creating more rhetoric than usable defence capacity to deter Xi's aggression. Let there be in the Budget Session what was disallowed in the Monsoon Session — an honest debate on Chinese perfidy instead of Rajnath Singh's strategic solilo- quy, "will not compromise ter- ritorial integrity" and "a befit- ting reply", without naming China after losing territory.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FARMERS OR GOONS?

Sir — It is shameful that the tractor rally by the farmers turned violent and police had to resort to lathicharge and the use of tear gas to control the unruly farmers. The incident has spoiled India's global image and is a blot on our democracy. The farmers who were largely peaceful during the last two months should have exercised some restraint.

Not to mention that this all happened when we were celebrating our 72nd Republic Day. Chaotic scenes were witnessed at ITO, where hundreds of protest- ers could be seen chasing police person- nel with sticks and ramming their tractors into the buses parked by the police. Farmers damaged public property. At the ITO, a bus was vandalised by the angry farmers. The farmers should have followed the Delhi Police's advice which had given permission to them to hold their tractor parade on select routes only after the official Republic Day parade on the Rajpath concluded. However, chaos ensued as the farmers were adamant on heading towards central Delhi. Such a situation was never witnessed since Independence. It is high time the Government and the farmers think in national interest rather than mak- ing this issue a war of prestige. The world is laughing at us.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### HAIL THE SUPREME COURT

Sir — The Supreme Court's ruling that it will not interfere in the decision of the Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission (APSEC) to conduct gram panchayat polls in February, came as a set- back to the Andhra Pradesh Government. Andhra Pradesh had sought the halting of polls due to the ongoing COVID-19 vac- cination drive.

Reluctance on the part of the State Government to conduct the panchayat polls shows that all is not well under its rule. The Ministers and MLAs associat- ed with the ruling party even resorted to using abusive words for the Election Commission officials. It all happened after the poll schedule was released by the

### Gimmicks will not do



The recent move by the Gujarat Government to rename the dragon fruit as 'Kamalam' is nothing more than a gimmick and will serve no real purpose. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has announced that the name dragon fruit is associated with China which necessitated the change of name after our national flower, the lotus. It is high time that India decisively acts against China for transgressing the International

Border and developing a full-fledged village with- in the boundaries of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Government has recently banned 59 Chinese apps in a sweeping move that may lead to further acrimony between both the nations. It is good to ban Chinese apps but we must also be ready to deal with any possible misadven- ture by its troops. India should devise a com- prehensive strategy to take on China which must include giving a body blow to the market of Chinese products in India and playing offensive rather than being defensive on the frontiers. India's territorial integrity cannot be compro- mised. The question remains if such stunts like renaming fruits are the answer, then we could merely give the Chinese village in Arunachal Pradesh an Indian name and solve the problem! The Government should take firm decisions rather than resorting to gimmicks like renam- ing a fruit or a vegetable.

Shovanlal Chakraborty | Kolkata

APSEC on January 11, a single-judge Bench of the High Court ruled in favour of the State Government, halting the elec- tion process. However, on January 21, the High Court set aside the stay order. After that, the bewildered Andhra Pradesh Government approached the Supreme Court. The Election Commission is a con- stitutional body and an insult of its offi- cials amounts to insulting the Constitution. The Supreme Court has taken the right decision and such deci- sions will be eye-openers for those who undermine the power and authority of constitutional bodies.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao | Hyderabad

### CONGRESS MUST WAKE UP

Sir — This refers to the article 'Wake up and smell the coffee' (January 26) by Kalyani Shankar. Frankly speaking, the grand old party having to its credit the lion's share in post-Independence govern- ance of the country notwithstanding, has for long been at the receiving end of its

internecine bickering. That led to a gradual loss of faith and the party suffer- ed in terms of losing one State after another in the elections held not-in-the- too-distant past. To rub it in, several Congress stalwarts, including both the disgruntled ones and those seeking greener pastures, also defected to the ruling regime.

It is time that the affairs of the grand old party are overseen by an elected and full-time president at the helm so as to put at bay further fragmentation of the Congress party. The sword of Damocles is hanging over the heads of its leaders, cadres, workers and office-bearers alike. In order to survive, the Congress needs to fall back on its grassroots policy with a view to reconnecting with common men and making them aware of the party's ideology.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

## SOUND BITE

The Centre's sev- eral political initia- tives to resolve the Naga issue could not be fructified in the last 24 years due to the unrealistic intransi- gence of some people.

Nagaland Governor — RN Ravi

A new chapter has been opened in our ties with our main partner, the US, and it will continue. Our relations will be at the level of Government-to-Government.

Afghan President — Ashraf Ghani

I've been research- ing and reading a lot about women in governance. It's been enlightening, fascinating and so insightful to understand the importance of women in leadership.

Bollywood actor — Priyanka Chopra

The entertainment level in T10 is even higher than T20 and it's a more compact game than T20, very short; the margin of error is a lot thinner.

West Indies' cricketer — Johnson Charles

If one looks around today, divisive forces are at work in the society to create chaos. They are trying to mislead the youth and the farmers.

Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

**FIRST COLUMN**

**BIG HOPES OF SMALL INVESTORS**

The pandemic has left people in a state of uncertainty. Hopes are now glued to the forthcoming Union Budget



HIMA BINDU KOTA

The COVID-19 pandemic left small investors in a state of uncertainty as there were major job and business losses, salary cuts and, above all, loss of lives and health. Although the steady rise of the stock markets this month gave some respite and hope to people, 2020 was mostly a tough year and hopes are now pinned on the forthcoming Union Budget on February 1. After an insipid annual financial statement last year, the nation is now looking to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to spread some cheer.

For common people, Income-Tax (I-T) relief is an important aspect. Although relief in I-T slabs would be a welcome move, it is highly unlikely this time as the Government is stretched to the limit due to the expenses it has incurred in fighting the virus and also due to the vaccination drive. It would be a great respite for small investors if the overall deductions under Section 80C could be increased from the current levels of ₹1.5 lakh to somewhere between ₹2.5-₹3 lakh. Senior citizens have been the worst affected by the contagion and to give some respite to senior citizens, tax relief could be increased from the current ₹3-₹5 lakh to merge with the I-T exemption limit of super senior citizens.

Further, the interest accrued on the Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS) is taxable. A full rebate on this interest could turn out to be a boon for the elderly. The possibility of increasing the exemption limit under Section 80TTB, that is, the interest on income from various deposits of senior citizens like savings bank accounts, fixed deposits and recurring deposit accounts, should be addressed, with limits increasing from the current levels of ₹50,000 to at least ₹1,00,000.



A lot of people, who lost their jobs during the last year, were from the lower income category, particularly women. The Government had extended the moratorium period for companies for filing Goods and Services Tax (GST) returns. If this facility could be extended to non-living entities like companies, similar measures should be extended to people, particularly women in the low income category. The I-T exemption limit can be increased marginally for women from ₹2.5 lakh to ₹3 lakh. Also, for women who fall in the income category of ₹3-₹10 lakh, a moratorium period can be extended till they find stability in their jobs, to pay taxes.

Newer saving schemes and bonds with unique features are also the need of the hour. Although the stock markets gave strong returns last year, not all micro investors can understand equity markets. Therefore, there is a need to deepen the debt markets in India to channelise long-term savings of micro investors in the bond market. There is a need to develop the Debt-Linked Savings Scheme (DLSS) similar to the Equity-Linked Savings Scheme (ELSS). DLSS can turn invest in debt instruments permissible under SEBI regulations. This Budget should also provide I-T deductions for investments in DLSS up to a limit of ₹1.5 lakh. This would encourage small investors, who are wary of equity markets, to participate in debt markets and take advantage of tax exemptions. The ELSS was introduced in 1992 to encourage equity investments in India. Similar efforts to boost debt markets will go a long way in deepening the bond markets in India. Infrastructure bonds should also be the flavour of this Budget to provide additional tax breaks to small investors. The introduction of newer saving schemes and bonds will have the twin advantages of providing small investors an avenue for saving while mobilising funds for the Government to direct into several development projects.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Arniy University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

**Democracy prevails but it can rot fast**

Thanks to technologies of the 21st century, the mind of a voter is hackable. And that has led to demagoguery entering the system through the back door, unnoticed



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

The shining city on the hill, Capitol Hill to be exact, fell on January 6. It was a sad day not only for America but also for many countries that borrowed the concept of democracy from it. A peaceful transfer of power is at the root of democracy and if an outgoing leader does not respect conventions, then it is time to ponder, is democracy at stake or was former US President Donald Trump's behaviour an aberration?

Aristotle thought of aristocracy, monarchy, and oligarchy as better forms of Government. They, over a period of time degenerate and democracy results. Political cycles come and go; it is your luck which one you witness. The moot question then, is the decay inevitable or avoidable? If yes, who checks this decay and how? What needs to be done so that people choose the right person and base their decision on merit and not on falsehood?

Across the world, on the Capitol Hill, in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal and the Raisina Hill, democracy is under attack like never before.

Modern democracy became the flavour of the day in the 20th century. Many nations that had nothing to do with it, prefixed or suffixed "republic" or "democratic" to join the club. So you have the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for instance. Many countries gave democracy a chance, battling on the collective wisdom of the people. But come the 21st century and that notion lies flat on its face. The collective wisdom got Vladimir Putin for Russia and Trump for America, with the danger of his return looming large in 2024. Democracy is finding the going tough even in small countries like Nepal, where the Prime Minister dissolved Parliament to save his chair. So, is democracy finding it hard to cope with the changing realities of the 21st century? And are we confusing demagoguery with democracy?

A Pew Research Centre survey for democracies around the world shows people's disenchantment with their democratic system. People across 27 nations surveyed by Pew in 2018 were more dissatisfied than satisfied with the way democracy was working in their country. This included the US, the UK and Japan.

It doesn't stop there, the dissatisfaction is increasing with each passing year. As per the Pew survey, between 2017 and 2018, dissatisfaction with democracy grew in 14 of the 27 countries surveyed, 10 showed no change whereas only three countries' satisfaction with democracy increased. India topped the chart where dissatisfaction increased by 22 per cent.

The reason for this disenchantment is that democracies are not delivering what they ought to. Development is not on the menu, slogans are. Insensitivity to people's woes, corruption and a blurry vision is leading to sloppy performance by the so-called democratic governments. The paradox is that these leaders have a mass base and a committed cadre to fall back upon. A true "Cult Demagogue", if you want to call it that!

So, why are people around the world favouring undemocratic leaders? What leads to anti-poor, pro-capitalists leaders gaining ground? How come Trump made it to the White House in 2016 while well-meaning Hillary was dumped by the people? And Putin is so popular in Russia that people sing the song "A man like Putin" in his praise.

