



Memorandum of family arrangement gives TVS a chance to seek new vistas

Page 6



Karnataka planning Ordinance to ban cow slaughter: Yediyurappa

Page 8



Bumrah rescues Indians with the bat in warm-up match

Page 15

## NEARBY



Delhi records 2,385 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded 2,385 fresh COVID-19 cases on Friday with over 71,000 tests being conducted, even as the positivity rate stood at 3.33%, authorities said.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

HC stays CIC order on PM's foreign visits

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed a Central Information Commission direction to the IAF to provide an RTI activist information regarding each foreign visit of PM Narendra Modi undertaken on IAF aircraft.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

## Farmers to block Delhi-Jaipur highway

Police deployed over call to picket toll booths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

More farmers were streaming towards the national capital on Friday in response to the call from protesting unions to intensify the ongoing agitation against the three agricultural marketing reform laws by blocking the Delhi-Jaipur highway, and picketing toll plazas on Saturday.

Police personnel have been deployed in strength to deal with the situation and provide alternate routes to commuters.

For the last two weeks, tens of thousands of farmers have gathered at several points on Delhi's borders



**Standing in support:** Volunteers distributing bananas to farmers protesting against the farm laws at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. They are demanding a full repeal of the three contentious laws passed by Parliament in September.

"More farmers have now joined the dharna sites at Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Palwal," said a statement from the All India Kisan

Sangharsh Coordination Committee. "Farmers from Tamil Nadu have arrived and groups of farmers from almost all States of India shall

be arriving to join the Delhi protest soon," it added.

BUKU faction moves SC against laws

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhanu) on Friday moved the Supreme Court highlighting the 'inconclusive' talks with the Centre over the farm laws, which it said would lead to an exploitative regime. The farmers' body wants the court to direct the government to strengthen the existing APMC system for sale of farm produce at a good bargain. ▶ PAGE 9

## Nadda attack: MHA summons top West Bengal officials

Chief Secretary says State taking action



**Tension escalates:** BJP leaders Mukul Roy and Kailash Vijayvargiya addressing the media in Kolkata on Friday. ■ ANI

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

The row over Thursday's attack on the convoy of BJP national president J.P. Nadda in West Bengal's Diamond Harbour escalated on Friday, with the Union Home Ministry summoning the West Bengal Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police to attend a meeting on December 14 to discuss the "law and order situation in the State, including the incident regarding certain Z category proteeetees".

In a strong response to the attack, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said, "What happened yesterday was an unfortunate slur on democracy," adding that he had sent a report to the Centre on the incident.

ready addressing this issue with utmost seriousness".

In the attack, several vehicles were damaged and BJP leaders, including national general secretary Kaliasi Vijayvargiya, injured.

In a strong response to the attack, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said, "What happened yesterday was an unfortunate slur on democracy," adding that he had sent a report to the Centre on the incident.

In his letter, Mr. Bandyopadhyay said three cases, two for vandalism at Usthi and Falta police stations under the Diamond Harbour Police district, had been registered and seven persons arrested in the matter.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Industrial output stays in positive territory for second month at 3.6 %

Electricity generation grew 11.2% in October

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India's industrial output grew at the fastest pace in eight months in October 2020 at 3.6%, with consumer durables production surpassing levels last seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, as per quick estimates from the National Statistical Office (NSO) released on Friday.

This was the second month in a row that industrial output recorded positive growth, but economists were cautious about calling it a 'turnaround' as October's numbers were bolstered by pent-up and festive demand and helped by a low base as the index of industrial production had shrunk 6.6% in October 2019.

The NSO also revised upwards its estimates for September's industrial output growth from 0.2% to 0.5%, in light of updated data. Total industrial output so

far in 2020-21 is now 17.5% lower than the April 2019-October 2019 period.

Electricity generation grew 11.2% in October compared to a 12.2% decline a year ago, while manufacturing activity grew 3.5% in contrast to a 5.7% contraction in October 2019. Mining shrank 1.5%.

"The broad-based growth in manufacturing is significant. Machinery growth has turned positive, which is reflected in capital goods even though there was a very strong base effect," said CARE

uneven.

"The underlying strength of demand remains mixed, and is still tentative in some sectors," said Aditi Nayar, principal economist at ICRA, who said October's growth is 'feebler than expected' and November 2020 may record slower IIP growth or even a slide back into contraction mode.

"A variety of available indicators such as output of coal, electricity, non-oil exports and GST e-way bills have revealed that the pace of growth flagged in November 2020, on account of a combination of an unfavourable base effect, fewer working days related to the shift in the festive calendar, as well as some slack after the satiation of pent-up demand," she explained.

India Ratings principal economist Sunil Kumar Sinha agreed, stressing that while two consecutive months of positive IIP growth is a good sign, one must wait for few more months to believe that the economy is firmly in recovery mode.

## Panel probing ISRO case set to begin work

I have received a call to come before the committee, says Nambi Narayanan

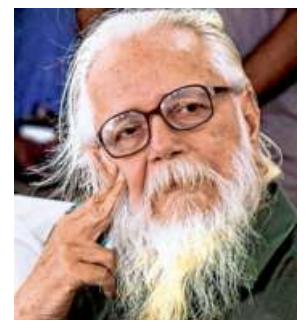
KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

A three-member Committee chaired by former Supreme Court judge D.K. Jain is scheduled to begin work on unravelling the rogue officials responsible for the infamous ISRO 'frame-up' case of 1994, which destroyed the life and reputation of Nambi Narayanan, one of the country's prominent space scientists.

The Justice Jain committee is expected to sit at Thiruvananthapuram on December 14 and 15.

"I have received a call from Justice Jain's office to come before the committee. I will help with whatever information I can give them about what happened," Mr. Narayanan told *The Hindu* on Friday.

The panel is having its first sitting two years after the Supreme Court consti-



Nambi Narayanan

tuted it in September 2018 to find "ways and means to take appropriate steps against the erring officials".

It could either opt to function from New Delhi or hold meetings at an appropriate place in Kerala.

At the time of his arrest on November 30, 1994, Mr. Narayanan was working on cryogenic engine technology at the premier Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The police investi-

gators had accused him of passing on documents and drawings of ISRO relating to Viking/Vikas engine technology, cryogenic engine technology and PSLV flight data/drawings to Pakistan.

**'Career smothered'**

But the Supreme Court dismissed the case in 2018 as a criminal frame-up based on "some kind fancy or notion". It said Mr. Narayanan's career was "smothered."

The scientist himself had

said that the prosecution

launched by the Kerala police

had a "catastrophic effect"

on his career and personal life, besides setting

back the technological ad-

vancement in space re-

search.

The CBI, which took over

the probe from the Kerala

Police, had promptly filed a

closure report in 1996. But

Mr. Narayanan fought on to

bring his accusers to justice.

The apex court, in its 2018 judgment, had called the treatment meted out to the scientist while he was in custody "psycho-pathological".

The court ordered the Kerala government to pay

Mr. Narayanan ₹50 lakh in

compensation, though it

said mere money was not

enough to make up for the

torture the scientist had en-

dured for 24 years.

An enquiry was called for

to look into the circumstan-

ces behind the "frame-up."

Mr. Narayanan, in his peti-

tion before the Supreme

Court, had arraigned former

Kerala DGP Siby Mathew,

K.K. Joshua and S. Vijayan

(the latter two had retired in

senior positions in the poli-

ce), as responsible.

The court had allowed the

Centre and the State govern-

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## IN BRIEF

## Two officers on protest duty test positive

NEW DELHI  
A Deputy Commissioner of Police and an Additional DCP, who were on duty at the Singhu border during the farmers' protest have tested positive and are under home quarantine. In the wake of the development, a COVID-19 testing booth has been set up for the police personnel.

## Cong. hits out at govt. for not giving napkins under Udaan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI  
The Delhi Pradesh Mahila Congress (DPMC) on Monday lashed out the Delhi government for not providing sanitary pads to schoolchildren under the Udaan scheme during the pandemic.

DPMC chief Amrita Dhawan said if the government was not providing sanitary napkins to these girls, the party is ready to take up the responsibility. "The pandemic can end but the menstrual cycle will not. This is each women's reality and hence we bleed with pride," Ms. Dhawan said.

Under the scheme, 30,000 out-of-school girls used to get six sanitary napkins a month for ₹6. Ms. Dhawan said while the government is using the pandemic as a reason to have not floated a new tender for the scheme, data shows that in the last 18 months, napkins were provided for only six months.

## Friendship blooms on either side of the barricade at Singhu border

Far from feeling antagonistic, protesters and policemen have struck a warm relationship

HEMAMI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

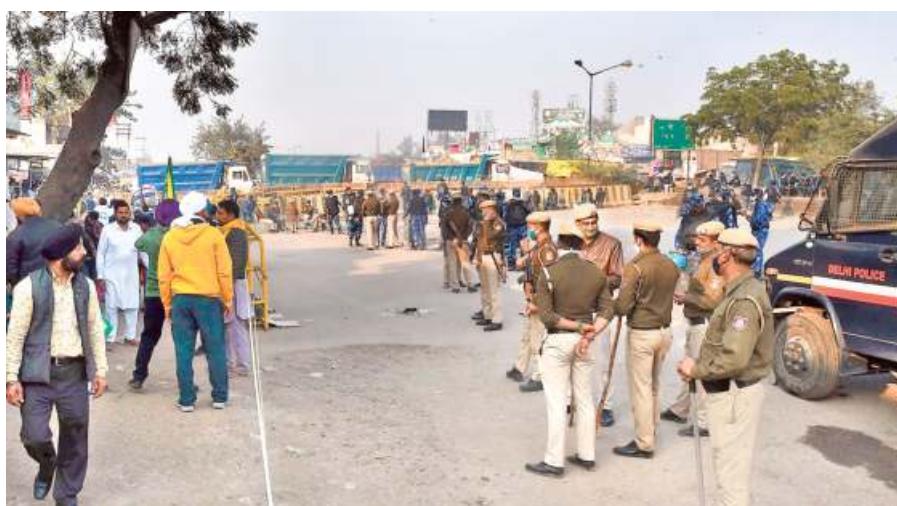
Across the barricades at Delhi-Haryana's Singhu border, police officials and protesting farmers seem to share a unique relationship. They are warm and 'like family' thought pitched on the opposite sides in different gears. The policemen with their riot gear and the farmers with their flags.

While smoking his hookah, Balwan (65), a resident of Sonipat, said the police officers are like their own children and are only doing their duty. "They haven't done anything bad to us and we haven't either. Some of them even eat at our langars and we welcome them with open arms," he said.

**Mutual trust**  
Sitting next to him, Dalbir Singh, another resident, said he has friends and relatives in the paramilitary forces and they understand the situation. "They also want it to end at the earliest," he said.

Making a rather hard-hitting point, Jai Kishan Sharma said: "Kisan aur jawan ek hi chulhe ki roti khaate hain... gaon ke gharon main ek bachha agar kisan hota hai toh doosra jawan hota hai [Farmer and soldier eat from the same plate... In houses in the village, if one child is a farmer, another is a soldier]."

Both of us doing our respective jobs for our liveli-



Security personnel deployed at the Singhu border on GT Karnal Road during the farmers' protest on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

hood, the farmers said. Though hesitant to talk about which side the heart lies in, officers including seniors shared how the protesters have treated them in the last 15 days.

"They force us to have water and tea, even if we say that we don't need it. While serving anything at the langar, they always come and ask us," said a constable-rank personnel, whose father is a farmer in Haryana, and who has been on border duty since November 26.

**Brothers in arms**  
Another officer said that they have all been ordered not to say anything to the protesters and be cordial with them. "They are doing what they think is right and we are

here to protect them," he said. The officers who usually stand on the outside facing the protesters shared how the farmers make videos and call the officers their brothers. "It feels good," the officer smiled.

**Welcome change**  
The "good" behaviour is not limited to lower-ranked personnel. Senior police officers have also experienced the warmth. "On Friday morning itself, an old uncle wearing a turban approached us and said, 'Aap nahin aate hain is side isiyi hum aaye hain' [You don't come to our side, that's why we've come] and handed us a fistful of almonds," he said.

The officer said that they're used to listening to

'Delhi Police Haye Haye' at protests, therefore, this comes as a welcome change. "However, there are some protesters who are not farmers but use foul words against us but thankfully, they don't find resonance in the real protesting crowd," he said.

Another senior officer shared how a farmer once approached him and told him that their fight is with those in power and not with the police. He even invited him to eat at the langar.

Even the barricades were there to restrict movement, a police officer said. And not a symbol of distrust. Despite the protests gathering steam, both sides are hopeful that their relationship stays the same till the end.

## Farmers camping at Palwal hope govt. will bow to their demands

Protest to swell as more people from other States to join soon

ASHOK KUMAR  
PALWAL

Amid stand-off between the farmer unions and the Central government over the withdrawal of three contentious Farm Laws, the farmers, mostly from Madhya Pradesh, camping at a flyover on the Delhi-Agra Highway (NH-19) near Kundli-Manesar Palwal Expressway here for the past over a week sound optimistic saying that government would eventually "bow" to their demands.

Prepared for a long haul, the farmers said the government had softened its stand from earlier advocating the three legislations as "good" to being ready to make "amendments" now.

## Gathering steam

"The government has softened its stand. Earlier, the government said laws were good. Now they feel the need for amendments. More people are likely to join us now as the wedding season will be over by December 12 and wheat has been sown. Our numbers are swelling. The movement will gather more steam in the days to come," said Kuldeep Singh, a Sikh from Bhind in Madhya Pradesh, playing cards on a winter afternoon on Thursday.

Sitting next to him, Sukhvinder Singh, added that it was an elected government and would have to withdraw the laws if the farmers don't want it.

Amit Pal Singh, another



Protesters said they had come prepared for months and are also supported by the locals. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are likely to join us," said Harvinder Gill, 35.

Bundelkhand Kisan Union national president Vimal Kumar Sharma, accompanied by a few farmers from the Bundelkhand region, said the Uttar Pradesh Police tried to stop them from marching towards Delhi, but they managed to reach travelling through different routes instead.

Prepared for the December 12 call to make tolls free, the farmers claimed they had called up their families back home asking them to ensure that the tolls in their neighbourhood were made free.

The farmers could be happy with amendments till the time they had not decided to march to Delhi, but now they want complete repeal. We are seeking our due and not begging. It's country of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan,' said Gurjeet Singh, summing up the overwhelming sentiment at the protest site.

## Light rain likely today

Met forecasts clear sky on Sunday

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
The Met department on Friday said the city will witness partly cloudy sky with light rain on Saturday. The maximum and minimum temperatures will settle between 26 degrees Celsius and 13 degrees Celsius respectively.

The cloudy weather is likely to raise the minimum temperature for a day and then cause a drop thereafter.

## Change in weather

The change in weather is being caused by an active western disturbance in the region that has brought fresh snowfall in the Himalayas. The Met has also forecast moderate to dense fog in the morning over the next few

days.

"Mainly clear sky with moderate fog in the morning on December 13 and mainly clear sky with moderate to dense fog in the morning on December 14 and 15," the Met said.

On Friday, the sky was partly cloudy with the maximum temperature settling at 25.8 degrees Celsius, which is three degrees warmer than normal and the minimum was 11.3 degrees Celsius, which is two degrees above normal.

After a colder than normal October and November, December this year has been warmer than usual with both the maximum and minimum temperatures staying above normal for the season so far.

## Capital's air quality expected to improve today due to rain

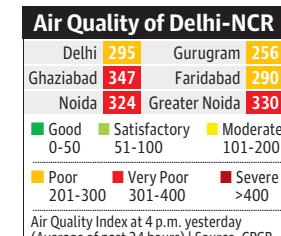
Effect of stubble burning on AQI was negligible on Friday

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Gurugram was in the "poor" category on Friday and Noida's in the "very poor" category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

The air quality of the national capital is expected to improve to the "poor" to "moderate" category on Saturday due to scattered rainfall.

"Under the influence of fresh western disturbance, isolated to scattered rainfall and better ventilation conditions are expected on Friday night and Saturday and the AQI is likely to further improve on to the lower end of the 'poor' to 'moderate'



category by December 12," said government-run monitoring agency, SAFAR.

The AQI of Delhi was 295 on Friday, as per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin, which is an average of the past 24 hours. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 256 and 324 respectively. The effect of stubble burning on air quality was negligible on Friday.

But the local surface-level winds were calm, which does not help in the dispersion of pollutants. Also, the mixing height, which is the height from the ground-level up to which pollutants can be dispersed, was also low at night. This also prevents pollutants from getting dispersed easily.

The air quality is expected to increase later in the week. "As an aftermath of western disturbance, high moisture availability with higher air holding capacity and dense fog formation is expected, which will lead to deterioration of AQI to the 'poor' to lower end of the 'very poor' category on December 13 and December 14," SAFAR added.

## Life support



A farmer, who was feeling unwell, being examined by a doctor at the protest site in Ghazipur on Friday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

## मतदाता सूची का विरोध संक्षिप्त पुनरीकाण 2021

(16 नवंबर, 2020 से 15 दिसंबर, 2020)

स्पेशल कैप

12 दिसंबर, 2020 (शनिवार) एवं 13 दिसंबर, 2020 (रविवार)

सभी मतदान केंद्रों पर

- उपलब्ध सेवाएँ:
- मतदाता सूची में नाम जुड़वाएं (फार्म 6)
  - मृतक या स्थानांतरित मतदाता का नाम हटवाएं (फार्म 7)
  - मतदाता प्रवर्षित में सुधार करवाएं (फार्म 8)
  - पते में परिवर्तन ढर्ज करवाएं (फार्म 8A)

संकल्प हमारा टूटे ना, कोई मतदाता छूटे ना

योग्यता  
1 जनवरी, 2021 तक

मुख्य निर्वाचन अधिकारी  
ओडी सेट रस्टोरन कोलेज विलिंग, कश्यपीरी गेट, दिल्ली- 110006  
www.ceodelhi.gov.in

DIP/Sabdarth/D/0087/20-21

## One killed, two injured during fight near hospital

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
A 32-year-old man was stabbed to death while two brothers injured during a brawl with another group of youths near Safdarjung Hospital, the police said on Friday.

## Two arrested

The deceased, Neeraj, was stabbed at least 22 times and Rakesh and Mukesh sustained injuries, they said. The three victims worked as sweepers at the Safdarjung Hospital. Two persons – Krishna and Ravi – have been arrested, an of-

ficer said, adding: "The incident happened on Wednesday night when the two groups were drinking at an open space near Safdarjung Hospital. The scuffle started after one group confronted the other over their contractual status. One of the accused brought a knife from a vendor and attacked all of them. After the attack, all of the accused left the spot."

