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NEW DELHI, FRIDAY MARCH 12, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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# Didi plans wheelchair campaign

## Be calm, CM urges workers; no change in drive map, says TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Day after fracture in her ankle, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is planning to resume her Assembly poll campaign, albeit on wheelchair, even as she released a video on Thursday asking her party workers to maintain calm.

The Chief Minister had to be hospitalised on Wednesday evening after she fell and broke her left ankle during the election campaign in Nandigram.

TMC leadership said that her election campaign programmes would remain unchanged and Mamata is sure to attend five back-to-back rallies at Purulia and Bankura on March 13 and 14.

While asking the agitating party workers to remain calm in a video message, the Chief Minister said her leg got crushed when a crowd standing by the road pressed against the front door of her vehicle which was half open while she was standing on it and waving at the onlookers.

Mamata had on Wednesday evening alleged



"conspiracy" blaming 4-5 men who committed the "mischief" prompting the Trinamool Congress workers to start demonstrating all across the State. The TMC also submitted a memorandum to the Election Commission of India seeking a thorough investigation into the matter.

The condition of the Chief Minister was stable, doctors said, adding a cast has been put on her left leg. While the MRI scan showed abrasion or hairline fracture, a six-member

team of doctors also said that some more radiological tests would be conducted on her "to ascertain the reason for the front headache and chest pain."

In her video message, Mamata said, "I appeal to everyone to remain calm and not create disturbance to the common man... I will soon return and start campaign... no programme will be hampered. I will manage it all. If need be I will campaign on a wheelchair."

She said, "It is true that I

was badly hurt while campaigning in Nandigram during which my leg and arm were injured. There were bone injuries... ligament injuries... I also suffered chest pain."

Speaking about the cause of the injury she said, "I was greeting people from the car bonnet and the crowd pressed into me, the entire pressure was on me. My leg got injured after which I was given medicines and taken to Kolkata."

Mamata's video statement notwithstanding, her party leaders continued with the "conspiracy" narrative accusing the Election Commission "which is in charge of the State administration now" for "compromising the Chief Minister's security."

Harping on the conspiracy theory, senior TMC leaders Firhad Hakim, and Saugato Roy, who visited the accident spot on Thursday, said, "It is strange that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not call up even once to enquire after the Chief Minister's health. This is unprecedented and clearly speaks about the insensitivity of the BJP." Roy is going to Delhi

to lodge a formal complaint with the EC on Friday.

Dismissing the BJP's theory that the door of Mamata's vehicle on which she was standing got hit by a roadside post causing her the freak injury, Roy and Hakim said had it been so then the door of her vehicle — NoWB02 AN - 5555 — would suffer dents or bear scratch marks... but nothing of that sort was found in the vehicle.

TMC Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien who formally wrote a letter to the Commission on his party's behalf, said, "You have to understand the chronology. You removed the DGP, compromised her security, and then attacked her. If you go through social media posts by the BJP leaders there have been indications that she would be attacked."

There was no reaction from the EC though inside sources said that EC had instructed all the DMs and SPs to take precautionary measures concerning the Prime Minister and the CM.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Steady rise in Covid cases worries Centre

## 23K cases in 24 hrs, highest since Jan 7; Maha takes lead

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After showing a decline, India's daily Covid-19 cases are now moving northwards with Maharashtra taking the lead, causing concern for the authorities.

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*Continued on Page 2*



A health worker collects a swab sample of an elderly resident of Dharavi during a door-to-door screening for Covid-19 in Mumbai on Thursday

# Delhi's daily count spikes to 2-month high of 409, 3 die

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 409 fresh cases of Covid-19, the highest daily count in the past two months on Thursday. With three fresh deaths reported on Thursday, the death toll rose to 10,934 in the national Capital.

The total number of people infected with life-threatening Covid-19 has reached 6,42,439 while the daily positivity rate stayed at 0.59 per cent, according to the health bulletin issued by the Delhi Government.

These 409 new cases came out of the 69,810, tests conducted the previous day, including 42,187 RT-PCR tests and 25,623 rapid antigen tests. According to the bulletin issued by the Delhi Health

Department, out of the total number of 5,711 beds in Covid hospitals, 5,132 are vacant.

The number of people under home isolation climbed to 1,028 from 982 on Wednesday, it said, adding that over 6.29 lakh people have recovered from the infection till date. The highest single-day spikes 8,593 cases till date was reported on November 11.

The number of containment zones in Delhi has shown intermittent rise and fall in the last several days, with the figure standing at 592 on Thursday, it said. It said four beds in Covid care centres are occupied by persons under quarantine, including travellers who have returned by the Vande Bharat Mission.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Modi's photo taken off Covid jab certificates in poll-bound States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

suggested by the Commission," Bhushan wrote.

Following a complaint by the Trinamool Congress, the EC had written to the Ministry on March 5 reiterating its standing instructions on the use of photos of political leaders in Government advertisements during elections and asked the Health Ministry to follow the model code in letter and spirit.

It had suggested the use of filters in the Co-WIN platform to exclude the picture of the Prime Minister in Covid-19 certificates being given to people in the poll-bound States and the UT.

Sources aware of the correspondence between the EC and the Ministry said the panel didn't refer to any individual or personality but had asked the Health Ministry to follow the provisions of the model code in letter and spirit.

Meanwhile, an expert panel recommended the

# Covishield to cost less than ₹200 in pvt hospitals: Govt

## Covaxin clinical trial mode label removed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

removal of the "clinical trial mode" label attached to the emergency authorisation of Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin.

The Centre on Thursday said that the DCGI has granted it the restricted emergency use authorisation mode.

"Covaxin has been granted the permission for restricted

use in emergency situation in public interest and that both Covid-19 vaccines Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute have the same licensure status now," NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul said at a press conference here.

*Continued on Page 2*

Denmark, Norway, Iceland suspend use of AstraZeneca shots

**Copenhagen:** Denmark, Norway and Iceland on Thursday temporarily suspended the use of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine over concerns about patients developing post-jab blood clots, as the manufacturer and Europe's medicines watchdog insisted the vaccine was safe.

Denmark was first to announce its suspension, following reports of serious cases of blood clots among those who had received the shot, the Health Authority said.

## 6-month prison for flouting face mask rule in Nilgiris

**Udhagamandalam:** Amid increase in Covid-19 cases in several States, the administration in Nilgiris district, home to popular tourist destinations, on Thursday warned of six months imprisonment to those found without face masks in public places. District Collector Innocent Divya issued the warning to prevent a second wave of Covid-19 in the backdrop of rise in fresh cases of late in various states and cities, official sources said.



Devotees perform abhishek of Lord Shiva on Maha Shivratri in New Delhi on Thursday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## CAPSULE

### 2 JeM ULTRAS KILLED IN J&K'S ANANTNAG

Srinagar: Two Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorists were killed in an overnight encounter with security forces in Anantnag district of Jammu & Kashmir, police said on Thursday. The security forces launched a cordon and search operation at Kandipora in Bijbehara area of the district on Wednesday following information about the presence of terrorists there, a police official said.

### KEDARNATH TEMPLE TO REOPEN ON MAY 17

Dehradun: The Kedarnath Temple will be reopened for devotees on May 17, a spokesperson of the Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board said on Thursday. Badrinath Temple, which was closed on November 19, will reopen on May 18. Gangotri and Yamunotri temples will reopen on May 14. The Char Dham Yatra will begin after reopening of the temples.

### CHINA OPPOSES TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE, SAYS LI

Beijing: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on Thursday that China opposes separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence" but welcomes any dialogue by Taiwanese political parties on cross-Straits relations. China considers Taiwan as part of it and vows to integrate it with the Chinese mainland.

# Bank unions call for strike on Mar 15, 16 against privatisation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine unions, has given a call for a two-day strike from March 15 to protest against the proposed privatisation of two state-owned lenders.

In the Union Budget presented last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) as part of its disinvestment plan.

The Government has already privatised IDBI Bank by selling its majority stake in the lender to LIC in 2019 and merged 14 public sector banks in the last four years.

Conciliation meetings before the Additional Chief Labour Commissioner on March 4, 9 and 10 — did not yield any positive result. All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) general secretary CH Venkatachalam said in a statement.

"Hence, it has been decided to go ahead with the strike

for 2 continuous days on 15th and 16th March 2021. About 10 lakh bank employees and officers of the banks will participate in the strike," he claimed.

Most of the banks, including the State Bank of India (SBI), have informed their customers about the impact on functioning of branches and offices if the strike materialises. Banks have also informed that they are taking necessary steps for the smooth functioning of bank branches and offices on the days of the proposed strike.

Members of UFBU include All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), National Confederation of Bank Employees (NCBE), All India Bank Officers' Association (AIBOA) and Bank Employees Federation (BEFI).

Others are Indian National Bank Employees Federation (INBEF), Indian National Bank Officers Congress, National Organisation of Bank Workers and National Organisation of Bank Officers.

# Congress biggest loser of political defection

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 170 MLAs left Cong during polls between 2016 and 2020



The Congress has been the biggest loser of political defection as 170 of its MLAs left the party to join other parties during the elections held between 2016 and 2020.

"It is to be noted that the recent fall of Governments in Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh and Karnataka State Assemblies were due to defections of their MLAs," the report said.

For the 2019 LS polls, the report said, It said between 2016 and

# Delhi's hottest day so far this year at 35.2°C; IMD predicts rain today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Residents of Delhi battled hot day on Thursday with the city recording a maximum temperature of 35.2 degrees Celsius, six notches above normal and the highest so far this year, the India Meteorological Department said.

The minimum temperature settled at 17.2 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal. Light rain, hail and gusty winds are likely towards the night, the IMD said.

The mercury is expected to settle around 35 degrees Celsius for the next three to four days, it said. The air quality in the national Capital was recorded in the "poor" category. The 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) was 242, according to real-time data of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

An AQI between 201 and 300 is considered "poor", 301-400 "very poor" and 401-500 "severe", while an AQI above 500 falls in the "severe plus" category.

The relative humidity at 8.30 am was 87 per cent, they



"We are expecting light rainfall activity and clouding over the plains in the next 2-3 days. Over Delhi, rain is expected around March 12. Widespread rain and thunderstorms are expected over the hills. There may be a marginal dip in maximum temperatures over Delhi after the WD moves away but that will be only for March 13 and 14," said Kuldeep Srivastava, head, regional weather forecasting centre.

# PM to flag off 'Padyatra' from Sabarmati Ashram

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off a 'Padyatra' (March) from Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat on Friday and launch various initiatives planned under 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence.

The padayatra will be joined by different groups of people on the way to Dandi.

Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel will lead the first lap of 75 kilometres of the padayatra, which will be undertaken by 81 marchers from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Navsari, a journey of 241 miles that will end on April 5, lasting for 25 days.

Modi will also launch various other cultural and digital initiatives for the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and will also address the gathering at Sabarmati Ashram.

Gujarat Governor Acharya

Devrat, Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel and Chief Minister of Gujarat Vijay Rupani will also be present on the occasion, scheduled to commence at 10.30 a.m.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is a series of events to be organised by the Central government to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence. The Mahotsav will be celebrated as a Jan-Utsav in the spirit of Jan-Bhagidari.

A National Implementation Committee headed by the Home Minister has been constituted to chalk out policies and planning of various events to be undertaken under the Commemoration. The curtain raiser activities are beginning from March 12, 75 weeks prior to August 15, 2022.

The event will witness the inauguration of the curtain raiser activities planned under the theme India@75 like a film, website, song,

Atmanirbhar Charkha and Atmanirbhar Incubator.

Along with the above initiatives, a cultural programme presenting the celebration of the indomitable spirit of the country will also be organized. It will include music, dance, recitation, reading of the Preamble of the Constitution (each line in a different language, representing the different regions of the country).

Depicting the youth power as the future of India there will be 75 voices in the choir as well as 75 dancers in the event.

State and UT Governments are also organizing programmes all over India on March 12. In addition to these programmes, the Archaeological Survey of India and Zonal Cultural Centres under the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Youth Affairs and TRIFED have planned various activities to mark the occasion.

IANS

## Unable to pay school fee, UP student shoots himself dead

Shahjahanpur (UP): A Class 12 student allegedly committed suicide in this Uttar Pradesh district as he was 'upset' over his father's failure to pay his school fee, police said on Thursday.

Anup Kumar (18) shot himself with a countrymade pistol on Wednesday, after his father told him that he could not arrange the money for his school fee, Deputy Superintendent of Police Mahendra Kumar said.

The deceased's father, Parmeshwar Dayal, who works as a labourer, told the police that two months ago, his son had asked for Rs 8,000 to pay his school fee. On Wednesday, he again asked his father about the money.

The body of the deceased has been sent for post-mortem, PTI

## Road accident in Agra leaves nine dead

PTI ■ NOIDA

Nine people died in Uttar Pradesh's Agra district on Thursday morning after an SUV collided with a tractor-trolley, police said.

Three others injured in the crash are hospitalised, Agra Senior Superintendent of Police Babloo Kumar said.

The incident took place on the Agra-Kanpur highway in the Etawah police station area around 5 am, he said.

"The speeding SUV crossed over to the other side of the road where it hit the tractor-trolley. There were 12 people who got injured and were taken to a hospital, where nine of them succumbed to the injuries," Kumar said.

The victims belong to Jharkhand, he added.

Further details were awaited.

## Gauhati HC stays wage hike for tea garden staff



**Guwahati:** In a new twist in poll-bound Assam, the Gauhati High Court has stayed the State Government's decision to enhance daily wages to over 7,46 lakh tea garden workers in the state.

A court official on Thursday said that the court stayed the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's February 20 decision to hike the daily wages to 7,46,667 tea garden workers by Rs 50 -- from Rs 167 to Rs 217 -- on a petition filed by the Indian Tea Association (ITA).

Hearing the petition of the ITA and 17 tea companies that own over 90 per cent of tea estates in Assam, Justice Michael Zothankhuma upheld the argument that the wage hike was "illegal" as no committee or sub-committee had been formed, as required under relevant sections of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

The court asked the government not to take any action against the ITA and the tea companies until a case challenging the state Labour Department's notification on

the wage hike, is disposed of.

As the Assembly poll campaign picked up, the focus of all parties have been more on the tea garden votes. In wake of the court order, the leaders of the Congress-led seven party "Mahajot" (grand alliance) and the front headed by the Assam Jatiya Parishad have immediately begun campaigning against the BJP's "betrayal of

trust" with the tea workers.

The Congress already announced five guarantees" for the people to be fulfilled if the party comes to power, including raising the tea workers' daily wages to Rs 365 from the existing Rs 167.