The loopholes in a democratic system have always been there. Now it is even easier, faster, effective and cheaper to exploit them. Thanks to technologies of the 21st century, the mind of a voter is hackable. And that has led to demagoguery entering the system through the back door, unnoticed. Modern technology has made it easier to sway opinions. It is not by chance that political parties spend a huge amount of money on taming social media



ULTIMATELY IT IS GOING TO BE HUMAN INTELLIGENCE VS AI. LET'S BET ON HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. CHECK THE BACKGROUND OF THE PEOPLE WHO WIN THE MANDATE AND EXAMINE THEIR CRIMINAL RECORDS. SEE THEIR BALANCE SHEETS, READ THEIR STATEMENTS AND HEAR THEIR LIES AND ABILITY, AND MARVEL AT THEIR TALENT TO SPREAD LIES. DEMOCRACY IS UNDERGOING A METAMORPHOSIS FOR SURE. HOLD IT RIGHT THERE. DEMOCRACY IS FAR FROM OVER. IT PREVAILS. DAMN DEMAGOGY

The writer is a columnist and documentary film-maker. The views expressed are personal.



and on its analytics.

At the moment it is the (mis)use of social media that is being used to manipulate the masses. Earlier a leader had to say something to be heard. Today he just has to drop a hint on Twitter and the Twitter warriors do the rest for him. The message is loud and clear, and in the language the people understand best. It is garnished with fake references and laced with eloquence. A hackathon is taking place right there.

Before the canards and lies on social media are detected they have already reached their target audience and have been read by millions. The Washington Post kept track of the lies Trump spoke while in office. It clocked 20,000+ lies that Trump spoke in his four-year tenure. That is more than 12 lies a day!

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) may not be so ubiquitous today but soon it will be. And that will only make matters worse. Campaigns are being designed to target the gullible and political novices. The mass media, the fourth pillar that could impart the right information, has already broken into two parts. By and large, it doesn't support the people, it supports the powers that be. In the US and in India it is divided and in Russia it doesn't exist. The media is doing everything, hunting ghosts in old forts, tracking Baghdadi but telling the truth.

When the voter thinks he is going to exercise his will, he is sadly mistaken. It is the propaganda at the back of his mind which is making a choice for him. No wonder the Right-wing ideologies across the world are so in. You like it or not they are catchy, appeal to the simple mind, and give your ego a boost, an identity to live and die for. The reason is that the simple masses understand and respond to simpler ideas,

faster than complex issues.

To "build a wall" or "make America great again" resonates with Americans rather than the intellect of Hillary Clinton. As does the "back to glorious old days of Russia" or the "back to Hindutva" rant back home. Modern societies have grown so complex that they are beyond the comprehension of a common educated man, let alone a semi-literate person. So Putin's "Strong President - Strong Russia" slogan works with an average Russian. With his limited political acumen he thinks a strong leader would deal with the wrongdoers. But at the end of the day he has bolstered a wrongdoer and weakened his own position. "Building a wall" as a simple solution to the American problem of unemployment and crime sells. Catchy phrases seldom bring tangible results and that is why people's lives become more and more miserable.

So what are the lessons for the world's biggest democracy from the world's oldest democracy? There can be many takeaways from the time Trump campaigned for the presidency to the time when he said goodbye at the Andrews Airport. Democracies are fragile and sensitive ecosystems that can be easily tampered with and manipulated. Democracy can easily degenerate into demagoguery and no one would even notice. The abnormal quickly becomes the new normal. People, like a frog, would boil to death before realising that the temperature has risen.

The US democracy prevails as their institutions are strong, ours are not. Even the Trump-appointed judges did not back him, not to mention the ultimate betrayal by Mike Pence. If that had not happened, the story would have been different. That said, Trump's supporters who fed on his 20,000-odd lies remain and

would not mind fomenting trouble again. That is the biggest danger. Demagoguery, like cricket, is a game of glorious uncertainty. A wrong move here can ruin your chances of survival. Let's hope that doesn't happen in this country which is going to have a new Parliament soon. We certainly need new framework for a functioning democratic set-up built in infallible stones.

Today democracy is not what it used to be: Pluralism not majoritarianism defined it, inclusive not exclusive, and certainly not insensible. There is a stark departure from the good old days that needs to be restored. It needs rebooting. This needs to be done wholesale. It needs to be done by the people themselves through the technology that is hacking their mind, a kind of reverse engineering.

Ultimately it is going to be human intelligence vs AI. Let's bet on human intelligence. Check the background of the people who win the mandate and examine their criminal records. See their balance sheets, read their statements and hear their lies and ability, and marvel at their talent to spread lies. Democracy is undergoing a metamorphosis for sure. Hold it right there. Democracy is far from over. It prevails. Damn demagoguery!

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

THOSE WHO ARE TALKING ABOUT THE FAMILY SYSTEM HAVE FIVE MEMBERS EACH OF THEIR FAMILY IN POLITICS.  
—TMC MP  
**ABHISHEK BANERJEE**



THE CORRUPT NEPHEW HAS INDULGED IN COAL AND SAND SCAM AND SMUGGLING OF COWS, ₹36 LAKH IS DEPOSITED IN A BANK IN THAILAND PER MONTH.  
—BJP LEADER  
**SUVENDU ADHIKARI**

**Implementation of new CSR rules is key**

The Govt should go beyond making amendments and verify that schemes are yielding results in line with the legislative intent

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was first inserted in the statute books by the Companies Act, 2013, in which Section 135 mandated a certain class of companies to spend two per cent of their average net profit on social causes. In 2014, India became the first country to legally mandate CSR and this issue was highly debated. There were arguments that a firm already pays taxes on its taxable income, therefore, these provisions were in the nature of additional levy. It was also argued that corporates are already engaged in social activity by way of creating jobs and assisting in economic progress, therefore, social welfare being the



SHSHANK SAURAV

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Government's job should not be shouldered by them. However, there is another view that since businesses take resources from society and they have to deal with society for exchanging their goods/services, they must participate in social uplift.

The Government notified the new CSR rules on January 22 and these are going to have major implications. Earlier, if a company failed to spend money on CSR activities, then it was only required to disclose this in its annual report. Now, corporates will be required to deposit the unspent amount in the fund specified by the Government. Apart from this, CSR activities can now be undertaken only through enti-

ties which are registered under the Income Tax Act and with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. This change will bring programme implementing agencies under scrutiny also.

Also, as per Rule 8(3), certain companies will have to submit impact assessment reports of their CSR projects. This is expected to bring transparency into the process because several instances have been reported in the past where executing agencies were used to either channelise funds for illegal activities or money was routed through the banking channel only to meet the regulatory requirements on paper. Even though there is no hard law in the West which enforces



mandatory CSR spend but firms are already invested big in this area because society there is more mature and their customers are conscious about the public image of the entity. If a closer look is taken at the recent changes in Indian

CSR rules, it is evident that legal scrutiny is being heightened not only on the corporate bodies but equal stress is given on implementation partners, too. An implementation partner, which is usually an NGO, is registered as a charitable organisation and it receives donation from outside India also.

The Government started tightening the noose on NGOs from 2010 when the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), repealed the erstwhile Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 1976, and subsequent amendments to it were made by the Modi Government.

In the last few years, the Home Ministry cancelled the

FCRA licences of various NGOs which were non-compliant with the laws related to foreign donation and in some cases, though the licences were not cancelled outright but their ability to receive funds was curbed severely as the CSR route was allegedly used by various NGOs to carry out their operations which were allegedly not in compliance with the law.

NGOs must adhere to the laws of the land and the changes made in CSR rules are a welcome step. The Government officials should go beyond merely making amendments and verify that CSR schemes are yielding results in line with the legislative intent.

**FOREIGN EYE**



**RUSSIANS PROTEST AGAINST PUTINISM**

Alexei Navalny has again exposed the squalid truth about President Putin's faltering regime. Putin, as is his wont in moments of crisis, was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he was hiding in his COVID bunker or in his secret Black Sea palace. But he could not avoid hearing the people's message: Free Navalny, free Russia, end Putinism. (The Observer editorial)



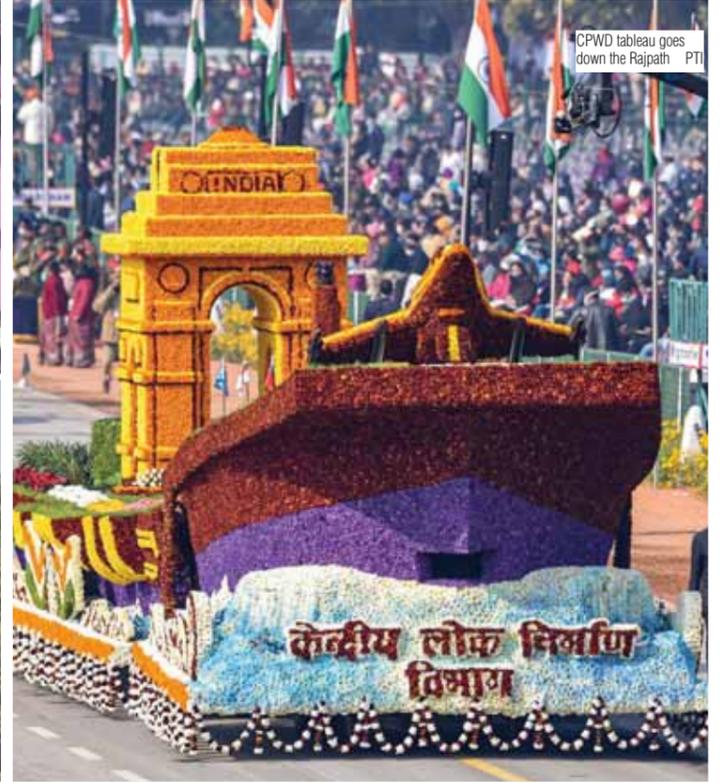
IAF Su-30 fighter jets perform a fly past on Tuesday PTI



Dignitaries look on during a flypast PTI



IAF's Sarang helicopters fly past Rajpath PTI



CPWD tableau goes down the Rajpath PTI



BSF's camel mounted contingent participates PTI



Members of Bangladesh Armed Forces contingent pass through Rajpath PTI



Members of Indian Navy contingent pass through Rajpath during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi, on Tuesday PTI



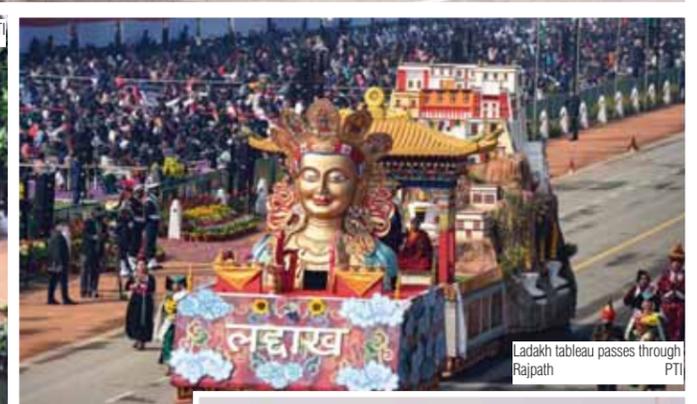
A contingent of horse-mounted Kolkata Police marches during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations at Red Road in Kolkata, on Tuesday PTI



DRDO's BrahMos missile on display PTI



Assam tableau passes through Rajpath PTI



Ladakh tableau passes through Rajpath PTI



Students perform during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations in Jammu on Tuesday PTI



Tricolor helium balloons fly over Rajpath as the Indian National flag flutters PTI

AMID TENSIONS WITH US

# China to conduct military drills in South China Sea

Beijing: China said on Tuesday it will conduct military exercises in the South China Sea this week, just days after Beijing bristled at a US aircraft carrier group's entry into the disputed waters.