"A juvenile has also been apprehended. A case of murder and attempt to murder has been registered," said DCP (South-West) Ingit Pratap Singh.

## Three of firm nabbed for duping buyers of ₹20 cr.

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
Three directors of a real estate firm have been arrested for allegedly duping over 20 buyers to the tune of ₹20 crore on the pretext of higher returns, the police said on Friday.

The arrested have been identified as Anil Kumar Saham, Aunirban Saha and

Ashok Kumar Sirohi, they said. The case came to the fore when a woman approached the police alleging that the accused cheated her of ₹5.44 crore by luring her into their group housing project in Noida.

The accused persons used to dupe the buyers to invest in the project on the pretext of huge profits.



अंतिम तिथि  
15 दिसंबर  
2020



मतदाता सूची का विरोध संक्षिप्त पुनरीकाण 2021



16 नवंबर, 2020 से 15 दिसंबर, 2020



स्पेशल कैप



सभी मतदान केंद्रों पर



उपलब्ध सेवाएँ



मतदाता सूची का विरोध संक्षिप्त पुनरीकाण 2021



16 नवंबर, 2020 से 15 दिसंबर, 2020



स्पेशल कैप



सभी मतदान केंद्रों पर



उपलब्ध सेवाएँ



Timings  
DELHI

SATURDAY, DEC. 12	RISE 07:05 SET 17:26
RISE 04:10 SET 15:33	
SUNDAY, DEC. 13	
RISE 07:05 SET 17:26	
RISE 05:20 SET 16:18	
MONDAY, DEC. 14	
RISE 07:06 SET 17:27	
RISE 06:30 SET 17:11	

Delhi Weather max min  
Delhi City 26 11  
Safdarjung 26 11  
Palam 24 14

Delhi Palam Today  
25°C One or two spell of rain and thundershower with gusty winds and cloudy sky expected.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
25°C Cool morning with fog and mist. A partly cloudy sky becoming clear later on.

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## Act against unscientific disposal of waste: NGT

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking action against unscientific disposal of waste in storm water drains by dairy owners in Ghaziabad, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the State authorities to take action and ensure compliance of rules.

The NGT said, "Let the statutory authorities concerned take further action of stopping the illegal activity and ensuring compliance of environmental norms."

A report furnished by the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board said that two dairies were found non-compliant to rules and hence environmental compensation had been assessed.

These units neither obtained nor was granted any licences or consents or permissions from State authorities like Ghaziabad Nagar Nigam, UPPCB and so on. The State authorities should take action against illegal operation of the business in residential area as per the provisions of the applicable rules or law," read an action plan.

## Centre writes to Delhi govt. on permission to cut trees for 100-bed hospital

Project is stuck due to lack of clearance

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

The Central government has written to the Delhi government to give permission for cutting trees for a 100-bed hospital in Najafgarh, which has been pending with the latter.

The Hindu had reported on November 27 how the hospital project of the Union Health Ministry was stuck as permission for cutting trees has been pending with the Delhi Environment Minister's office for almost two years.

The Additional Director General (ADG) of Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change wrote to the Delhi government on November 27 to "look into the matter" of permission for cutting trees. The ADG sent the letter in response to a letter by the Secretary of Union Ministry of Health on the subject.

"Forest clearance is essential for making the hospital functional. Officials have again recommended the cut-

ting of trees to the Minister. The letter from the Centre is now pending before the Minister for approval," a Delhi government official said.

In 2018, the officials concerned had recommended the cutting of trees and as per a status report of the Delhi government, the file for the project was submitted to the Environment Minister on December 18, 2018 and the Minister has neither rejected nor approved it since then.

In November, up to 55% of hospital beds for COVID-19 were occupied in Delhi and more than 90% of ICU beds were full. There were several complaints of people finding it difficult to find beds, forcing governments to start temporary hospitals.

In May 2018, the Union cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had cleared the construction of the hospital and said that it will cater to 13.65 lakh people. The hospital was supposed to be operational by May 2020.

## Probe ordered into 'mishandling' of ₹2,400 cr. by North civic body: Jain

Atishi raises questions over working pattern of all Delhi municipal corporations

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Urban Development Minister Satyendar Jain on Friday said that he has ordered an inquiry into "misappropriation" of more than ₹2,400 crore by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

This, even as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which runs the three civic bodies, staged protests outside the official residences of Delhi Cabinet Ministers, demanding disbursal of dues amounting to ₹13,000 crore.

"North Delhi Municipal Corporation, which is said to be in a financial crunch and cannot pay salaries on time to its doctors and staffers, has done misappropriation of more than ₹2,400 crore. It was supposed to get from South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

I came to know about this through newspapers. I have told the Additional Chief Secretary of Urban Development [of Delhi government] to inquire about it. An inquiry will be conducted," Mr. Jain said while addressing a press conference at party headquarters.

On Wednesday, AAP alleged that the North corporation had waived ₹2,457 crore owed by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

When asked about the demand of ₹13,000 crore by the corporations, the Minister said: "They should ask the Central government.

During the last elections, they were confident about getting funds from the Central government.



I came to know about this [misappropriation] through the newspapers. I have told the Additional Chief Secretary of Urban Development to inquire about it

SATYENDRA JAIN  
Urban Development Minister

political malice.

"By withholding the fund of the corporations, the Kejriwal government wants to deprive Delhiites of those facilities which the civic body is struggling to provide in the fields of education and healthcare," he alleged.

AAP leader and MLA Atishi said for the past 15 days Commissioners of all the three BJP-ruled municipal corporations were on leave and raised questions over the working pattern of the corporations.

**Commissioners on leave'**

"On one side, the Mayors of civic bodies are sitting outside the CM's residence and busy doing politics and on the other side the commissioners are on leave. AAP

wants to know why has the BJP left the municipal corporations in such a condition and who is responsible for making the new budgets or imposing series of new taxes on citizens," she told the media.

BJP leaders meet L-G over fund release

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

BJP president Adesh Gupta and Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri met Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal on Friday and demanded that directions be issued to the Delhi government to immediately release a fund of ₹13,000 crore to the municipal corporations.

Alleging that funds to this effect were due to the civic bodies, Mr. Gupta and Mr. Bidhuri also handed over a memorandum to the Lieutenant Governor in the matter.

According to the BJP, in view of the seriousness of the subject, the Lieutenant Governor assured them that he would summon the Delhi government's reply on it.

"Mayors and other senior corporators have been sitting on a dharna outside the CM's residence for the last five days demanding immediate payment of the outstanding funds. But the CM does not have time to meet the corporation leaders," Mr. Gupta said.

"The L-G has deemed the Kejriwal government's withholding of funds of the corporation unfair. The L-G has also written a letter to the CM thrice in this context," Mr. Gupta also said.

The Delhi BJP president said the party had also demanded "appropriate action" in regard to an alleged conspiracy to "kill" the protesting Mayors allegedly by senior AAP leaders.

## Delhi records 2,385 new COVID-19 cases

There are 18,676 active cases in city at present and 6,501 containment zones

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed 2,385 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,03,535, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

Also, 60 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 9,934.

Of the total cases, 5,74,925 people have recovered and there are 18,676 active cases.

The positivity of COVID-19 treatment in the city, 73.7% were vacant, as per the bulletin.

There were 6,501 containment zones in the city as on Friday.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain told reporters that positivity till now was 8.53%, as per the bulletin.

Out of the total 18,853



The total number of COVID-19 cases in Delhi now stands at 6,03,535. ■ FILE: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 73.7% were vacant, as per the bulletin.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain told reporters that positivity till now was 8.53%, as per the bulletin.

Out of the total 18,853

is on the wane," Mr. Jain said.

### 70,000 tests daily

He also said that more than 70,000 tests are still being carried out on a daily basis. He said that the situation was under control and requested people to wear masks and follow social distancing.

### COVID-19

When asked about delay in reports of RT-PCR tests, he said, "I agree that there has been a delay, but that is being looked into. We followed the Central government's orders to double the testing, which led to the delay. However, now, there is a betterment in the turnaround time."

Baijal reviews status of digital delivery project

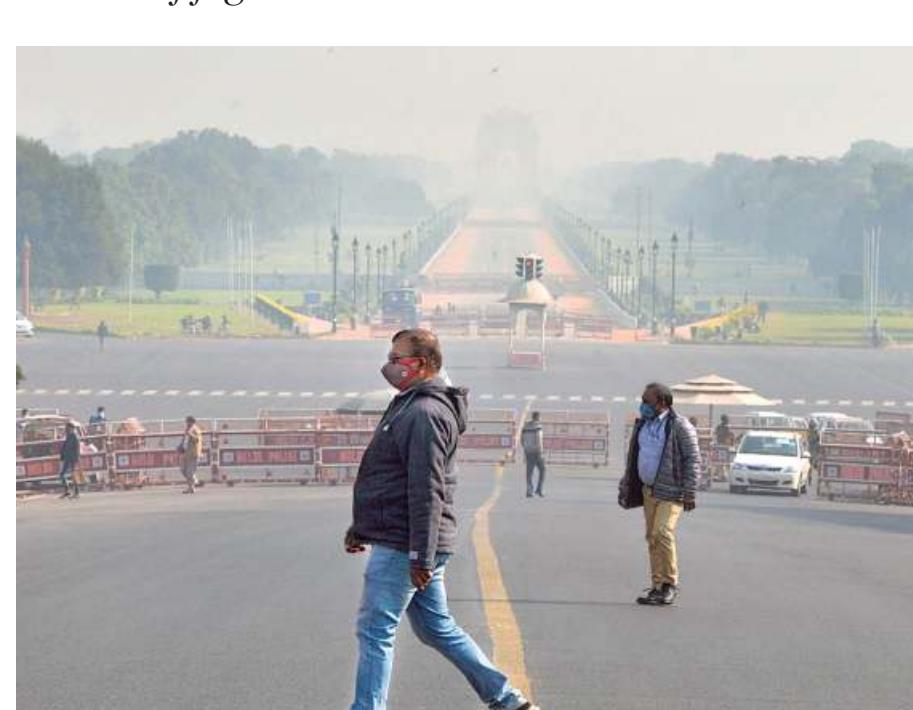
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal on Friday reviewed the status and progress of the Digital Delivery of Services project here at Raj Niwas.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the L-G said, he emphasised on the provision of all public services online through a common integrated platform for the convenience of citizens.

"The need to facilitate access and use of online services by general public through various modes and on adherence to timelines have been stressed upon," Mr. Baijal said.

## Blanket of fog



Fog engulfs Rajpath in New Delhi on Friday morning. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## Jamaat case: HC rejects plea to transfer probe

Delhi Police failed to arrest Saad despite lapse of considerable time: petitioner

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Friday dismissed a plea seeking direction to transfer from Delhi Police to the NIA to investigate the matter in a time-bound manner.

Mr. Upadhyay had also sought for the probe to be monitored by the High Court, alleging that the Delhi Police has failed to arrest the leader despite

lapse of considerable time.

In May this year, Delhi government had opposed the plea saying Delhi Police was conducting the investigation in a fair manner and argued that the petitioner has no locus standi to file the plea.

Delhi Police Crime Branch had on March 31 lodged an FIR against seven persons, including the cleric, on a complaint by

Station House Officer of Nizamuddin police station here for holding a congregation of Tablighi Jamaat followers in alleged violation of the orders against large gatherings to contain the spread of the virus.

The Enforcement Directorate has also filed a money laundering case against Mr. Saad, trusts links to the Jamaat and others.

## We are taking all necessary COVID-19 Precautionary Measures

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Government of Jammu & Kashmir  
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Telefax:- 0194-2496089, Email ID:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

Gist of e-tender  
NIT No: MHCHD/TS/2020-21/219/e-tendering  
Dated: 09.12.2020

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, e-tenders, valid for 180 days, are invited from the Registered, reputed & experienced firms as detailed in the NIT for below mentioned works:

S. No	Name of Garden	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Time of completion (in Days)	Position of AAA/funds
1	2 Re-routing of the Central Heating Pipeline From Boiler House to other sections at Govt. B&J Hospital, Srinagar.	4.05	200	8000	05	Available as communicated by intending department

- Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.ktenders.gov.in from 10.12.2020 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 10.12.2020 (18.00 hrs).
- Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 11.12.2020 (10.00 hrs) to 17.12.2020(14.00 hrs) in two (02) covers.
- Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 17.12.2020 at 16.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

No: MHCHD/TS/6840-45 Date : 09-12-2020

DIPK-10241/20

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
MHCHD, Srinagar

## 80% turnout in Rajasthan polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

About 80% of 14.32 lakh voters cast their votes in the elections for 50 municipal bodies situated in 12 districts of Rajasthan on Friday. The highest turnout at 90.32% was recorded at Na-

gar in Bhatatpur district in the polls for the town's municipality.

Of the total urban local bodies which went to polls, 43 were municipalities and seven were municipal councils. As many as 7,249 candidates were in the fray.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The general public is hereby informed on instructions of my client Mrs. Sushma Goel W/o Late Sh. Rajender Goel Aged 56 years, R/o - C-10, New Market, Sector - 10, P.O. - Sector 10, New Delhi-110056, who has discovered and disinherited his wife Prachi Singh from all her movable and immovable properties due to her outlandish misconduct and especially misbehavior of her daughter-in-law namely Prachi Singh. Anybody deals with them at his own risk. She will not be responsible for any of their actions. PARVESH KR. BASIR (Adv.) Enr. D/338/2017, Ch.No.1424, Rohini Court Complex, Delhi-83 M.8860987850

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
NOTICE is hereby given that AMARJEET KAUR BHAMBRA D/o INDER SINGH R/o. WZ-139-A-4-A, SECOND FLOOR, GALLI NO. 13, NEW MAHABIR NAGAR, TILAK NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110018 OF AFGHANISTAN is applying to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, for any person who knows any reason why Naturalization should not be granted should send a written signed statement of the facts to said Secretary.

**TENDERS**

**CHENNAI PORT TRUST M&EE Department**  
e-tenders are invited for the following:  
1. Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Quick Release Mooring Hooks.  
2. Hiring of 2 Nos. Water Tanker Lorries.  
For further details/ corrigendum, if any, visit [www.eprocure.gov.in](http://www.eprocure.gov.in) or [www.chennaiport.gov.in](http://www.chennaiport.gov.in)

Chief Mechanical Engineer

## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH

**E Narayanan** (74)  
Retd. Customs Superintendent  
S/o M.D. Ekambaram  
DOB: 24.11.1946 - DOD: 06.12.2020  
Deeply mourned by his  
Wife, Daughter & Son.  
[santhoshram.en@gmail.com](mailto:santhoshram.en@gmail.com) /  
[vishnupriya.narayanan@gmail.com](mailto:vishnupriya.narayanan@gmail.com)  
044-2618 4807

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

**1st Anniversary**  
**V. RAJAAMANI**  
TNEB-RS-Retd  
Dearly missed by family & friends.  
7667733551

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## Panel to probe infants death in Kota hospital

Nine casualties reported in last 2 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan government on Friday appointed a four-member committee to investigate the death of nine newborns at J.K. Lon Hospital in Kota during the last two days. The committee will submit its report within three days, after inspecting the hospital and looking into the medical facilities available in the institution.

Five infants died at the hospital during Wednesday night and four more on Thursday. All of them were one to four days old. The death of an unusual number of newborn babies in the hospital in December last year had also generated a controversy.

J.K. Lon hospital, run by the State government, is dedicated to the treatment

of children and infants. Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma said here that he had received reports from the hospital's Medical Superintendent and the Kota Medical College Principal, explaining the causes of death of the newborns.

The reports stated that three of the infants had been brought dead to the hospital, while three others had died of congenital diseases. The remaining three newborn babies died from cot death, also called the sudden infant death syndrome, which is caused by suffocation during breastfeeding or other reasons, according to the reports.

Mr. Sharma asked the Principals of all medical colleges in the State to take special care of the treatment of newborns.

## Miffed BTP threatens to cut ties with Congress in Rajasthan

Party upset with Cong. members joining hands with BJP to defeat its candidate

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

Upset with the Congress zila parishad members joining hands with the BJP to defeat its zila pramukh candidate in Dungarpur, the Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP) on Friday threatened to sever its alliance with the ruling party in Rajasthan.

The BTP, with its two MLAs, had extended support to the Congress after the government formation in 2018.

In the recent four-phase panchayat body elections,

the BTP-backed Independents won 13 of the 27 seats

in the Dungarpur Zila Parishad, while the BJP and the Congress won eight and six seats respectively. The Congress and the BJP came to

Congress and BJP two sides of the same coin and both were trying to finish the regional parties by entering into alliance with them

CHHOTUBHAI VASAVA  
Founder, Bharatiya Tribal Party

BJP earlier this week despite the Opposition party winning just eight seats.

## Founded in Gujarat

Founded in neighbouring Gujarat by tribal leader Chhotubhai Vasava in 2017, the BTP entered the electoral fray in Rajasthan in 2018 and won two Assembly seats - Chorasi and Sagwara - in Dungarpur district. The nascent party has started wielding considerable influence in the tribal-dominated regions of southern Rajasthan.

As an ally of the Congress, it voted for the Congress's candidates in the Rajya Sabha elections held in June and backed Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot during the political

turmoil in July and August. BTP MLAs Rajkumar Roat

and Ram Prasad supported the Congress during the confidence vote on the floor of the Assembly.

Mr. Vasava, an MLA from Gujarat's Jhagadia constituency, said the Congress and BJP were "two sides of the same coin" and alleged that both were trying to finish the regional parties by entering into alliance with them. The BTP would shortly withdraw its support to the Congress government and strengthen itself as an "alternative front" in the State.

BTP State president Velaram Ghogra said a party executive meeting would be held in a couple of days and a formal decision announced for snapping the alliance with the Congress.

## Illicit liquor trade rampant in Punjab: AAP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

smuggling was rampant across the State.

law.

"As many as 126 deaths were reported in Punjab due to consumption of spurious liquor recently in the Majha area, but no strict action was taken against those behind the tragedy," he said.

The AAP leader said

that despite the fact that the Excise and Taxation Department and the Home Department were under Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, he had failed to curb illicit liquor smuggling in the State, demanding that he should quit the posts.

## Arunachal tribal group sets govt. offices on fire

Violence followed move to defer polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

A tribal group demanding the cancellation of electoral rights to non-indigenous people, mostly former Assam Rifles personnel, set several government offices on fire at Vijaynagar in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district on Friday.