Following the ruling, the opposition party termed the recent hike of the tea garden workers' wages as a "poll gimmick".

"The BJP government had not followed proper official procedure to raise the daily wages of tea garden workers as per the Act mentioned in the Labour Department notification. No committees or sub-committees were formed before the wage hike," Congress spokesperson Bobeeta Sarma said.

The Congress also claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to revise the daily wages of tea workers in Assam to Rs 350 prior to the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Increase in daily wages of tea garden workers is an election issue in Assam with opposition parties, including the

Congress, criticising the BJP-led government for deliberately delaying wage revision for the last several years.

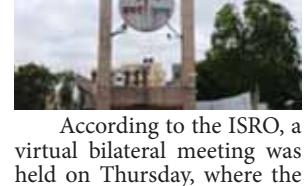
While the tea garden workers in southern Assam are getting daily wages of Rs 145 per day, the workers in the remaining areas of the state are getting Rs 167 per day.

However, the ruling BJP is confident that the court's order is not going to affect the party's poll prospects. "This will not affect our election prospects in any way. If there were technical mistakes, the government would rectify them after retaining power. No party in Assam has done so far as much for the tea community as the BJP has done," party's state President Ranjeet Kumar Dass told the media.

Assam has over 10 lakh tea garden workers in the organised sector working in 850 tea estates. The state roughly produces 55 per cent of India's total tea production of 1,389.70 million kg. Tea tribe communities determine the votes in 30 to 35 of the state's 126 Assembly seats.

## ISRO, JAXA to collaborate on paddy acreage, air quality monitoring

**Chennai:** The space agencies of India and Japan on Thursday agreed on collaborative activities for rice crop area and air quality monitoring using satellite data, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said.



According to the ISRO, a virtual bilateral meeting was held on Thursday, where the Indian delegation was led by ISRO Chairman K. Sivan, and the Japanese delegation led by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) President Hiroshi Yamakawa.

Both agencies signed an implementing arrangement for collaborative activities on rice crop area and air quality monitoring using satellite data, ISRO said.

The two agencies, while reviewing their on-going programmes in earth observation, lunar cooperation and satellite navigation, also agreed to explore opportunities for cooperation in space situational awareness and professional exchange programme. IANS

## UN forum appreciates Haryana Police's effort to reduce accidents

**Chandigarh:** The UN Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety has appreciated the initiative launched by the Haryana Police for reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by road accidents on the Sonipat-Ambala National Highway 44.

Under this initiative, the police have fixed the target of reducing the number of road accidents and deaths on the 187-km stretch passing through Haryana by 33 per cent in the current year.

In this context, DGP Manoj Yadava addressed a webinar of

UN Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety wherein he highlighted the various components of this initiative.

He mentioned that in 2018, 743 people had died due to road accidents on this stretch, which is more than the total number of deaths in the entire Netherlands and the UAE during that year.

He explained that the police had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE) for carrying out road safety audits of every kilometre of the highway passing through

Haryana. The road engineering related improvements suggested by the IRTE will be implemented by the NHAI as part of the special understanding by the police and the state department of transport.

Since a large number of road fatalities involves pedestrians and cyclists, the police along with the other stakeholder authorities will create underpasses and foot overbridges at points where large number of pedestrians cross the road in Sonipat and Panipat districts.

IANS

The bodies have been sent for post-mortem. IANS

## Steady rise...

From Page 1

While daily cases have been rising since mid-February, reaching the levels seen in the last week of December, the uptick in daily fatalities is not the same as that was witnessed during that period.

India recorded 126 fresh fatalities on Wednesday with six States accounted for 82.54 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra registered maximum casualties (54), followed by Punjab (17) and Kerala (14), the Ministry said.

Also, eight States have displayed an upward trajectory in daily new cases. These are Maharashtra, Punjab,

Karnataka, Gujarat, Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Karnataka recorded 760 cases on Wednesday, while Gujarat reported 675 cases.

India currently has 1,89,226 active Covid-19 cases, which account for 1.68 per cent of its total caseload.

Showing the change in the number of active cases for the States in the 24-hour period, the Health Ministry said Kerala reported the maximum decline in the figure while Maharashtra has shown the maximum increase.

Nineteen States and Union territories -- Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Goa, Jharkhand, Puducherry,

Lakshadweep, Sikkim, Ladakh, Manipur, Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh -- have not reported any Covid-19 death in the said period.

Meanwhile, more than 2.56 crore (2,56,85,011) vaccine doses have so far been administered in the country through 4,78,168 sessions, according to a provisional report compiled at Thursday 7 am, the Ministry said.

The beneficiaries include 71,97,100 healthcare workers (HCWs) who have been administered the first dose, 40,13,249 HCWs who have

been given the second dose, 70,54,659 frontline workers (FLWs) who have been given the first dose and 6,37,281 FLWs who have received the second dose.

Besides, 9,67,058 beneficiaries aged above 45 years with specific co-morbidities and 58,15,664 beneficiaries aged above 60 years have also received the first dose of the vaccine.

On the 54th day (March 10) of the ongoing vaccination drive, a total of 13,17,357 vaccine doses were administered - 10,30,243 beneficiaries inoculated across 20,299 sessions for the first dose and 2,87,114 HCWs and FLWs given the second dose.

Opposition. But we do not want such backdoor entry into politics. We want to fight her in the game and defeat her from the front. Let her come and campaign and face defeat frontally."

Another senior TMC leader Partho Chatterjee said, that the State's law and order condition was "good" before the elections were announced and it has deteriorated only after the EC took charge."

Elsewhere rejecting the "conspiracy" theory the BJP leadership hit back saying "why on earth the conspirators who want to kill the Chief Minister will target the leg ... and why on earth a party will want to ruin its electoral chances by mounting such trivial attacks."

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh "wishing the Chief Minister early recovery" said "it is easy to plaster your leg and lie down crying conspiracy -- in order to gather sympathy -- and it is difficult to fight the elections taking on a surging

## Gujarat sees 3 rapes of adolescents everyday, 6,215 cases in 5 yrs

**Gandhinagar:** The Vibrant state of Gujarat is also vibrant as far as rapes of adolescent girls is concerned. The state has seen more than three rapes of adolescent girls everyday during the past 5 years. According to the state government figures released in the ongoing Assembly session there were 6,215 incidents of adolescent girls raped in the period from October 2015 to 2020 and 6 incidents of gang rape.

Congress MLA from Petlad, Nirjanan Patel had raised the question before Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani as to how many rape incidents had occurred from October 2015 till September 2020 in Gujarat, how many persons were still to be nabbed and what action did the government take to curb such incidents.

In reply the Gujarat government's home department informed that during the said period a total of 6,215 adolescent girls were raped in Gujarat. Practically this amounts to more than three rapes of teenage girls everyday in Gujarat which boasts of having coined the slogan, 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'.

Out of these 6,215, the Gujarat Police still has to arrest a total of 209 persons connected with the crimes.

In response to what steps did the government take to prevent such crimes, the home department replied that 39 women police stations were set up across the state. IANS

## Disabled girl raped in Bihar, accused held

IANS ■ SAHARSA

A horrific case of alleged rape with a physically challenged girl has come to light from Bihar's Saharsa district. The girl, a minor, suffers from speech disability, reports say.

Acting promptly in the case, the police have taken the accused into custody.

A police official said on Thursday, "a mute girl had gone to cut grass in a field not far from her residence. A boy, also staying in the same village, allegedly raped her on Wednesday. When she resisted the rape, the accused beat her up."

After the incident, other women cutting grass nearby caught hold of the accused, but his uncle managed to help him escape.

The police were immediately informed after this.

Deputy Superintendent of Police B.N. Mehta said: "The accused has been arrested. An FIR has been registered in a case in a women's police station. The accused is reportedly a minor. Further investigations are on."

I, Virender Kumar S/o Shri Gulshan Rai Sharma, R/o Flat No.C-101, DCP Office Complex, Opposite Surajmal Institute, C-4, Jankipuri, New Delhi-110058 (Permanent Address:WZ-88, Street No.3, Sadh Nagar, Palam Colony, New Delhi-110045) hereby declare that all the names Virender Kumar, Virender Sharma and Virender Kumar Sharma relate to one and the same person and in future shall be known as Virender Kumar for all purposes.

PD(8953)C  
Gopal Singh S/o Diwan Singh (Late), R/o House No-178-B 1/B Ward No-2, Mehrauli New Delhi-110030, have changed my name to Gopal Singh Mehta for all purposes.

PD(8954)C  
I, Mohammad Farooq Khan S/o Late Abdul Wahid Khan, R/o-C-24/1, Okhla Vihar, Jamia Nagar New Delhi-110025, declare that my correct and complete name is Mohammad Farooq Khan instead of Mohammad Farooq Khan.

PD(8955)A

## Delhi's daily count spikes to 2-month high of 409, 3 die

From Page 1

Delhi had recorded 370 new cases on Wednesday and 320 on Tuesday. The city

reported three deaths due to the disease on Wednesday and four on Tuesday.

On Sunday and Monday, 286 and 239 cases, respectively, were recorded in the national Capital. The city had registered 321 coronavirus cases and one death last Saturday, and 312 cases and a fatality on Friday.

A total of 585 cases were reported on January 1 and 384 on January 4. The daily count had dropped to 306 on January 11 and risen again to 386 on January 12, according to official figures.

The numbers had started to come down in February. On February 26, the month's highest daily count of 256 cases was recorded. On Thursday, 409 new coronavirus cases were recorded, taking the infection tally to 6,42,439, the bulletin said.

The Subject Expert Panel on Covid-19 of the CDSCO has recommended granting emergency use authorisation to Bharat Biotech's indigenously developed Covaxin while removing the condition for the vaccine to be administered in "clinical trial mode".

## Covishield to cost less...



# Congress seeks probe into Scania bus scam

**Gadkari's office rejects allegation, calls it malicious and fabricated**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI / MUMBAI

The Congress on Thursday demanded the Prime Minister Narendra Modi order a thorough probe into the matter even as Union Minister Nitin Gadkari's office termed as "malicious, fabricated, and baseless" the findings of international media reports that alleged that Swedish truck and bus manufacturer Scania offered a luxury bus to Gadkari for use in his daughter's wedding in 2016.

"The media allegations that in November 2016, Scania delivered a luxury bus to a company that had close ties with Gadkari's sons are malicious, fabricated and baseless," said a statement issued by the office of the Union Road Transport and Highways. "And the allegations that the bus was not paid for and was used for the wedding of Gadkari's daughter are nothing but a figment of media's imagination," it said.

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan, however, demanded a thorough probe into the matter. "Na khauna na khane dunga was PM Modi's key campaign promise which helped him



win the Lok Sabha election. Such a scathing report by two reputed international government broadcasters of grave corruption in India seriously damages India's reputation as a nation and that of Prime Minister Modi in particular. I hope Prime Minister Modi will institute a thorough inquiry to find out the truth in this matter," said Chavan in statement.

On Wednesday, news agency Reuters quoted a Swedish media report saying Scania delivered a specially-equipped bus to a company with connections to Gadkari that was intended for his daughter's wedding and was not fully paid for.

Denying the allegations, Gadkari's office said the minister and his family members have "absolutely nothing to do with the purchase or sale of the bus". "Nor do they have anything to do with any firm or individual who might be linked with the purchase or sale of the bus," the statement

said. Gadkari's office said it was an internal affair of the Swedish company. "Since the entire episode of the Scania bus is an internal affair of the Swedish company, it will be prudent for the media to wait for an official statement by Scania India which handled the matter," it said.

Gadkari's office clarified that the minister was a "pioneer in introducing Scania's Ethanol-run bus in Nagpur as a part of his drive to bring in green public transport in India". It said Gadkari encouraged the Nagpur Municipal Corporation to initiate a pilot project and the Nagpur civic body signed a commercial MOU with the Swedish company.

"Accordingly, Scania's Ethanol-operated buses started plying in Nagpur. It was purely a commercial arrangement between the Nagpur civic body and the Swedish bus manufacturers and Gadkari and his family had nothing to do with it," it said.

The BJP has released the list of 60 candidates for the first two phases of the elections. West Bengal elections will be held in

# BJP ropes in more MPs, MLAs for mission WB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP has roped in more of its MPs and MLAs across the country to work in West Bengal to fully charge and activate its organisational machinery for the first-phase of polling in the State.

According to sources, 22 leaders have been added to the BJP's West Bengal's already huge political team engaged in mass mobilisation and campaigning.

According to sources, Union Home Minister Amit Shah met these 22 leaders which included Nitin Navin, Arvind Limbawali, Radha Mohan Singh, Pravesh Verma, Ramesh Bidhuri, Vinod Tawde, Sankar Choudhary, Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, Nishikant Dubey, Mangal Pandey and Pradeep Singh Vaghela.

Besides, seven union ministers on the field, two additional central ministers petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Power Minister R K Singh have also been put on the job in the high-stake eight-phased battle for ballots in the State.

The election campaign is in full swing in West Bengal. Top leaders of BJP and Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States are visiting the state for the campaign.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi kick-started his poll campaign from Kolkata parade ground this week, his first since the announcement of poll dates by the election commission. Modi will address over 22 public rallies in the state.

The BJP has released the list of 60 candidates for the first two phases of the elections. West Bengal elections will be held in

# Didi only politician whose income has fallen, as per her EC affidavit

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee appears to be the only politician whose income and assets have declined in the last few years. The TMC supremo, who is ruling West Bengal for the two consecutive terms, has declared assets which are less than her declaration made during the 2016 Assembly elections.

According to her affidavit filed before the Election Commission on Wednesday, Mamata's assets come around only ₹17.41 lakh which include cash in hand of ₹69,255. In 2019-20, her income was ₹10.34 lakh as per income tax return filed by her.

On the other hand, Assam Chief Minister and BJP leader Sarbananda Sonowal's assets,



13,53,356.71. She has invested ₹18,490.00 in NSS. She also owns jewellery worth ₹43,837.

Her income was ₹10.34 lakh in

2019-20; ₹20.71 lakh in 2018-

19; ₹8.35 lakh in 2017-18 and

₹9.18 lakh in 2016-17 and ₹

1.72 lakh in 2015-16. As per

the affidavit, Mamata don't own any agricultural, non-

agricultural land and immovable properties in any form.

She has no liabilities, criminal cases and FIRs.

In 2016, Banerjee had declared assets worth a little over ₹30 lakh. Her movable assets comprise cash in hand of ₹18,436, ₹27,61 lakh in bank investments, nine grams of

jewellery worth ₹6,380, and a

multi-gym machine worth ₹2.15 lakh, besides ₹5,188 as personal advances. In the 2011

Assembly polls, her assets,

comprising entirely of move-

ables - were valued at ₹15.84

lakh.