A notice issued by the country's Maritime Safety Administration prohibited entry into a portion of waters in the Gulf of Tonkin to the west of the Leizhou peninsula in southwestern China from January 27 to January 30, but it did not offer details on when the drills would take place or at what scale.

A US carrier group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt entered the South China Sea on Saturday to promote "freedom of the seas," the US military said, days after Joe Biden began his term as president.

The contested waters have



become another flashpoint in the increasingly tense bilateral relationship between Beijing and Washington. The US military has steadily increased its activities there in recent years as China asserts its territorial claims in the area in conflict with neighbouring countries including Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan.

The announcement of the drills in the Gulf of Tonkin, just

east of Vietnam, came as the Southeast Asian country opened a key Communist Party congress in Hanoi.

China on Monday complained that the United States frequently sends aircraft and vessels into the South China Sea, through which trillion dollars in trade flow every year, to "flex its muscles" and said such actions are not conducive to peace and stability in the region.

## Iran says Biden won't have infinite time to rejoin nuke deal

Tehran: Iran warned the Biden administration on Tuesday that it will not have an indefinite time period on its disposal to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers.

Iran also said it expects Washington to swiftly lift crippling economic sanctions that former President Donald Trump imposed on the country after pulling America out of the atomic accord in 2018, as part of what he called maximum pressure against Iran. Trump cited Iran's ballistic missile programme among other issues in withdrawing from the accord.

The remarks Tuesday by Iran's Cabinet spokesman Ali Rabiee are part of pressure that Tehran is trying to exert on the US as it seeks to increase its leverage and get the Biden administration to quickly return to the deal.

# 'Joe Biden to pause oil drilling on public lands'

Washington: President Joe Biden is set to announce a wide-ranging moratorium on new oil and gas leasing on US lands, as his administration moves quickly to reverse Trump administration policies on energy and the environment and address climate change.

Two people with knowledge of Biden's plans outlined the proposed moratorium, which will be announced Wednesday. They asked not to be identified because the plan has not been made public; some details

remain in flux. The move follows a 60-day suspension of new drilling permits for US Lands and waters announced last week and follows Biden's campaign pledge to halt new drilling on federal lands and end the leasing of publicly owned energy reserves as part of his plan to address climate change. The moratorium is intended to allow time for officials to review the impact of oil and gas drilling on the environment and climate.

Environmental groups

hailed the expected moratorium as the kind of bold, urgent action needed to slow climate change. "The fossil fuel industry has inflicted tremendous damage on the planet. The administration's review, if done correctly, will show that filthy fracking and drilling must end for good, everywhere," said Kieran Suckling, executive director at the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group that has pushed for the drilling pause.

Oil industry groups

slammed the move, saying Biden had already eliminated thousands of oil and gas jobs by killing the Keystone XL oil pipeline on his first day in office. "This is just the start. It will get worse," said Brook Simmons, president of the Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma. "Meanwhile, the laws of physics, chemistry and supply and demand remain in effect. Oil and natural gas prices are going up, and so will home heating bills, consumer prices and fuel costs."

## Italian PM resigns in bid to form stronger Government

Rome: Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned Tuesday in the hope of forming a new Government after weeks of turmoil in his ruling coalition, leaving Italy rudderless as it battles the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

He tendered his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter of Italian political crises, who invited him to stay on in a caretaker capacity pending discussions on what happens next.

The uneasy coalition that has led Italy since September 2019 was fatally weakened earlier this month by the withdrawal of former premier Matteo Renzi's small but crucial

Italia Viva party.

Ahead of a key vote in parliament this week that he looked set to lose, Conte informed his cabinet on Tuesday that he would quit in what supporters said was a move to form a new government.

After the meeting with Mattarella, a spokesman for the president said he "reserves the right to decide (what to do next) and invited the government to stay in office in a caretaker capacity". Mattarella will open discussions with party leaders on Wednesday afternoon which are likely to lead into Thursday — leaving a vacuum at the top of the eurozone's third largest economy at a crucial time.

## Official: Troops withdraw from home of Uganda's Bobi Wine

Kampala (Uganda): An attorney for Bobi Wine says Ugandan soldiers have withdrawn from the Opposition presidential challenger's home the day after a judge ruled that his house arrest was unlawful.

But attorney George Musisi told The Associated Press that security forces could still be seen in the village near the candidate's property outside the capital, Kampala.

"They have gone for now," he said. "Of course (the candidate) hasn't yet stepped outside the house. We don't know what will happen."

The popular singer-turned-opposition figure was meeting officials with his National Unity Platform party at his home on

Tuesday, a holiday in Uganda that marks the day that rebels led by President Yoweri Museveni took power 35 years ago.

A police helicopter hovered over the area, according to local broadcaster NTV.

The candidate, whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, has been unable to leave his home since the January 14 election.

Ugandan authorities have said he can only leave his home under military escort because they fear his presence in public could incite rioting.

Police told reporters on Monday they would pull away from his residence but keep surveilling the area.

## New Zealand PM says 'borders likely to be shut for most of 2021'

Wellington: New Zealand's borders are likely to remain closed for much of the year as health officials assess global vaccine rollouts, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern warned Tuesday.

Ardern said the emergence over the weekend of New Zealand's first case of community transmission in more than two months showed the danger Covid-19 still posed to a nation hailed for its response to the coronavirus.

She said her government would not re-open its borders — which have been effectively closed to all but returning citizens since last March — while the pandemic was still raging worldwide.

"Given the risks in the world around us and the uncertainty of the global roll-

out of a vaccine, we can expect our borders to be impacted for much of this year," she told reporters.

Still, Ardern said New Zealand would continue to pursue "travel bubbles" with Australia and Pacific island nations, which have also been largely successful at keeping out or containing the virus.

Plans to open a travel bubble by the end of March were thrown into question when Australia suspended quarantine-free travel for Kiwis in response to the latest case of community transmission.

Ardern said the case — a 56-year-old New Zealander who recently returned from Europe — was "well under control" and criticised Australia for re-imposing quarantine for New Zealanders.

## UN group says Sri Lanka virus cremation rule violates rights

AP ■ COLOMBO (SRI LANKA)

A group of UN experts has criticised Sri Lanka's requirement that those who die of Covid-19 be cremated, even if it goes against a family's religious beliefs, and warned that decisions based on "discrimination and aggressive nationalism" could incite hatred and violence.

The experts, who are part of the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, said in a statement Monday that rule amounts to a human rights violation.

"We deplore the implementation of such public health decisions based on discrimination, aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism amounting to persecution of Muslims and other minorities

in the country," the experts said.

"Such hostility against the minorities exacerbates existing prejudices, intercommunal tensions, and religious intolerance, sowing fear and distrust while inciting further hatred and violence." Sri Lanka introduced the rule in March, saying there was a risk that bodies with the coronavirus could contaminate the ground water if they were buried.

The WHO as well as Sri Lankan medical groups have said that burial of those who died of Covid-19 is safe.

More than 70% of Sri Lankans are Buddhist, a faith in which cremation is common. But 9% of people in Sri Lanka are Muslims and many say cremation goes against their religious beliefs.

## SINCE END OF WORLD WAR II

# Poland registers biggest number of yearly deaths

Warsaw: Statistics for 2020 show deaths spiked in Poland to a level unseen since World War II and births sharply declined, trends attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and described by some as a demographic crisis.

The data reported Tuesday by the daily newspaper Dziennik Gazeta Prawna came from a state register that includes weekly births and deaths. Poland, a nation with a population of more than 38 million, registered 357,400

births last year, the lowest number since 2005, and some 486,200 deaths from various causes, the highest number registered since the war. The overall data showed a population loss of some 129,000 people, compared to a decline of some 36,400 the year before.

Poland's population has slowly decreased in the past two decades mostly due to the emigration of young people seeking better opportunities.

The low birth rate surprised observers because some

experts predicted the lockdown measures the Polish government has imposed on and off since mid-March would lead to a baby boom, the newspaper said. Communist-era martial law restrictions in Poland during the early 1980s produced such an uptick in births.

Demography expert Piotr Szukalski told Dziennik Gazeta Prawna he thinks that deep concerns about the spread of the coronavirus are to blame.

Minister of Family and Social Policy Marlena Malag

ascribed the high death rate to the pandemic and said it would take a long time for the current government program of family benefits intended to boost the birthrate to reverse the negative trend.

Commenting on data the state agency Statistics Poland released in December for 11 months of 2020, economist Rafal Mundry said the number of deaths was the highest since World War II, and the number of births the lowest in 15 years.

## Business

# IMF projects impressive 11.5% growth in 2021

Washington: The IMF on Tuesday projected an impressive 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021, making the country the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth this year amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

The International Monetary Fund's growth projections for India in its latest World Economic Outlook Update released on Tuesday reflected a strong rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In its latest update, the IMF projected a 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021. This makes India the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth in 2021, it said.

China is next with 8.1 per cent growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9 per cent) and France (5.5 per cent).

Revising its figures, the IMF said that in 2020, the Indian economy is estimated to

have contracted by eight per cent. China is the only major country which registered a positive growth rate of 2.3 per cent in 2020.

India's economy, the IMF said, is projected to grow by 6.8 per cent in 2022 and that of China by 5.6 per cent.

With the latest projections, India regains the tag of the fastest developing economies of the world.

IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath, during a virtual press conference to release the WEO update, said that India has somewhat a faster pace of recovery, but cumulatively by the end of 2022, it is nine per cent below its pre-pandemic projected level.

"Cumulatively by the end of 2022, India is still nine per cent below its pre-pandemic projected level," Gopinath said.

"We are seeing India come back to its 2019 levels and 2021, but it's still below. Why do we have these upgrades (in IMF's growth projections for

India)...Because the activity and mobility particularly came back much faster than expected in India. We have not seen another wave," Gopinath said.

"In fact, we are seeing a very strong decline in cases, which is again a bit different from other parts of the world. So, these factors, including what we're seeing in terms of high frequency indicators, point to have somewhat faster pace of recovery. But again, there is still some distance to go," Gopinath said.