The arson followed the decision of the State Election Commission to defer the panchayat elections in areas under Vijaynagar Circle citing law and order issues. The rural polls are scheduled for December 22.

The district police said a large number of people led by Yobin (tribe) Students' Union swooped down on Vijaynagar at around 8:30 am and burnt down the offices of the extra assistant commissioner, Special Branch of the State police and the post office.

"The miscreants, carrying machetes, sticks, bows and arrows, also ransacked the Vijaynagar police station and partially damaged the civil helipad," State police spokesperson Hemant Tiwari said.

Kime Kaming, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police in charge of Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts reached Vijaynagar by chopper while other senior officials, including Inspector-General of Police (Law and Order) Chuku Apa, were on their way. "An additional force is being rushed to Vijaynagar for maintaining law and order," the spokesperson said, adding that the senior officials will camp there until the situation becomes normal.

## Non APST candidates

Trouble had been brewing in the area after the locals objected to the political parties fielding "non-APSTs" [non-Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribes] for the posts of zilla parishad and gram panchayat members. The parties, including the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, dropped such candidates after the All-Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union took up the issue.

Vijaynagar, bordering Myanmar, is one of the remotest administrative circles of Arunachal Pradesh.

## Odisha govt. not keen on reopening schools

Parents also reluctant to send children

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government seems to be not keen on reopening schools any time soon though active COVID-19 cases in more than 50% districts are in double-digit, indicating remarkable improvement in the situation.

A day after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik issued a stern warning not to make separate statements on opening of educational institutions, preparations for starting higher classes such as IX and X have been put on the back burner.

Earlier, it was stated that schools may reopen from the first week of January. The decision to reopen educational institutions would be taken by taking all aspects into consideration, Mr. Patnaik had said.

Parents have expressed concern over sending children to schools in the middle of the current winter season although the recovery rate was as high as 98.52%. Similarly, the daily positive rate

came down to below 1% for the first time.

The State government on Friday reported 387 positive cases, taking the total to 3,23,029. As many as 3,17,870 persons have already recovered. Four persons have died, taking the total fatalities to 1,798.

**Less cases**  
Only four persons were found to be recuperating in Subarnapur district, while Kandhamal and Gajapati had five and six persons infected with COVID-19 respectively. The total active cases in Boudh, Nabarangpur, Nayagarh, Dhenkanal, Deogarh, Ganjam, Rayagada and Malkangiri remained under 50.

Meanwhile, the State government said it had kept all logistics ready for the vaccination programme. "We are in constant touch with the Centre for the vaccination programme," said Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy.

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Chief Mechanical Engineer

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Zone, M.E.I. Layout, Bagalgunte, Hesaraghatta Main Road, Bengaluru-560073  
No. B.B.M.P/EE/DD/Tend/24/2020-21 Date: 10.12.2020

## TENDER POSTPONED NOTIFICATION

Sub.: Regarding Tender Notification Postponed.

Ref. : This office e-Procurement Portal Tender

Notification No. : B.B.M.P/EE/DD/Tend/24/2020-21,

Date: 17.11.2020.

With reference to the above subject, above reference tender had invited, due to technical reasons submission of bids through e-Procurement portal last date as postponed below mentioned.

**Revised Time Schedule :** (1) Pre bid meeting at Chief Engineer, Dasarahalli Zone, on 23.12.2020 or before 4:00 p.m. (2) Tender must be submitted online through e-Procurement Portal on 28.1.2020 or before 4:00 p.m. (3) Technical bids will be opened on the website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BBMP on or after 29.12.2020 at 4:30 p.m. (4) Financial bids will be opened on the website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BBMP on or after 30.12.2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BBMP

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Wear Mask Follow Physical Distancing Maintain Hand Hygiene

6 Feet

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Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahlipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites tender through e-Tendering process from reputed Service Firm for hosting and maintenance of CRCC Academic Monitoring and SDMIS Portal.

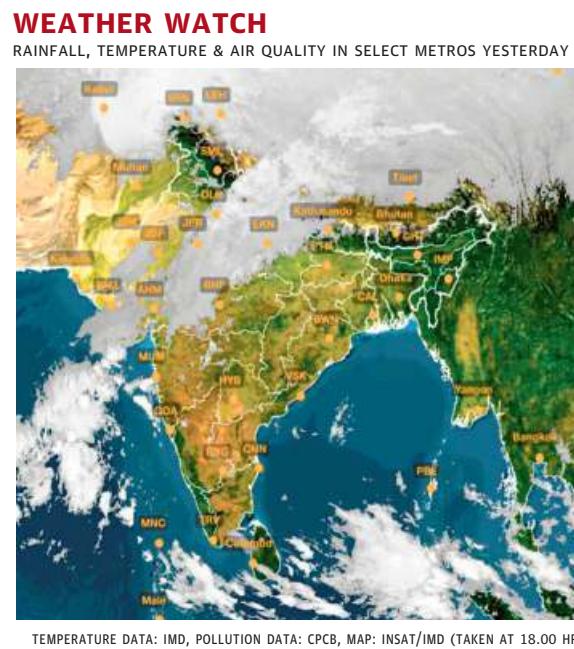
**Approx Tender Value :** Rs. 74,40,000/- (Rupees Seventy Four Lakhs Forty Thousand Only); **Earnest Money :** Rs. 1,48,800/- (Rupees One Lakhs Forty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Only); **Cost of Tender Forms (In Rs.) :** NIL. Bidders

will be able to submit their original revised bids up to 15:00 hrs on 29.12.2020 only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offers received shall be rejected. Details are available on our website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Assistant Workshop Manager, SECR, Nagpur

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

**Forecast for Saturday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala and Mahe. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over east Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim and Odisha

**CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala ..... 24.4 ..... 17.7 Kozhikode ..... 33.5 ..... 24.3

Ahmedabad ..... 0.8 ..... 23.5 ..... 21.0 Kurnool ..... 32.6 ..... 17.1

Aizawl ..... 21.0 ..... 9.8 Lucknow ..... 20.1 ..... 13.7

Allahabad ..... 27.1 ..... 15.0 Madurai ..... 29.8 ..... 22.1

Bengaluru ..... 29.3 ..... 16.6 Mangalore ..... 33.0 ..... 23.1

Bhopal ..... 21.8 ..... 18.0 Mumbai ..... 0.2 ..... 28.8 ..... 24.0

Bhubaneswar ..... 31.2 ..... 16.3 Mysuru ..... 30.0 ..... 18.2

Chandigarh ..... 27.5 ..... 11.3 New Delhi ..... 25.8 ..... 11.3

Chennai ..... 29.1 ..... 22.0 Patna ..... 22.2 ..... 12.8

Coimbatore ..... 29.7 ..... 20.6 Port Blair ..... 30.4 ..... 22.8

Dehradun ..... 27.0 ..... 9.6 Puducherry ..... 29.1 ..... 20.3

Gangtok ..... 13.7 ..... 8.1 Pune ..... 29.1 ..... 19.5

Goa ..... 22.6 ..... 31.0 Raipur ..... 31.1 ..... 24.5

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Imphal ..... 21.8 ..... 7.0 Srinagar ..... 10.0 ..... 3.0

Jaipur ..... 24.4 ..... 18.5 Thiruvananthapuram ..... 32.0 ..... 24.2

Kochi ..... 12.8 ..... 33.2 ..... 24.6 Tiruchi ..... 30.5 ..... 20.5

Kohima ..... 17.6 ..... 6.0 Vijayawada ..... 30.2 ..... 19.5

Kolkata ..... 22.1 ..... 16.6 Visakhapatnam ..... 29.3 ..... 20.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

**CITIES** **SO<sub>2</sub>** **NO<sub>x</sub>** **CO** **PM<sub>2.5</sub>** **PM<sub>10</sub>** **CODE**

Ahmedabad ..... 27 ..... 87 ..... 36 ..... 80 ..... 50 ..... 2

Bengaluru ..... 17 ..... 74 ..... 45 ..... 79 ..... 98 ..... 2

Chennai ..... 12 ..... 10 ..... 32 ..... 109 ..... 50 ..... 2

Delhi ..... 10 ..... 90 ..... 86 ..... 367 ..... 307 ..... 2

Hyderabad ..... 5 ..... 100 ..... 13 ..... 80 ..... 107 ..... 2

Kolkata ..... 10 ..... 23 ..... 61 ..... 304 ..... 177 ..... 2

Lucknow ..... 6 ..... 100 ..... 39 ..... 361 ..... 332 ..... 2

Mumbai ..... 7 ..... 76 ..... 26 ..... 216 ..... 170 ..... 2

Pune ..... 8 ..... 82 ..... 97 ..... 118 ..... 103 ..... 2

Visakhapatnam ..... 26 ..... 42 ..... 61 ..... 274 ..... 254 ..... 2

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

# HC: systems not sensitive to problems faced by farmers

Court dismisses plea seeking quashing of FIR against trio accused of duping farmers of ₹2.8 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court said "all systems" are not sensitive to the problems farmers are facing in the country while dismissing a plea by the owners of a transport company accused of duping farmers of ₹2.8 crore.

A Division Bench of Justices T.V. Nalawade and M.G. Sewlikar was hearing the criminal application filed by the accused seeking quashing of an FIR registered against them in Jalgaon. The accused had been booked on charges of cheating and dishonesty inducing delivery of property.

Saniya Kadri, a broker in agricultural produce, registered the complaint against the owners of Khandelwal Transporters on July 28, 2017. Ms. Kadri said she had signed an agreement with the accused after they approached her to hand over the banana produce collected from farmers. They



Raising concern: The Bombay High Court noted that farmer suicides are increasing by the day in the country. ■ FILE PHOTO

claimed to have contacts with traders in different States who would give her a better price and help her earn more profit.

Ms. Kadri alleged that the accused did not make any payment for the deliveries made between May 21 and June 18, 2017. The complainant said she is now unable to pay ₹2.8 crore in dues to the farmers. However, the lawyer appearing for the accused claimed that no such agreement was inked between them and Ms. Kadri.

The court observed that it was "unfortunate that all the systems are not showing sensitivity towards the problems faced by farmers". The court also noted

that since farmers have no resources and cannot afford to get involved in litigation, traders take advantage of their plight. "This inability of farmers is used by traders to make money on the agricultural produce which farmers get after working hard. The suicides of farmers are increasing day by day as farmers are facing all kinds of problems and the present problem of cheating is an additional circumstance which is compelling the farmers to commit suicide."

Dismissing the plea, the Bench said it is not possible to presume that the accused had no intention of duping the farmers. The court said, "The facts and circumstances show that first the atmosphere was created to lure the farmers and when the farmers started trusting, the plan was executed and payment was not made and the farmers were cheated. The record shows that the money was collected by the applicants [transport company owners], but it was not passed on to the informant [Ms. Kadri], who was expected to pass it on to the farmers. In view of all these circumstances, this court holds that, at this stage, it is not possible to presume that there was no intention to deceive at the beginning."

## MahaSharad to be launched today

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

The Social Justice Department will launch Mahasharad, a digital platform which will provide for free the tools required by differently-abled people, on Saturday to mark the 80th birthday of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar. MahaSharad stands for Maharashtra System of Health Rehabilitation and Assistance for Divyang.

Social Justice Minister Dhananjay Munde said the department aims to reach out to 29 lakh differently-abled people through the mahaSharad.in portal and its mobile app, which will be available by March 2021.

Mr. Munde said, "A number of generous individuals are keen to help and donate for the noble cause. There are many tools such as Braille kit, hearing aid, wheelchair, artificial organs in the market, but many Divyang individuals cannot purchase them owing to lack of money. Our platform will be the bridge."

Differently-abled people can list the tools they require on the platform and donors will be able to help them. Aid will be provided to those who register on the portal with valid credentials.

The mobile application of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute – e-Barti – will also be launched to mark Mr. Pawar's birthday.

clothes at least on Fridays to encourage the use of hand-spun, a circular issued on December 8 stated.

"It has been observed that several officials/staff do not wear attire suitable for government employees. Hence, the image of government staff gets sullied among people," it said.

Also, all government employees must wear khadi

clothes at least on Fridays to encourage the use of hand-spun, a circular issued on December 8 stated.

"It has been observed that several officials/staff do not wear attire suitable for government employees. Hence, the image of government staff gets sullied among people," it said.

The last date for submission of Tender Document is amended as 22-12-2020 by 16.00 hrs

Opening of the tender paper is amended as 23-12-2020 by 11.00 hrs

Document related to Pre-Bid queries, response and amendments can be downloaded from Jharkhand Police website "jhpolice.gov.in".

I.G. of Police (Provision)  
Jharkhand Ranchi

PR 237293 Police (20-21)\_D

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## Connecting more people

Public wi-fi is a low-cost option to reach unserved citizens and grow the economy

The Central government's move to enable public wi-fi data service through small retail data offices can get many more people connected, just as long-distance telephony was expanded through STD public call offices over three decades ago. Bringing broadband Internet to remote locations at minimum investment, and giving subscribers the option of making small, need-based payments to use it has remained a challenge thus far, but the Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM WANI) scheme approved by the Union Cabinet aims to bridge that divide using wireless technologies. Potentially, Internet access will connect a new wave of users not just to commercial and entertainment options, but also to education, telehealth and agriculture extension, and bring greater accountability to government by boosting transparency and interactivity. The government is hoping that by cutting through layers of bureaucracy and eliminating licences and fees, it can make it easy even for a tea shop owner to register online as a service provider, opening up new income avenues. Three years ago, when TRAI outlined the plan and initiated the first pilot of a public wi-fi system on the WANI architecture, it noted that a 10% rise in net penetration led to a 1.4% increase in GDP. Public wi-fi, however, suffered neglect because it was seen as a competitor to data services sold by mobile telecom firms, rather than as the complementary technology it is.

A rapid scale-up of Internet in rural India will be transformative, given the low level of penetration – 27.57 subscribers per 100 population in 2019 – and wi-fi linked to broadband fibre service is the fastest route to achieving that. Upcoming mobile technologies such as 5G may provide good quality data, but they involve high investment in new spectrum, connectivity equipment and regular subscriber fees. The WANI system offers an elegant way forward to connect low revenue consumers. It opens up opportunities for community organisations, libraries, educational institutions, panchayats and small entrepreneurs to tap into a whole new ecosystem, purchasing bandwidth from a public data office aggregator to serve local consumers. What the citizen expects is robust service, protection of data integrity, transparency on commercial use of data, and security against cyberattacks. The government must also ensure true unbundling of hardware, software, apps and payment gateways in the WANI system, as advocated by TRAI, to prevent monopolies. Existing public wi-fi options run on a limited scale by some entities compel consumers to pay through a single gateway app, underscoring the need for reform. Executed properly, the public data offices (PDOs) of PM WANI can do what the PCOs did for phone calls, going well beyond 'ease of doing business' to genuinely empower citizens.

## Maduro's win

Venezuela's opposition should seek popular support at home, not help from abroad

The sweeping victory Nicolás Maduro and his allies secured in Sunday's legislative elections in Venezuela has allowed the oil-rich country's President to tighten his grip on power. The outgoing National Assembly, in which the opposition has a majority, has remained outside his influence. Last year, the Assembly Speaker, Juan Guaidó, declared himself acting President after the opposition refused to recognise Mr. Maduro's 2018 re-election. But despite Mr. Guaidó's call for revolt and the support he got internationally, including from the U.S., all other major institutions, including the judiciary and the military, remained loyal to Mr. Maduro – he has emerged stronger with his United Socialist Party and allies winning 67% of the vote. But the results are unlikely to resolve the political crisis. The Guaidó-led main right-wing opposition bloc had boycotted the election. It claimed that the Supreme Court's decision earlier this year to appoint a new election commission without participation from the National Assembly was illegal. The opposition has also rejected the results. It points out that only 31% of registered voters cast their ballots – less than half of the turnout in the 2015 legislative election which the opposition won – questioning the legitimacy of the whole process. The U.S. and several EU countries too have refused to recognise the vote.

Venezuela has for long been embroiled in crises. When oil prices fell, its ambitious Bolivarian welfare schemes, launched by Mr. Maduro's charismatic predecessor, Hugo Chávez, began showing cracks. Coupled with American sanctions, the economic crisis led to food, fuel and medicine shortages, triggering protests and forcing at least 4.5 million to flee. The 2015 legislative election was an early warning to the ruling socialists. But they failed to fix the economy. To override the opposition from the Assembly, Mr. Maduro convened a Constituent Assembly, which even passed laws. The opposition, on the other side, could have used its mandate to mobilise the people and build a bigger movement. But it chose the easier path: Mr. Guaidó declared himself the President without even a semblance of legitimacy, and joined hands with foreign powers, including Colombia and the U.S., whose antipathy towards the socialists in Caracas is hardly a secret. In effect, the Venezuelan right-wing opposition abandoned its political fight and, by taking American help to unseat President Maduro, strengthened the regime's narrative that the opposition leaders are being used by "Yankee imperialists". By boycotting the election, the opposition has, in practice, made it easier for Mr. Maduro to win it. If the opposition wants to challenge the government effectively, it should build a political movement at home, tapping the grievances of the public, not on the support that may or may not come from abroad.

# Pointing the finger at parliamentary scrutiny

The demand for repeal of laws passed by Parliament only shows a serious lapse in the management of legislative work



P.D.T. ACHARY

The new Farm Bills passed by Parliament in the last monsoon session have evoked a scale of protest unforeseen by the government. Negotiations between the government and the farmers seem to have produced no result, and the farmers are determined to scale up their agitation in the coming days. The country seems to be heading toward a serious confrontation between the government and the agitating farmers.

A noteworthy aspect of the negotiations is that many of the proposals put forward now by the government for the consideration of the farmers are issues which were more or less rejected by the government when those Bills were debated in Parliament. The government is reportedly willing to amend these Acts now in order to meet the demands of the farmers. It is another matter that the farmers have rejected these proposals. They have made it clear that they want these laws to be repealed and if necessary, fresh laws to be enacted after discussions with the farmers and other stakeholders.

### A process of refinement

The demand for the repeal of the laws passed by Parliament only recently essentially points to a serious lapse in the management of the legislative work in Parliament. Parliament is the supreme law-making body which has put in place a large machinery of committees to scrutinise the Bills which are brought before it by the government as a part of its legislative programme. Rules of the Houses leave it to the Speaker or the Chairman to refer the Bills to the Standing Committees for a detailed scrutiny thereof. After such scrutiny is completed, the committees send their reports contain-

ing their recommendations on improvements to be made in the Bills to the Houses. While undertaking such scrutiny, the committees invite various stakeholders to place their views before them. Only after elaborate consultation do the committees formulate their views and recommendations. Under any circumstances, the Bills which come back to the Houses after the scrutiny by the committees will be in a much better shape in terms of their content.