Sonowal, in his affidavit submitted as a BJP candidate for Majuli (ST) candidate for the 2021 Assembly polls in the state, has declared total assets worth over ₹3.17 crore as

against over ₹1.85 crore in

2016, an increase of ₹

1,32,26,475. The 59-year old

chief minister's movable assets

have increased to more than ₹1.14 cr in 2021 as against

more than ₹70.44 lakh in 2016

while the immovable assets

have shown a rise from ₹1.15

cr submitted in the last polls to

over ₹2.02 cr. His bank

deposits have escalated more

than three-fold to ₹38,02,498

in 2021 from ₹12,13,320 in

2016 while the value of his

movable assets have swelled

from ₹28,90,794 to ₹43,26,461.

The Chief Minister owned

shares in Oil India Limited

(OIL) worth ₹8,77,500 in

2016 whose worth has risen to

₹13,04,697 this year.

eight phases from March 27 to April 29. The result will be declared on May 2.

# Temporary pick: Bittu leader of Congress in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday gave temporary charge of the position of Lok Sabha leader to Ludhiana Lok Sabha MP Ravneet Singh Bittu. Bittu will discharge the role for the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament. Bittu is the party's chief whip in Lok Sabha.

The appointment came on Thursday after Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, leader of Congress in Lok Sabha, had to leave for campaigning in the upcoming State elections.

With Deputy leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi also busy with Assam polls, Bittu would have to lead party's strategy in the lower house where legislative business remains held up due to opposition's demands to suspend all work and discuss fuel price rise first.

Bittu is a three-time Member of Parliament and has been closely associated with the current farmers' protest against the three controversial farm bills.

AICC sources said in recent times he has been leading from front and has come into the good books of party's high command.

# Edu can shape India's rise, destiny: LS Speaker

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday said that education is an essential factor for the all-around development of the country, so Government and private sector participation is also important.

"Our country has its own identity in the field of knowledge, where Zero was also discovered in India and today India is leading in the world in the field of knowledge wherein youth have a special role. Today's society is technology and innovation based and skill development is giving

is committed to fulfilling their dreams, that's why the youth of India is leading in every field in the world. Universities are an inspiration for students that build students' character and capacity. Institutions like Amity provide students with a growth environment and opportunities," said the Lok Sabha Speaker.

He also talked about New Education Policy, Skill policy and youth development policy that have been prepared by the government by keeping the youth at the center for all-round development.

The role of educational institutions is to transform dreams into sankalp and sankalp into siddhi. The youth

Dr. Atul Chauhan, Chancellor, Amity University, advised students to always learn from people. Amity Youth festival is a unique online platform for students to showcase their talent without boundaries. Prof. (Dr.) Balvinder Shukla Vice-Chancellor, Amity University was also present on the occasion.

The online festival will comprise 97 creative and knowledge-driven events/activities in which around 10,000 students from India and 35 countries internationally will be participating.

Earlier, the Congress leader had appealed citizens to raise their voice to "protect democracy" and launched the party's Democracy Report.

Rahul has been consistently targeting the Government over the rising fuel prices, farm laws and other issues. Recently, Rahul Gandhi

# India no longer a democratic country: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Thursday slammed the ruling BJP and said that India was no longer a democratic country. "India is no longer a democratic country," Rahul said in his tweet as he shared a news clipping which read India now as autocratic as Pakistan, worse than Bangladesh: Sweden institute's Democracy Report.

Rahul has been consistently targeting the Government over the rising fuel prices, farm laws and other issues. Recently, Rahul Gandhi

Rahul has been consistently targeting the Government over the rising fuel prices, farm laws

On the other hand the party's students unit, NSUI will stage a protest march on Friday named

Chattri Adhikar March across the country. The protest will be concerning the major points like reduced % in budget for education sector, unemployment, issue of scholarships and fellowship grants etc.

This protest is against the autocratic Government and their failed governance. The campaign is regarding Naukri Do ya Degree Vapis Lo (either gives jobs or take back the degrees).

# India serving humanity by providing Covid vax: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that a self-reliant India is good for the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that creating wealth and value "not only for ourselves but for the larger humanity" is at the core of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Modi also asked youngsters to read 'Bhagavad Gita', saying its teachings are extremely practical and relatable. In the middle of their fast-paced lives, Gita will provide an oasis of calm and peace, he added.

Speaking at the launch of the Kindle version of Swami Chidhavanananda's 'Bhagavad Gita' via video conferencing, the Prime Minister said the epic's core message to people is to perform action and assert that 1.3 billion people of India have decided their course of action which is to make India 'Atmanirbhar' or self-reliant. In the long term, a self-reliant India is in everyone's

interest, he said. "At the core of Atmanirbhar Bharat is to create wealth and values not only for ourselves but for the larger humanity. We believe that an Atmanirbhar Bharat is good for the world," he added. In the recent past, when the world needed medicines, India did whatever it could to provide them, the Prime Minister said, referring to India providing medicines and now vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our scientists worked in a quick time to come out with vaccines. Now, India is humbled that vaccines made in India are going around the world. We want to heal as well as help humanity. This is exactly what the Bhagavad Gita teaches us," Modi stressed.

The world is fighting a tough battle against a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic. The economic and social impacts are also far-reaching. In such a time, the path shown in Bhagavad Gita becomes ever

relevant," he asserted. It could provide strength and direction to once again emerge victorious from the challenges humanity faces, he said. "In India, we saw many instances of this. Our people-powered fight against COVID-19, the outstanding spirit of the people, the courage of citizens, one can say that behind this is a glimpse of what the Gita highlights," he said. Noting that E-books are becoming very popular especially among the youth, Modi said, therefore, this effort will connect more youngsters with the noble thoughts of the Gita. The beauty of the Gita is in its depth, diversity and flexibility, he said.

He quoted a peer-reviewed journal of cardiology published by the University of Oxford which talks at length about the relevance of Gita during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Modi said this e-book will also deepen the connect between the eternal Gita and the glorious Tamil culture and enable the Tamil diaspora spread across the world to read it easily. He praised the Tamil diaspora for scaling new heights in many sectors and yet carrying the greatness of its culture wherever they went.

The PMLA case was initiated on the basis of investigation conducted by the Directorate of Intelligence (DRI), Kolkata relating to the diversion of "gold jewellery" in the domestic area, which was meant for export.

# ED arrests one for money laundering in gold diversion case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Subsequent to searches conducted at five different locations at Hyderabad, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday arrested accused Preet Kumar Agarwal under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in connection with diversion of gold jewellery in the domestic market despite availing zero duty in procurement of gold for making export of finished products.

The investigation conducted by DRI inter alia revealed that gold weighing 250 kg (approximately) had been diverted/smuggled by the accused in the domestic area. DRI had filed criminal complaint under various Sections of the Customs Act, 1962.

During the searches conducted by ED, incriminating documents, valuables and seized, which also indicate large scale hawala transactions being carried out by accused persons, it said.

It has also been found that the accused persons have acquired assets in the name of other persons, it added.

Customs as well as to generate and launder huge proceeds of crime," the ED said in a statement.

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# EC lodges FIR in fake EVM hacking case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a strong note of an old fake news about the hacking of electronic voting machine (EVM) being circulated on some social media platforms/internet, the Election Commission has lodged an FIR under the IPC Section 500 (punishment for defamation) and Representation of the People Act 1951 Section 128 (maintenance of secrecy of voting), 134(breach of official duty in connection with elections).

Investigation has been initiated in this

# Maha records 14,317 new cases, highest of 2021

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra on Thursday recorded 14,317 new coronavirus cases, the highest one-day spike this year, which took its caseload to 22,66,374, a health official said.

With 57 fatalities, the death toll reached 52,667, he said.

On October 7 the state had reported 14,578 cases after which the number of daily cases had declined.

As many as 7,193 patients were discharged from hospitals on Thursday, taking the total of recoveries to 21,06,400.

The number of active cases in the state crossed one lakh to reach 1,06,070. On November 6 the state had reported 1,02,099 active cases and the numbers had dwindled after that.

However, since February 14 new cases have surged.

Nagpur city recorded the highest 1,701 new cases, followed by 1,514 cases in Pune and 1,509 in Mumbai city.

The Pune division comprising civic bodies of Pune, Pimpri Chinchwad as well as districts of Pune, Solapur and Satara reported 3,088 new cases, highest among the divisions.

The number of cases in the Pune division stood at 5,49,484 and death toll at 11,825.

Mumbai's Covid-19 tally



increased to 3,38,643 and four deaths took the fatality count to 11,519.

Mumbai division reported 2,856 new cases and 11 deaths, taking the cumulative caseload to 7,49,849 and death toll to 19,921.

Nashik division's case tally stood at 3,09,421 and death toll at 5,340.

Kolhapur division has reported 1,20,744 cases and 4,082 deaths till now, while Aurangabad division's case tally stood at 87,369 and death count at 2,081.

Latur division has reported 90,144 cases until now and 2,556 fatalities. Akola division has reported 1,12,854 cases while 1,886 people have succumbed to the disease until

now. Nagpur division has reported 2,46,363 infections and 4,886 fatalities so far.

With 97,778 tests carried out on Thursday, the state has so far tested 1,72,13,312 samples for coronavirus.

There are 4,80,083 people in home quarantine while 4,719 are in institutional quarantine.

Out of 57 deaths, 25 occurred in the last 48 hours and 19 in the last week. Remaining 13 deaths were from the period before the last week.

Maharashtra's COVID-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases: 22,66,374, new cases: 14,317, death toll: 52,667, discharged: 21,06,400, active cases: 1,06,070, people tested so far: 1,72,13,312. PTI

## Saradha scam: ED summons TMC MLA, noted painter



**Kolkata:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is probing the money laundering aspect of the multi-crore Saradha scam, has summoned TMC MLA Samir Chakraborty and noted painter Suvarnansha in connection with the case.

Sources said Chakraborty has been asked to depose before ED officials on Friday, while Suvarnansha will face interrogation next Monday.

Thousands of investors have been duped by the Saradha group by means of the fraudulent schemes floated by the firm.

Two years ago, Suvarnansha was interrogated by the CBI for his alleged involvement.

Sources in the Enforcement Directorate said Chakraborty had allegedly funded a TV channel with money received from the now-defunct Saradha group. PTI

## Equal rights for all religions, industrial growth on LF's draft manifesto for polls

**Kolkata:** The Left Front (LF) on Thursday came out with a "draft manifesto" for the West Bengal Assembly elections, asserting that it will ensure safety and security of all minorities and frame policies for the State's industrial development, if voted in.

Claiming that both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) are playing the communal card to polarise the state's populace, the front said that it would strictly abide by the principles of the Constitution, and ensure equal rights for all religions.

The Left Front, which ruled West Bengal for a record 34 years, contended that its fight against "the Centre's anti-people laws" brought into force by the BJP, such as the ones on cow slaughter and 'love jihad'.

The draft has been forwarded to alliance partners Congress and Abbas Siddique-

led ISF, the front stated, maintaining that their views and opinions, too, will find a place in the final manifesto.

Industries to the state, the draft

said, adding that the success of previous Left Front governments in the matter will be kept in consideration.

The manifesto also

promised to fill up vacancies in the state government.

At least 20 per cent of the state budget will be allotted for education, it said, while asserting that the National Education Policy, 2020 will not be implemented in West Bengal.

Claiming that severe drawbacks in the state's healthcare infrastructure have come to the fore amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the draft further said "priority will be accorded to epidemic control and disease preventive measures". PTI

## EC asks Bengal admin to be more cautious about security for VVIPs

**Kolkata:** In the wake of the Nandigram Incident in which Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was hurt, the Election Commission has asked the State administration to be more cautious while planning for security arrangements for high-profile VVIPs when they campaign for the coming Assembly election, an EC official said.

The state chief election officer Ariz Aftab along with ADG (Law and Order) and state nodal officer Jagmohan held virtual meetings with district magistrates in the state and asked to

"The EC has said security arrangements must be made in a very cautious manner. We can

not be casual when it involves important high-profile VVIPs like the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers. All DMs and the police administration have

to be very alert when such figures come to the State to campaign for the coming elections,"

the official said. Banerjee was hurt while campaigning at Nandigram on Wednesday evening hours after she filed her nomination to contest from the seat in East Midnapore district, where she will take on her one time protege and now BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari. PTI

## Akhilesh makes insinuations, demands probe into 'attack' on Mamata

**Sambhal (UP):** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav Thursday demanded a probe into the alleged attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during electioneering in Nandigram and hoped that people would elect her their CM once again.

Accusing the BJP of hatch-

ing pre-poll conspiracies against the Trinamool Congress and Banerjee, Yadav asserted that people in West Bengal know Mamata Banerjee has been the sole popular chief minister of the state.

"The BJP may hatch as many conspiracies as they want... how many more such

incidents might take place?" Yadav said while talking to reporters at the residence of his party MP Shafiqur Rahman Burq here. "I hope the people of Bengal will once again elect Mamata Banerjee. The people know if there is any popular chief minister, it is Mamata Banerjee," said Yadav. PTI

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## 'Thank you, India'

Canada expresses gratitude for COVID vaccine but Delhi HC raps the Govt on the knuckles

India, following the Puranic principle of 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam' (The world is one family), has been providing anti-COVID vaccines by way of grant assistance and commercial supplies to several countries under the "Vaccine Maitri" initiative along with keeping the inoculation of Indians on priority. The latest such beneficiary is Canada — on March 4, India dispatched 5,00,000 doses of Covishield there — and whose citizens have now expressed thankfulness and gratitude by mounting billboards in Canada's Greater Toronto area with the pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The accompanying note reads: "Thank you India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for providing COVID vaccine to Canada. Long live India-Canada friendship." Over the past few months, India's vaccine diplomacy has been earning it many friends. That India's gesture is genuine, heartfelt and aimed at protecting as many peoples as possible may be gauged from the fact that even though the relations between India and Pakistan remain far from hunky-dory, it is set to receive 45 million 'Made in India' doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Besides Pakistan, India — known as the "pharmacy of the world" for producing 60 per cent of the vaccines globally — has already sent anti-COVID dose consignments as gifts to neighbours such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and on commercial basis to several other countries. The country has provided more than 361.94 lakh doses of anti-COVID vaccines to countries, of which 67.5 lakh doses have been supplied as grant assistance and 294.44 lakh on commercial basis.