Early this month, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva had said that India "actually has taken very decisive action, very decisive steps to deal with the pandemic and to deal with the economic consequences of it".

India, she said, went for a very dramatic lockdown for a country of this size of population with people clustered so closely together. And then India moved to more targeted restrictions and lockdowns.

## Covid-hit global economy projected to grow at 5.5% in 2021, says IMF

Washington: The global economy, ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic, is projected to grow at 5.5 per cent in 2021 and 4.2 per cent in 2022, the IMF said on Tuesday, reflecting the expectations of a vaccine-powered strengthening of business activities later in the year and additional policy support in a few large economies.

"In our latest World Economic Outlook forecast, we project global growth for 2021 at 5.5 per cent, 0.3 percentage point higher than our October forecast, moderating to 4.2 per cent in 2022," said Gita Gopinath, Chief Economist of the IMF.

The global economy contracted by an estimated 3.5 per cent in 2020 amidst the unprecedented health crisis.

The 2021 forecast is revised up by 0.3 percentage point relative to the previous forecast (5.2 per cent) in October last year, reflecting expectations of a vaccine-powered strengthen-

ing of business activities later in the year and additional policy support in a few large economies, the IMF said.

According to Gopinath, the upgrade for 2021 reflects the positive effects of the onset of vaccinations in some countries, additional policy support at the end of 2020 in economies such as the United States and Japan and an expected increase in contact intensive activities as the health crisis wanes. However, the positive effects are partially offset by a somewhat worse outlook for the 'very near-term' as measures to contain the spread of the virus dampen activity, she said.

Noting that there is a great deal of uncertainty around this forecast, Gopinath said that greater success with vaccinations and therapeutics and additional policy support could improve outcomes, while slow vaccine rollout, virus mutations, and premature withdrawal of policy support could worsen the outcomes.

## India's GDP to contract 8% in FY21, says FICCI survey

New Delhi: India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to contract by 8 per cent in 2020-21, according to the latest round of FICCI's Economic Outlook Survey.

The annual median growth forecast by the industry body is based on responses from leading economists representing industry, banking and financial services sector. The survey was conducted in January.

The median growth forecast for agriculture and allied activities has been pegged at 3.5 per cent for 2020-21.

"Agriculture sector has

exhibited significant resilience in the face of the pandemic. Higher rabi acreage, good monsoons, higher reservoir levels and strong growth in tractor sales indicate continued buoyancy in the sector," Fici stated on the survey findings.

However, industry and services sector, which were most severely hit due to the pandemic induced economic fall-out, are expected to contract by 10 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively during 2020-21.

The industrial recovery is gaining traction, but the growth is still not broad based.

## Budget: Tough balancing act for Govt, says report

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Budget 2021-22 may see the trade-off to become more acute between stimulating growth, and maintaining fiscal rectitude, Kotak Institutional Equities said in a pre-budget note.

The Covid-19 pandemic disruptions has pushed down the country GDP growth into the negative zone in two successive quarters and projections are that GDP may contract over 7 per cent in FY21.

This contraction has come on the back of increased spending by the government on Covid relief measures that has already taken up the coun-

try's fiscal deficit several notches with expectations that deficit may run at a high of 7.5 per cent of GDP in FY21 as against budget target of 3.5 per cent.

The government needs to aim at increasing stable incomes for large parts of the population in the middle and bottom of the pyramid which have been the worst hit from the pandemic.

"We expect the budget to strengthen the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision and focus on health, physical infrastructure, and financial sector along with rural India," said Sudveer Rakshit, Vice President and Senior Economist at Kotak Institutional Equities.

## Amazon's growth continues in 2021, more jobs to Boston

Washington: Amazon's 2020 hiring spree does not appear to be slowing in the new year with the company announcing 3,000 new jobs in Boston in coming years. The hires announced Tuesday will double the workforce in Amazon's Boston tech hub, with new jobs spread across Alexa, Amazon Web Services, Amazon Robotics, and Amazon Pharmacy.

A number of companies that have allowed people to better maintain social distancing during the pandemic have experienced explosive growth over the past year, and Amazon is at the top of that list.

## 'Govt may announce steps in Budget 2021 to promote e-commerce exports, imports'

New Delhi: The Government in the budget next week is expected to announce measures such as extending the facility of bulk clearance for e-commerce imports and exports with a view to promoting the growth of this fast-growing segment in the country, sources said.

They said that as there is a multi-fold increase in the e-commerce sector in the country, a significant volume of products is imported into and exported out of India through this platform and there is a need to find a balance between control and facilitation for the sector.

Currently, importers and

exporters are required to submit individual/separate clearance documents for each package with the Indian customs department, which adds cost for traders to conduct business through e-commerce.

"With an aim to support the growth of the e-commerce sector in India, the facility for bulk clearance of import and export is required for e-commerce import and exports. Additionally, a simplified process in case of return of e-commerce shipments would also help in promoting the growth," one of the sources said.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will unveil the Budget for 2021-22 on

February 1.

According to exporters, easing of processes for the sector would further help in boosting the country's outbound shipments.

"Extending the facility of bulk clearance is a good idea. Globally this facility is there. It will help in reducing transaction cost. If it is permitted, it would hugely benefit the e-commerce trade," Federation of Indian Export Organisations Director General Ajay Sahai said.

A leather exporter said that the move if announced in the Budget would help promote exports through e-commerce medium.

## Indian startups attract \$10.14 bn in funding in 2020, says report

New Delhi: Indian startups are estimated to have received \$10.14 billion in funding across more than 1,200 deals in 2020 despite the Covid crisis, a report by consulting firm HexGn said.

Even though the total investment received in 2020 is lower than that of 2019 (\$14.5 billion), the number of deals were higher by 20 per cent, the report said.

"Weathering negative sentiment, seed stage investment deals grew by 50 per cent from \$353 million over 420 deals in 2019 to \$372 million over 672 deals in 2020. This is a good sign for people looking to plunge into startups, as early-stage investors are now keen to back risk-takers early on," the report noted.

This can be attributed to the work done by Invest India, Startup India, AgNii and other agencies of the Indian government to boost investor confidence and entrepreneurial cul-

ture, it added.

This is the third year in a row that India has kept its number four position globally after the US, China and the UK.

Globally, startups raised over \$308 billion in funding, with the US garnering \$165 billion.

The report said Bengaluru, Delhi NCR and Mumbai accounted for 90 per cent of the startup investments in the country, signalling concentration of angel investors and appetite in these regions.

Bengaluru led with \$4.3 billion in startup investments, followed by Delhi NCR (\$3 billion) and Mumbai (\$2 billion). In terms of sectors, e-commerce attracted the highest investment with \$3 billion, followed by fintech at \$2.37 billion and edtech at \$1.52 billion.

The biggest gainer has been the edtech segment that grew four times this year from \$380 million in 2019.

## Govt may hike agri credit target to about ₹19 lakh crore in Budget

New Delhi: With the aim of doubling farmers' income by 2022, the government is likely to raise farm credit target to about ₹19 lakh crore in Budget 2021-22 to be presented on February 1, according to sources.

For the current fiscal, the government has set a farm credit target of ₹15 lakh crore.

The Government has been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year and this time too, the target is likely to be increased to around Rs 19 lakh crore for the 2021-22, sources said.

"Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and co-operatives are active in the agriculture credit space. The Nabard refinance scheme will be further expanded. Agriculture credit target for the 2020-21 has been set up at ₹15 lakh crore," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said while announcing the Budget 2020-21.

# CRACK CLAT 2021

The CLAT is scheduled to be conducted on June 13, 2021, which is three days after Boards get over. This leaves students in a dilemma whether to prepare for boards or CLAT. AMANDEEP RAJGOTRA shares tips that will help

A degree in law has got huge popularity since many decades, and the reason which makes it a favorable choice for students is primarily that the course is neutral to all the streams whether commerce or engineering. Further, it has huge scope in terms of career and respect in the society. Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) is an exam to get admission to the top National Law Universities of the country. As, cracking this competitive exam requires a lot of focus along with determination and perseverance, dedicated candidates aiming to choose law as a career, this is the right time to kick start their preparations.

The CLAT 2021 is scheduled to be conducted on June 13 2021, which is three days right after the board exams are getting over. While this comes as a rude shock to the students, another dilemma remains the preparation strategy and focus whether to prepare for boards or CLAT and how to effectively manage both.

Looking into the larger picture for the future and career aspects in law, it is not that simple as it may seem. Preparing for law demands a lot of focus along with determination and perseverance to crack the beast like entrance exams for the most reputed law colleges in India. Many aspirants lose the chances of fulfilling their dreams assuming the journey frivolously.

Hence the pre requisite hard work required to crack the exam is well evident. Studying at the 11th hour is never

a fruitful exercise, it does not fetch the students much benefit, but if they make it a regular routine to prepare for a paper which is a multiple choice question based exam with a disciplined outlook, they are sure to achieve their goals. It's always good to have a path and vision from an early age.

Primarily it is important to understand the format and sections of the exam paper, which contains the following sections:

■ **Legal Aptitude:** Being the most important section this also happens to be the deciding sections in case of a tie break. The section is passage based consisting of questions on legal knowledge and terminologies and requires a lot of reading. The candidates should be well versed with the recent happenings in the Legal world.

■ **General knowledge and current affairs:** This is another passage based section with questions covering Culture, World Affairs, and Current Affairs. Reading newspapers regularly is the most relevant and appropriate thing to ace in this section. Pattern shows that most of the questions have been put up from certain newspaper articles and editorials.

■ **English (comprehension and grammar based):** The section has reading comprehension which includes questions on grammar and vocabulary. The passages are medium to small in length and require a deep understanding of the text. The questions are more inference based.

■ **Logical Reasoning:** This section has passages on critical reasoning

Any entrance exam preparation requires regular practice. An aspirant should target to attempt the questions with 80-90 per cent accuracy. When you practice, you must try to identify the question types within each section that you are good at and those that you are not good at. This will help you save time

and complex arrangement. Critical reasoning demands good comprehension ability and critical thinking ability. The questions on assumptions, strengthening and weakening arguments, conclusions require a lot of practice.

■ **Elementary Mathematics:** The questions will cover Data interpretation which covers sub topics such as Ratio Proportion, Average, Percentage, Profit and Loss, and Mixture Allegations. The section includes short sets of facts, graphs, or other diagrammatic representations.

Pioneering in the field of preparing several students for the exam, the faculty at Pratham test prep is always envisioned for a holistic development approach and mentor its students to get into the best institutions across the country and abroad. The following expert tips will certainly guide any law aspirant in their journey of achieving their goal:

■ **Strategic Planning:** Strategic planning helps in prioritising the subjects and topics requiring more attention than the others as per the learning style of each individual. While this includes preparing for Class XII as well, dedicating only three hours a day (classes and self-study) for CLAT and the remaining time can be utilised for Class XII.