This is the common experience. That is the reason why the Rules of the Houses provide for reference of the Bills to the committees. Although, technically, the reference to the committees is within the discretion of the Speaker or the Chairman, the intention of the Rules is that all important Bills should go before the committees for a detailed examination.

However, every Bill which comes before the Houses need not be sent to the committees. For example, some minor Amendment Bills or Bills which do not have any serious ramifications need not be sent to the committees. That is precisely why the Presiding Officers have been given the discretion in the matter of reference of Bills to committees. But it does not mean that they can exercise their discretion not to refer to the committee an important Bill which has serious implications for society. Such an action only defeats the purpose of the Rules.

### Draughtsman's creations

Data show that very few Bills are referred to the Parliamentary Committees now. Ministers are generally reluctant to send their Bills to the committees because they are in a hurry to pass them. They often request the Presiding Officers not to refer their Bills to the committees. But the Presiding Officers are required to exercise their independent judgment in the matter and decide the issue. They need to keep in mind the fact that the Bills which the government brings before the Houses often have serious shortcomings. They are in fact draughtsman's creations. Members of Parliament who



REUTERS

know the ground realities better apply their mind and put them in a better shape.

### Across history

Improving the pieces of legislation through detailed scrutiny by Parliament through its committees is historically an ancient practice. In fact, the British Parliament has been doing it since the 16th century. The Indian experience of legislative scrutiny of Bills goes back to the post-Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. It is interesting to note that the Central Legislative Assembly which was the Parliament of British India, had set up three committees: Committee on Petitions relating to Bills, Select Committee of Amendments of standing orders and Select Committee on Bills. Thus, even the colonial Parliament recognised the need and usefulness of parliamentary scrutiny of Bills brought to the House by the government.

Free India's Parliament established a vast network of committees to undertake scrutiny of various aspects of governance including the Bills. Prior to the formation of Standing Committees, the Indian Parliament used to appoint select committees, joint select committees, etc. for detailed scrutiny of important legislative proposals of the government. With the formation of standing committees, the occasions for appointing select or joint select committees are few.

A cursory look at the Bills sent to the committees in the past would reveal the seriousness shown by both the government and the Opposition in having the Bills scrutinised by the committees. So far as the select commit-

tees or joint select committees are concerned, generally, a proposal from the Opposition to set up such a committee is agreed to by the government.

Usually, some informal consultations take place between the government and the Opposition before a consensus is arrived at on the formation of such committees. Old-timers in Parliament are quite familiar with this healthy tradition of consensus making in Parliament.

### These Bills were made better

Now for a few examples of Bills scrutinised by Parliamentary Committees in the past may be cited to show that important legislative proposals were usually sent to the committees for detailed examination; this resulted in the improvement of their content. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill was introduced in 1999 in the Lok Sabha and was immediately referred to a joint committee of both Houses. This Bill was meant to develop new varieties of plants and protect the rights of farmers and breeders. The committee completed its work in eight months and made many improvements by way of bringing greater clarity into various terms and concepts.

Similarly, the Seeds Bill, 2004 was referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture which obtained the views of agricultural research institutions, agricultural universities, national and State seed corporations, private seed companies, scientists, farmers' organisations, non-governmental organisations and individuals.

Through the process of consultation with a wide range of experts and research organisations and farmers, the committee made significant improvements in the Bill; as a result, there was a better law on seeds.

It was the same case with the Companies (Amendment) Bill, the Information Technology Bill, and the Goods and Services Tax Bill, to name a few. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill which was introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2011, which was referred to the Commit-

tee, was again referred to a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha when it was transmitted to that House after being passed by the Lok Sabha. Thus, this Bill underwent double security by two committees of Parliament. When this Bill went back to the Lok Sabha after being passed by Rajya Sabha – with amendments as suggested by its Select Committee – Sushma Swaraj, then Leader of the Opposition, Lok Sabha, was lavish in her praise of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha for subjecting the Bill to further scrutiny by the Rajya Sabha's Select Committee and greatly improving the Bill's content.

This is only a sample of Bills referred to Parliamentary Committees for detailed study. It is in fact difficult to understand why the Farm Bills – they seek to alter the well-established system of grain trade in major grain growing States and which have left farmers completely shaken – were not sent to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture for a detailed study. The Committee is sure to have consulted the farmers apart from other stakeholders and suggested improvements which, perhaps, could have averted the current agitation.

### Functioning by consensus

Our Parliamentary Committees have a tradition of working in a non-party manner. The reports of these Committees are based on consensus. It may be a bit difficult for people to believe that the instrumentalities of Parliament could rise above parties. But that is how they function. The systems of Parliament are inclusive. They have the capacity to harmonise contradictions. Despite the adversarial politics playing out in full force in the Houses, the calm atmosphere prevailing in the committee rooms and the purposiveness shown by the members in dealing with issues are a tremendously reassuring factor. To make these systems gradually non-functional and irrelevant is to invite disaster.

P.D.T. Achary is former Secretary General, Lok Sabha

## Pragmatic family arrangement, a new business chapter +

The memorandum of family arrangement TVS announced gives it a chance to remain as an entity and seek new vistas



RAGHUVIR SRINIVASAN

TVS, the pre-eminent industrial group and business family of south India, has always been known for being conservative in its business, traditional in its approach and low in public profile. With the memorandum of family arrangement announced on Thursday, the group has proved that it is not just all of the above; it is also pragmatic and rooted in reality, without romanticising that it can stay together as a family even as it enters the fifth generation.

### Idealistic notion vs. reality

The memorandum is only the first step and there will be many trickier ones to take as the group untangles family holdings across its estimated 45-50 companies in the months ahead. But what is important is the realisation and acceptance that it is difficult to align the vision and priorities of a bunch of 40-45 people of varied age profiles, from their 20s to their 80s, with differing aspirations, outlooks and risk profiles, by the sole agent of family glue.

How often have we seen family businesses falter at the altar of competing ambitions, conflicting views on business and the desire to be unfettered by historical baggage? The Ambanis may come to

mind first when we think of conflicting ambitions among family members leading to trouble, but there are several other prominent business families in India that have come to grief due to their inability to manage the pulls and pressures of newer generations.

The problem is the idealistic notion that familial ties and bonding at the personal level can handle any friction on the business side between family members. As the Ambani saga showed, it is impossible to manage aspirations even in the second generation among own brothers. It is naive to hope that this can happen at the level of cousins, twice or thrice removed from each other in the fourth or fifth generation. There is bound to be conflict even in the presence of a patriarch whose will may not always be respected.

The TVS group, all of 109 years old, faced this predicament. Indeed, there have been minor rumbles in the past inside the group but they were well managed by the family. With the fourth generation entering stewardship roles across the major companies in the group such as TVS Motor, Sundaram Clayton, Sundram Fasteners, Brakes India, Wheels India, Sundaram Brake Linings and Lucas TVS, the pitch was laid for conflict. The elders in the group, prudently, decided to not bat on this pitch.

**Situating the new generation**  
We have to remember an important point here. The generation that is now taking over the controls is born in a new India that is confident about itself, an econ-



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

ic powerhouse, and it is exposed to tectonic changes in technology and approach to business. It is not fettered as the earlier generations were by government controls or a low self-esteem caused by backwardness of the country labelled with the Third World tag.

This is a generation that believes that the world belongs to it and is unhesitant to take risks in business, risks that their fathers and mothers would shy away from. The best way to handle them then is to give them the freedom and tell them that the world is theirs to conquer. Shacking them with family business traditions and values will only lead to disaffection. They are not going to align on a single path just because that path has been laid out by the family.

**Missing the bus**  
Let us look at the other pluses of this move. If one were to write the history of the third generation of the TVS group which boasts of stalwarts such as Suresh Krishna, Venu Srinivasan, Viji Santhanam, K. Mahesh and Gopal Srinivasan, to name just a few, what would stand out is that they did not take the group into sunrise sectors such as

information technology, pharmaceuticals and renewable energy. Or into capital intensive infrastructure, which was a growth area.

More than a decade ago, in an informal conversation with this writer, Venu Srinivasan acknowledged that it was a missed opportunity to have not entered information technology in the 1990s. "The infotech wave is in many ways exactly like what TVS does – ethical businesses, organised people, engineers, manpower at the doorstep... I think TVS did miss that bus. Today, even if not a \$4-\$5 billion business, we should have had at least a \$1 billion business in the knowledge sector," admitted Mr. Srinivasan during a chat over lunch for a column that was published in *Business Line* under the 'Table Talk' series.

Even as he acknowledged that it would have made a big difference to the group if it had caught the IT or pharma wave, Mr. Srinivasan could not be persuaded into giving a reason for the failure. But one could sense remorse over a missed opportunity that was most likely due to the conservatism and risk-aversion of the group. It is possible that minus the family fitters, one or more of the otherwise highly successful generation would have been set out on a new path. The family re-arrangement now would make such things possible for the fourth generation leadership.

Second, and this is the biggest plus, the pragmatism shown on the business side will hopefully ensure that the family stays together at the personal level. The diversity of opinion and professional aspira-

tions will now be neatly separated from family relationships. With all the group companies now free to use the TVS brand without royalty liabilities, the franchise of the group can be built independently by each of the constituents.

### On a new highway

To be sure, these are early days and the real challenge will be in operationalising the sentiment behind the memorandum. Given that many of the group companies are listed, there will be market expectations to manage. Some companies also have foreign collaborators that have to be aligned with the group's decision. There could also be some cross-holdings among the companies that need to be untangled. And then, of course, are the legal formalities to be gone through and approvals that need to be secured. But there is little doubt that the group's elders have given it a chance to survive as an entity in the next generation.

During the chat with Venu Srinivasan mentioned earlier, this writer had asked him why there was no documented history of the TVS group. His reply was characteristic of the group's philosophy: "It came from a feeling that you should not remain rooted in the past. We could not get our elder generation to document because of this thought." This philosophy is again on display now, and hopefully it will give the group a chance to last the next 100 years serving India's development.

Raghuvir Srinivasan is Editor, The Hindu BusinessLine



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### New Parliament

It does not behove well on the part of the Opposition parties to have skipped the ground breaking ceremony for the new Parliament building. Though the new project was thought of by the Prime Minister, its expenditure will be using tax-payers' money alone. As such, everyone should welcome the new temple of democracy if it is to be executed in an honourable way without the ghost of

corruption. Some of the Opposition's remarks, that the new building will rest on the ruins of liberal democracy, is nothing but mendacity. Have they forgotten the Emergency era of the Congress?

K. CHELLAPPAN,  
Chennai

■ It gladdened one's heart to hear the Prime Minister speak about the spirit of democracy. But one was also left wondering why

governance under his watch has failed to reflect the democratic and constitutional spirit he so eloquently captured on the occasion. Unless a spirit of accommodation prevails inside, the new building may reflect the ego of rulers but definitely not the democratic aspirations of people.

MANOJ ALEMBATH  
Kannur, Kerala

■ A new Parliament building is meaningless unless and

until our politicians make a solemn pledge to cleanse politics of criminal elements, follow ideology and not hop from one party to another every few weeks, ensure that there are more women parliamentarians, engage in purposeful debate and ensure complete sittings of each parliamentary session. We, the people, do not want old wine in a new bottle, especially when the provision has been made in the new building for more

seats for our MPs.  
BARU RAJENDRA PRASAD,  
Hyderabad

■ On the fast track  
One finds a Wasim Akram in T. Natarajan, as his pace and bounce off the wicket mirror

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**  
A report headlined "Police to inquire into Chitra's death" (Dec. 11, 2020, some editions) erroneously said that the actor reportedly returned home after the shoot and went to the bathroom. It should have said she returned to the hotel room after the shoot. The mistake was corrected in the later editions.

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# Love on the razor's edge

A flurry of FIRs against consensual inter-faith relationships and marriages have been registered in Uttar Pradesh ever since the government introduced a law against forced conversion by marriage. **Omar Rashid** reports on couples who live in fear and the police that is invoking the law with fervour

**A**round 7 a.m. on November 24, Sarvesh Kumar Shukla woke up to discover that the blue metal gate of his humble, unplastered brick house was unlatched. Shukla, who lives in Makhu Behar village in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh, first assumed that one of his three sons had gone out, but he found them sleeping inside. In the adjoining room, his younger daughter was fast asleep. Beside her, there was a large lump covered by a mattress. He thought it was his eldest daughter Neetu, aged 19. "But when I lifted the *bichauna* (bedding), she was not there," says Sarvesh, 42, a saffron *gamcha* dangling over his half-sleeved pink cardigan. Sarvesh assumed that the Class 12 student was in the bathroom or had gone to the fields. But by now, apprehension had turned to fear.

Perhaps, Sarvesh had already anticipated the worst. He sent a boy to check on Jubrail, a Muslim van driver in his early twenties, who lived with his two brothers and mother around 50 metres away, in a house facing a mosque. Jubrail had been missing since the night before, he learnt. Sarvesh quickly joined the dots: Jubrail and Neetu had run away together.

Sarvesh claims that he had no idea that his daughter was going to leave home, let alone elope with Jubrail. In the First Information Report (FIR) lodged at the Tambaur police station on November 26 against an unknown person for "kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage", Sarvesh submitted that his daughter would talk to someone on the phone at night, but he did not know her phone number. There were no religious undertones in the FIR.

On the same day, some 130 km away from Makhu Behar village, in Lucknow, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Cabinet gave its nod to an ordinance that makes religious conversion a non-bailable offence inviting penalties up to 10 years in prison if found to be effected for marriage or through misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or other allegedly fraudulent means. The ordinance was cleared by the Cabinet weeks after Adityanath promised to bring an "effective law" against "love jihad", a legally unrecognised term radical Hindu groups use to accuse Muslim men of converting Hindu women by marriage.

## Invoking the ordinance

The next day, Sarvesh submitted another application to the police in Tambaur, this time naming Jubrail as the accused and Jubrail's family members as accomplices. In his complaint, Sarvesh alleged that Jubrail had lured his daughter into eloping with him. Two days later, Sarvesh curiously submitted yet another application, this time to the district police chief, alleging that Jubrail had induced his daughter to flee from home with the intention of converting her to another religion. In contradiction to the earlier application, Sarvesh now claimed that his daughter was a minor, aged 17. "The opposite party is Muslim. They have made my daughter disappear. Her life and honour are in danger," pleaded an illiterate Sarvesh in a Hindi application signed with his thumb impression.

Incidentally, on the same day, Governor Anandiben Patel promulgated the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020. It was based on "facts" presented by the Shukla family in the new application that Sections 3 and 5 of the new ordinance were added to the FIR, says Sitapur Superintendent of Police (North) Rajiv Dixit.

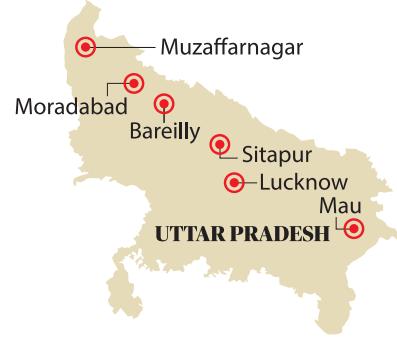
While Neetu and Jubrail have not been traced yet, a police officer says 10 persons accused of facilitating the elopement, all of them Jubrail's family members or acquaintances, have been arrested. Police teams have been sent to Lucknow, Bahraich, Barabanki and even Punjab in search of the couple.

Ever since the promulgation of the ordinance, the U.P. police have displayed uncanny expediency in invoking it in cases involving Muslim men and Hindu women. Apart from Sitapur, FIRs have been lodged in Bareilly, Moradabad, Mau and Muzaffarnagar. According to police records, at least 18 persons have been arrested under the new ordinance so far: 10 in Sitapur, five in Mau, two in Moradabad and one in Bareilly. Barring one, all of them are Muslims.

In Makhu Behar village, Neetu's parents are livid and ashamed at once. They are angry with themselves for failing to anticipate their daughter's actions. "If one of my children had died, I would have felt less pain," says Rekha, Sarvesh's wife. "We have not been able to show our face in the village." Standing in front of the facade of his house, Sarvesh says, "If he was not taking her to convert her, why else would a Muslim man take away a Hindu woman?" Sarvesh, a Brahmin, is a farmer. He owns eight bighas of land and five head of cattle. The family still uses wood fire for cooking.



Sarvesh Kumar Shukla and his wife Rekha stand outside their house in Makhu Behar village in Sitapur. The couple's eldest daughter Neetu allegedly eloped with a Muslim man, Jubrail, who lived in the same neighborhood, on November 23. Jubrail and his family have been booked under the U.P. government's new ordinance. (Below): Jubrail's house cuts a deserted picture. Jubrail and 10 people, including his mother and two brothers, are in jail for allegedly helping him and Neetu elope. • OMAR RASHID



Neetu left home with ₹2 lakh in cash, which her father had acquired in exchange for buffaloes, and all her mother's jewellery, allege the couple. Locals think the claim is exaggerated.

"Now all I have left is this body. Either you fire a bullet into me or ask the *dargah* (inspector) to do it," Rekha says.

The 'dishonour' of their daughter having eloped with a Muslim man has upset the Shuklas more than her disappearance. Sarvesh and his family have not ventured out much since November 24. A relative of the Shuklas sums up their sentiments: "Saaht pushtin ka daag lagai gawa (The blot will last for seven generations)," he said. Another gives a threat to the couple, "Shaadi na hoti, post-mortem hota (The wedding won't take place, only the post-mortem will)."

Could Neetu, prima facie an adult, have gone with Jubrail willingly and not been induced or coerced? Was there any trigger for the elopement that the parents were unaware of? These questions irk Sarvesh. "I don't know how and what happened. Suppose I'm sitting here and someone goes to the shed and steals a buffalo of mine, how would I know who has done it," he asks. And what if Neetu had eloped with a Hindu? "If that was the case, I would not react," he says. Rekha adds: "We would give them a *jaimala* (wedding garland)."

In Makhu Behar, where even inter-caste marriages are considered quite scandalous, a marriage or elopement between a Hindu woman and a Muslim man is nothing short of outrageous. Both communities say the elopement has brought them *badnaami* (shame). Jubrail's single-floor, tarpaulin-roofed brick house is deserted. The only signs of life in this decrepit house are the overgrown papaya plantation in the tiny backyard, wood ash at the brick stove, and fresh lumps of cow dung in the courtyard. Jubrail's relative's home is also locked. An eerie silence hangs in the air; most neighbours are reluctant to talk about the case.