However, it seems that not everybody is a big fan of the Government's ongoing efforts to tame the virus, which is still mutating into more dangerous strains. The Delhi High Court, rather bizarrely it would seem, has told the Centre to "earn goodwill in the country first and then earn it outside" after observing that the Government is supplying the COVID-19 vaccine to even those countries which are on "not-so-friendly" terms with India. On March 4, the same Bench had made another observation: "We are not utilising it (here) fully. At the same time, we are donating or selling it to foreign countries. There has to be a sense of urgency." However, it may be argued that since the virus doesn't recognise or honour geographical boundaries or State borders, it is not unthinkable for it to cross over into Indian territory from the porous borders we share with certain countries even if we had the entire Indian citizenry inoculated against the virus. The situation in these turbulent times demands that all the countries and peoples stand together with the objective of saving humankind and defeating the accused virus. The second phase of the world's largest vaccination drive is already underway, so it isn't as if the Government is twiddling its thumbs or not doing enough for the citizens. If the vaccine diplomacy helps our nation notch up a few friends more, especially among the neighbouring countries, there seems nothing wrong with it.

### PIC TALK



A Naga sadhu gets ready for a holy dip in the Ganga on Maha Shivratri in Haridwar

PTI

## Master stroke?

Whether the 'attack' on Mamata was staged or indeed a security lapse, must be probed

The "daughter of West Bengal", Mamata Banerjee, is injured. Whether it is a "planned attack" by the BJP, a "mishap" or she staged a high-voltage "drama" for garnering voters' sympathy is a matter of investigation. Regardless of what the truth is, an astute politician like Didi who knows the tricks of the trade will not let go of this opportunity to play the victim card to win over the electorate. The incident took place after

she had filed her nomination papers in Nandigram, where she is pitted against former confidant Suvenu Adhikari who recently defected to the BJP. The TMC claimed that she was inside her car and greeting people when four-five unidentified persons banged the car's door. Abhishek Banerjee, her nephew and a TMC MP, shared the image of Didi lying on a hospital bed with one leg in a cast. "BJP, brace yourself to see the power of people of BENGAL on Sunday, May 2nd. Get ready," he tweeted. The BJP leaders have termed it a "drama" and sought a CBI probe into her claims but they know well that the picture of an injured Mamata in hospital is by itself capable of voting the TMC back to power for a third term.

Even if she campaigns with her injuries, which she has hinted at, there is no denying that her condition will move the voters. Even the thought of it must be giving nightmares to the BJP's strategists, who have made every possible effort to oust Mamata from power. Whatever manoeuvre Mamata decides to employ to get the maximum out of the situation, the "attack" — which came a day after the Election Commission replaced the Director-General of Bengal Police amid allegations of violence by the BJP — must be thoroughly probed. The poll panel has asked the State administration for a report on the incident. Unless it was staged, there is definitely an angle of security lapse in it. The Chief Ministers usually have a high-security cover of several layers and Mamata had Z+ security. However, there is also no denying that our politicians resort to "saam, daam, dand, bhed" (every trick and possible means) to win elections which are no less interesting than a blockbuster with action-packed scenes, drama, comedy, thrill and all types of emotions. And what the audience is to a film in terms of reaching a decision on whether it is a hit or a flop, the voters are to elections as it is they who decide the fate of leaders. We must trust their sense of judgement.



### IDENTIFY EVERY MIGRANT IN GOA

Sir — While the Goa Police needs to be appreciated for cracking the double murder case in Fatora and apprehending the three accused in Mumbai within 24 hours of the crime, the gruesome killing of the two senior citizens brings into sharp focus the irresponsible behaviour of the general public when it comes to adhering to simple rules that could go a long way in protecting them against the evil designs of criminals.

Tenant verification process as a means to check the criminal antecedents of those staying on rent in various leased-out properties has never been accorded the sort of seriousness that it actually warrants. Seen as a rather cumbersome task, landlords have preferred overlooking this statutory obligation while renting out their premises. Not that the police have been overly strict over the matter, either! It is only on the commissioning of crimes of this nature that the police wake up to the matter of registration of tenants at the nearest police station and begin cracking the whip. It is indeed an alarming situation where, despite the steady influx of migrants into the State, the tenant verification process has not kept pace with the requirements.

As much as the landlords and owners of business premises, the police too are responsible for the mess arising out of such situations. Hence, it becomes essential that the administration tightens protocols and begins a sustained identification process of every migrant in Goa.

Pachu Menon | Goa

### MAKE FOOTPATHS ENCROACHMENT-FREE

Sir — The footpaths should be made free of encroachments and illegal street vendors who create nuisance must be taken to task. It is the responsibility of both the municipal authorities and the police to act against such vendors and illegal traders who not only do their business on footpaths but many of them live there, too. Many of them are pickpockets and bootleggers. They snatch chain, purse and other belongings

of passers-by and policemen are often complicit in the crime.

It is a known fact that police personnel take "cut money" from such criminals and allow them a free hand. Further, many people don't have civic sense and throw garbage on roads and on footpaths without caring for others. Some people, who travel by car, throw packets of chips or cigarette butts at signals. We must remember that it is our collective responsibility to keep our city neat and clean. The mindset that it is the responsibility of civic authorities and not of citizens needs to be changed.

We should have some sense of responsibility towards our environment. It is our surroundings that define our behaviour in a big away. We must keep it safe, clean and healthy.

Seetharam Basaani | Telangana

### PEOPLE HAVE LOST FAITH IN POLITICOS

Sir — It is very sad that people have lost faith in political parties and politicians.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### AAP's clever move



This refers to the editorial '0.13% Deshbhakti' (March 11). Every political party wants to win elections by hook or by crook. Nationalism has always been the core issue, riding on the crest of which the Grand Old Party remained in power for several decades after Independence. The AAP is just following the footsteps of the BJP and the Congress to remain in power. The party also wants to expand beyond

Delhi and, in its pursuit, the Arvind Kejriwal-led dispensation is ready to spend public money. Any expansion of a political party at the cost of public exchequer is both morally and legally incorrect. The AAP Government has no right to spend public money for organising programmes on nationalism theme in other States. This amounts to sheer wastage of the Government's coffers and must be stopped.

Parliament must frame rules reasonably restricting the State Governments in their expenditure and States should not be allowed to spend at their whims and fancies. The AAP is pulling every string to make sure that it competes with the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections. Delhi is the AAP's bastion and it would not be easy for any other party to wrest it. However, with its brand of nationalism, the party will certainly hurt the prospects of the BJP and the Congress and will make a dent in their vote banks.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

None other than our politicians are responsible for this situation as they make false promises and indulge in rhetoric during elections but fail to fulfill these. People feel cheated and thus develop a sort of hatred towards the politicians.

Further, the Government is hell-bent on breaking the farmers' protest and not ready to concede their genuine demands. On the other hand, much to the misery of the common people, the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG are on the rise. Citizens who are already overburdened due to the loss of jobs and salary cuts because of the Coronavirus pandemic, are not in a position to bear any more.

The politicians must do something for the people that should make the masses believe in what they say. They must sincerely walk the talk.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### SOUND BITE



There will be problems with my leg but I shall not cancel any of my political programmes. I will take part in the campaigns in a wheelchair, if necessary.

West Bengal CM

Mamata Banerjee

We are working on procuring all of the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. We need to see that our people are immunised alongside the citizens of developed nations.

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## FIRSTCOLUMN

## SALE OF PSUs IS A VIABLE OPTION

The new units on the block are profit-making ones, hence they are attractive to the private sector



RAM ACHARYA

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), plans to manage the vast inventory of public assets locked up in 277 Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) for which it is inviting bids from private players for the units which are doing fairly well and are certainly not in the "red." It is a significant departure from the approach two decades ago, when as many as 101 PSUs called the "red brigade" were trotted out for being disinvested, an exercise which was bound to fail as very few private sector players had the appetite for taking a risk and putting their money into underperforming entities! A private entity with a responsibility towards its shareholders and an eye on its bottom line would normally be interested in acquiring a PSU which would add to its existing portfolio and perhaps open up new avenues for its products and services or help in extending its reach. While the option of stripping away a PSU's assets such as land, equipment, machinery, plant and so on to help to pay off its debts is attractive, however, the more thorny issue would be the existing manpower on its rolls.



Invariably, over the years, this manpower would have got used to a pace of working which may not be in consonance with the private sector's work culture of awarding the high performers and weeding out the dead wood. The recent merger of a number of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) was not welcomed by staff unions even though the options for career advancement and other perks were unaffected. The road map laid out by GV Ramakrishna in his fourth report as the Chairman of the Disinvestment Commission in 1997 had strongly recommended strategic outright sale. But perhaps, political compulsions and the Opposition's charge of selling the "family silver" had diluted this to opting for a partnership with the private sector as a first step, giving away 26 per cent of the equity and effectively the management control.

It was expected that this route would enable an enhancement of its equity value over the years, fetching a higher price for the total disinvestment deal at a later date, as it happened in some cases — when Maruti Limited was sold to Suzuki (which was already a minor partner) and Hindustan Zinc Limited was bought by Sterlite (which later on metamorphosed into the Vedanta Group).

The new PSUs on the block are also profit making ones, hence they are attractive to the private sector. Reportedly, the Shipping Corporation of India with nearly 80 ships and a large, efficient workforce earning sizable profits has attracted bids from other biggies in the field such as Safe Seas of the UAE, Great Eastern Shipping, Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Group, Foresight Group and so on. The 277 CPSUs are a mixed bag including banks, air transport-related entities, heavy and light engineering works and those with mixed activities such as Andrew Yule which has engineering, electrical equipment, tea and a turnkey projects division. We also have a PSU for forest and plantation in the Andamans, one for manufacturing artificial limbs in Kanpur and Hindustan Latex to make condoms in Kerala!

West Bengal boasts the second-largest number, 35, quite a few of which were set up as private entities in the 'Raj' era. However, given the militant labour unions, it is unlikely that they would ever be on the private sector's radar. Except perhaps for those private companies which are already in the thick of it and managing well, like the Titagarh Group, which has the credit of acquiring Arbel Fauvel Rail, a French company in 2010 and turning it around!

(The author is former member, Railway Board. The views expressed are personal.)

## The politics of pop culture

What is popular culture? Is it a real manifestation of the expressions of the working and lower-middle classes or is it imposed from above? And can States control it?



NADEEM PARACHA

Recently a short video made by Dananeer Mobeen, a young Pakistani woman, went viral in the subcontinent and spawned a host of memes. It was a casual video in which the woman lightheartedly parodied the Americanised Urdu accents of certain upper-class Pakistanis. Indeed, viral videos and memes are nothing out of the ordinary. Their "fame" usually lasts a few days. Like most popular culture products, they are quickly consumed and then disposed. But like any other popular culture product they, too, can add something substantial to an ongoing social or political discourse. Popular culture products have rapidly evolved, but their nature has remained the same. They have managed to not only exercise social influence but also impact various political aspects of a society. It is thus not uncommon for governments to ban or try to control certain products of popular culture.

But what is popular culture? Is it a recent occurrence or was there always a popular culture when humans began to band together as societies? Professor of Cultural Studies John Storey writes in his book, *'Inventing Popular Culture'*, that the term "popular culture" was first coined in 19th century England. According to Storey, popular culture was a product of industrialisation and the consequential urbanisation in Europe, when cities began to grow and witnessed an influx of migrants from rural areas arriving to work in factories. They brought with them, what came to be known as, folk culture. But in a rapidly evolving urban modernity, folk culture was derided as being superstitious, conservative and static.

In response, the urban working classes with roots in the rural areas formulated their own modernity, by utilising inventions such as the printing press and the railways to mass-produce and proliferate cultural products drawn from their daily experiences in the cities.

The mythos of folk cultures were fused with the lived experiences of urban modernity to develop cultural products that were inexpensive, mass-produced and expressed as being modern. They were an exhibition of the modernity of the urban working classes.

The makers and sellers of popular culture products often belonged to the emerging middle classes, some of whom came from rural backgrounds but had "made it big" in the cities. Their products were woven to enthrall the masses toiling in factories and living in cramped conditions.

By the mid-1940s, though, popular culture had become a melting pot of varied industries, churning out films, songs, pulp novels, tabloids and so on. In their 1944 book, *'Dialectic of Enlightenment'* the German social scientists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer savage the "popular culture industry" as a cynical outcome of capitalist production.

They agree that the main consumers of popular culture products were the urban working and lower-middle classes, but lament that these products "confine them, body and soul." To Adorno and Horkheimer, the popular culture industry "is not the art of the consumer but rather the projection of the will of those in control on to their victims."



POPULAR CULTURE PRODUCTS HAVE RAPIDLY EVOLVED, BUT THEIR NATURE HAS REMAINED THE SAME. THEY HAVE MANAGED TO NOT ONLY EXERCISE SOCIAL INFLUENCE BUT ALSO IMPACT VARIOUS POLITICAL ASPECTS OF A SOCIETY. IT IS THUS NOT UNCOMMON FOR GOVERNMENTS TO BAN OR TRY TO CONTROL CERTAIN PRODUCTS OF POPULAR CULTURE

The views expressed are personal.  
Courtesy: Dawn



The American cultural theorist John Fiske disagrees with Adorno and Horkheimer. In his 1989 book *'Understanding Popular Culture'*, Fiske writes that popular culture was made from within and below, not imposed from above. He writes that there is always an element of popular culture that lies outside social control, which escapes or opposes hegemonic forces.

LW Levine, in his essay for the 1992 issue of *The American Historical Review*, writes that to the purveyors of popular culture products, a majority of people buy into this culture of their own accord. The nature of their demand influences the creation and evolution of this culture's products. To them it is a culture of the people, by the people.

However, in the anthology *'Popular Culture and World Politics'*, Jutta Welde and Christina Rowley write that states and governments actively use popular culture products in many ways and for multiple purposes. Take, for instance, the relationship between popular culture and the State and governments in Pakistan.

In South Asia, popular culture — as it began to be understood from the 19th century onwards — was a by-product of the many economic and political changes introduced in the region by British colonialism. In Pakistan, right from the onset, the State began developing

a monopoly over defining and designing popular culture products. This meant that these were being generated from above because folk cultures below were seen as promoting ethnic provincialism. For example, till the late 1960s, the State-owned media was not allowed to air folk songs. Popular culture products were to follow the State's instructions to promote Pakistani society as an integrated cultural whole.

Films based on ancient folk tales (such as the 1950s *Sassi*) were an example of the "Urduisation" of a non-Urdu folk tale.

According to RB Qureshi in *'Exploring Qawwali and Gramophone Culture in Pakistan'*, the *qawwali* was not played on Radio Pakistan until the creation of the Urdu *qawwali* in the late 1950s. However, the line between what was being dictated from above and what was brewing below began to blur during ZA Bhutto's populist regime (1971-77).