■ **Effective time management:** As the objective of the aptitude test is to check the articulate thinking, it is not advisable to compulsorily attempt all the questions. Instead one should focus on maximizing the scores by

attempting known questions. In fact, sometimes this urge to attempt all the questions can bring your accuracy level down drastically under timing pressure.

■ **Regular practice:** Any entrance exam preparation requires regular practice. An aspirant should target to attempt the questions with 80-90 per cent accuracy. When you practice, you must try to identify the question types within each section that you are good at, and those that you are not good at. This will help you save time on the actual exam. Current Affairs are always a make-or-break section for anyone.

■ **Mock tests and analysis:** With PSIS interface, consisting of diligently made mock exams for CLAT provides a real time experience. It is very important to work constantly on improving vocabulary and learning current affairs. This will help you enhance your score. Although, you can always modify this strategy based on your performance in the Mock Tests.

Don't be skeptical! It is important for a person to have self-belief. Self-motivation helps in developing a perspective and reaching the set goals effectively. Since the pattern is more reading based, normally, students are not able to complete the paper. Therefore, they feel demotivated and leave preparation midway. Regular intervals in your daily schedule where you take out time for yourself will help you achieve success.

The writer is National Head - Law, PRATHAM Test Prep

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

The function of a child is to live his/her own life, not the life that his/her anxious parents think he/she should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educators who thinks they knows best.

— AS Neil

## New high for AKGEC

It is a matter of great pride for the AKGEC family — the Management, faculty, staff, students and the alumni, that Neeraj Srivastava, a 2009 BTech graduate from Electronics and Communication stream, has been awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Award by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow. This is the first time that the University has instituted the award in 2021.



Neeraj Srivastava

About 1000 nominations from the University affiliated colleges, including Govt colleges, were received and reviewed by various committees including Academic Council. Of the 10 short listed candidates, Neeraj Srivastava was finally selected for the award and awarded by the Governor of Uttar Pradesh on January 16, 2021 during the AKTU Convocation.

Neeraj is the founder of DLT Labs — a name well known in the blockchain space. With the strength of 250+ people globally and offices at multiple locations i.e. Canada, India, Japan, USA and Singapore, DLT Labs has been growing exponentially, well on its path to be the next Billion dollar enterprise. Although, DLT Labs has been in existence since 2012 but in last three years they have positioned themselves as the global leader in the blockchain space with the biggest ever implementation on blockchain technology for Walmart, also winning the CSCMP Innovation Award for this product.

Besides the above, Neeraj has achieved a patent grant for Relational Data Management and Organisation Using DLT in his name and has research paper publications in the field of Blockchain. He is also hold-

ing prestigious positions including Member of Forbes Technology Council, Board Member of IBM Blockchain, Blockchain Expert with Bank of Canada & Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and Team Leader at Royal Bank of Canada to launch Apple Pay.

Neeraj and his company are the first to launch EMV based Apple Pay all over the world and to open the world's first Blockchain Lab at BSE. He is one of the first, across the world, to launch a full blockchain course on Udemy and is an active speaker on technologies across the globe.

In addition to his achievements after passing out from the college, Neeraj had been active in research and development during his tenure in the college as well. He was the founder member of the Software Development Centre established at AKGEC in the year 2008. The centre is engaged in promoting innovative work, project based learning, industrial consultancies and entrepreneurial skills amongst students.

We are indeed proud of him and wish him the best for all his future endeavours.

# Be digitally smart

We live in a world driven and dominated by technology. From the latest smartphones to diversified apps to wearables, consumers today are connected round-the-clock. As a consequence, marketing has undergone a seismic change. To reach, engage with and delight their end customers, digital marketers need certain skills in order to succeed in the current environment. The mushrooming of hi-tech companies and rise of telecommuting jobs have brought a career as a digital marketer into the limelight.

Irrespective of what role one is in, there are some competencies that every marketer needs to have. Even a marketing specialist must have a strong foundation of general skills and a robust awareness about other disciplines.

Here are the five important skills that make a digital marketer stand out in the online marketing landscape and will help them become highly successful:

### Website Analytics/App Analytics

The rise of digital marketing has resulted in huge amounts of data. As marketers have easy access to the performance of marketing campaigns and consumers' behaviour, they need to be competent enough to analyse this data. Hence, future digital marketers are required to master data analytics. Digital marketers also need to be good with comprehending how data influences customer experience on different platforms. For this purpose, they need to be hands-on with other tools like Google Analytics, Apps Analytics, and Google AdWords.

Even marketing specialists must have a strong foundation of general skills and a robust awareness about other disciplines, says AMOL ROY



### SEO & SEM

A well-drafted article, newsletter or blog is pointless if it isn't visible to the intended audience. Including targeted and relevant keywords in the content has become essential as Google keeps upgrading its algorithm from time-to-time. These keywords strengthen the SEO and SEM strategies. SEM is an umbrella term referring to the process of enhancing website visibility in search engine results by investing in paid search advertising. Marketers who know well how to leverage SEO and SEM to a brand's success are in high demand.

### Social Media Advertising

Social media has become extensively entrenched within our daily

lives. Marketers need to know which social media channel they can tap into to reach their targeted audience. Organic social media marketing has a very narrow and limited reach these days. Therefore, learning how to run social media ad campaigns has become essential. As a digital marketer, one should hone skills in paid ads, creative ad experimentation, biddings, granular targeting of relevant audiences, and social media analytics such as Facebook and Instagram analytics.

### Content Marketing

Modern day marketers know the value of content and how it can help generate leads, nurture leads and close them. Strategising and leading a content marketing campaign is another crucial skill that is much in demand. When paired with other sources used for tracking visitors' website experiences, such as web analytics, digital marketers can effectively determine the relevancy level, alignment and uniqueness which each piece of content is offering.

### Google Ads & PPC

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising helps businesses expand their reach, generate higher revenue, and raise brand awareness. A digital marketer who can scale paid advertising for brands can land well-paid jobs. To do well in PPC, one should be able to think strategically and scientifically. They need to create campaigns from the start, optimise, analyse and report on campaigns using both Google Analytics and Google Adwords.

Digital marketing has emerged as a much sought-after career. In order to be a successful digital marketer, knowing these skills are inevitable. All the required information and tools that one may need are easily available. One just needs to put in consistent efforts and unwavering dedication to make a head start into one of the most lucrative professions today.

The writer is Founder, Shutter Cast

# Time for new learnings

According to a report, 1.2 billion children in 186 countries have been forced out of classrooms due to the pandemic. SARVJEET SINGH assess how education has been impacted during COVID

COVID-19 pandemic which has paralyzed the economic social life across the globe has also seen some innovation and adaptation in certain sectors. One such sector is the Learning and Education Sector which has seen a paradigm shift in the manner in which education is imparted.

According to World Economic Forum Report 1.2 billion children in 186 countries have been forced out of classrooms due to the rampaging pandemic. The enormity and magnitude of the learning deficit forced by the pandemic resulted in Education Institutes across the globe adopting e-learning successfully.

According to Clementina Lal, teacher of Frank Anthony Public School, the new teaching methodology transacted online has resulted in more intense engagement on part of both students and teachers in the teaching and learning process.

She adds that the online learning has also integrated the importance of effective time management in learning and teaching experience. Other teachers while supporting Lal also point out that pace of learning has also seen an upswing as the option of taking notes or help from friends, in adhering to the learning process or submitting assignments is no longer available for the students.

For the educator it also means that the content being delivered has to conform to the highest standard as parents are likely to be witnessing the standard of teaching.

Manisha Obroi whose ward studies in St Columbus School says that as parents our involvement in the child's learning process has grown substantially. "We are connected with the day to day learning experience of the child and are in a better position to support/substantiate/reinforce the learning. It does afford an opportunity to both parents and children to be partners in the journey of learning under the guidance of the teacher," she says. This has also strengthened the bond between parents and children, adds Obroi.

All, however, is not entirely positive in this new method of learning. Group assignments and learning experiences which underline the collaborative learning experience are no longer available. The absence of playground experience in school has also taken away an integral part of school years. This along with other extra curricular activities have created a huge vacuum in the overall experience of school learning.

As the uncertainty regarding the pandemic looms it is this vacuum which needs to be addressed.

Some of the steps towards the same could be the following:

■ **Online cultural events:** Some of the NGOs and Cultural Organisations have successfully conducted cultural events showcasing talents of children in diverse spheres such as dancing, singing, poetry etc. The schools can repeat that successful experience for their students.

■ **Fitness goals:** Students to be given fitness goals through a basic regime of cardio vascular or yogic exercises.

■ **Playground experience** in phased manner can be opened in schools.

The extraordinary pace by schools in adapting to the situation and rapidly shifting to online learning methodology would certainly find a mention in the annals of history when the impact of Covid-19 would be assessed. The school children in their formative years have been part of this incredible fight back against the odds imposed by the pandemic. The lessons of resilience and courage in face of formidable challenges would certainly stand the young ones in good stead in future and would go a long way in making our world a better place.

The writer is Assistant General Secretary, New Delhi YMCA

## Amazon Academy is here

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon India on January 13, 2021 announced the launch of Amazon Academy to help students preparing for the JEE for entrance to engineering colleges. The online preparation offering will equip students with in-depth knowledge and practice routines required for the JEE, through curated learning material, live lectures and comprehensive assessments in Math, Physics and Chemistry. The beta version of Amazon Academy will be available free of cost on the web and the Google Play store. Amazon Academy will offer stu-

dents a range of JEE preparatory resources at launch, including specially crafted mock tests by industry experts, over 15,000 handpicked questions with hints and detailed step by step solutions for practice.

The mock tests include chapter tests, part tests, and full tests that simulate the JEE pattern, helping students manage exam preparedness at their own pace.

The Academy will also hold live All India Mock Tests at scheduled intervals. These tests are designed to mirror the JEE experience helping students understand the nuances of the examination.

## VIT-AP varsity felicitates unsung heroes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the occasion of 72nd Republic Day celebrations on Tuesday, VIT-AP University felicitated APSRTC drivers B Krishna Rao and D Hanumantha Rao were honoured posthumously, six fire services personnel and three police personnel for saving the lives of people by discharging their duties diligently were also honoured. Dr A Vishnu Vardhan Reddy, Vice Chancellor,

Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University, Govt of Andhra Pradesh unfurled the 100 ft national tricolour and presented 47 academic excellence awards to the students for the 2019-20 academic year. A total of 15 awards were given to the faculty and staff winners of cultural competitions.

The Chief Guest lauded the university authorities for choosing Republic Day for felicitating the unsung heroes in remembrance of their selfless service to the humanity



Dr A Vishnuvardhan Reddy Vice Chancellor, ANG RAU felicitates Unsung Heroes in the presence of Dr SV Kota Reddy, Vice Chancellor, VIT-AP, Dr CLV Sivakumar, Registrar and Dr Anupama AD student welfare

under University Social Responsibility. He also expressed his wish to work together in agri-engineering area for the benefit of the farming community.