Jubrail's brothers Israel and Moinuddin, who is physically challenged; their mother; Israel's wife; uncle Usman; relatives Rafiq and Shamshad; and three friends, including a Hindu van driver Saroj Shukla, who allegedly dropped the couple at the bus station are all in jail. The arrests have instilled fear among the village's Muslims, many of whom have temporarily shifted to other places or have remained indoors.

Locals whisper about Neetu and Jubrail's friendship but refuse to comment on their alleged relationship. The two

families shared a cordial relationship but maintained distance over the past year due to a minor dispute over cattle.

There is a general consensus in the village that the man and woman had planned their elopement. But Neetu and Jubrail were rarely seen out together. Both Hindus and Muslims say Jubrail was always focused on earning a livelihood. He had recently purchased a second-hand van, which incidentally he did not use for the elopement. Neighbours describe Neetu as being discreet but bright.

## Old files, new case

Some 250 km northwest of Tambaur, in Sharif Nagar village of Bareilly, septuagenarian Rafiq Ahmad is waiting for his son Uwaish, 21, to return from jail. Barely 24 hours after the ordinance was promulgated, the U.P. Police lodged a case in Deorania police station against Uwaish, a labourer, for criminal intimidation. Sections of the new ordinance were added to the printed FIR with a pen as the police system was not updated with the law. In the FIR, a local Hindu man, Tikaram Rathore, accused Uwaish of trying to coerce his married daughter, aged 20, to convert to Uwaish's religion and marry him. Tikaram said Uwaish had developed a friendship with his daughter during their school days, and intended to "coerce, coax and allure her into converting".

However, a day later, the woman's brother, Kesarpal, contradicted the narrative and said that his sister had planned to elope in October 2019 but was tracked by the police within days. Uwaish faced a kidnapping case but to preserve their 'social honour', the Rathores changed their statement and the matter reached a compromise in court, say Kesarpal and a police officer. The woman got married to another man this May.

It remains unclear how the ordinance fits in this case and what prompted the family to re-open an apparently resolved grievance. The local Station House Officer says Tikaram submitted a fresh complaint and contended that Uwaish continued to harass and threaten his daughter even after her marriage. But Kesarpal, who works in a private firm, claims that his father did not

approach the police. He says the police came to their house to question them about some "old files" before taking Tikaram to the police station for questioning. The police subsequently arrested Uwaish on December 2.

Rafiq claims that his son and the woman had not been in touch since the settlement. The police booked his son under the new ordinance to "add stars" to their badges, he says. Rafiq also claims that the Rathore family were pressured by the police to file the fresh complaint and blames the administration for falsely implicating his son. Rafiq says last year, the woman left her house due to some domestic grievance, but Uwaish did not accompany her. "Even they (the Rathore family) are with us," he says. Kesarpal has been inaccessible since November 29.

## A tool for harassment

Though there is no mention of 'love jihad' in the draft of the ordinance, the law was introduced against the backdrop of the Bharatiya Janata Party's promise to introduce measures to curb inter-faith marriages and relationships involving a Hindu woman and a Muslim man. Government spokesperson Siddharth Nath Singh said the ordinance would help provide justice to women, especially to those from Dalit and tribal communities.

However, others argue that the ordinance is being used to harass inter-faith couples and expose them to vigilanism. Pranvesh Om, a law research scholar from Prayagraj, one of the petitioners challenging the ordinance in the Supreme Court, argues that the FIRs lodged so far do not *prima facie* disclose the offence and are based on mere apprehensions.

In Sitapur, for instance, sections under the new ordinance were later added to the FIR on the basis of apprehensions of the informant, says Pranvesh. "Only unlawful conversion and attempts of conversion have been made punishable. Here, neither was there an attempt nor was there any offence committed. This ordinance gives room to lodge a false FIR stating that someone is preparing to convert someone unlawfully," he says.

Ali Khan Mahmudabad, Professor at

Ashoka University, says the ordinance is "another tool to criminalise behaviour of Muslim men". He says, "The goal seems to be to deepen the social gulf between the two communities so that there is more distrust and subsequently it is easier to dehumanise the other."

Already living in fear due to societal pressures, conservative customs, and restrictions, inter-faith couples now have another worry – the ordinance. It threatens to criminalise inter-faith love and marriage and places the burden of proof on the accused.

## Disregarding the agency of women

In two cases, the consent and agency of adult women have been disregarded. On December 5, the police in Kanth arrested Rashid and his brother when Rashid was allegedly attempting to get his marriage to a Hindu woman registered. He and Pinki, from Bijnor, had been in a consensual relationship and had been living with each other for the past few months. They had known each other for two years. Pinki says the couple had got married on July 24 in Dehradun.

When they reached the marriage registration office in Kanth, Rashid and his brother were arrested based on an FIR lodged by the woman's mother who alleged that Rashid had induced Pinki into marriage and converted her under the garb of providing a job, the police say. According to Section 4 of the ordinance, any aggrieved person, his or her parents, brother, sister or any other person who is related to him or her by blood, marriage or adoption may lodge an FIR of unlawful conversion.

At the tehsil, Pinki was heckled and humiliated by members of a right-wing group. She asserted that she was an adult and had married willingly but it fell on deaf ears. "This law is made for people like you," one of the nameless vigilante leaders was heard telling Pinki in a video of the incident.

The police have not found any document as proof of Pinki and Rashid's marriage or conversion, says Vidya Sagar Mishra, Superintendent of Police, Rural Moradabad. While the right-wing group claimed that they handed over the couple to the police after chasing them near a temple, Mishra says the vigilantes had reached the spot after they heard that the police had arrived there. The woman's mother brought the police there, he says. Pinki is now at a shelter home run by the government as she did not want to go back to her family, says Mishra. "We cannot force her to go. Also, this makes sense from a security point of view," the officer says.

## State has no right to intervene

While no FIR was lodged in Lucknow, the police on December 2 controversially intervened to stop a marriage ceremony between a consenting couple – a Hindu B.Sc student (20) and a Muslim pharmacist (25) – citing the new ordinance. The police reached the venue allegedly on the complaint of a fringe outfit, the Rashtriya Yuva Vahini, which describes itself as a "sahyogi (partner)" of the BJP. The police asked the couple

to first seek the permission of the District Magistrate before getting married. The ordinance declares void any marriage done with the sole purpose of "unlawful conversion or vice-versa". Also, one who desires to convert his or her religion has to give a declaration in a prescribed form at least 60 days in advance to the District Magistrate or the Additional District Magistrate stating that this was being done of his or her own free will and without coercion. Violation of this provision can land a person in jail for three months or even three years. The Lucknow couple agreed to marry only after acquiring the District Magistrate's nod.

The marriage ceremony was planned much ahead of the day when the ordinance was passed. After participating in the religious ceremonies of both faiths, the couple had planned to register their marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

The episode at the venue has shaken the two families who have gone under the radar. In their lower-middle class locality on the outskirts of Lucknow, the families say they prefer to stay indoors. They agree to talk after much persuasion under the condition of anonymity. Despite the episode, the families are firm on the marriage. Happy to report the unflinching support of her parents, the woman says the government or outsiders have no right to interfere in consensual inter-personal relationships. The man, mehndi colours still fresh on his hands, says the marriage was stopped only to harass them.

"In our locality such cases keep coming up, but nothing happens. They appear in the *thana*, the consent of the man and woman is taken, and the two are asked to go live together," says the man. While stressing that the couple had no plans of converting post-marriage, he also added that if needed, one of them would change their religion. He wouldn't mind becoming a Hindu for her either, he says.

The woman's parents say they would rather see her happily marry a man she loves rather than see her being forced to elope. "We are happy if our children are happy," says her mother, a cook from the Gupta community. The father says, "If we didn't agree and tomorrow they take a wrong step, what will we do?"

**Vague terms in the new law**

The new ordinance was also invoked in Muzaffarnagar where two Muslim brothers were booked on November 29 for allegedly trying to force a married Hindu woman to convert. In his complaint at the Mansoorpur police station, Akshay Kumar Tyagi, who works in a prominent pharmaceutical company as a labour contractor in Haridwar, where he had been living for five years with his wife Parul and two children, alleged that one Nadeem had "trapped" her in a "net of love" with the aim of converting her. Nadeem, 32, a resident of Bhagwanpur in Haridwar, is a labourer and used to frequent their house. He became friends with Parul, Akshay submitted. By alluring her, Nadeem planned to marry Parul and convert her, alleged Akshay in the FIR. The allurement? An Oppo F15 mobile phone that Nadeem had gifted Parul. She used the phone to secretly communicate with him, he says. Nadeem's brother Salman was also booked for allegedly helping him in the "conspiracy". No arrests have been made in the case. Akshay did not respond to requests for an interview.

Five persons were arrested in Mau district's Chiraiyakot days after a Muslim man, already married, and 13 others were booked for allegedly abducting the daughter of a prominent Hindu gold trader on the eve of her wedding. The ordinance was also slapped against them. The police say the man, said to be a driver, and the woman fled from their homes and are yet to be traced.

In the context of these cases, Pranvesh further states that the offences under the law have been defined in vague terms, in particular the word 'allurement'. This could result in the lodging of fake cases by the member of one religion against the member of another, in order to harass them. The ordinance is also silent on the point of live-in relationships, he says. "What will be the fate of cases wherein two adults of different religions live together without marrying or converting their religion," he asks.

Also when the procedure for declaration while solemnising inter-religious marriages has already been prescribed under the Special Marriage Act, a Central law, what prompted the State government to provide for a cumbersome procedure for declaration under the new law, he asks.

Meanwhile, in Sitapur, the distraught Shuklas await the return of their daughter. Sarvesh says there is no question of his daughter ever marrying a Muslim, even if there is no conversion. And what if she is adamant? "There is no way I'll allow it," he says sternly. "If I get back the girl, I will get her married off and liberate myself [from this responsibility]."



FROM PAGE ONE

## Farmers set to block Delhi-Jaipur highway

In Uttar Pradesh, the Tikait faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union is making plans to besiege toll barriers. "We will picket the toll plazas, so that the cess cannot be collected tomorrow. We will not block the road, but we will allow commuters to go through for free for one day," said Dharmendra Malik, spokesperson of BKU (Tikait).

More than 5,000 police personnel have been deployed at several intersections and toll barriers in Haryana districts bordering Delhi.

Two thousand police personnel have been deployed at five strategic points, including at the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal intersection near Panchgaon, to prevent the agitating farmers from blocking the Delhi-Jaipur Highway, said Astha Modi, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Headquarters, Gurugram. The police are also ready with a diversion plan to avoid any inconvenience to commuters, she added. Additional police forces were also deployed at the Kherki Daula toll plaza, one of the busiest in the country.

Farmer unions are seeking support from local farmers in Sohna and Rewari to set up blockades, said Ms. Modi.

The Faridabad Police

have deployed 3,500 police personnel equipped with riot equipment to deal with any situation, said Arpit Jain, DCP, Headquarters. Reserve Police Force personnel have also been deployed at five tolls in the city at the Badarpur border, Gurugram-Faridabad border, KGP toll plaza, Pali Crusher Zone and Dholi.

The police said drones would also be used to keep a watch on anti-social elements and identify them.

In Amritsar, thousands of farmers and farm labourers under the banner of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Samiti started a tractor-trolley 'march' for Delhi on Friday to ensure the ongoing agitation doesn't lose steam.

"Thousands of farmers and labourers from Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran, Ferozpur, Fazilka, Jalandhar and Moga districts are on the move," Sarvan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the Punjab unit of the Samiti, told *The Hindu*.

The Congress also plans to hold demonstrations at the 'Shambu border' on December 14 in support of the farmers, said the party's State chief Sunil Jakhar.

(With inputs from *Vikas Vasudeva* in Chandigarh, *Ashok Kumar* in Gurugram and *Priscilla Jebaraj* in New Delhi)

## MHA summons top Bengal officials over attack on Nadda

"The West Bengal Police had provided a bullet proof car and a pilot to Shri J.P. Nadda, which was in addition to the escort (vehicle) by the State manned by the CRPF and PSO CRPF. He is entitled as Z-category proteeetee," Mr. Bandypadhyay said. The letter added that the "DIG (Police) of the range was stationed in the area to personally supervise the police arrangements, while four additional SPs, eight DYSPs, 14 Inspectors, 70 SIs/ASIs, 40 RAF personnel and 259 constable and 350 members of auxiliary forces were deployed on route and at the venue at Diamond Harbour."

Meanwhile, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) held a press conference questioning the Centre's summons to senior officials of the State government. "Centre has no jurisdiction to issue summons to Chief Secretary and Director General of Police. Law and order under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution is a State subject. So, if there are any issues regarding that, the State is answerable," TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said.

In response, BJP leader Mukul Roy said the Centre could summon officials of the State as "there is no rule of law in West Bengal". Mr. Roy also termed the State government's claims that enough security was provided to Mr. Nadda as a complete lie. "A bullet proof car was provided to Mr. Nadda; we did not see any policeman on the road. I have never seen a government that can lie so much," Mr. Roy said.

**'Slur on democracy'**

Mr. Dhankar described the attack as "unfortunate" and a "slur on democracy."

"I take a very serious note of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee remarks... I request her to withdraw her comments," Mr. Dhankar said addressing a press conference at Raj Bhawan.

"Administration does not allow any activity. How can that happen," he said.

Mr. Dhankar said that he has sent a report to the Centre on the Thursday's developments.

Following the presser, the TMC leadership said the Governor's threats could not intimidate the party. "He sends such reports daily. By sending such reports and remarks, he cannot threaten Mamata Banerjee. The people of the State are with us," senior TMC leader Subrata Mukherjee said.

## Apple trees cut in J&K anti-encroachment drive

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
KANIDAJAN

With prediction of fresh snowfall in upper reaches of the Kashmir Valley, members of around 30 families are running from pillar to post to know the reason for the felling of tens of thousands of apple trees and a sudden eviction of nomadic population of Gujjars near the forest area in Budgam'seh Pakherpora Block in central Kashmir.

In his 70s, Sharif Bajaj is the head of a family of eight members in Kanidajan village and homeless now. "Forest officials came this week to my Kotha [hunting] with orders to evict us. In this weather, where will we go? We have shifted to a nearby village. We tend cattle up in the forest area. What will happen to our means of earning now?" he said.

The Forest department

has started a drive against "illegal encroachers" of forest land in the Valley. It also felled apple trees planted on what the department described as "forest land".

"I fail to understand the reason behind cutting the apple trees. Many were 30-year-old trees. This area sees a stunted growth of trees due to poor water levels. Many were planted by my grandfather. We are living here for more than six decades and my great grandfathers lived earlier up in the forest area. I fail to understand what is our sin," Mr. Bajaj said. Sa-been Ahmad Wagay alleged that the Forest Department within two days of the eviction notice started felling apple trees spread over 13 kanals (1.62 acre).

"We were not even heard. The land is with us for many generations", Mr. Wagay, with 13 family members in the house, said.

The Forest department

has started a drive against "illegal encroachers" of forest land in the Valley. It also felled apple trees planted on what the department described as "forest land".

The Forest department

# Not all Indian droughts are caused by El Niño

Bengaluru scientists point to 'curving waves' from the Atlantic region that may be drying up the monsoons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Droughts in India have historically been associated with El Niño, an anomalous warming of the equatorial Pacific, but scientists from Bengaluru suggest other culprits too.

The study that appears in journal *Science* says that nearly six out of 10 droughts, in non-El Niño years, that occurred during the Indian summer-monsoon season in the past century may have been driven by atmospheric disturbances from the North Atlantic region.

The study was led by researchers at the Centre for Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences (CAOS), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.

In an El Niño year, abnormally warm equatorial Pacific waters pull moisture-laden clouds away from the sub-continent, but the IISc study shows that in non-El Niño years, these droughts are a consequence of a sudden and steep drop in rainfall in late August.

### 21-member panel to probe mysterious illness in A.P.

RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS  
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has constituted a 21-member high level multi-disciplinary committee to investigate the mysterious disease that affected hundreds of people in West Godavari district.

More than 600 people had taken ill in Eluru and neighbouring villages with symptoms of neurotoxicity, and are undergoing treatment in Eluru Government General Hospital (GGH) and other hospitals.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney will head the committee and Principal Secretary (Health and Family Welfare) Anil Kumar Singhal will be the member-convenor.

Experts from All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and Mangalagiri, World Health Organisation, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, National Institute of Nutrition, National Centre for Disease Control and Indian Council for Medical Research, who camped at Eluru and were investigating the outbreak of the disease, and officers of various State government departments are members of the committee.

The committee has been asked to investigate the source of the infection and suggest remedial measures.

Following the presser, the TMC leadership said the Governor's threats could not intimidate the party. "He sends such reports daily. By sending such reports and remarks, he cannot threaten Mamata Banerjee. The people of the State are with us," senior TMC leader Subrata Mukherjee said.

The committee has been

asked to investigate the

source of the infection and

suggest remedial mea-

sures.

"As early as the 1980s, people have looked at these droughts individually. But they have not collated and pooled them together, and deduced that these droughts may all have a different type of evolution than El Niño droughts," V. Venugopal, Associate Professor at CAOS, says in a statement by the IISc.

### Decline in rainfall

In an El Niño year, the rainfall deficit departure from a long-term average will set in early around mid-June and progressively worsen. However, a non-El Niño year drought will see rainfall and will similarly weaken in mid-June. But from mid-July to mid-August, usually the rainiest period of the monsoon, the monsoon will appear to recover. However, around August third week, there was a sudden steep decline in rainfall, resulting in drought conditions.

"We tried to see if we could trace this [August] drought back to a forcing agent or system that in-



**Parched and dry:** A file photo of the Dummanahalli village lake in Karnataka's Tumakuru district. Many lakes in the district have gone dry due to persistent drought conditions last year.

fluences the behaviour over India. We looked at the winds that were prevalent in these non-El Niño drought years."

### Rossby wave

It seems, the researchers note, that winds in the upper atmosphere are interacting with a deep cyclonic circulation above the abnormally cold North Atlantic waters. The resulting wave of air currents, called a Rossby wave,

curved down from the North Atlantic squeezed in by the Tibetan plateau and hit the subcontinent around mid-August, suppressing rainfall and throwing off the monsoon that was trying to recover from the June lull.

The wave's usual course is to go from west to east, but not towards the equator, explains Jai Sukhatme, Associate Professor at CAOS and co-auth-

or.