But even then, the more concentrated "regional" or Sufi themes running across folk songs and *qawwalis* were stripped down and presented as secularised mediations on spiritualism, which could now be enjoyed as entertainment as well. In the 1980s, the General Zia dictatorship was quick to use certain popular culture products to broadcast its ideas of Islamisation. For instance, during the dictator-

ship, folk and national songs became lyrical manifestations of faith, family values and the glory of State institutions (such as the military and the police). By the 1990s, the profane had become privatised and the sacred had become public. The country's cultural spaces had shrunk or they had to add some element of the sacred to continue existing. These included spaces sponsored by multinational organisations. From the mid-2000s, popular culture in the country splintered. The popular culture products below — such as exhibitions of religiosity through unregulated sermons and speeches via digital audio mediums on the one hand, and the more secular popular culture expressions such as Umer Sharif's stage plays employing everyday Urdu — jostled for space with the ideas of popular culture coming from the middle, such as Coke Studio, award shows and lavish TV soap operas.

What was emerging from the State above was defused and defanged. It seemed especially so when the three strata, above, middle and below, all landed on social media sites in full view of each other. I do not see their interaction in this respect as a cultural war. It is a discourse between varied popular culture products and ideas. However, it is still early to predict exactly what this might lead to.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE HEALTH MINISTRY CLAIMED THAT RAJASTHAN RECEIVED 37.61 LAKH VACCINES. THIS DATA IS COMPLETELY INCORRECT.

—RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

ASHOK GEHLOT



THE CLAIMS OF SHORTAGE ARE BOGUS. THE STATE HAS RECEIVED 37.61 LAKH VACCINES BUT IS GIVING ACCOUNT OF 24.28 LAKH DOSES.

—RAJASTHAN BJP CHIEF SPOKESPERSON

RAMILAL SHARMA



## The Dandi march still teaches the importance of sacrifice

But there is a sea change in the situation of the country then and now. The journey of India will now be defined by self-reliance and self-respect



PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL

The historic Dandi march that began on March 12, 1930, played a significant role in India's freedom struggle as it was the most influential and inspirational moment in the fight for independence.

This is the reason why the day marking the beginning of the Dandi march was chosen to launch the celebrations surrounding 75 years of India's Independence. The events after the Dandi yatra, certainly brought the colonial rulers under pressure. Through this movement, Mahatma Gandhi once again introduced the power of truth and non-violence to the world.

The system of making salt in India had existed since ancient times and the tradition was carried forward by salt farmers. In Bihar and many other provinces, this work was left to a special community. Gradually, the technique of

making salt started to improve, but over time, salt was also beginning to become a commercial item. The Dandi March was part of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent protest against the British monopoly on production of salt.

In a letter to Lord Irwin on March 2, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi said that "politically, our position is no better than that of slaves, the roots of our culture have been hollowed out." He further wrote that "this letter is not intended as a threat. It is just a simple and sacred duty of a *Satyagrahi*. Therefore, I am sending it through a young English friend who is an advocate of the Indian view, who has full faith in non-violence and who has been perhaps sent to me for this purpose only by the Almighty." The name of the Mahatma's friend was Reginald Reynolds, who had lived with him in the

Sabarmati ashram and had faith in the Mahatma's philosophy. In the letter to Lord Irwin, Mahatma Gandhi informed him about the decision to break the salt law which Gandhiji felt was the biggest injustice to the poor.

The Dandi March started from Sabarmati Ashram on March 12 as per schedule. At exactly 6:30 am, Gandhiji left the ashram with 79 followers and started the yatra. They completed 241 miles up to Dandi in 24 days. During this period, the Father of the Nation used to address the gatherings during the yatra. His speeches were successful in influencing the minds of the people against the policies of the British.

During the march, it was clearly spelled out that the people should keep their attention focused on the Salt Law itself and at the same time it was



ensured that civil disobedience was not resorted to before Gandhiji broke the Salt Law at Dandi. With the permission of Gandhiji, a pledge was written for the *satyagrahis*. The letter stated: "I am ready to go to jail and I will be happy to bear whatever hardships and punishments will be meted out to me as part of this movement."

On the night of April 4, 1930, the *padyatra* entered Dandi. Hundreds of Gandhian *satyagrahis* gathered on the

Dandi coast in the morning of April 5 wearing khadi. A Press briefing was also organised at Dandi. Sarojini Naidu, Suman, Abbas Tyabji, Mithuben Petit joined the Dandi march. In his address, Gandhiji gave information about breaking the Salt Law next morning.

The Mahatma broke the Salt Law by the simple symbolic act of picking up a fistful of salt on the Dandi coast on the morning of April 6. He was immediately detained under British law.

Prior to his arrest, Gandhiji had clearly sent across the message that Swaraj cannot be sustained without sacrifice and, therefore, it is possible that people will have to make unlimited sacrifices to achieve it. A true sacrifice is one in which one side suffers without resorting to retaliation. Describing the Dandi march, the reporter of *The Daily Telegraph*, London,

Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett wrote, "Who knew that this event will become historical in the future? Is the arrest of a Mahatma a small thing? No doubt, Gandhiji has emerged as a Mahatma and a divine man in the eyes of crores of Indians today."

This was the most important turn in India's freedom struggle, which emerged from the Dandi March. People understood that non-cooperation was not just an idea but a well-thought-out plan for resistance to the British rule.

Gandhiji's visit to Dandi, a wave of nationalism swept across India. The symbolic Dandi yatra created a sentiment in favour of freedom among the people. Gandhiji's Dandi march still shows us how to take the right decision in difficult times and highlights the importance of sacrifice to the people.

After about 91 years, I shall

be treading on the same soil in a *padyatra* on the occasion of 75 years of independence. But there is a sea change in the situation of the country between then and now. The journey of India will now be defined by self-reliance and self-respect. We will no more be seekers and our image on the world canvas will be that of a contributor. In this hour of crisis across the globe, we have delivered medicines and vaccines to various countries. That shows that our age-old belief in "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is still alive.

India wants to speak the language of labour and toil so that our future generations are carved out in strength. The Prime Minister envisions that when the country celebrates the centenary of India's Independence, then our achievements and cultural glory should be a shining example before the world.

# Myanmar protests: 7 more killed by Junta

Military accuses Suu Kyi of taking illegal payment

central Myanmar's Myaing township.

"Six men were shot dead while eight people were wounded — with one man in a critical condition," a rescue worker told AFP.

A witness told AFP five of them were shot in the head.

There was also a fatality in Yangon's North Dagon, where Chit Min Thu, 25, died after being shot in the head.

"I recently learnt that his wife is two months pregnant," his mother Hnin Malar Aung San Suu Kyi had accepted hefty illegal payments.

Diplomatic pressure has been building since the generals seized power on February 1, triggering daily protests around the country that they have struggled to quell.

The United Nations on Wednesday condemned the junta's increasingly violent crackdown, which has seen more than 60 killed and 2,000 arrested, with even China — a traditional Myanmar ally — calling for "de-escalation" and dialogue.

Thursday saw more hard-line action against demonstrators, with six killed in cen-

ted giving Suu Kyi \$600,000 in cash, along with more than 11 kilograms (\$680,000 worth) of gold.

"We have learned Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself took this \$600,000 and seven vases (11.2 kilograms) of gold. The anti-corruption commission is investigating," Zaw Min Tun said.

Nobel peace laureate Suu Kyi, detained since the February 1 putsch, is already facing several criminal charges including owning unlicensed walkie-talkies and violating coronavirus restrictions by staging a campaign event during last year's election.

"No one will be in peace until this situation ends. They were so cruel with my son. I never expected my son would be shot in the head... I'm worried about all the unarmed youth, they will be in trouble."

The military, which has defended its takeover by citing voting irregularities in November elections won by Suu Kyi's party, held a rare news conference Thursday accusing Suu Kyi of corruption.

In the capital Naypyidaw, junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said the detained chief minister of Yangon had admit-

ted giving Suu Kyi \$600,000 in cash, along with more than 11 kilograms (\$680,000 worth) of gold.

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# China OK's plan to veto Hong Kong election candidates

**China opposes 'Taiwan independence', welcomes cross-Strait dialogue: Li**

Beijing: China's rubber-stamp parliament voted on Thursday for sweeping changes to Hong Kong's electoral system — including powers to veto candidates — as Beijing moves to ensure only "patriots" run the city following huge pro-democracy rallies.

Beijing has acted decisively to dismantle Hong Kong's limited democratic pillars after massive and sometimes violent protests coursed through the financial hub in 2019.

At last year's meeting of the National People's Congress, the Communist Party leadership imposed a draconian national security law on the finance hub that has since been weaponised against the democracy movement.

Dozens of campaigners have been jailed, smothering protests

in a city which had enjoyed greater political freedoms than on the authoritarian mainland under a system dubbed "one country, two systems".

On Thursday, only one member of the 2,896-strong National People's Congress abstained in the vote, which critics say will hammer another nail in the coffin of Hong Kong's democracy movement.

The decision aims to place the power of governing the city "firmly in the hands of forces that are patriotic and love Hong Kong", parliamentary spokesman Wang Chen said in Beijing at the opening of the congress on Friday.

Senior Chinese officials have since made clear loyalty to the Communist Party will be key to deciding if a Hong Konger is a "patriot".

Addressing a virtual press conference at the end of the Parliament session, Li said

Chinese mainland's policy regarding Taiwan has been consistent and clear-cut, adhering to the 1992 Consensus that embodies the "one-China" principle.

"Under this premise, we welcome any political party or group in Taiwan to communicate with us and conduct dialogue on cross-Strait relations and the future of the nation," Li said.

The mainland is committed to promoting peaceful development across the Taiwan Straits and national reunification and opposes any form of

separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence" and foreign interference in cross-Straits affairs, he said.

"We believe that the two sides of the Straits are one and the same family. Over the years, we have introduced a number of policies benefiting Taiwan businesses and compatriots," Li said.

The mainland will continue to enable Taiwan residents to enjoy the development opportunities on mainland and promote integrated development across the Straits, he added.

PTI

# Royal family 'very much not racist', says Prince William

**London:** Britain's royal family is "very much not a racist", Prince William said on Thursday, in his first public remarks since his younger brother Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle made explosive claims in a TV interview.

William, the Duke of Cambridge, also revealed that he had not spoken to Harry since the tell-all interview to Oprah Winfrey was first broadcast over the weekend but plans to do so.

Harry and Meghan's interview has sent Buckingham Palace into a tailspin.

The 38-year-old second in line to the British throne was joined by wife Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, when he was asked by reporters about the controversy that has dominated UK media headlines ever since Harry, 36, and Meghan, 39, revealed that an unnamed royal had raised concerns about their mixed-race son Archie's skin colour.

Prince William's visit is not the first appearance by a senior royal since the interview aired - the Prince of Wales carried out an engagement earlier this week.

Prince William's comments follow a rare statement issued by Buckingham Palace earlier this week to say that the issues raised during the interview with Winfrey, the American talk show host, particularly that of race, are concerning.

"Whilst some recollections may vary, they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately. Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members," the statement read.

The statement indicated that Queen Elizabeth II was "saddened" to learn the full extent of how challenging the last few years had been for her grandson Harry and his wife Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

It followed an extensive interview by the couple with Winfrey in which Meghan spoke about her suicidal thoughts when she was pregnant with Archie and also shared her dismay at some racist undertones within the royal ranks towards her son.

In reference to Prince William and wife Kate Middleton, Prince Harry told the American chat show host that there was a "space" between the brothers which he hoped time would heal.

Chauvin already faced second-degree murder and manslaughter charges. Legal experts say the additional charge helps prosecutors by giving jurors one more option to convict Chauvin of murder.

The dispute over the third-degree murder charge revolved around the conviction of

another former Minneapolis police officer in the unrelated killing of an Australian woman. The appeals court recently affirmed Mohamed Noor's third-degree murder conviction in the 2017 shooting death of Justine Ruszczyk Damond, and the state used that affirmation to argue that it established new justification for the charge in Chauvin's case.

Cahill agreed that the precedent has now been established.

"I feel bound by that and I feel it would be an abuse of discretion not to grant the motion," he said.

Floyd was declared dead on May 25 after Chauvin, who is white, pressed his knee against the Black man's neck for about nine minutes. Floyd's death sparked sometimes violent protests in Minneapolis and beyond, leading to a nationwide reckoning on race.

AP

# Judge OK's 3rd-degree murder charge for ex-cop in Floyd death

**Minneapolis:** A judge on Thursday granted prosecutors' request to add a third-degree murder charge against the former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's death.

Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill reinstated the charge after the former officer, Derek Chauvin, failed to get appellate courts to block it.

Cahill had earlier rejected the charge as not warranted by the circumstances of Floyd's death, but an appellate court ruling in an unrelated case established new grounds for it.

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AP

# Denmark, Norway, Iceland suspend use of AstraZeneca

**Copenhagen:** Denmark, Norway and Iceland on Thursday temporarily suspended the use of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine over concerns about patients developing post-jab blood clots, as the manufacturer and Europe's medicines watchdog insisted the vaccine was safe.

Denmark was first to announce its suspension, "following reports of serious cases of blood clots" among people who had received the vaccine, the country's Health Authority said in a statement.

It stressed the move was precautionary, and that "it has not been determined, at the time being, that there is a link between the vaccine and the blood clots".

As of March 9, 22 cases of blood clots had been reported among more than three million people vaccinated in the

European Economic Area, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said.

Austria announced on Monday that it had suspended the use of a batch of AstraZeneca vaccines after a 49-year-old nurse died of "severe blood coagulation problems" days after receiving an anti-Covid shot.

Four other European countries — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Luxembourg — have also suspended the use of vaccines from this batch, which was sent to 17 European countries and consisted of one million jabs.

Denmark however suspended the use of all of its AstraZeneca supply, as did Iceland and Norway in subsequent announcements on Thursday citing similar concerns.

On Wednesday, the EMA said a preliminary probe

showed that the batch of AstraZeneca vaccines used in Austria was likely not to blame for the nurse's death.

"This is a super-cautious approach based on some isolated reports in Europe," said Stephen Evans, a professor of pharmacoepidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"The risk and benefit balance is still very much in favour of the vaccine," he said.

AstraZeneca, an Anglo-Swedish company which developed the vaccine with Oxford University, defended the safety of its product.

"The safety of the vaccine has been extensively studied in phase III clinical trials and peer-reviewed data confirms the vaccine has been generally well tolerated," a spokesman for the group told AFP.

Britain, whose widely

praised vaccine rollout has been largely underpinned by the AstraZeneca jab, also defended it as "both safe and effective".