All 11 unsung heroes received these awards and reward of ₹25,000 each. The Vice President of VIT-AP university Dr Sekar Viswanathan, Vice Chancellor Dr SV Kota Reddy, Registrar Dr CLV Sivakumar, family members of unsung heroes, faculty and staff were also present.

## Lending a helping hand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CSR initiative of US-based IT firm — Emerge360 — has come as a boon for the students of District Council School in Donje, tehsil Haveli, in the outskirts of Pune who will now be introduced to the world of Internet as their school has been given 10 laptops and desktops to set up a computer lab.

The US-based IT solution provider now plans to reach out to more such

schools across India to set up computer labs.

"We will be donating 10 desktops and laptops to schools across India every month. We will help schools mainly in rural and semi-urban areas which cannot afford to set up their own computer labs," said Shriram Dhotre, Emerge360 spokesperson.

"Our small CSR effort of donating computers will help in technological advancement of the young minds," Dhotre adds.

Technological advancements and innovations have given birth to novel industries and new-age business models have replaced the old ones. Hence, we are seeing an array of emerging career options, says NIKHIL BARSHIKAR



# BE A FRONTRUNNER

Decades ago, our career options were extremely limited and so were the opportunities to do what interests us. But today, technological advancements and innovations have given birth to novel industries, and new-age business models have replaced the old ones. Hence, we are seeing an array of emerging career options that didn't were virtually unheard of five years ago.

In 2021, we have endless possibilities for a successful career in many fields, from — digital marketing, new-age banking and finance, and state-of-the-art technology. Here are the five career options for those who want to be at the forefront of this unprecedented evolution:

## NEW-AGE BANKERS

New developments have transformed the BFSI landscape. Their ever-expanding range of services has resulted in immense demand for new-age bankers who specialize in Macroeconomics, Wealth Management, Financial Analysis, Ratios, Retail and Corporate Banking, Capital Management, Cryptocurrencies, RPA, Risk &

Compliance, and other such specialties. Professionals, skilled in the aforementioned skills, are sure to thrive in their careers in 2021 and beyond.

## DIGITAL BANKING MANAGERS

The banking business has teamed up with digital technology, providing better and faster services to their customers. While millennials welcomed it when it came into existence, now, after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, customers of all ages are using digital banking services to avoid contact and overcrowding. According to Wells Fargo Securities Analyst Mike Mayo, what we're seeing is the greatest acceleration of Digital Banking in history, and what's taken place over the last few months may have taken place over two to 10 years if the pandemic had not come along. As a result, there is a growing demand for digital banking managers to keep pace with the relentless digitization in the global BFSI sector.

## CLOUD ARCHITECT

An O'Reilly report released in January 2022 titled 'Cloud Adoption

Both existing and aspiring professionals have a myriad of career options laid out before them. All one needs to do is upskill and reskill oneself with relevant skills continuously to become more employable and stay on top of the market

in 2020', revealed that over 88% of organizations were already using cloud infrastructure in some form.

The rise of work-from-home culture in the wake of the pandemic led to wider adoption of cloud technology across the globe. Cloud computing is expected to be one of the fastest-growing technologies with the industry reaching USD 832 billion by 2025. With a massive surge in demand for cloud-based services, cloud architects and cloud developers are destined to be one of the most sought-after professionals in the upcoming years.

## AI/ML ENGINEER

Over the past few years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been evolving and expanding its territory. It is present in almost every aspect of our lives, right from navigation systems to entertainment devices, making an AI specialist a critical resource for every business in any scenario. The World Economic Forum (WEF) expects AI to create 133 million jobs by 2022. Machine Learning (ML) has also taken the world by storm as businesses begin to learn and harness its full potential. ML engineers

are in high demand as companies rely on their expertise to reinvent business models to suit the current global scenario.

## AI MARKETING ANALYST

Technological advancements have kept the marketing landscape constantly evolving. However, the one technology that has been redefining digital marketing is AI. It has been providing marketers with insights into customer's preferences and opinions, helping them create marketing campaigns that lead to more conversion and sales. With more and more businesses are leveraging the power of AI to improve marketing performance, AI marketing analyst is going to be one of the most in-demand jobs of this decade.

Today, both existing and aspiring professionals have a myriad of career options laid out before them. All you need to do is simply upskill and reskill yourself with relevant skills continuously to make yourself more employable and stay on top of the market.

The writer is Founder and Managing Director, Imarticus Learning

## 'IIFT involved horizontal and vertical scrolling'

The exam was on similar lines as last year. While sections like QR was tough, DL and VR was moderate to difficult, says PRADEEP PANDEY

The IIFT 2021 was conducted on January 24, 2021 for admission to the prestigious Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) located in Delhi, Kolkata, and Kakinada (AP). The test was conducted across various centres in the country from 3 pm to 5 pm in the computer-based test format. There were four sections this year similar to what we had last year. The exam interface involved a lot of horizontal and vertical scrolling, which would have affected the test taker's performance to some extent. However, it could have been mitigated by viewing the paper in the question paper mode or by hiding the question palette.

**Quantitative Reasoning:** The section was higher in difficulty with lengthier questions as compared to last year's paper. The section had a total of 25 questions from multiple areas, though arithmetic appeared to rule the roost. Test takers would have noticed a huge surge in the number of questions from arithmetic like Percentages, SI-CI, Time & Work, Time & Distance etc.

**Reading Comprehension & Verbal Ability:** This section was very similar to the last year's pattern. So, students who have prepared with us and took our mock IIFT exams would have been prepared well for this year's exam. This section consisted of 16 questions on RCs and 19 on Verbal Ability with a total of 35 questions.

There were four RC passages with four questions each. Most of the questions were Inference based or Specific Detail based. The Inference questions, however, were not very difficult to answer.

The questions in the Verbal Ability segment were an assorted mix predominantly on vocabulary, with grammar and para jumbles the following suit. Answering grammar questions should have been a cakewalk as the choices were also not close either.

The vocabulary questions could have been killers for students who did not focus on this part, but for those students who prepared vocabulary with us



Pradeep Pandey  
Academic Head, Triumphant Institute of Management Education, Delhi

would have noticed many familiar words. Of the three para jumble questions, two were very tricky and one was of moderate difficulty. Students would have had to rely more on logical thinking than on grammatical connectives.

**Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning:** This section had a total of 30 questions with 16 questions on DI and 14 on LR. The DI sets were very calculation-intensive, which made the sets lengthier to solve. The LR sets were relatively easier than the DI sets. The overall difficulty level of this section can be classified as moderate-difficult.

The cut-off is expected to be around 20 to 22 marks.

**General Awareness:** This year the GK section was easy. This section, apart from the regular MCQs, also had match the following type of questions.

Students who avidly read the newspapers would have been able to handle this section with some ease. The questions were from diverse topics like Personalities, Sports, Brands, Geography, Space science, Awards, Corporate entities, Government Schemes, etc. Out of 20 questions, Static GK had 11 questions and nine questions were based on Current Affairs.

The cut-off in this section is expected to be around 6 to 7.5 marks.

The world today is totally different than what it used to be a year ago, COVID-19 has scraped away our nation and the world. The concern of the business owners is to keep everyone safe be it colleagues, family and friends. To focus on everything at once is burdensome to manage therefore the owner split work among employees for the smooth functioning of their organisation. Despite the pandemic, many organisations continue to make an expressive contribution to society, all this was possible because of their employees. The fight against COVID-19 can not be accelerated without human assets. The best thing that can be done by leaders is to lean in, empathise with their employees, listen to

them, communicate frequently, be flexible and supportive.

Many employees are now working remotely. In many organisations the work of three people is being done by a single employee. Apart from this, working from home greatly impacts the to-do list of workers. They are doing their job, their childcare worker's job, their cook's job, the job of their children's teacher and many more. Yet they are being unnoticed by the employer, it is the high time to refurbish the notion of an ideal worker.

While some are working remotely, some have started going to workplaces. Coming to office during pandemic is a tuff grind, they are not only risking their lives but also

## MINDIT

the lives of their family members.

It's high time to work together to ensure that the silver lining of this massive and terrifying pandemic is a new understanding of the worker as someone who is creative, concentrated, and committed—but who must still balance work commitments with caring responsibilities.

**Stress shooting up:** Jobs of many have been lost and work pressure on many has been increased greatly. New standards of operating have been implemented to protect the health of the employees. Several

organisations have temporarily moved the location of their workforces, from offices to homes. This slows down the risk of propagation of the virus. Drastic changes have been observed everywhere in the world.

**Employees: An Immensely Valuable Asset:** There is no denial of the fact that human beings are the most prominent asset for any organisation. In a competitive world, it is only the human asset that contrasts an organisation from its competitors, not a tangible or fixed asset. Human resource or

human asset being the most powerful asset distinguishes the knowledge economy of any organisation from others.

When an employee leaves an organisation he could be replaced physically but his knowledge and skills can not be fully replaced, a different skill set is possessed by every individual. Business decision makers are aware of the fact that the skill set of employees constitute more than 80% of an organisation's asset. The talent and efficiency of an employee sways the growth and pace of the organisation. Therefore enhancing employee's performance and efficiency becomes the major priority for any organisation. The other crucial assets like brands, trademarks, R&D, intellectual

property, patents and copyrights are essentially contributed by human assets therefore they are the most vital patrons towards the organisation.

**Appraisal at workplace:** Being the major contributor for growth and profit of any organisation, employees need to be praised. Their irreplaceable efforts can not be contrasted with any monetary value as such but incentives and appraisals can motivate them to perform better day by day. Their tremendous efforts result in magnificent consumer reviews and creating brand image. Prioritising employees could be the need of the hour.

The writer is Vivek K Singh, Co-founder-CEO, Careerera



The University of Bristol invites applications for one-year postgraduate taught programmes. These awards cover between 25 and 100 per cent of tuition fees for the duration of course. International candidates are eligible to apply for the opportunity.

**Award:** A number of awards valued at £5,000, £10,000 and £20,000.

**Eligibility:** The studentships are awarded to study the subjects offered by the university (except Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science).

You are eligible to apply for the opportunity if you have applied to study any one-year, full-time PG taught programme, excluding Distance-Learning programmes at the University of Bristol starting in 2021. Applicants must be classed as an overseas student for fee-paying purposes.

**Language requirement:** If English is not your first language then you will need to show that your English language skills are at a high enough level to succeed in your studies.

**How to apply:** To apply for the opportunity applicants must submit the online application form by this given link: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/international/fees-finance/scholarships/application-form/>

**Application deadline:** The last date to apply for this award is May 25, 2021

deadline for round one deadline: 10 am (UK time) March 29, 2021. For round two deadline: 10 am (UK time) June 14, 2021.

Applications are invited for UBC International MBA Entrance and merit awards at the University of British Columbia Saudar. The grant is available to support international students.