Thus beyond looking at

predictability of monsoon variability."

Independent scientists say that while the link in the research paper is "novel" it is yet early days to be able to predict an impending drought in India from this paper alone. The Indian Ocean, says Roxy Mathew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, plays an important role in determining the monsoon's performance and several other factors will have to be considered to develop a reliable model to forecast a potential shortfall in the absence of El Niño.

In 2014, India saw a 14% rainfall deficit – or a drought – that wasn't linked to El Niño and before that in 1986 and 1985. "The sheer size of the Pacific means that it influences global climate much more than the Atlantic or other oceans. Therefore, the latter links aren't easily discoverable. But this study shows that we do need to look at such links closely," Mr. Koll told *The Hindu*.

## IN BRIEF



**HC grants bail to actor Sanjana in drugs case**

The Karnataka High Court on Friday granted bail to Archana Manohar Galraani alias Sanjana Galraani, an accused in the drug racket case, to enable her to undergo medication or surgery, if necessary, for the health disorder diagnosed during medical examination.

### Guruvayur temple to be closed for two weeks

With the area including the Guruvayur Sreekrishna temple being declared as a containment zone in the wake of COVID-19 threat, the temple will be closed for two weeks from Saturday. An emergency meeting of the management committee of the Guruvayur Devaswom held here on Friday took the decision. Essential temple rituals will be conducted. But functions such as weddings or Thulabham will not be allowed.

### Jagan to kick-start survey of lands in A.P.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will launch the comprehensive survey of lands under the 'Jagananna Bhu Hakku - Bhu Raksha' scheme on December 21. The survey will take off at Takkelapadu in Jagatpeta mandal of Krishna district, and cover 17,460 villages spanning over 1.26 lakh sq km in three phases.

## Five injured as TDP, YSRCP workers clash

YSRCP workers block TDP leaders from proceeding to Kurabalakota mandal

STAFF REPORTER  
CHITTOOR



**Huge loss:** The cars that were damaged during a clash between the TDP and the YSRCP workers in Chittoor district.

charge Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy and their followers were on their way to Angallu and B. Kothakota mandal headquarters to call on the families of party workers, who had died in re-

cent months due to various reasons.

When the TDP leaders ar-

rived at Angallu, about 100

YSRCP workers squatted on

the road and raised slogans

demanding that they go

back. The TDP cadres accompanying the leaders in about a dozen vehicles resorted to counter-protest, insisting that they be allowed to proceed with their schedule. This led to a clash between the groups, in which five persons were injured and some cars damaged.

### Naidu condemns attack

TDP national president N. Chandrababu Naidu condemned the attack and demanded stringent action against those responsible.

Party leader R. Madhu Ba-

bhu suffered a serious head injury. The attackers also tar-

geted a journalist and snatched his mobile phone and camera, Mr. Naidu said.

According to information, former MLAs Dommalapati Ramesh (Madanapalle) and Shankar Yadav (Tamballapalle) and TDP Piler in-

passed in the Assembly on Wednesday. Though the Bill was listed on the Council's agenda for Thursday, the ruling BJP did not introduce the

Bill before the House was ad-

journed *sine die* by Chair-

man K. Prathapchandra Shetty.

Earlier on Friday, a BJP

delegation led by House leader and Minister for Muzrai and Fisheries Kota Srinivas Poojary called on Governor Vajubhai R. Vala and urged him to direct the Council Chairman to convene the session either on Tuesday or Wednesday to enable the government to pass the anti-cow slaughter Bill.

Promulgation of an ordi-

nance will not be necessary

if the Council meets next

week and passes the Bill.

The day saw the Chief Mi-

nister performing *gau pooja*

at his residence "Cauvery".

He told presspersons that an

ordinance would be promul-

gated banning cow

slaughter.

The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020, was

passed in the Assembly on

Wednesday. Though the Bill

was listed on the Council's

agenda for Thursday, the rul-

ing BJP did not introduce the

bill.

Bill before the House was ad-

journed *sine die* by

# 'Gym ka langar' springs up for protesting sportsmen

Kabaddi team ex-captain and powerlifter add muscle to stir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

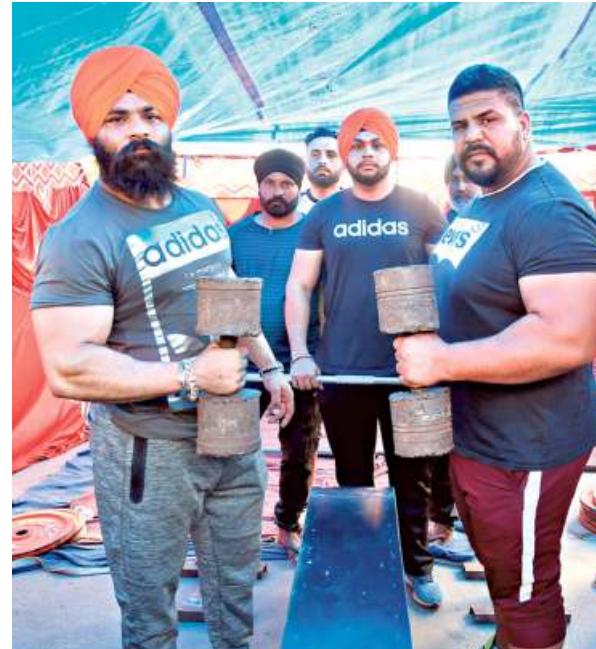
NEW DELHI  
A 'gym ka langar' has come up on the Singhu border for all the sportspersons who have joined the farmers in solidarity and anyone who wishes to work out.

This open gymnasium is equipped with dumbbells, weight plates, a bench, a rod and two holders. The bench and holding rods were made from scratch here in Delhi, the sportspersons who are managing the gym said.

The men behind the gym are Mangat Singh alias Mangi Bagga, former captain of the Indian kabaddi team, and Aman Hothy, a powerlifter.

Mr. Hothy, who has to take part in a powerlifting competition in Tamil Nadu in February, has joined the protest and is now practising here. "I am a farmer first and then a powerlifter. We'll all stay here till our problem is resolved," he said.

Back in Jalandhar, Mr. Hothy says, he works out early in the morning, after which he would go to the fields. The powerlifter said he spent two hours working out in the morning and two hours in the evening. He and



**Keeping fit:** Powerlifters Taran Bir Singh and Aman Hothy at the gym at the protest site on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

his peers spend the rest of the time managing the stage and activities around it.

"This gym is for anyone and everyone who wants to work out. There are so many langars around here... one can call this 'gym ka langar,'" he said.

"We've been fighting for

our rights and nothing else. We are not asking for any favours," he said.

Mr. Mangi said he and other kabaddi and hockey players and athletes who had joined the protest managed the stage security, langars, and whatever other activities were required.

"The farmers' body said

they will soon hold a big rally on the farmers' issue.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhanu) on Friday moved the Supreme Court highlighting the "inconclusive" talks with the Centre over the repeal of the three controversial farm laws, which it said would lead to the corporatisation and usher in an exploitative regime.

The farmers' body said the court should direct the government to strengthen the existing Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) system to enable sale of farm produce at a good bargain.

The Union said, rather than expecting a poor and illiterate farmer to strike a hard bargain and sell his produce to a multinational, the government should infuse more funds into the APMCs and effectively manage the minimum support price for the welfare of the agriculture sector.

**New commission**

The petition, filed through advocate A.P. Singh, suggested the constitution of a 'Farmers Commission' to fix the prices of crops. The farmers' body recommended

## BKU faction moves SC against new laws

'Strengthen existing APMCs instead'

**C** The Acts will spell disaster for the farmers... They will become vulnerable to corporate greed

BHARATIYA KISAN UNION

ed the waiver of agriculture loans to help farmers find their feet during the pandemic. It said farmers have taken their lives unable to bear the burden of their debts.

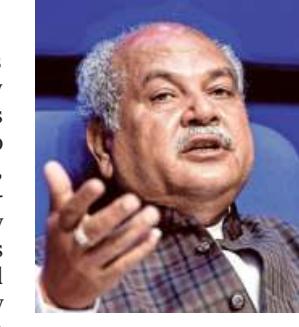
### Road to ruin

"If these [laws] are allowed, we are going to completely ruin our country as the corporates can, in one stroke, export our agriculture produce without any regulation. This may even result in famines," the petition said.

The petition said the three laws were passed hastily, with hardly any discussion. "In their current form, they will spell disaster for the farming community by opening a parallel market which is unregulated and gives enough place for exploitation of farmers... Farmers will become vulnerable to corporate greed of multinational companies," the petition said.

# Farmers stick to stand, but Minister is hopeful

We already rejected Centre's proposals on Dec. 5: protesters



Farmers are yet to respond, says Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

affiliated to the Left parties, said Mr. Tomar should take responsibility for the disruption in talks. "The Agriculture Minister has to explain why Home Minister Amit Shah interrupted the discussion process and brought again the proposal of amendments, which was categorically rejected by the Kisan delegation on December 5," it said.

### Fictitious claims: group

On Thursday, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry issued a comprehensive 106-page document, laying out the Centre's rationale for the three contentious farm laws, refuting 'myths' surrounding the laws, and defending its record on farmers' welfare. Some of the major points included, "MSP will not go away; APMC mandis will not be closed, farmers land will not be taken away and buyers cannot make changes to the land."

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee said it would rebut the booklet on Saturday, saying it carried "fictitious claims".

## Bihar govt. raises paddy offtake limit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

Amid the protests in Delhi over the new farm legislations, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has increased the paddy procurement limit from 200 quintals to 250 quintals for land-owning farmers.

It has also ensured that farmers registered with the Agriculture Department are automatically deemed eligible for paddy procurement by the Primary Agriculture Credit Society (PACS) at the minimum support price (MSP).

This was decided at a high-level meeting chaired by Mr. Kumar on Thursday to review status of paddy procurement during 2020-21. As regards marginal farmers, the State government has decided to increase the limit of paddy procurement from 75 quintals to 100 quintals.

## Bid to slash agri income to Bihar level: Rahul

Farmers wants to earn like Punjabis'

ers of Punjab," he said.

In another tweet, he quoted Subramania Bharathiar's praise of farmers and said withdrawing the three anti-farmers' laws would be a fitting tribute to the great Tamil poet on his 139th birth anniversary.

Bihar had abolished the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act way back in 2006. Abolishing the APMCs and minimum support price would make the farmers more vulnerable, the Congress says.

The data cited by Mr. Gandhi is from the Situation Survey of Agricultural Household undertaken in 2013.

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E-tenders/e-Bids are invited for licensing out open space (Approx 500 Sq. Yds) at Leisure Valley Area, Sector 10, Chandigarh for running/ managing of Hanging Restaurant (in the Sky) on revenue sharing basis.

Detailed E-Tender document is available on portal <http://etenders.chd.nic.in> for online participation. Last date for uploading of e-bid is 28.12.2020 strictly upto 05:00 P.M. M.D reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason.

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### TENDER NOTICE

Bids are invited from reputed and experienced Agencies for "Comprehensive Consultancy Services for Development of Riverfront Stretch (Left Bank) near Statue of Unity, Kevadia, Narmada, Gujarat." The project requirements, technical specifications, eligibility criteria, selection process, etc. are included in the Tender documents published on the websites: <https://www.nprocure.com/> and <https://www.gujarattourism.com/>. The tender documents shall be available online from 18/12/2020.

The last date for submission of the Financial Bid is 18/01/2021 upto 3:00 pm, and Technical Bid is 22/01/2021 upto 3:00 pm. The Financial Bid shall be uploaded in n-procure website only.

Managing Director

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE No.SR-TVCO5N/TEND/3/2020/05 dated 09.12.2020.

Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Southern Railway, Thiruvananthapuram-14 for and on behalf of The President of India invites e-tenders for the following work.

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Name of Work
1	TVC-SNT-TELE-20-21-08	Up-gradation of Railnet connections at Officer's Quarters at Poopappura in Thiruvananthapuram Division
2	TVC-SNT-TELE-20-21-09	Maintenance of Telecom Assets in TVC Division/ADSTE/ERS Section
3	TVC-SNT-SIG-20-21-10	Annual zonal contract for S&T-DSTE (NEM/Excl-NC/CAPEx-TEN/Excl) section in TVC Division
4	TVC-SNT-SIG-20-21-11	Annual zonal contract for S&T-ADSTE/TVC/ERS (Excl-ALLP-KYJ-CNGR-NEM (Indl) section in TVC Division
5	TVC-SNT-SIG-20-21-12	Annual zonal contract for S&T-ADSTE/ERS (SRR/Excl)-ERS-CNGR(Excl) (ERS-CHTS, ERS-IPN, IPL-VPDM, PNQ-GUV) section in TVC Division

Complete details & tender document will be available at [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

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# 'China rise has attracted a great deal of attention'

Gen. Rawat terms it a defining moment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
In the midst of conflicts in the last three decades, global financial crisis and mushrooming of many multilateral organisations, China's rise has been one of the most defining moments of the 21st century, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat stated on Friday.

"In recent years, China's economic and military rise, coupled with competition to increase influence in the region, has attracted a great deal of attention. At present, there are over 120 warships of extra-regional forces deployed in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in support of various missions. For now, by and large, the region has remained peaceful, albeit under contestation," he said, virtually addressing the Global Dialogue Security Summit on developments in the Indo-Pacific.

### New phase of nationalism

On the post-COVID situation, Gen. Rawat pointed out that the world was entering a new geopolitical phase, likely to be based on nationalism, protectionism, and strategic realignments.

"We are, and we will, continue to witness rise of nationalism, economic patriotism, shift towards buying local brands, need to take back supply chains and shifting of strategic industries within the country's



Today, we are facing increasing security challenges and the best guarantee for peace and stability is to have dissuasive deterrence

GEN. BIPIN RAWAT  
Chief of Defence Staff

## To end graft, mindset must change: judge

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

There would be no end to corruption unless people changed their way of thinking, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul stated in the Supreme Court on Friday and dismissed as withdrawn a plea seeking stringent punishment for corruption and money laundering.

"Personally, I feel we in society should change our thinking... For every person taking money, there is a person distributing money," Justice Kaul, heading a three-judge Bench, said.

His oral comments came while hearing a petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, represented by senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan.

**Suggestion is utopian?** Mr. Upadhyay, a frequent public interest litigation (PIL) petitioner in the court, said the government should confiscate the ill-gotten wealth – black money, benami and disproportionate assets – of the corrupt and the criminals and throw the offenders in jail for lifetime.

Justice Kaul said Mr. Upadhyay's suggestion was utopian. The petitioner cannot expect to remedy all the wrongs in society through the judicial process. "There is the process of the legislature and the executive..." Justice Kaul said, allowing Mr. Upadhyay to withdraw and knock the doors of the Law Commission of India with his suggestions.

## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RADIO ASTROPHYSICS

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Broad eligibility criteria: B.Sc (physics/mathematics) for M.Sc. and Integrated Ph.D; M.Sc (physics/applied physics) for regular Ph.D; B.E, B. Tech and M. Tech degrees are also accepted for regular Ph.D in some participating institutes, which have their specific eligibility criteria.

To apply and obtain more information visit <http://www.jest.org.in>

Online application: January 11, to February 14, 2021 ;

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### NOTICE

No.14888/OMC/Perln./2020  
Date: 11/12/2020

Pursuant to the Advt. No. 46/OMC dated 26.02.2020 and Notice No. 14744/ OMC/ Perln./2020 dated 07.12.2020, the Online Computer Based Test (CBT) which was originally scheduled on 08.12.2020 (03 shifts) and was postponed until further notice due to Bharat Band Call, is hereby rescheduled on 21.12.2020 (03 shifts).

This is for information of all the candidates that the rescheduled CBT will be conducted on 21.12.2020 (03 shifts). The CBT centres, shifts and timings including reporting time of the candidates shall remain unchanged (i.e. as planned earlier for 08.12.2020).

Communication regarding revised schedule and dispatch of e-Admit card shall be sent to the candidates through their registered e-mail ID & Mobile Number from 14.12.2020 onwards.

Candidates are advised to report at the examination centre

## IN BRIEF



Nishant Singh, fighter pilot, laid to rest

NEW DELHI  
Commander Nishant Singh, 34, the Navy's fighter pilot who lost his life in the recent MiG-29K jet crash, was laid to rest with full military honours at Goa on Friday. "His wife, Nayaaab Randhawa, received the tricolour and her husband's uniform from the Commanding Officer of the squadron," the Navy said. The jet crashed in the sea off Goa on November 26.

Maharashtra to give film sector industry status  
MUMBAI  
A week after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a meeting with film studio owners, producers and actors in Mumbai for his planned film city in Noida, the Maharashtra government has moved to sanction industry status to the film and entertainment sector. Amit Deshmukh, the State's Cultural Affairs Minister, said the proposal on the rapidly growing sector would be discussed in a Maharashtra Cabinet meeting at the earliest.

## Rules notified to serve warrants in Maldives

NEW DELHI  
The Ministry of Home Affairs on Friday notified rules for Indian courts to send summons or search warrants to accused persons in the Maldives and wanted in India, as per an agreement signed between the two countries. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval was in Sri Lanka on November 28 to attend the 4th NSA-level Maritime Security Cooperation meeting with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The arrangement on court summons between the two countries is understood to have been reached in Colombo.

# India is on track to reduce emissions'

Environment Minister says the country will meet its commitment by the target year of 2030

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said that India was the only major G20 country that was on track towards keeping to its nationally determined commitments to halt runaway global warming. It had achieved 21% of its emissions intensity reduction target as a proportion of its GDP in line with its pledge to a 33-35% reduction by 2030, he said.

Mr. Javadekar was addressing a media briefing ahead of the international Climate Ambition Summit to be jointly hosted on Saturday by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is among the 78 leaders expect-

"We have already achieved 21% of our emissions intensity target, the share of renewables in our energy mix is 37.9% and our tree cover has increased by 15,000 sq km in six years

**Voluntary pledge**  
In 2015, ahead of the United Nations' significant climate conference in Paris, India announced three major voluntary commitments called the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC): improving the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35% by 2030 over 2005 levels; increasing the share of non-fossil fuels-based electricity to 40% by 2030, and enhancing its forest cover, thereby absorbing 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is also expected to address the summit.

According to the International Institute of Sustainable Development, the summit is

positioned as a "sprint to Glasgow", where the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is scheduled to take place from November 1-12, 2021.

**High polluters**  
On Saturday, some of the world's top 10 emitters will be present: China, the European Union, India, Japan and Canada. Notable absentee

big polluters are Australia, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico. Two senior U.S. Government officials are expected to attend.