The Danish suspension, which will be reviewed after two weeks, is expected to slow down the country's vaccination campaign. Denmark now expects to have its entire adult population vaccinated by mid-August instead of early July, the health authority said.

"We are of course saddened by this news," said Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

Frederiksen, who has pushed for the production of more vaccines and has formed a controversial alliance with Austria and Israel to do so, defended the Danish health authorities' decision.

"There is always a risk associated with vaccines," she told reporters.

"Things have gone well in Denmark, but there are some risks linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine that need to be examined more closely. That seems to me to be the right way to proceed."

AP

# Sudan's PM in Cairo to discuss Ethiopia's Nile dam dispute

**Cairo:** Sudan's prime minister held talks with the Egyptian president in Cairo on Thursday as both nations seek to build a united front in the ongoing dispute over the controversial dam that Ethiopia is building on the Blue Nile.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi agreed that both governments should "work closely at this critical moment" until they mobilize international and regional players to help mediate a solution to the water dispute with Ethiopia, according to a statement by the Egyptian presidency.

The dispute centers on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and how much water Ethiopia will release downstream if a multi-year drought occurs and how the three countries would settle any future disputes.

Egypt and Sudan also call for a legally binding agreement on the dam's filling and operation, while Ethiopia insists on guidelines.

In his message on the occasion of the 36th charter day of SAARC on December 8 last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the full potential of the eight-member bloc can only be realised in an atmosphere free of terror and violence.

On December 8, 1985 at the first SAARC Summit in Dhaka, the leaders of the seven South Asian states — the Maldives, India, Bhutan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka signed a charter to establish the bloc. Afghanistan became the eighth SAARC member in 2007. PTI

ations, the countries have failed to reach a three-way deal.

Karthoum has recently called for internationalizing the dispute to include the U.S., the European Union, the U.N. And the African Union to facilitate reaching an agreement on the filling and the operation of Ethiopia's massive dam.

Sudan wants Ethiopia to coordinate and share data on the dam's operation to avoid flooding and protect its own power-generating dams on the Blue Nile, the main tributary of the Nile River.

The Blue Nile meets with the White Nile in Khartoum. From there, the Nile winds northward through Egypt and flows into the Mediterranean Sea.

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country with over 100 million people, has called the dam an existential threat and worries that it would reduce its share of Nile waters.

The country relies almost entirely on the Nile to supply water for agriculture and its people.

Despite years-long negoti-

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# Moody's: Most economies won't return to pre-Covid levels by 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Moody's Investors Service on Thursday said the credit downturn arising out of Covid-19 will be short-lived but most economies will not return to pre-pandemic activity levels until 2022.

In the year since the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, the virus has disrupted the global economy and triggered a credit downturn accompanied by a spike in bond defaults.

"The credit challenges arising from Covid-19 have been substantial, but the credit downturn likely will be relatively short-lived. Risks remain more significant for the sectors most vulnerable to restrictions on their normal activities," Moody's said in a global report on coronavirus. Stating that most economies will not return

to pre-pandemic activity levels until 2022, Moody's said it expects a slow and bumpy global recovery and uncertainty around the macroeconomic outlook remains much higher than usual.

Policy actions will continue to support economic activity and financial markets after the pandemic has eased, it added. Policymakers will continue to support economic activity long after the pandemic has faded, in some cases for years, Moody's said.

Moody's expects the incidence and prevalence of the pandemic to gradually decline over the course of this year, as vaccination numbers rise. In turn, this will allow govern-

ments to gradually ease lockdown measures. However, a residual level of Covid-19 likely will persist over time, raising the prospect of global pockets of risk in regions where vaccination progress is slow, and of localised outbreaks.

In addition, new mutations that increase the virulence or spread of the virus pose a key risk to efforts to normalise conditions. Rather than eliminating the virus, we expect to 'learn to live with it' at low case rates," it added.

The rating agency said it took several rating actions in response to the credit consequences of the pandemic and does not expect to conduct another wholesale review of credit ratings this year unless there is a significant shock to the global economy or to financial markets, or a shock resulting from a dramatic change in the trajectory of the virus.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Passenger vehicles and two-wheeler dealers in the country are expected to see higher revenue growth and profitability in the next fiscal with a revival in demand driven by rural demand and an increasing preference for personal mobility, a report said on Thursday.

## Passenger vehicles, 2-wheeler dealers likely to see higher revenue growth next fiscal: Report



With 20-22 per cent revenue growth and 50-100 basis points (bps) improvement in operating margin expected for next fiscal, overall revenue and operating profits of automobile dealers are set to scale back to pre-Covid levels, rating agency Crisil said.

The revenues, which were significantly impacted in fiscal 2020 and 2021, will see a steep recovery due to improved demand for automobiles across segments, it added. This, along with improved ancillary revenues, which is more profitable

than vehicle sales, will support overall operating profitability for automobile dealers, and boost cash accruals, the report said.

"We are seeing a turnaround. PV and 2W dealers are expected to see revenue growth of 20-22 per cent and 15-17 per cent, respectively, in fiscal 2022.

Healthy rural demand and an increasing preference for personal mobility will drive this growth," Crisil Ratings Director Gautam Shahi said.

Revenue growth for commercial vehicle (CV) dealers is expected at 35-40 per cent in

fiscal 2022, supported by improving economic activity, increase in budget allocation for infrastructure and low base effect, he added.

Over the past 12 months, the cost of ownership of passenger vehicles (PVs) and two-wheelers (2Ws) has risen 8-10 per cent following a 15-17 per cent surge in fuel prices, price hikes by OEMs to BS-VI costs and costlier raw material, CRSIL said, adding while that affected sales, the nationwide lockdown also slammed the brakes on ancillary revenue.

## INBRIEF

### N RLY CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

New Delhi: Northern Railway celebrated the International Women's Day-2021 at Headquarters Office, Baroda House in New Delhi on Wednesday. The celebration concluded with the dignified presence of Ashutosh Gangal, General Manager, Northern Railway. Shikha Gangal, president, NRWWO and other senior railway officials were also present on the occasion.

### PFC & REC SIGN MoU WITH KHEL



New Delhi: Power Finance Corporation Ltd. (PFC) along with REC Ltd. signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among Kholongchhu Hydro Energy Ltd. and Power Finance Corp. Ltd. for extending a Term Loan of ₹4,058 crore for 600 MW Hydro Electric Project at TrashiYangtse, Bhutan. The project is proposed to be funded in a debt-equity ratio of 70:30 and the Term loan of ₹4,058 crore shall be shared by PFC and REC in equal proportion. Apart from PFC and REC, ₹400 crore is proposed to be arranged from Bank of Bhutan (₹200 crore) and NPPF, Bhutan (₹200 crore).

### SWARUP KUMAR SAHA APPOINTED PNB ED



New Delhi: Swarup Kumar Saha assumed the charge as Executive Director of the Punjab National Bank on Wednesday. Before taking up this assignment, he was Zonal Manager (Chief General Manager), Lucknow in Punjab National Bank. In a career spanning over 30 years, he has worked in different capacities and has worked across the country. He has wide exposure in Human Resource Development, Treasury, International Banking, Credit, Risk Management, Organisation Restructuring and Board matters.

### CSR BID TO HELP GIRL STUDENTS IN GOVT SCHOOLS

Faridabad: With an aim to enhance the quality and accessibility of education for the girl students, Goodyear India Limited has started its CSR initiative, in which infrastructural development and education quality enhancement activities were taken up in both schools. Sandeep Mahajan, chairman & managing director, Goodyear India, said "We are delighted to support Government schools in Faridabad and Ballabgarh for driving accessibility to education for the girl child and improve their participation rate in schooling and primary education."

## Investors continue to be bullish on gold ETFs; invest ₹491 cr in Feb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors pumped ₹491 crore in gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) in February as they seem to be taking advantage of the lower domestic prices caused due to declining international rates, appreciating rupee and reduction in custom duty.

This came following a net investment of ₹625 crore in January and ₹431 crore in December. Prior to this, gold ETFs had seen an outflow of ₹141 crore in November, data available with Association of Mutual Funds in India showed.

Continuing flows in gold ETFs further indicate increased acceptance of these efficient forms of owning gold.

### 17 States operationalise 'One Nation-One Ration Card' system

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seventeen states have operationalised 'One Nation-One Ration Card' system with Uttarakhand being the latest to complete the reform, the finance ministry said on Thursday.

States completing the One Nation-One Ration Card system reform are eligible for additional borrowing of 0.25 percent of gross state domestic product (GSDP).

Accordingly, these states have been granted additional borrowing permission of ₹37,600 crore by the Department of Expenditure, the ministry said in a statement.

### LPG consumption up 7.3% despite price rise: Oil cos

PTI ■ FRANKFURT

New Delhi: Cooking gas LPG consumption rose 7.3 per cent in the last three months despite a steep price rise, with usage among the PMUY beneficiaries, who are mostly poor rural households, jumping near 20 per cent, state-owned oil companies said.

"LPG consumption has improved amongst PMUY customers," Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) said in a statement.

Cooking gas consumption between December 2020 and February 2021, the period that saw a massive ₹175 per cylinder increase in rates across all categories, jumped 19.5 per cent among the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) beneficiaries — the over 8 crore poor households that got free connection since 2016.

### Lagging US, Europe speeds up help for virus-hit economy

AP ■ FRANKFURT

The European Central Bank said it would step up its bond-purchase stimulus to support an economy whose recovery is expected to lag a year behind the US, held back by slow vaccine rollouts and less relief spending by governments.

The central bank for the 19 countries that use the euro said Thursday that over the next quarter the purchases would be conducted "at a significantly higher pace than during the first months of the year." The move is aimed at preventing a premature rise in borrowing costs while businesses are still struggling with coronavirus restrictions like curfews and shutdowns.

Yields on long-term gov-

ernment bonds have risen by about 0.3% since the start of the year in the eurozone. That is not much, and rates remain low. But it is too early for the eurozone to withstand higher rates, usually associated with recovering growth and inflation.

ECB President Christine Lagarde told a news conference that the rise in market borrowing rates, "if left unchecked, could translate into a premature tightening of financial conditions for all sectors of the economy. This is undesirable."

The bond purchases have the effect of pushing down bond yields, which are used as benchmarks for borrowing across the region. So the ECB's move would in theory help keep credit cheap for companies.

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

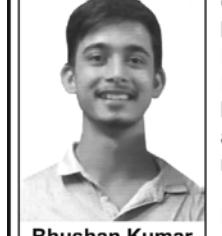


General public is hereby informed that one female namely **Vidya, W/o Late Hirday Parshad, R/o RZB-46, Gali No. 2, Nihal Vihar, Nangloi, Delhi, Age: 42 years, Height: 5'2"**, **Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, wearing Mahroon Suit-Salwar and Black Chappal in feet, has been missing/kidnapped from area of P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi, since 20.02.2021. In this regard a DD No. 47-A, dated 22.02.2021 has been registered at P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi.**

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the female but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax: 011-24368639  
Ph. No.: 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi  
DP/711/OD/2021 Ph. No.: 011-25946700, 25946710

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that a boy **Bhushan Kumar S/o Satender Kumar R/o H. No. 80, Pandit Chowk, Mandawali, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since 09.02.2021 from the area of P.S. Mandawali, Delhi. In this regard a FIR No. 68/21 u/s 363 IPC dated 11.02.2021 has been registered at PS, Mandawali, Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped boy is as under:

Name: Bhushan Kumar, Father's Name : Satender Kumar, Age : 17 years 11 months, Height : 170 cm, Built : Medium, Face: Long, Complexion : Fair, Hair : Black, Wearing: Blue Shirt, Black Lower and Hawaii Chappal in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
e-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax: 011-24368639  
Ph. No.: 011-24368638, 24368641 SHO P.S., Mandawali, Delhi  
Ph. : 011-22720808 8750870627 DP/396/ED/2021

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is known to all that the Original Allottee of Residential MIG Flat No. 42B, Block-C, Sector-62, Noida, U.P., Smt. Suman Kalra Wife of Shri V.K. Kalra, Resident of C-59, East End Apartment, Mayur Vihar, Phase-1, New Delhi-110096, have sold the said flat on the basis of Registered General Power of Attorney of Shri Abhay Dev S/o Sh. Narendra Dev, R/o C-42B, Rajat Vihar, Sector-62, Noida, U.P., on 11/12/2001, and the Agreement to Sell of the said property is not registered. Because the Agreement to sell is not registered so with the help of this Public Notice it is informed that the transfer of this flat goes in favour of Smt. Mukta Dev wife of Shri Abhay Dev, R/o C-42B, Rajat Vihar, Sector-62, Noida, U.P. If anyone/one has/have any objection he/she/they will submit his/her/their objection in the Housing Division of Noida Authority alongwith the proofs within the 15 day from the published of this Notice.

Shri Abhay Dev S/o Sh. Narendra Dev

SHO P.S. Narendra Dev S/o Sh. Narendra Dev

DP/714/NW/2021

## Lost & Found

I, Priti D/o Sh. Kamlesh Kumar Kanjoly, R/o 43-D, Kashi Ram Awash, Sector-45, Noida, U.P. declare that I have lost my 10th class original certificate (CBSE) & Aadhar Card No. 423268247221 at khedipul bazar, Faridabad. If anybody found the above paper please contact: 7834856990, 9999863725

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that a lady namely **Jyoti, alongwith daughter (Charshi, Age-3 year, Built: Thin, Face: Round, Height: 2'6", Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Yellow Colour Frock)** W/o Suraj, R/o J-1107, Jahangir, Puri, Delhi, Age: 26 years, Height: 5'3", Built: Thin, Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Pink Suit with Chunni and Sleeper in her feet has been missing from the area of P.S. Mahendra Park, Delhi since 25.02.2021 at 1.00 PM. In this regard a DD No. 94, dated 01.03.2021 has been registered at P.S. Mahendra Park, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady alongwith daughter but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this lady alongwith daughter please inform undersigned.

E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.nic.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.nic.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax: 011-24368639  
SHO P.S. Mahendra Park, Delhi  
DP/714/NW/2021

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that this girl (depicted in the photo) namely: **Roshni D/o Roop Narayan R/o H. No. 113, Vikas Nagar, Gali No. 9, Yadav Enclave, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS Ranholi, Delhi since 21.12.2020. In this regard DD No. 90-A dated 22.12.2020 has been registered at PS. Ranholi, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far.