**Eligibility:** Candidates who display an outstanding combination of talent, drive, and academic achievement may be considered for UBC International MBA Entrance or merit awards.

**Supporting documents:** Submit the following: Official transcripts in sealed university envelopes (plus official English translations if transcripts are not issued in English by the home university). Original degree certificates in sealed university envelopes

**Admission requirements:** Students must have a bachelor's degree with a B average or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution.

**Language requirement:** Applicants have to submit official TOEFL (program code: 0965) or IELTS scores. Official test scores should be received by UBC directly from the testing agency.

**How to apply:** To grasp the opportunity, aspirants have to take admission in the master's degree coursework at the university.

**Application deadline:** The last date to apply for this award is May 25, 2021

## MARKETING OPERATIONS AT PEOPLEBOX.AI

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹10,000-₹20,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956114](http://internshala.com/i/6956114)  
Deadline: February 3, 2021

## MOBILE APP DEV AT PRODINNOV

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹10,000-₹20,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956115](http://internshala.com/i/6956115)  
Deadline: February 3, 2021

## DATA ANALYTICS AT DIALABANK

Location: Chandigarh  
Stipend: ₹10,000-₹12,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956141](http://internshala.com/i/6956141)  
Deadline: February 3, 2021

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (SALES) AT WAYBEYOND MEDIA

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹20,000-₹25,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956121](http://internshala.com/i/6956121)  
Deadline: February 3, 2021

## MEDIA & PR AT ART CULTURE FEST

Location: Delhi  
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956125](http://internshala.com/i/6956125)  
Deadline: February 3, 2021

## FESHER JOBS MANAGEMENT TRAINEE - BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT J AT AVSAR HR SERVICES

Stipend: ₹8-₹10 lakh per annum  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956164](http://internshala.com/i/6956164)  
Deadline: February 8, 2021  
Skill(s): MS-Office, MS-PowerPoint, Digital Marketing and English proficiency

## ANDROID APP DEVELOPER AT ATOM

Location: Remote  
Stipend: ₹3.6-₹8.4 lakh per annum  
Link: [internshala.com/i/6956167](http://internshala.com/i/6956167)  
Deadline: February 6, 2021  
Skill(s): Android and Kotlin

## STUDY ABROAD

'Important for students to keep up with changes'

Change is hard. But each shift provides us with new opportunities to grow, adapt and evolve, says HARJIV SINGH

A thought-provoking experiment centred round the future of college education got underway in the

spring of 2013 at Stanford university. Inspired by the new emphasis on online learning, the Stanford 2025 Project, explored how universities, students and teachers will approach in-person, physical learning environment a decade by bringing an end to a society of alumni in favour of a lifetime learning.

A year since COVID upended everything including education, the Stanford study with its emphasis on modular, personalised, and collaborative learning across space and time seems nothing short of prophetic. Not only has 2020 compelled a change on the ground in who is learning online, where, and how, but it has also brought into focus key questions about educa-

tion. As someone who has benefited immensely from the experience of having studied overseas including at an Ivy League school—the Columbia University—I do not mean to underestimate the invaluable insights and irreplaceable experience that travelling to study enables. But if the past year is anything to go by, it is clear higher education can no longer be sought in the same in-person, four-year on campus module. College education, especially at any Ivy League school, is expensive. An undergrad, on-campus degree can put a family back by about \$70,000 a year. Platforms like BrainGain Global can play a pivotal role in serving as a bridge between students and universities to choose the college that best fits a student's profile and interests, smoothening the path towards enrolling in a short-term, high-value course.

The writer is founder-CEO, BrainGain Global

## QUOTEUNQUOTE

The world is experiencing unprecedented times and global GDP and employment rate is at an all-time low. India is also at the cusp of systemic transformation in the economy. Newer trends and emerging technologies such as AI, ML, Internet of Things (IoT), data science, and analytics are creating undercurrents of the new paradigm. Education and skill development will lead us out of the current pandemic. There are numerous disruptions that the education system of the country had to face in 2020, and it has affected the overall learning and development process of the students. The government should make stronger efforts to incorporate AI, ML and Data Science training sessions at the grassroots level and build capacities and acumen for new-age tech domains in educational institutions. Doing so will empower the masses with the required knowledge, innovation and competencies to navigate the AI-driven world of tomorrow.

—Kartik Sharma, Co-Founder, DcodeAI

One would like the Government to explore the possibility of increasing the capacity of the existing top-class institutes instead of focusing on starting new institutes at different locations. Many such institutes abroad operate with much larger intakes. With the increase in capacity at such institutes, more students can get into the so called 'top-institute'. Better utilisation would be possible for the existing infra of such institutes at a fraction of the costs compared to those incurred by setting up new infrastructure elsewhere. More students would mean better returns for the institutes financially which would mean the ability to provide the students with better faculty and resources. Equally important, a larger pool of students would also make it possible for the institutes to carry a bigger variety of disciplines in their courses. There will always be political pressures to start institutes at new/remote locations. It is now time to strengthen the existing institutes and make their 'top-quality' percolate to as many more deserving students as possible.

—Manek Daruvala, Founder-director, TIME

Education will see the Government pushing NEP roll out and incentivize ed-tech. The Government should not let this go of this opportunity and push larger public-private partnerships in both education and healthcare and create incentives to drive CSR Budgets in this direction. Skilling which saw its entire previous year's outlay go unutilized, would see a special impetus from Government and we are looking at historic allocation in skilling as the process of reskilling and bringing back the unemployed to the labour market assumes prime focus.

—Vivek Tuteja, Chairman and mentor, Endeavor Careers

Last year's budget had allocated 38,317 crore, 40% of the total budget towards higher education. With one in 5 students unskilled for the modern workplace and about 60% unemployment in the higher education graduates in India, I implore to the finance minister to increase the higher education budget by about at least 25%. Last year only 125Cr were allocated to teacher training and adult training. We need to significantly increase our focus on teachers as they are the backbone of the education system. We have to invest in the right future skill force, then only can we achieve the PM's \$5 trillion dream.

—Prof (col) Shishir Kumar, Director General, ImaginXP

The Budget needs to focus on policy measures that will turn around the economy and set it right on a growth trajectory. The government should strive to increase the disposable income of the middle classes so that discretionary spending will rise. Realigning the direct tax slabs and raising the tax exemption limit to 5 lacs will boost the consumption power of the masses and this, in turn, will lead to an increased demand for goods and services. Any tax loss from this move will be more than compensated by the growth in consumer spending and the subsequent increase in indirect tax proceeds.

—Akshay Hegde, Co-founder-MD, ShakeDeal

# VIRAT IS MY CAPTAIN & I'M HIS DEPUTY: RAHANE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ajinkya Rahane has won many a fans with his astute captaincy during the Indian team's epic triumph in Australia but he would like to make it very clear that the undisputed leader of this side is Virat Kohli and he is happy filling in when required.

Come February 5, Rahane will again be the vice-captain of the Test team against England with Kohli back in the saddle. So will things be different now when he once again dons the vice captain's hat?

"Nothing changes. Virat was and will always be the captain of the Test team and I am his deputy. When he was absent it was my duty to lead the side and my responsibility to give my best for Team India's success," Rahane, who was on his way to Chennai, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

For the vice-captain, it was not about being on the hot seat but having the ability to perform the role to perfection that mattered the most.

"It's not the matter of merely being a captain. How you perform the captain's role is what's more important. So far I have been successful. Hopefully, in future also, I will try to give these kind of results for my team," said the man, who has led his country to four wins in five Tests.

Reflecting on his relationship with Kohli, Rahane said it has always been smooth.

"Me and Virat have always shared a good bonding with each other. He has time and again praised my batting. Both of us played memorable knocks for our team in India and overseas conditions. It only helped that Virat comes at No.4 and myself at No.5. We have had a lot of partnerships," the 32-year-old said.

Theirs is a relationship that has been based on transparency and mutual respect.

"We have always backed each other's game. When we are at the crease, we dis-



count threadbare about opposition's bowling. We caution each other whenever one of us plays a rash shot."

And how does he find Kohli as a captain?

"Virat is a sharp captain. He takes good on-field decisions. Whenever the spinners are in operation, he is banking on me and he believes that taking those catches at slips off (Ravichandran) Ashwin and (Ravindra) Jadeja is one of

my core competence areas.

"Virat expects a lot from me and I try and ensure not to let him down," said Rahane, who is 13 short of a milestone of 100 catches in Test matches as an outfielder.

Rahane's classy hundred in the Melbourne Test, according to head coach Ravi Shastri, was a catalyst for change.

Having gone through rough patches in the past few years, does he feel more

secure about his place in the Test side now?

"Honestly speaking, I never ever felt that my place in the side was ever in danger. The captain and team management always had faith in me," said the Mumbaier, who has 4472 runs in 69 Tests with 12 hundreds at an average of 42.58.

Rahane believes in the old adage that form is temporary but class is permanent.

## Kohli has made India tough side: Hussain

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England captain Nasser Hussain feels Virat Kohli has instilled a fighting attitude in the current Indian team, which does not get bullied by adversities, whether on or off the field.

Despite missing some key players to injuries and skipper Kohli, who was on paternity leave, an inexperienced Indian team, led by Ajinkya Rahane, displayed grit and determination to register a historic come-from-behind 2-1 series win over Australia.

Hussain warned England to be ready for a tough one in the four-Test series against India, starting February 5 in Chennai.

"Any side that can go to Australia, go 1-0 down after being bowled out for 36, lose Kohli because he's going home on paternity leave, lose your bowling attack and still come back and win after some of the stuff that went on off the field in Australia, they won't be bullied," he told Sky Sports.

"They (India) are a tough side. I think Kohli has instilled that. Make no

mistake, at home, they are a formidable outfit."

Insisting that England will head into the India assignment with plenty of confidence after the 2-0 series sweep of Sri Lanka, Hussain urged the visitors to field their best eleven in the first Test.

Hussain had earlier taken strong objection to England's decision to rest Jonny Bairstow for the first two India Tests.

"That's a really good sign that they're doing that, with harder tasks ahead. The Ashes, India home and away, New Zealand confirmed, but that is great momentum and confidence going into an iconic series which is India away," he said.

"...I was brought up in India and I've always seen India vs England as one of the great series - all I would have asked is turn up to Chennai with your best 13 to 15 players."

"I think England fans have earned the right for their best team to be there that first day. If it means (Stuart) Broad and (James) Anderson playing together because it's a bit green, worry about the Ashes down the line."

in Rahane but he downplayed his role.

"With regards to leadership, I can only say that it varies from person to person. A captain is as good as his team. When you win a match or a series, it's always a collective effort and not because of singular man's contribution."

"It's your teammates only, who make you a good leader. The complete credit of this series win belongs to my team," concluded the reticent cricketer.

## 'After a rest, I'll be raring go to India'



PTI ■ LONDON

England batsman Jonny Bairstow admits it is "tricky" to miss the first two Tests against India next month but says there is no other slot to take a break and he will be "raring to go" when he comes back to the side later in the tour.