The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP 21 in Paris, on December 12, 2015, constitutes a landmark agreement on climate change that seeks to limit global average temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and endeavour to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

The agreement, which came into force on November 4, 2016, currently has 188 parties. All parties to it are expected to undertake ambitious efforts to support the agreement's goals and communicate their related intentions every five years in the form of NDCs.

In the first round, 186 parties submitted their first NDC and two have since submitted a second one.

Both addressed the need to fight terrorism and shared the "same vision" on the future of the Afghanistan peace process, officials said.

"We have similar concerns about extremism, fundamentalism and separatism. We both stand firmly together against terrorism. We also have a similar approach on regional security issues," Mr. Modi said in his opening statement welcoming President Mirziyoyev to their first virtual summit.

**Energy pact**  
The two sides signed a Dollar Credit Line Agreement between the Export-Import Bank of India and the Uzbekistan Government and several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)

including in the areas of renewable energy and information technology on the sidelines of the meeting.

The leaders instructed their officials to fast-track the conclusion of the ongoing Joint Feasibility Study that will pave the way for commencement of negotiations on a Preferential Trade Agreement," MEA joint secretary Adarsh Swaika said, adding that the two leaders acknowledged that the current bilateral trade level of about US \$285 million (2018) was far below the potential.

"The [leaders] shared the same vision of a united, [sovereign] democratic Islamic republic of Afghanistan, that it should be an Afghan led, owned and controlled peace process. It is also vitally important to preserve the gains made by Afghanistan in the last two decades including for minorities, women and children," Mr. Swaika said.



Joint goals: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, right, and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. ■MEA

## PM, Uzbek President discuss Afghan projects

Both address need to fight terrorism

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India and Uzbekistan plan to cooperate on connectivity projects in Afghanistan and will participate in a tri-lateral dialogue with Iran, said the two sides after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during a virtual summit on Friday.

Both addressed the need to fight terrorism and shared the "same vision" on the future of the Afghanistan peace process, officials said.

"We have similar concerns about extremism, fundamentalism and separatism. We both stand firmly together against terrorism. We also have a similar approach on regional security issues," Mr. Modi said in his opening statement welcoming President Mirziyoyev to their first virtual summit.

**Military exercise**

"Our security partnership is becoming a strong pillar of bilateral relations. Last year, the first joint military exercise between our armed forces took place. Our joint efforts are also increasing in the areas of space and atomic energy," Mr. Modi added.

India also confirmed the approval of a \$448-million Line of Credit for four developmental projects in Uzbekistan in the areas of "road

We have already achieved 21% of our emissions intensity target, the share of renewables in our energy mix is 37.9% and our tree cover has increased by 15,000 sq km in six years

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR,  
UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

## HC stays CIC order on PM's foreign visits

IAF says information 'very sensitive'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The IAF had moved the High Court challenging the July 8, 2020, order of the CIC, saying that the information sought was "extremely sensitive in nature" as it related to details of the Prime Minister's security apparatus.

"The information so sought includes details related to the entire entourage, names of Special Protection Group (SPG) personnel accompanying the Prime Minister of India on foreign tours for his personal safety, and the same, if disclosed, can potentially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India," the IAF said.

The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed a Central Information Commission (CIC) direction to the Indian Air Force (IAF) to provide an RTI activist information regarding each foreign visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh undertaken on IAF aircraft.

Justice Navin Chawla also sought a response from the RTI activist, Commodore Lokesha K. Batra (retired), who had requested certified copies of Special Flight Returns Part-I and Part-II relating to foreign visits of Mr. Modi and Dr. Singh.

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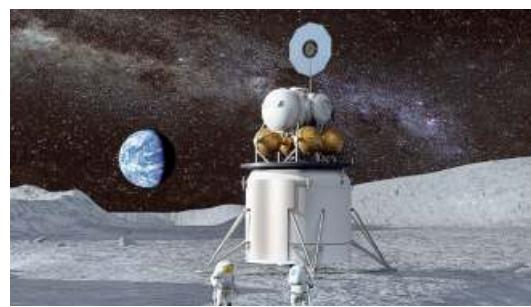
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Justice Navin Chawla also sought a response from the RTI activist, Commodore Lokesha K. Batra (retired), who had requested certified copies of Special Flight Returns Part-I and Part



## Instapick

**Margazhi 2020:** Another annual fixture goes virtual. Charsur Arts Foundation's concerts, with over 30 big names, including Sikkil Gurucharan, begin on December 15 (season pass at ₹1,500 on [in.bookmyshow.com](#)). The Music Academy (@madrasmusicacademy) in Chennai has scaled down events to be held from December 24 to 31. But don't fret about not being able to Instagram the *sabha* canteen food. Most regular caterers have plans to set up shop soon.



## Talking point

**Artemis Moon Mission:** After Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, we'll soon have the first woman and next man on the Moon. Almost 50 years after Apollo 11, NASA has announced a crew of 18 people who will be training to be part of a lunar surface mission set for 2024. While scientific research is one of the main goals, "activities related to field geology, sample collection and return and deployed experiments" are also on the cards. Details: [nasa.gov](#)

As per official reports, about 1,000 acres of sacred land have

## Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up, and other events you just can't miss.



### Deck the halls

Get into the Christmas spirit with a box of decorations curated and delivered to your home by New Delhi-based **CherishX**. Pick from the basic DIY kit (at ₹1,900) to the gold pack that includes a six-foot-tall tree, ornaments and more (at ₹6,499). On [cherishx.com](#). Add to the warmth of the season with **Hands carpets**' Christmas Story collection, featuring snowy grey and fiery red rugs. From ₹24,000 on [handscarpets.com](#).



### Winter brews

**Sula Vineyards**, along with **Blue Tokai Coffee Roasters**, has launched a limited edition Barrel Aged Blend. The cold brew features wine barrel-fermented coffee beans with subtle hints of grapes, dark chocolate, oak, tannins, and black currant. At ₹250 for 200 ml. Craft beer **MAKA di** from Latambarem Brewers in Goa, has a festive honey ale made with wild honey from Jim Corbett Park in Uttarakhand. Details: [makabeer.space](#)



### Cheer and joy

The Imperial has **Christmas hampers** that come in red baskets and include an assorted chocolates in a box, a boozy Christmas cake, gingerbread cookies with winter spices, stollen bread, a mince pie, La Molisana Spaghetti, balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, marshmallows, roasted nuts, Organic India tulsi and jasmine teas, a chocolate Santa, and Pringles. ₹7,080, at 1911 restaurant, The Imperial, Janpath, New Delhi



### Dance like a Nutcracker

Shortly after their annual Radio City Christmas Spectacular was cancelled, **The Rockettes** have started spreading holiday cheer through free virtual dance classes on their Instagram page. The American precision dance company has performed at the New York venue since 1932. Learn the parade of the wooden soldiers and the tree lighting routine, among others. The classes are hosted live on [@therockettes](#) on Wednesdays, till December 23.



### Live dive

With its regular menu featuring Mangalorean Chicken Sukha, Masala Jackfruit Cigar, Onion Cheese Bhaji, Pizza Kulcha and a lot more, **Farzi Cafe** will also have a live performance by The Toll Road tonight. A Delhi-based Bollywood fusion band, they will entertain people with retro and the latest Hindi movie cover hits. 9.30 pm onwards; Farzi Café, World Mark 3, Aerocity, New Delhi; for reservations 9667250222 / 9667260222



### Traditional hour

Pankaj Udhas, Talat Aziz, Anup Jalota and Sudeep Banerji, among many others, will perform at the 19th edition of **Khazana**, a festival of ghazals. On December 19 and 20, from 8 pm, streaming for free on [Hungama's](#) online platforms. **Kalakshetra's** 57th annual art festival goes online from December 21 to 31, with performances by Nithyasree Mahadevan and Rakesh Chaurasia. Tickets from ₹300 on [in.bookmyshow.com](#)



### In store

Japanese fashion brand **Onitsuka Tiger** has launched a 1,500 sq ft store in Pacific Mall. Expect men's and women's shoes, clothes (jackets, tees), accessories (socks, bags, caps) in new designs, updated classics (like the oiled leather series), and in collaboration with artists like Willow Smith. The current shoe collection, the **Holiday Quilting Series** has velvet quilted uppers. Ground floor, Pacific Mall, Tagore Garden, New Delhi

# Of sinners and saints

Mumbai rapper Divine hits it straight out of the gully with his second album, *'Punya Paap'*. The title track has already crossed 10 million views on YouTube



LALITHA SUHASINI

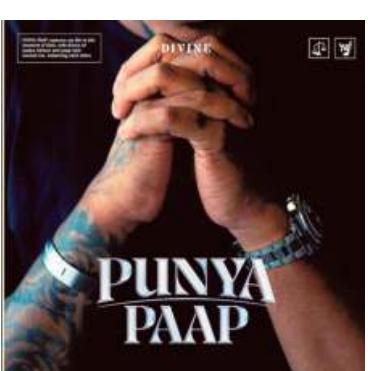
Rap provocateur Vivian Fernandes, who goes by the moniker Divine, upended the pandemic by working through the year to produce a superlative album. "Covid se pehle hi hum faasle rakhte the" (I maintained a distance even before COVID struck) is just one of the lines from the 29-year-old old Mumbai rapper's new album 'Punya Paap', which is telling of how he turns context into wordplay. "I made 25 samples, shortlisted 15 and picked 11 from that," he says of his second album, which released earlier this month. It features a slew of collaborations including rapper Dutchavelli from Birmingham, Brooklyn rap star Nas and Grammy-winning soul singer Cocoa Sarai.

From oppression of the working class to climate change to love, Divine covers a wide spectrum. You hear his love for disco on the slick 'Disco Song' and his nod to the OG Bollywood gangster film on 'Satya'. On 'Top 5 D.O.A' he raps, "Mazaa aata hai yaar gaana banane mein," (It's great fun making songs) so listeners can feel the head rush that he did while making this album. No surprise then that the title track has over 10 million views on YouTube. Excerpts from an interview:

**Making the second album is always a challenge because everyone has really high expectations. Was that the case with 'Punya Paap'?**

It is tough to raise the bar, especially since 'Kohinoor', my first album had an amazing response. But there was no pressure because of the lockdown. I had no phone calls, no brand endorsements, no shows. I was in my zone, and had fun writing this album. I wanted to bring in sounds that were in my head, in my heart and were never out there. 'Disco Rap' is

(Clockwise from right) Divine; Punya Paap album cover, a still from the 'Mera Bhai' video; with Nas; and Dutchavelli



The main reason this album sounds good is because of the production. I want to shout out to all the producers who answered my 4 am calls to fix something.

“

something I'd heard as a child so I wanted to do something on a similar beat. I had Nas and Dutchavelli, who sent me verses in three days. Nas recorded when he wasn't well and that's a huge thing for me.

I'm also lucky to have friends who have studios, because I was in there five days a week for two months straight. The main reason this album sounds good is because of the production. I want to shout out to all the producers who answered my 4 am calls to fix something. Especially Stunnah Beatz from Guwahati – we have great chemistry and whenever I call him, he knows exactly what I want.

You mentioned that you showed up at the label's office and gave them the tracks for 'Kohinoor'. Is that how it worked for this album as well? Yeah, they [the label] cannot choose. I'm blessed that they allow me to do that.

Did the label step in to help the collaborations happen?

Dutchavelli happened because of BBC. I've played their festival and they've covered me a couple of times. They asked me who in the UK I would like to collaborate with and I picked Dutch, since he is one of my favourite rappers. I was on his song ('Bando Diaries') before this.

In 'Top 5 D.O.A.' you say "Abhi bhi sapne mein chal rahe apan" (I'm still walking in a dream). What's unbelievable about your life?

Everything, man. Everything feels unreal. I wouldn't think that a guy from Bombay who comes from Andheri



East would be on a Nas song, on a Dutch song. I never thought that would happen. I'm still dreaming, I think.

You've brought in Jesus and Moses in your rap. How did you decide that you will talk about your faith on the album?

2013's 'Voice of the Streets' was my first track that got 25,000 views in three to four months, and I was the happiest guy at that point in time. I wanted to start off my second album with the sample of the French choir featured on that, because it was underrated. It is not a religious thing. As for rapping with Biblical references, that is what I've heard my mum speak about and I draw from what I've heard or felt around me. If I knew something about *Mahabharat*, I would have used those references also. It is just a natural thing. But I do believe in God.

Who is 'Mera Bhai' about?

It is about some of the instances with my friends, because suddenly my life took off. Because work is important [to me], some of my friends drifted away, turning their back on me. They were thinking that I was the one who drifted away, so I made that song. Maybe some of them misunderstood me, so this song is for them and they will get it.

So, it is not about Naezy?

Na na na. Naezy's cool with me. I love him. We hang out.

What do you mean by "Modi-wala shot"?

It is open to interpretation. Whatever my fans think.

The writer is an independent journalist and a faculty of journalism at FLAME University.

been allocated to build this *Swachh Bharat Sapna Factory*. Photographs of India's biggest, brightest – and gummiest – star, Akshay Kumar taking the lead have social media in a tizzy. Take that, Trudeau. Our boy is no turncoat.

It looks like the monopoly of the god-knows-what-snorting Nepo Gang is finally coming to an end. It is soon going to be the days of good, clean, enlightening, uplifting cinema – the kind Chandragupta Maurya and Manoj Kumar would have co-directed had they had the opportunity.

I have a few ideas that I would like to share. On how this new era could be ushered in.

As is our ancient custom, let's begin with names. Bollywood, a name that has been in currency for too long, is just a toxic derivative of the deeply corrupting western capital of cinema. And it should be erased with immediate effect. Our new film city should be called Culturewood, or better still, *Sanskari Lakdi*. That it brings to mind the corrective implement used by our young patriots on anyone eating the wrong fare, cracking the wrong joke, or marrying the wrong kind is no coincidence. The names of Kollywood, Tollywood and Mollywood will be changed, too, in due course. Together, they will be called *Madras Lakdi*. When they learn Hindid, we could do a rethink.

As for real estate allocation, why

not split the property right down the middle? One half for Kangana Ranaut, the other for Akshaybhai Bhatia, separated by an electrified fence so that Kangana's wooden horse doesn't stray.

Kangana's section will make films on all that is wrong with our ancient land today. She will write, produce, direct, and star in all the vehicles herself. Some of her titles: *Tapsee Ki Sasti Kahani*, *Trudeau Ek Dodo*, *Anurag Ek Dishrag* and *KJo, Please Go Go*. These movies will be released on Twitter. And anyone criticising the movies will be made the subject of the next movie.

Akshay Kumar, meanwhile, will make movies that are totally positive. His subjects will deal with all that is good and great in our ancient land. *Deshbhakt Khiladi 1, 2 and 3*, *Central Vista: Ek Prem Katha*, *I Love My Statues*, *Garam Masala Part 2: The MDH Story...*

One of the main resources for any big industrial complex is water. *Sunny Paaji* will make sure there is plenty of water throughout the year in the film city. He will bore through the soil doing the *'Yaara O Yaara'* step from *Jeet* and install hand-pumps every 100 metres or so by using the reverse of the *Gadar* method. Kent RO systems could be procured at a discounted price using his family connections.

Deer and peacock will fly about the campus, *pushpaka vimanams* will fly overhead showering petals, and Mukesh Khanha, Alok Nath and Barack Obama will be on the advisory board. I'm loving it.

**Krishna Shastri Devulapalli** is a satirist. He has written four books and edited an anthology.



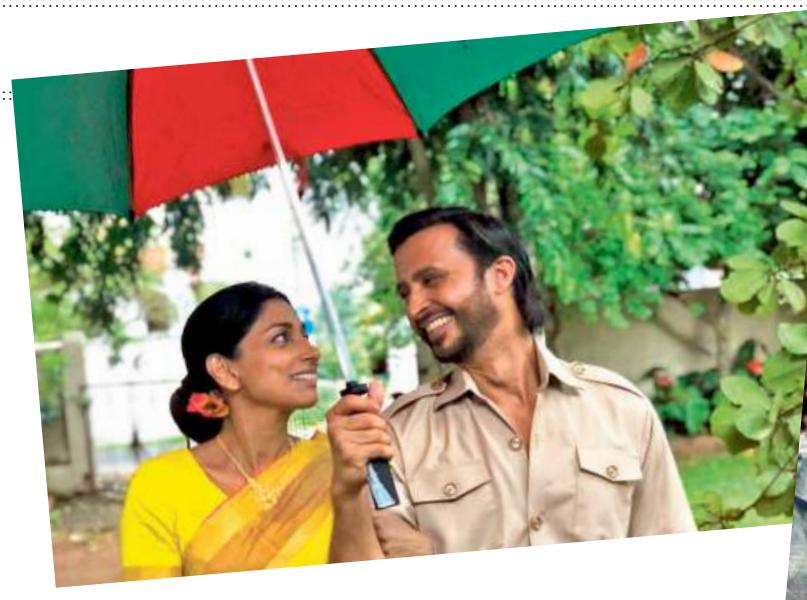
**The local flavour**

*Funny Boy* might make Sri Lanka a trending Google search, but the island has a plethora of art and culture that you can dig into, says Ingram. Here are three he recommends:

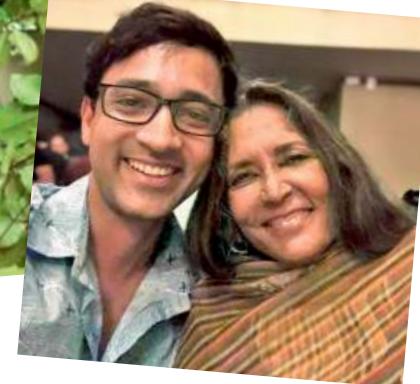
1. Read *Line of Lanka* by Sunela Jayewarden, which delves into Sri Lanka's myths and history across time.

2. Catch a play by Mind Adventures, a theatre company that has focussed on social and sexual politics in the country. Arun Welandawew-Prematilleke's award winning play, *The One Who Loves You So*, features two young men who meet on a gay dating app (Ingram played the lead role in previous stagings).

3. Watch local TV dramas such as *Kumbiyo*. "I think we're just starting to figure out TV, and *Kumbiyo* is one of the first pieces of work that really got it right," he says.



Stills from *Funny Boy*, and (below) Ingram with director Deepa Mehta at wrap up



ny Boy is one of his most acclaimed works.

It is therefore surprising that Ingram hadn't read the book until he was cast in the film. The reason, he says, is that the subject matter was too close to him. As a young gay man grappling with his own sexuality, he was afraid to be associated with it. "Every time I was at a bookshop, I couldn't pick it up. Because to even pick it up meant looking around and thinking, 'They're going to know?'"