Her physical description is as under:-

**Sex: Female, Age: 22 years, Height: 5'2" ft., Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Wearing: Blue Suit Salwar and Cream Chappie in feet.**

Any person having information or clue about this missing/kidnapped girl may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO P.S. Ranholi, Delhi  
E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph. No.: 011-28363001, 28363002  
Fax No.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
DP/713/OD/2021

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General public is hereby informed that a female namely **Bina Kumari, W/o Late Shyam Lal, R/o: Plot No. 155-B, Near Chintu Wali Gali, Deep Enclave, Delhi** is missing/kidnapped since 24.01.2021 from the area of P.S. Ranholi, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 58-A dated 16.02.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Ranholi, Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped lady is as under:

Name: Bina Kumari, Age: 30 Years, Height: 5', Face: Round, Complexion: Shallow.

If anyone has any information about this missing/kidnapped lady please inform P.S. Ranholi, Delhi

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639 SHO Police Station, Ranholi, Delhi  
Ph: 011-28363001, 28363002 DP/713/OD/2021

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that one female Namely: **Naajvin**



Bollywood

'I was slightly nervous about *OK Computer*. I didn't know how people would react.'

—Vijay Varma

10

Filmmaker NILA MADHAB PANDA's *Kalira Atita* has entered into the Oscar race in multiple categories this year. He tells AYUSHI SHARMA that people should watch the film as a duty



Filmmaker Nila Madhab Panda is always moved by what surrounds him. And we can say this by the choice of content that he showcases. His filmography usually deals with the things that affect our society at large. For instance, take *Halkaa, Kadi Hawa, I am Kalam* and the latest *Kalira Atita* (*Yesterday's Past*), which has also entered the Oscars 2021 race in the general entry category for Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Director and others. We talk to him to find out the reason why his films always portray responsibility, highlighting social issues, what motivates him to create such content and his ideology behind it? Excerpts:

Q Oscars are usually people's 'once in a lifetime' dream. Your film *Kalira Atita* has entered the Oscars 2021 race and that too under multiple categories. How are you taking it? What was your reaction when you got to know about it for the first time?

To be honest, it's a very natural process. If you see the kind of films I have made in my entire career, they have always been around social issues. I prefer covering important stories during important times. It's something that I believe in and work towards achieving it. I never give up. I constantly try and find such stories. That's my forte. This is my first film dedicated to my own language — Odia. So an Odia film about

climate change made it a very essential film of my life. And that's why I thought of sending it to the Oscars. However, it doesn't really matter to me if I win the award or not. Of course, I'll be on cloud 9 if it happens but right now what matters more is that people must watch this film as a duty. This story is talking about something that the world is going to face, rather what the world is facing already.

Q How did you conceptualise it? An insight into the storyline...

Earlier, in 2005-06, people were not aware that climate change is real. They never recognised it as a threat to civilisation. It's only now, and that too, after the pandemic hit us that people are accepting this fact and acknowledging it seriously. I made this film based on

an area located in the east coast of India (Odisha), where there used to be a cluster of seven villages out of which three of them have already gone under the sea. In 2006, on the front page of a national daily newspaper, I saw a frightening picture of a lone hand pump sticking out of the sea. It was surprising. So I decided to follow that story... and I did that for almost 14 years continuously. Then later, I decided to make a feature film on it. So *Kalira Atita* is about how those villages disappeared because of climate change and rising sea levels.

Well, the story revolves around Gunu, a young man from Satavaya village, who travels back to his now devastated village confronting his tragic past, reliving moments as prophesied by a priest who keeps frequenting him. His

challenging survival on the abandoned coast, his very existence and his struggle to survive the fury of nature make his journey a poetic portrayal of emotional trauma and human triumph.

Q There have been many films and shows around climate change. How and why do you think this is different?

I think my film comes as a shock value. It's like you are actually seeing and realising it now when all this has been happening in front of you since decades. I hope you get what I am trying to convey...

Q How much research and fieldwork you had to do in documenting this story?

Can you believe 14 years of my life

have gone in making this... As I said it was that frightening picture of a lone hand pump sticking out of the sea which made me curious. After reading that story, I started researching. I began finding more about those villages. Then later, I decided to go there to see the reality. I spoke to various people, the government and, also, noted the scientific perception... All put together, I realised that there is one conclusion which is: Climate is changing.

Q Your films portray responsibility and humanity, highlighting social issues, which are important to be considered. What motivates you to create films based on social issues?

Well, I come from a small village so I have seen the perfect ecosystem of a village. When I started travelling around the world I realised that the world is changing too fast. We are not realising what we are doing to our environment directly or indirectly... As a storyteller, I realise that it's very important to address these issues. I feel that it's a responsibility on my shoulders to be able to make a difference and show it to the world.

Q How do you think such realistic films can impact people's mindsets and make them start acting towards becoming more responsible citizens?

During the lockdown, as people across the globe stayed home to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, the earth became cleaner. An unplanned grand experiment changed our planet. I feel it's god's way of making people understand — *ek hi planet hai, kadar karo uski*. When you will learn to become selfless, the world will become normal again. The pandemic is a god's way of telling you to introspect what you have been doing to nature. Certainly, Coronavirus has given people a lesson of a lifetime, that look, it's high time that you start acting towards becoming more responsible citizens. We keep changing as humans but I don't know how much people have actually changed. We can only hope for the best.

Q Why do you think there is lesser audience available for such films that are not commercialised but deliver an important message?

I don't blame people because everybody needs entertainment in life in one way or another. And films are a major source of that. People prefer light, comedy content but at the same time, they do realise the importance of such films.

Actor Rajkummar Rao selling tickets of his forthcoming film *Roohi* at PVR Plaza, Connaught Place, New Delhi.

## The hues of nature

Spring is the season to head out to revel in the beauty of nature. The 34th Garden Tourism Festival attempts to create awareness about the environment and showcase the rich floriculture of the capital. Organised by the Delhi Tourism, in association with the State government, the festival is on till tomorrow



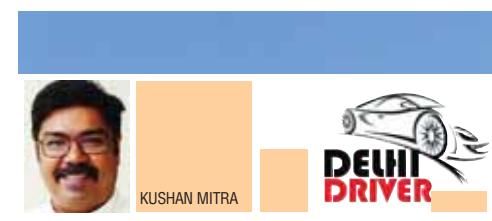
## A new baby Mercedes

Is the new A-Class more than just a badge?

The Mercedes-Benz A-Class is the new kid on the block when it comes to both Mercedes-Benz and the entry-level luxury sedan segment. This car effectively replaces the old CLA sedan, which was based on the old A-Class which — some of you might recall — was a hatchback. This new A-Class is longer, wider and taller than the old CLA and most importantly, it was built as a sedan from the ground-up, primarily for the Chinese market. But the car brand has figured out that selling cars designed for the Chinese market can be quite profitable in India, the long-wheelbase E-Class being a great example.

This has always been an interesting segment. The CLA competed with the Audi A3, which is currently not on the market and the new A-Class goes up against the equally new BMW 2-series Gran Coupe. That said, the BMWs and the Mercedes might not exactly go up against each other, and I say that because the cars are different. And we will get to that after a few lines on the new offering from India's largest luxury car marque.

Much like human beings have grown over the past century thanks to industrialised agriculture and fast food, cars have also grown bigger to accommodate those larger human beings. The A-Class sedan is, thus, not a small car. It is over 4.5 meters long, indeed a fair bit longer than the CLA. In fact, it is only a little bit shorter than the W203 C-Class that was sold until 2014-15 in India and actually feels larger inside. Because it is wider than the old C-Class and just as tall, the cabin space is big-



ger. And thanks to modern materials and conveniences such as widescreen digital displays, a panoramic sunroof and better interior materials, the A-Class feels a world apart from a car that was sold in India by the same carmaker just six years ago.

Make no mistakes, when the A-

Class finally goes on sale, orders are currently being accepted but the official prices are yet to be announced, it will not be cheap. Prices, in absolute terms, have gone up. Of course, so has the exchange rate of the Euro to the Rupee and the feature set offered by the cars. That said, let us bring in its closest rival,

the BMW 2-series Gran Coupe into the equation. And here comes the rub, the Bimmer is a better car to drive more engaging and more powerful, the Mercedes is just far more comfortable because it is bigger. While both cars are front-wheel drive, the BMW has a rear-wheel-drive feel to it thanks to a tight suspension that makes it engaging but, yeah, you feel the road. The Mercedes feels and rides like a good front-wheel-drive sedan without compromising comfort.

Don't get me wrong here, the Mercedes is not a bad car to drive, it is just that both the petrol and diesel variants of the BMW produce 190PS compared to the 150PS A200d and the 170PS A200. In addition, the BMW, like all cars from that carmaker, feels more dynamic and planted to the softer and positively smoother riding Mercedes. It comes down to the point of why you are buying a car in that segment. And, of course, the price. The BMW is not cheap at ₹50 lakh. The Mercedes, thanks to being slightly down on power, will likely be ever so slightly cheaper although both cars are assembled in India. When it comes to creature comforts, they're both more or less the same but keep in mind that the car wearing the star is bigger than the car wearing the propeller (or Bavarian flag, whatever you want to believe) and that will make the Mercedes-Benz A-Class a better buy for someone looking for a badge coupled with some degree of practicality. The BMW is, like its brethren, something for those who like having a spot of fun, someone in their 30s and single. The Mercedes-Benz A-Class, therefore, is something for someone with a family-oriented point of view. But until we know the sticker price, it is going to be hard to tell you which one you should buy.

## TREND BLAZER

### fairtalk

KIARA ADVANI



'If I look back on my journey, the opportunities I got were incredible. It came to me at a time when not so many people knew me. So, yes, at the end of the day if the audience appreciates your work, that's when people will again want to see you in another film. That is why we put a lot of pressure on us. I don't want to be defined by success or failure. I want to be that actor who is good in every film.'

### dailytalk

JANHVI KAPOOR



'Self doubt is a part of every actor's journey. I think every actor is plagued with self-doubt but at least it pushes me to do better. There are directors I really want to work with. I don't even know if I think in accordance to genre. I want to do stories. I want to tell stories.'

### HARRY TO OPEN GRAMMY AWARDS

Singer-songwriter HARRY STYLES will be the opening act at the forthcoming 63rd Grammy Awards, scheduled to take place on Sunday.

Jack Sussman, CBS executive VP of specials, music and live events, confirmed the performance.

"You don't want to miss the top of the show. It's going to be music coming at you heavy and hard like you've not seen it before. We've got Harry Styles, this incredible entertainer, at the top of the show and we'll just keep coming at you," he shared.



### VICKY KAUSHAL GETS TROLLED

A stunt performed by actor VICKY KAUSHAL on horseback has not gone down well with a section of netizens, who feel he could have been kinder to the animal. Vicky shared a photo of his stunt on Instagram.

In the image, Vicky standing straight on a horse's back, striking balance with both hands stretched. The actor claimed that he has recreated Anil Kapoor's painting in the film *Welcome*, where Kapoor's character Majnu bhai had painted a donkey standing on the back of a horse.





## Don't panic, it's organic

ANOOP VARMA shares a few reasons why chemical-free food industry is expected to see an accelerated demand in the coming years



burnt chilli dip with roasted dry red chillies blended with oil and slow cooked along with ginger and garlic was better than any other that I have tasted. But even superior was the one made with grounded green coriander, celery and spring onion over which is poured hot oil. A treat for those who prefer their flavours a little less fiery.

While these had set the bar high, the Honey pepper black mushroom and Jumbo five spices golden fried prawn raised it further. The mushroom had been hollowed out and stuffed with cheese — a combination that is surely made in my idea of culinary heaven. Fried crisp on the outside and squishy inside, it was love at first bite. I was still revelling in the taste when the prawns landed on the table. Piping hot, the soft and flavourful prawns had a delicious crunchy coating. Certainly, the four starters were food for the soul.

A Ginseng chicken with vegetable broth followed. However, despite its medicinal properties, I would not rank it at par with the starters as it needed a little more flavouring. Despite that, we were looking forward to the main course. The spread was certainly extensive and covered all five tastes. Stealing a march over the other dishes was a Crispy lamb with peppers which got the balance of flavours and textures just right. It was just perfect with the Brown garlic fried rice... and even on its own. The Claypot chicken with dry red chilli despite its name was not too hot but spiced just right. There was also Steamed river sole with spicy garlic sauce, which I am told is quite a hot seller, as well as Wok tossed bok choy with broccoli and Mapo Tofu — all of which had simple, clean flavours. But if I was to go back, I would stick with the slightly more complex chicken and lamb.

We were quite full but then there is always some room for dessert, especially when it is something as delicious as Honey baked yoghurt. The mildly sweet dish, with flavours that were in perfect harmony, was certainly a perfect ending to the meal.

smaller than their conventional counterparts. Small farms don't receive the same benefits from the economies of scale that large operations do and sometimes it may cost them a bit more. This is where big companies help small farmers to survive by creating jobs for them if food were produced using conventional agricultural methods. Due to the support by big companies, small ventures gain the confidence to start cultivating organic farms.

### INCREASE IN EXPORT

The demand for Indian organic food has witnessed a steady rise in India but it is receiving appreciation all over the globe. Due to India's favorable agro-climatic conditions, the quality of organic food to export is very high. If we continue to supply with the same growth as today then this export trend will definitely increase in the next five years.

### FOOD KITS

Creating food kits is a new normal nowadays. Many companies are adopting this technique to gain people's interest. These kits have just taken place after the pandemic when people started having doubts about food items. These food items are cooked up to 3/4th of 100 per cent, and are well-packed with proper cooking instructions. As we know we have to start living with the fact that COVID-19 is here to stay for some time, the trend towards ready to eat and ready to cook organic meals at home is the way forward.

The organic food industry will witness a humongous rise in the next five years. The industry is still naive and in an emerging phase. But it has huge growth potential and may even contribute to the economic growth of the country in the long run.

(The writer is the CEO and founder of Everything Organik.)



## R E C I P E S



of the batter into the pan, making about four fritters at a time.

- Cook over medium heat for two minutes or until golden and firm on the underside. Flip the fritters over and cook for a further two minutes until golden brown. Remove the cooked fritters from the pan, drain on paper towels and keep warm.
- Repeat until all the batter has been fried off.
- Mix the mayonnaise, chopped parsley and a little lemon juice, and adjust the seasoning to taste.
- Arrange the warm fritters on a platter and serve with the mayonnaise dressing plus extra lemon wedges (optional).

Courtesy: Le Creuset



### CHICKEN KRAPOW

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Chicken boneless: 130 gm
- Chop ginger: 4 gm
- Chop garlic: 5 gm
- Chop lemon grass: 3 gm
- Chop celery: 3 gm
- Chop onion: 8 gm
- Fresh red chillies: 3
- Boiled rice: 150 gm
- Salt: 3 gm
- Five spice powder: 2 gm

- Add chop garlic sautee.
- Add chop ginger, chop celery, chop lemon grass and chop onion.
- Add chicken and sautee.
- Add little water, allow chicken to cook.
- Add chilli paste and spichi sauce.
- Adjust seasoning.
- Adjust consistency with corn flour.
- Served topped on above boiled rice.
- Garnish with fresh basil leaves, fresh sliced red chillies and fried single egg.