Bairstow, Sam Curran and Mark Wood were rested by the national selectors for the first two Tests beginning in Chennai on February 5, a decision which was criticised by former England skipper Michael Vaughan and Kevin Pietersen.

The England tour of India comprises four Tests, five T20Is and three ODIs.

"If they hadn't given me the break now, then when? It's the way of the world at the moment. There's no one who plays all three formats who is doing the whole tour," Bairstow was quoted as saying by *Evening Standard*.

"It's tricky. It's a huge summer and winter and sadly you can't do everything. You do need to get out of the bubble and see your loved ones," he said.

"After a rest, I'll be raring to go in India." Coming back to England Test set-up, Bairstow scored 139 runs at an average of 46 in the two Tests in Sri Lanka and was involved in two of England's three stands of more than 100.

"I've absolutely loved being back. I was a bit emotional yesterday being back in the dressing room when you've won a series reaffirms why you keep doing it and never give it up. It's special," said the 31-year-old wicketkeeper batsman.

"I'd have liked to get a big score but I'm really happy with how I've played having not played a huge amount of red ball cricket for a little while, to come back in and spend the amount of time at the crease and contribute the way I have is really pleasing."

Bairstow had earned a Test recall for the Sri Lanka series, having last played for England in the Boxing Day match against South Africa in Cape Town in 2019.

"It was frustrating because I wanted to prove that I could play red-ball cricket, which I hold so dearly. My aspirations are to play Test cricket for as long as possible," said Bairstow, who has scored 4169 runs in 72 Tests at 35.03.

"I tried to play in between bubbles but it's hard to properly get your teeth stuck into it, because going and playing a game for Yorkshire is not the same as a Test series, with a lead-in to get your game and mindset in order."

## Countering India will be big challenge for Eng spinners: Jayawardene

PTI ■ LONDON

England spinners Dom Bess and Jack Leach must have gained a lot by bowling in Sri Lanka in a just-concluded series but a bigger challenge awaits them against India in the four-Test rubber starting February 5, feels former Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardene.

Left-arm spinner Leach claimed 10 wickets in the two-match series while off-spinner Bess took 12 in England's 2-0 victory.

"I think that's going to be a very exciting series and a very good challenge for this group of players. That's what cricket is all about. You need to go away and win the Test series," Jayawardene told *Sky Sports*.

"The two spinners (Bess and Leach) will have learned a lot here but it will be a bigger challenge in India."

Jayawardene though believes that England are "well



prepared" for the India series, especially when they will have services of star all-rounder Ben Stokes and impressive paceman Jofra Archer.

Both Stokes and Archer were rested for the Sri Lanka series.

"Getting Ben Stokes back will be a massive advantage for England because he will bring that experience and be another left-handed batsman in their top-order which can be crucial," said Jayawardene.

"Jofra Archer will bring something to the table with his pace, especially on slower wickets. So I think overall they are very well prepared."

Opener Rory Burns has also been called for the India assignment but it won't be easy for him to be battle-ready for international cricket, according to the Sri Lankan.

Burns, who has an experience of 21 Tests under his belt, last played in domestic matches at home, about four months back.

"It will be a challenge for Rory Burns if he opens. He hasn't played much cricket lately."

Jayawardene was also "disappointed" that wicket-keeper Jonny Bairstow is not in the squad "given his experience and the way he batted in this (Sri Lanka) series".

## Honours even on Day 1

Pak lose 4 in 1st innings after restricting SA for 220

AP ■ KARACHI

South Africa came back roaring after being skittled out for 220 on a bowler-dominated first day Tuesday of its first test in Pakistan in more than 13 years.

Pakistan was reduced to 33-4 at stumps on a pitch devoid of grass as 14 wickets fell on an eventful opening day of the two-test series.

South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada, playing his first test in a year, removed openers Abid Ali (4) and debutant Imran Butt (9) off deliveries with uneven bounce. Rabada had impressive figures of 6-3-8-2.

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj also had captain Babar Azam trapped leg before wicket for 7 off his third delivery, and Andrich Nortje knocked back the stumps of nightwatchman Shaheen Afridi for a duck.

At stumps, Azhar Ali and Fawad Alam were both unbeaten on 5.

Earlier, legspinner Yasir Shah grabbed 3-54 and left-arm spinner Nauman Ali 2-38 on debut to peg back South Africa after it won the toss and started confidently.

Opening batsman Dean Elgar top-scored with 58 off 106 balls with nine fours, and No. 9 batsman Rabada remained unbeaten on 21 as South Africa, 94-2 at lunch, lost its last eight wickets for 112 runs.

Faf du Plessis and Elgar were using their feet well against the spinners by lunch but Shah brought Pakistan back when he had du Plessis caught behind on 23 in his second over after the break. Du Plessis should have been out on 14 immediately after lunch but Abid couldn't hold on to a sharp catch at forward short leg.

Nauman got into the act in his seventh and



eighth overs, mainly because of the Proteas' wrong shot selection. Captain Quinton de Kock, in his 50th test, tried a reckless pull on 15 and was caught at midwicket, then Elgar tried a loose drive and edged into the slips after nearly three hours at 136-5.

Temba Bavuma added 43 runs with George Linde, but just before tea the diminutive Bavuma couldn't beat a strong throw from Hasan Ali while going for a second run. Bavuma was out for 17.

Linde successfully overturned a lbw decision against him off Shah on 14 before holing out in the deep, which gave Hasan Ali his first wicket in his return to test cricket after two years.

In the last session, Shah picked up two quick wickets but Rabada was missed twice, one of them a drop.

## TN, Punjab in Mushtaq Ali semis

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Punjab knocked defending champions Karnataka out from the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with their bowlers setting up a comfortable nine-wicket win in the first quarter-final, here on Tuesday.

In the second quarter-final, Tamil Nadu defeated Himachal Pradesh by five wickets to seal their semi-final spot.

Punjab first dismissed Karnataka for meagre 87 and then overhauled the target in 12.4 overs in what turned out to be a lopsided contest at the Sardar Patel stadium.

Pacers Siddharth Kaul (3/15) and Sandeep Sharma (2/17) ran through the Karnataka top-order after they were sent in to bat.



Karnataka was reeling at 26 for three, after openers Karun Nair (12) and Dewdutt Padikkal (11) fell cheaply. Pavan Deshpande (0) was

dismissed off his second ball, as Mayank Markande took a diving catch.

Kaul dismissed both Padikkal and Deshpande in the fourth over.

It soon became 26 for four, as young left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh (2/16) dismissed B R Sharath (2), who was caught in the slip cordon.

All-rounder Shreyas Gopal (13), who has often come to Karnataka's rescue too could not convert his start as he edged to wicket-keeper Prabhsimran Singh off pacer Ramandeep Singh (2/22) as Karnataka lost its half side for 51.

Ramandeep got his second wicket when he sent back J Suchith (8) to leave Karnataka at 72 for six.

Leggie Mayank Markande (1/12) then got into the act as he cleaned up a well-set Anirudh Joshi (27). Punjab continued their dominance over their opposition and ran through their lower order.

In reply, Punjab lost opener Abhishek Sharma (4) early but Prabhsimran Singh (49 not out off 37 balls) and Mandeeep Singh (35 not out) ensured that the chase was walk in the park with their 85-run unbeaten start for the second wicket. Prabhsimran, who took on the listless Karnataka attack, fittingly finished the game with a six.

In the evening game, put into bat, TN first restricted HP to 135/9 and then rode on Baba Aparajith's unbeaten 52 to overhaul the target in 17.5 overs.

## Sindhu, Srikanth look to turn tide

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Premier Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth need to shrug off the disappointments of the last two weeks as they gear up for the highly-competitive HSBC BWF World Tour Finals, beginning here on Wednesday.

World champion and Olympic silver medalist Sindhu, who had won the prestigious title in 2018, has been clubbed in Group 'B' alongside top-ranked Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei and home favourites Ratchanok Intanon and Pornpawee Chochuwong.

Sindhu's comeback to international badminton after the coronavirus-induced break was not as good as she would have expected.

The Indian, who has been training in London for the last few months, couldn't go the distance after losing a close opening match in Thailand Open, the first of the Asia leg.

In the second event last week, Sindhu suffered a demoralising straight game defeat against former world champion Ratchanok in the quarterfinals and she will have to gather herself as she opens her campaign against magician Tzu Ying, who reached the finals in both the Thailand Opens.

Former world number one Srikanth, on the other hand, has been clubbed in Group 'B' with Denmark's Anders Antonsen, Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei and Hong Kong's NG Ka Long Angus.

Srikanth, who had reached the semifinals of BWF Super Series Masters Finals in 2014, couldn't spend enough time on the court.

He had pulled out of the first Thailand Open ahead of the second round due to a calf muscle pull, while he was forced to withdraw after the opening round last week.

## Ndombele's double inspires Spurs

AP ■ WYCOMBE (ENGLAND)

Gareth Bale scored only his fourth goal since returning to Tottenham in leading a comeback to beat Wycombe 4-1 in the FA Cup.

Playing his first full match of the season on Monday, Bale netted before half-time to cancel out Fred Onyedimma's shock opener for the second-tier side.

With extra time looming, Harry Winks put Tottenham in front with a curling strike in the 86th minute then Tanguy Ndombele netted twice.

Jose Mourinho's side plays Everton in the fifth round to maintain its challenge in four competitions. Mourinho named a strong team and this was a chance for Bale to show why he should be in the team more often while back on loan from Real Madrid.

He wasted a chance after five minutes by heading wide and dragged an effort wide from another good position on the edge of the area.

Those misses proved costly as Wycombe took the lead in the 25th minute.

Uche Ikpeazu got the better of Tottenham defender Toby Alderweireld down the right and his cross was not cleared by Davinson Sanchez, who could only divert it into the path of Onyedimma to fire home.

Spurs went for a quick response and the chances continued to rack up. Japhet Tanganga headed over from a corner immediately after, Bale hit the side-netting with another good chance, and Moussa Sissoko's deflected effort from the edge of the area cannoned into the cross-bar.



bar, but his side finally levelled in first-half stoppage time.

Lucas Moura found space on the left and Bale broke the offside trap to hook home from close range.

That ought to have been the platform for Spurs to go on and win the game comfortably in the second half but a raft of missed chances caused unnecessary stress.

Bale was again wasteful after surging into the area, Erik Lamela could not get a proper connection on his shot from a good position and fired straight at Ryan Alsoop, and then Moura poked wide after finding space on the edge of the area.

Mourinho was not prepared to risk anything so he sent on Kane and Son Heung-min, but they too were equally wasteful.

Kane saw his shot blocked by Alsoop after miscontrolling, and Son flashed an effort wide after a trademark dart into the area.

But Spurs won it with a two-goal salvo in the space of 72 seconds.