Courtesy: Tanuj Nayar, Executive Chef, Jaypee Residency Manor, Mussoorie.



#### METHOD

- Place the ice into a large red wine glass.
- Take the radishes and red chicory and extract the juice.
- Pour the juice over the ice then slowly add the gin and tonic.
- Stir it gently and garnish with sliced radishes, rosemary sprig, lavender and a sprinkle of juniper berries.

Courtesy: Mohit Madaan, manager at Ricks' at Taj Mahal.

### MIRCHI KA SALAN

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Green chilli (de-seeded): 8-10
- Raw peanuts: 100 gm
- Coconut (grated): 50 gm
- Sesame seeds: ½ tsp
- Coriander seeds: 1 tsp
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Onion (sliced): 1
- Tamarind water: 4 tsp
- Ginger garlic paste: 1 tsp

until transparent.

- Grind the peanuts, sesame seeds, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, lightly fried onion and coconut together. Make a paste.
- Lightly fry the green chillies in oil and keep aside. In the same pan, sauté the grounded paste, along with the ginger-garlic paste, adding the turmeric, tamarind water and curd.



- Add a teaspoon of salt and some water.
- Finally, add green chillies and let the mixture boil.
- Garnish with fresh coriander leaves and serve.
- Mirchi Ka Salan is usually served with biryani. It can also be served with rice or rotis.

Courtesy: Zoheb Ali Qureshi, Executive Chef, Cross Border Kitchens.

### ENGLISH GARDEN GOLET COCKTAIL

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Monkey 47 gin: 60 ml
- Tonic water: 200 ml
- Radish and red chicory juice (made from 10 small radish and 4 leaves of red chicory): 30 ml
- Radish (chopped): 1
- Rosemary sprig
- Lavender sprig

# India start search for perfect combo



India captain Virat Kohli and Shikhar Dhawan share a lighter moment during training session ahead of first T20I match between India and England in Ahmedabad AP

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A blend of favourable results in the present and finding the perfect combination for the near future will be India's main endeavour when they square off against a well-rounded England in a five-match T20I series starting here on Friday.

For skipper Virat Kohli, the primary aim will be to get an idea of his core group of players going into the ICC T20 World Cup in October. And he couldn't have hoped for a better opposition than a world-class English white-ball side under Eoin Morgan, ready to be way more challenging on flatter tracks which promise a run-feast.

While there are more

advantages of having multiple options, fashionably described as a "happy headache" for any captain, there are a few pitfalls that come with such a situation. The Indian team understands this fully well, having burnt its hands during the 2019 World Cup.

It was one event where till last moment, they didn't have a settled number four.

However on the eve of the first T20I, skipper Virat Kohli made it clear that his deputy Rohit Sharma and the flamboyant KL Rahul will be the settled first choice opening combination going into the World T20 with Shikhar Dhawan being in

the reserves. While Suryakumar Yadav is a sentimental favourite for many after last year's IPL and his subsequent non-selection for the Australia tour, fellow Mumbaiyaar Shreyas Iyer looks a likely starter at least in the first couple of games in that middle-order slot at No 4 or 5 depending upon the match situation.

The Motera track will cer-

tainly be a flat deck, suiting the needs of the shortest format and with a lot of batting fire-power in both sides, the Ahmedabad skyline could witness a lot of fireworks from both ends.

Whether it's vice-captain Rohit, the indomitable duo of Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya for the hosts or captain

Morgan, Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler, Dawid Malan and Jason Roy at the other end, the kookaburra white might find itself in the stands more often than not.

With the unavailability of Thangarasu Natarajan in the bowling department, Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be back leading the attack along side another senior Yuzvendra Chahal for company.

With England's weakness against slow bowlers well-documented in these conditions, Chahal could have both Washington Sundar and Axar Patel for company which leaves Shardul Thakur, Deepak Chahar and Navdeep Saini in a three-way battle.

For England, the white ball format presents them with

multi-skilled cricketers like Stokes, Sam Curran and IPL auction sensation Moeen Ali for starters, who can change the complexion of any game in either departments.

Throw in specialists like pacers Jofra Archer, Mark Wood, Chris Jordan and wrist spinner Adil Rashid, it will be a contest where India can never be termed firm favourites.

The next week and half would be an indication as to which direction the teams are headed in terms of preparations for the marquee event later this year.

## SQUADS

**India:** Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Yuzvendra Chahal, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Rahul Tewatia, Ishan Kishan.

**England:** Eoin Morgan (captain), Joss Buttler (wk), Jason Roy, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Ben Stokes, Moeen Ali, Adil Rashid, Reece Topley, Chris Jordan, Mark Wood, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Sam Billings, Jonny Bairstow, Jofra Archer.

# Virat expects team to play with 'more freedom'

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India skipper Virat Kohli

expects his team to play much more freely in the five-match T20 series as the infusion of fresh blood has provided much-needed "x-factor and depth" to the batting unit, which it lacked in the past.

The selectors have picked IPL performers like Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and Rahul Tewatia for the England series while the inform Rishabh Pant has made a comeback.

With the IPL yet to be played, Kohli feels another fresh face or two may sneak into the squad ahead of the T20 World Cup at home in October but finds the current side full of balance and options.

"We have played with a certain kind of pattern in the past. We did not have a big tournament to work towards in the past. If you look at the squad, the additions we have made we have tried to address a few

things we needed in specific," Kohli said on the eve of the game referring to the likes of Suryakumar and Kishan.

"Guys who can be 'x' factors with the bat and do things which are the need of the hour in T20 cricket. These guys have done so on a regular basis in the IPL so we have tried to cover all those basis. Now it will be interesting to see how they go about in these five games."

Having not had enough options in the past, Kohli is happy with what he has at his disposal now.

"These are the only five games we have as a team before the World Cup and we want to see how these guys fare in the middle. I feel the squad right now we have barring Jaddu, who will come back whenever fit, is the most balanced in terms of the options available to take the field as and when required."

The Indian team has been guilty of playing one dimensional cricket with the bat and

found tough to accelerate after the fall of early wickets. That should change now, feels Kohli.

"The players have added in the squad is precisely to give our batting more depth and not play in a similar kind of pattern we have played with in the past. We want to be a side that plays free cricket, not having any baggage of lack of depth or one guy having to bat long enough to make sure we get to a big total."

"We have explosive guys in the team who can change the game at any stage and that is exactly what we have tried to address."

"This time around you will see guys playing more freely, more expressive in terms of approaching the innings even after we have lost couple of wickets which wasn't the case to be honest because we did not have enough depth in the batting to play freely for about 10 to 12 overs but I see much more positivity from this series onwards," said Kohli.

# Very difficult to beat India at home: Morgan

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

indications about how the core combination would look like.

"If Rohit plays, then it's simple. KL (Rahul) and Rohit have been performing consistently at the top of the order for us and those two will start," Kohli was unambiguous in his reply that the seasoned Shikhar Dhawan will have to wait.

"In a situation, Rohit takes rest and KL has a niggle or something, Shikhi (Dhawan)

obviously comes in as the third opener but the starting composition, Rohit and Rahul will be the ones who will start."

India will start their preparations for the T20 World Cup, to be held in India later this year, with the series against England and the skipper did give some

available for selection. And that includes pacer Jofra Archer, too.

"Yeah, everybody is fit to play and Jofra is available for the series," he said.

Morgan, however, refused to speak about the team composition.

## MASSIVELY BENEFITED'

England skipper Eoin Morgan also said that English cricketers' trust with the IPL has "massively benefited" his team and the "priceless" experience could hold it in good stead in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

"Yeah, we have benefitted from it (the IPL) massively and we are thankful for it and it has been a huge part in our development, particularly in the 50-over campaign towards 2019 World Cup," Morgan said.

Morgan said the Virat Kohli-led India are a very difficult side to beat in their backyard and the limited overs matches will be a challenge for his team.

"I do, I probably replicate the answer. India are the team to beat given we are playing them away from home. They are a very difficult side to beat in India," Morgan said ahead of the series opener.

"Given that the World Cup is here, I do think they will enter the World Cup as favourites, so this is going to be a great test for us and a great challenge and throughout the whole tour and not just for T20s," added the 34-year-old Dublin-born batsman.

According to the captain, all his players are fit and

available for selection. And that includes pacer Jofra Archer, too.

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"So, with two T20 World Cups almost around the corner from each other, hopefully we are going to continue to participate in the best and the biggest T20 tournament in the world. We gain huge experience and confidence from that," said Morgan, who has played 97 T20Is.

Morgan also said that from a personal point of view, he has learnt a lot by playing in the IPL.

"I think, it (the IPL experience) is huge.

"I think even regardless of the players involved in the World Cup, the development process that they go through just by being there, rubbing shoulders with the best in the world, being exposed to the pressures of being an overseas player in the biggest tournament in the world, priceless in many ways," he explained.

"We lost a few games in the Premier League, the team is not in the best shape but we want to fight in the Champions League," he said.

# Prithvi show takes Mumbai in final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai's in-form skipper Prithvi Shaw slammed a 122-ball 165 and powered his team to a comfortable 72-run win over Karnataka in the semi-final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Thursday.

Mumbai will meet Uttar Pradesh in the final at the Feroz Shah Kotla on Sunday. In the other semi-final, UP defeated Gujarat by five wickets.

Owing to Shaw's brilliance, Mumbai posted 322 after being put in to bat at the Airforce ground before bowling out the opposition for 250, with their bowlers putting up a splendid performance.

It was Shaw's show all the way as he toyed with an experienced Karnataka attack, and went on to register his fourth century of the tournament, hammering 17 fours and seven maximums.

Shaw had earlier scored three tons, including a double — 105 not out against Delhi, 227 not out against Puducherry and 185 not out against Saurashtra. He has amassed 754 runs so far in the tournament

— the single highest in an edition of the national ODI championship.

Chasing 323, Karnataka lost in form skipper R Samarth (8). Then Devdutt Padikkal (64) and Siddharth KV (8) tried to rally the innings, with their 68-run stand, but it was 22-year-old off-spinner Tanush Kotian (2/23), who inflicted Karnatak a double blow by dismissing Siddharth and skipper Manish Pandey.

Leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (2/61) put Mumbai on top after casting the dangerous Padikkal, who was in

ominous touch, and had by then smashed nine fours and a six.

Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani (2/47) got the better of Karun Nair (29) as Karnataka lost half their side for 134, while Yashashvi got the better of Shreyas Gopal to leave them staring at 152/6.

BR Sharath (61) delayed the inevitable and tried to put up a fight, but that wasn't enough.

Padikkal ended the tournament with 737 runs.

## NATH'S SHOW

In the other semi-final played at Feroz Shah Kotla, Akshdeep Nath's tight seam-up stuff along with a useful half-century helped Uttar Pradesh defeat Gujarat by five wickets to reach the Vijay Hazare Trophy final after 16 long years.

Opting to bat first, Gujarat top-order put up an ordinary show and found the going tough against some relentless UP bowling attack to be bundled out for a paltry 184 in 48.1 overs with Nath taking 1 for 29 in 6 overs apart from pacers Yash Fayal and Aaqib Khan finishing with three and two scalps respectively.

In reply, UP survived some early hiccups before Nath wrested control with a calculated 104-ball 71 (8x4), while the in-form Upendra Yadav sealed the issue with an unbeaten 31 from 25 balls.

Prithvi Shaw takes Mumbai in final

No remontada this time Messi misses penalty as Barca fail in latest PSG comeback attempt & exit CL

AFP ■ PARIS

Lionel Messi scored one stunning goal but then had a penalty saved as Barcelona failed in their attempt to produce a second Champions League comeback for the ages against Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday, a 1-1 draw taking the French side through to the quarter-finals.

Asked if it was important to focus on singles at the start of an innings, she said as a batter one needs to be calculative.

"I think singles, doubles, fours, sixes all are important, as a batter it depends on which bowler you are facing. You have to be very calculative as a batter."

"Well, at the moment the girls are in a very good space. First of all we have come back after a long break and everyone is fresh and want to play. But, definitely, a mental conditioning coach or a mentor will be good for a lot of the girls."

"And, definitely, the BCCI is looking into it and we will have something going into the World Cup," she added.

About skipper Mithali Raj, who is on the cusp of scoring 10,000 International runs, Mandhana said, "getting to 10,000 runs is a huge thing. She is the first Indian to do that I think and it shows how consistent she has been throughout her career."

"We have looked up to her... Definitely a very proud feeling for all of us in the team."

Asked if it was important to focus on singles at the start of an innings, she said as a batter one needs to be calculative.

"I think singles, doubles,



Kylian Mbappe chats with Lionel Messi after Champions League match @UEFA

the outstanding Keylor Navas to tip his spot-kick onto the bar.

Barcelona certainly went for it, but there was to be no repeat of their infamous recovery against the same opponents four years ago, when they lost the first leg 4-0 but triumphed 6-1 in the return.

It is the first time they have gone out before the quarter-finals since 2007 and, after Juventus were knocked out on Tuesday, neither Messi nor Cristiano Ronaldo will feature in the last eight for the first time since 2005.

"We are out, and that is what counts in our sport, but we can feel good about it because we had chances to make life difficult for our opponents," Koeman told Movistar Plus.

"We are out, and that is what counts in our sport, but we can feel good about it because we had chances to make life difficult for our opponents," Koeman told Movistar Plus.

"We deserved more, and things could have been different had it been 2-1 at half-time."

# Reds march on

Liverpool put their Premier League woes aside, ease into last eight

AFP ■ BUDAPEST

Liverpool eased past RB Leipzig into the Champions League quarter-finals with a 2-0 win in Budapest Wednesday that coach Jurgen Klopp said helps his side put their Premier League woes to one side.

Repeating their rapid-fire double act from the first leg, Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane again struck within four second-half minutes to give the Reds a 4-0 aggregate win and keep alive Liverpool's hopes of rescuing their miserable domestic season with European glory.

After six successive defeats at Anfield and dropping to

eighth place in the Premier League, Klopp's men looked relieved to be away from home, with the second leg also played in the Hungarian capital due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

"They were outstanding. We had to switch off the Premier League stuff to get here and to try. To give it a proper try," Klopp told BT Sport.

"The boys really enjoyed themselves tonight which is important," said Klopp.

"It is a big result for us," said Salah.