But in the years since, Ingram has become far more vocal and open about his sexual orientation and politics. On his personal blog, he has written about his country's restrictive anti-LGBTQ laws – a hangover from its British colonial occupation, modelled after India's own Section 377 (which was read down in 2018). That is why a gay Sri Lankan man playing the lead in an Oscar-contending movie about a gay Sri Lankan boy is a big deal to him. "I hope this film acts as a catalyst for more conversations," he says.

And yet, sections of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora have criticised the casting choices in *Funny Boy*, including the decision to cast Ingram, a Sinhala-speaking, non-Tamil actor, in a Tamil-speaking role. As far as Tamil representation goes, the main cast features just one actress, Nimmi Harasgama, who is half-Tamil. After the release of the trailer in October, there was a call on social media to boycott the film. Also, critics said, whatever little Tamil could be heard was mispronounced, and amounted to erasure of Tamil Sri Lankan culture.

When I bring this up, Ingram admits that he has held back on commenting about the issue. "It is wild for me to not say anything [because I am usually very outspoken on social media], but I don't think I possess the right kind of ground," he says, adding that he understands where the criticism comes from.

In defence, he points to Mehta's recent admission that she had auditioned Tamil actors who, for different reasons, had not accepted the role. But on a personal level, he doesn't believe that being a non-Tamil prevents him from doing the role justice. He says that playing a Tamil character has even helped him understand his country's past a little better.

Now that the film is in cinemas, he knows things may change. He is open to the possibility of relocating to pursue more acting opportunities ("but I'll definitely end up back in Sri Lanka"), but as to where that might be, he is not sure.

Having grown up on a diet of dubbed Indian soap operas ("Mandira Bedi was bigger here than she was in India," he says, gushing about the Indian actor's '90s serial, *Shanti - Ek Aurat Ki Kahani*), he is open to tapping into the Indian market. And luckily, he is fluent in Hindi, thanks to those very soap operas that he no longer watches in their dubbed formats.

Brandon Ingram is fielding both praise and criticism as *Funny Boy* hits cinemas. But the ad man and actor is clear where his career is headed — and it could include an Indian soap or two

# The queer Sri Lankan experience

SINDHURI NANDHAKUMAR

Brandon Damian Ingram is overwhelmed. He has what he calls a 'regular' job in advertising, he is studying for his Master's in mass communication, and he is dealing with all the attention that comes with playing the lead in a much-anticipated film. The film in question: Deepa Mehta's eponymous adaptation of the novel, *Funny Boy*. And given that it is Canada's official entry to the Academy Awards this year, and was purchased by director Ava DuVernay's distribution company, Array, the attention is unsurprising.

But the excitement has largely been contained within the walls of the Sri Lankan actor's home in Colombo, which he barely steps out of. "With everything else that's hap-

pening in the world, I've just been in one place — on my phone," he says, laughing.

Authored by Sri Lankan-Canadian novelist Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (which was originally published in 1994) tells the story of Arje Chehavratnam, a Tamil boy coming to terms with his sexuality against the backdrop of Sri Lanka's brutal ethnic conflict in the '80s.

Ingram, 35, vividly remembers the moment when he realised that a role in *Funny Boy* might become reality. In June last year, while at Colombo's Barefoot Café, meeting with a friend, he received a message from Selvadurai — a casual acquaintance — informing him that the novel was to be adapted for film. "Deepa would like to audition you," read the message. "I realised he meant Deepa Mehta and my



**Soaps and careers**  
This is the theatre actor's film debut, and when asked about his big-screen aspirations, he steers the conversation towards one particular medium. "I really want to be in a series because I love television so much. My dream — and this is going to sound hilarious — is to play the villain on one of those really soapy Hindi soaps, like *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki*. I feel like that's my true calling," he says, without any irony.

But he is not sure if he is ready to give up advertising just yet. He started in the field at 17, and 11 years later, decided to leave the industry. The five years that followed saw him live an itinerant life, waiting tables at a café in the beach town of Hikkaduwa, managing a bar in the western surfing hub of Arugam Bay, and working on his novels. But eventually, he felt a tug — to go back to Colombo. So he returned to advertising last year, joining Wunderman Thompson Worldwide (formerly JWT) as creative director — a job that he maintained even during the intense shooting schedule for *Funny Boy*.

**Facing down criticism**  
Selvadurai is one of Sri Lanka's renowned literary exports, and *Funny*

## What's your worldview?

The ongoing I-View World Film Festival will challenge ideas of identity, migration and more

GEORGINA MADDOX

I remember back in 1998, when, as a post-grad student of Social Communications and Media at Sophia's Polytech in Mumbai, a few of us were shoved into a police truck and driven down to the police station because we were outside the New Excelsior theatre protesting the vandalisation of Deepa Mehta's *Fire* by Right Wing groups. We were young, hot blooded and very excited by the first-ever film addressing issues of marginalised sexuality and 'choice' being screened publicly at a theatre. Getting arrested at the time was a mark of 'Pride' rather than shame.

Cut to 2020. This time the villain is Covid-19. As a result of the pandemic, Pride has been postponed to 2021 because large crowds cannot officially gather. The queer community, unlike the fearless farmers who are camped on the borders of Delhi, have decided not to take the 'risk'. However, once again, cinema unites us. And once again it is a Deep-

a

Mehta film, *Funny Boy*, that brings the community together.

The I-View World Film Festival, organised and hosted by Engendered, the trans-national arts and human rights organisation, marks International Human Rights Day (December 10). It has partnered with Hybrid Film Festival in New York, to showcase 50 shorts, documentaries and feature films from South Asia, Canada, Britain, Italy, Sweden, Netherlands, Argentina, Australia, Turkey/Syria, Iran and Thailand. The 10-day festival will have Covid-conscious screenings and a socially-distant red carpet at the DLF Cyber-Hub in Gurugram, with a panel discussion around Deepa Mehta's film (and Canada's official entry for the 2021 Academy Awards). It can also be viewed virtually on the Plexigo app.

*Read the full story on weekend.thehindu.com*  
*The I-View World Film Festival is on till December 20.*  
*Watch the films on plexigo.com.*



RAHUL VERMA

Among all that I really miss in these restricted times is the sound of a *degh* being opened in a small lane in Old Delhi. The *degh* would contain *haleem*, a dish that never fails to warm the cockles of my heart. Its aroma would embrace all of us, waiting to buy a plate of the meat-and-wheat dish.

Until last year, I used to get a large pot of Hyderabad's special *haleem* delivered during Ramzan. This year, of course, the service was suspended. I was moping about that when I learnt that a food outlet called Pot Pot ([potpot.in](http://potpot.in)) had *haleem* (and a whole lot of other delicacies) on the menu.

The place is run by Varun Tuli, who is one of the most talented chefs I have come across. I first had his food when we went with a group of friends to his restaurant

## FOOD SPOT

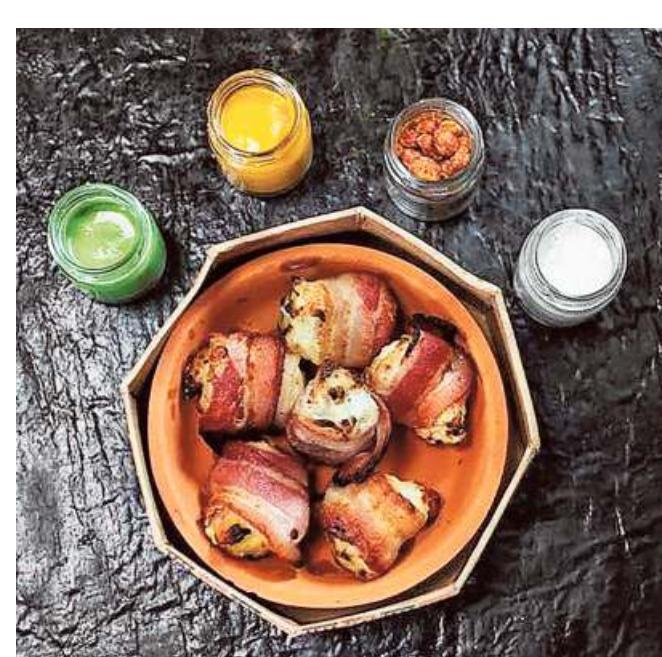
# But first, haleem

In pandemic times, Pot Pot tries to recreate the wonder of smoky smells and fresh-out-of-the-degh tastes

Yum Yum Tree, which offered various kinds of sushis (among other Oriental dishes). The restaurant closed after some years, and he opened Yum Yum Cha in Khan Market. And now there is Pot Pot.

Pot Pot's food is delivered in Delhi and Gurugram, and it is open all days from 12 noon upto 11 pm. They have a pickup point

in Udyog Vihar, Gurugram, and plan to open one in GK 1 in Delhi. These days, the best delivery services focus on hygiene, and their food is delivered in earthenware placed in cloth bags.



Pot Pot gives a nice twist to Indian dishes: For instance the menu includes miso masala fish (₹585) and truffle galouti slider (₹485). I had their spicy lotus root bhel (₹285), which was a delicious mix of crunchy lotus roots and peanuts, flavoured with lime juice and a Thai dressing. The bacon-wrapped tandoori prawn (₹585) was grilled in a tandoor, giving it a pleasantly smoky taste.

The malai broccoli (₹345) had florets also grilled in a tandoor and then topped with cream (I would have liked it without the cream). But I really enjoyed the mini Jaipuri mattar

**Fire and spice** (Clockwise from left) Bacon wrapped prawns, the blackest pot; tandoori broccoli, haleem

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



The menu includes interesting rotis (truffle kulcha, roomali roti flavoured with saffron, with spinach and so on) and rice dishes. I had the *bisi bele bhaat* (₹445), prepared with dal papru, rice, gunpowder and peanuts, and served up with mint raita (₹445).

The dishes come with chutneys and condiments: mango chutney, mint chutney, and crushed garlic and chillies.

The *haleem* (₹855) was more meaty than usual, but the cracked wheat added texture and taste to the dish that's as nourishing as it is flavoursome. I took a bowl of that, added crispy onions on top, along with ginger slivers and green chillies, and really didn't need anything more. I could smell the aroma of freshly cooked *haleem*. And, just for a moment, I was back in Old Delhi.

*The writer is a seasoned food critic*



A still from *Brief Story from the Green Planet*

# U.S. experts back Pfizer vaccine approval

Official clearance by the FDA is expected within a few days; President-elect Joe Biden hails decision

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. could soon be the next country to launch an immunisation campaign against COVID-19 after experts voted to recommend emergency approval for Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine.

The key milestone comes as the world's hardest-hit country logged nearly 6,000 virus deaths in 48 hours, with its overall toll approaching 300,000.

President-elect Joe Biden called the FDA experts' decision on Thursday a "bright light in a needlessly dark time", with official approval expected within days.

Infections are spreading fastest in North America and parts of Africa, whereas Europe's second wave has started to stabilise and cases are down in Asia and the Middle East.

Britain this week became



**Big push:** The U.S. hopes to start vaccinating 20 million people this month. •REUTERS

the first Western country to roll out the Pfizer-BioNTech jab, which Canada, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have also approved. And while Russia and China have already begun inoculation efforts with domestically produced vaccines, European Union (EU) countries are eagerly awaiting clearance.

## AstraZeneca to use part of Russia's Sputnik V

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

Pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca's Russian branch said on Friday it would use part of Russia's homemade Sputnik V vaccine in further clinical trials, a major sign of recognition for a jab that has

been viewed with scepticism by the West. Russia was one of the first countries to announce the development of a COVID-19 vaccine. While the jab is yet to complete its third and final phase of testing, developers say that interim trial results showed 95% efficacy.

blishing results of clinical trial involving nearly 44,000 people, which confirmed it was 95% effective with no serious safety issues.

The FDA said it would issue an allergy warning following Britain's lead after two healthcare workers there suffered reactions and needed treatment.

## No deal very likely, says Johnson

Sunday is the deadline for a final decision on Brexit talks

REUTERS

LONDON/BRUSSELS

Britain is likely to leave the European Union (EU) without a trade deal in just under three weeks' time, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Friday.

Britain quit the EU in January but remains an informal member until December 31, the end of a transition period during which it has remained in the EU single market and customs union.

Both sides say they want to agree arrangements to cover nearly \$1 trillion in annual trade, but talks are at an impasse. Ms. von der

**G**If there's a big offer, a big change in what they [the EU] are saying, then I must say that I'm yet to see it

BORIS JOHNSON  
British Prime Minister

Leyen told EU leaders that a no-deal was more likely than a deal, an official said.

"It's looking very, very likely we'll have to go for a solution that I think will be wonderful for the U.K., we'll be able to do exactly what we want from January 1, it will obviously be different from what we set out to achieve," Mr. Johnson told reporters. "If there's a big offer, a big change in what

they [the EU] are saying, then I must say that I'm yet to see it," Mr. Johnson said.

Mr. Johnson and Ms. von der Leyen have given negotiators until Sunday evening to break the impasse at talks that are deadlocked over fishing rights and EU demands for Britain to face consequences if in the future it diverges from the bloc's rules.

As leaders lined up to warn of the failure of talks, investors started to price in the risk of a chaotic finale to the Brexit crisis. Sterling tumbled, stocks fell and implied volatility surged. The pound fell 0.8% against the dollar to \$1.3184, before recovering somewhat.

## Donald Trump loses Wisconsin lawsuit

There was no wrongdoing, says court

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADISON

President Donald Trump on Friday lost a Wisconsin lawsuit seeking to disqualify more than 2,21,000 ballots and overturn his loss to Democrat Joe Biden in the battleground State. This is the latest in a string of legal defeats for Mr. Trump.

Reserve judge Stephen Siiman ruled against every argument Mr. Trump made while challenging ballots in the State's two largest counties, saying the election was properly administered and there was no wrongdoing as the President alleged.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court court previously refused to hear Mr. Trump's case before it went through the lower courts.

A majority of judges have also openly questioned whether disqualifying the ballots, as Mr. Trump wants, would be appropriate.

Mr. Trump planned to appeal the ruling at the conservative-controlled Wisconsin Supreme Court, even though his chances there appear to be slim.

He also has a federal lawsuit in Wisconsin, where the judge could rule as soon as Friday.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court previously refused to hear Mr. Trump's case before it went through the lower courts.

A majority of judges have also openly questioned whether disqualifying the ballots, as Mr. Trump wants, would be appropriate.

## Key Obama-era officials among Biden's Cabinet picks

Susan Rice named Domestic Policy Council director

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden announced several administration picks on Thursday, including Obama-era officials such as former National Security Adviser Susan Rice as White House Domestic Policy Council director and ex-chief of staff Denis McDonough as veterans affairs secretary.

The appointments, laid out by Mr. Biden's presidential transition team, highlight the diversity which Mr. Biden pledged to bring to his Cabinet.

"This is the right team for this moment in history, and I know that each of these leaders will hit the ground running on day one to take on the interconnected crises families are facing today," Mr. Biden said in a statement.



Susan Rice

Ms. Rice had been a contender for Secretary of State. But she was expected to face intense opposition from Republicans in the Senate confirmation process over her role in the Benghazi crisis of 2012, and that prestigious Cabinet position went to Mr. Biden's close adviser, Antony Blinken. Ms. Rice's appointment may come as a surprise given her experience in foreign policy. The position, which she tweeted she was "humbled and excited" to take, does not need Senate confirmation.

Mr. McDonough, 51, served multiple roles in Barack Obama's administration, including White House Chief of Staff and Deputy National Security Adviser. He has been nominated to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs, a sprawling government agency tasked with managing a healthcare network that serves nine million enrolled veterans.

He also named Tom Vilsack, 69, Mr. Obama's Secretary of Agriculture for two full terms, to the same role.

International trade expert Katherine Tai has been chosen to be the U.S. Trade Representative. Ms. Tai, currently the chief trade lawyer for the House Ways and Means Committee, would be the first Asian American and first woman of color in the USTR role.

## Award-winning S. Korean director Kim Ki-duk dead

He died in Latvia from COVID-19 complications

REUTERS

COPENHAGEN

South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk, a controversial figure both for his work and his personal life, died in Latvia from COVID-19 complications on Friday, a Latvian film official said.

Kim, who had won awards at the Venice, Cannes and Berlin film festivals, had been staying in the Latvian capital Riga in a private capacity after travelling to neighbouring Estonia for work, according to Dita Rietuma, director of Latvia's state National Film Centre.

Kim, 59, died at a hospital in Riga, Ms. Rietuma told Reuters, citing the director's



Kim Ki-Duk

private secretary.

Latvian media *Delfi* first reported Kim's death, referring to Vitaly Mansky, a Russian documentary film director who was reportedly working with Kim.

**MeToo accusations**

He was accused of rape and sexual harassment by a series of actresses amid the #MeToo movement.

Kim had not directly responded to those claims, but appealed in November after losing a lawsuit he pursued against one of the actresses and a local TV network that broadcast her accusations.

## Jimmy Lai charged under security law

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HONG KONG

Kim earned global praise as a regular at international festivals, but also faced criticism, especially over his portrayals of women, including in the ultra-violent film *Pie-ta*. That movie won the Golden Lion prize at the Venice Film Festival in 2012.

**MeToo accusations**

He was accused of rape and sexual harassment by a series of actresses amid the #MeToo movement.

Kim had not directly responded to those claims, but appealed in November after losing a lawsuit he pursued against one of the actresses and a local TV network that broadcast her accusations.

## Israel-Morocco pact follows a history of secret dealings

They have cooperated in various areas for almost 60 years

RONEN BERGMAN

Behind the announcement on Thursday that Israel and Morocco will establish their first formal diplomatic ties, there lies almost six decades of close, secret cooperation on intelligence and military matters between the two nations that officially did not acknowledge each other.

Israel has helped Morocco obtain weapons and intelligence-gathering gear and helped assassinate an opposition leader. Morocco has helped Israel take in Moroccan Jews, mount an operation against Osama bin Laden, and even spy on other Arab countries.

The collaboration – uncovered in an array of interviews conducted and documents unearthed over many years – reflects a longstanding Israeli policy of building covert ties with Arab regimes where common interests – and enemies – could be found.

The Moroccan-Israeli ties stemmed in part from the large number of Jews in Morocco before the birth of Israel in 1948, many of whom would migrate there, making up one of the largest parts of Israel's population. Some 1 million Israelis are from Morocco, or descended from those who were.

When Morocco gained independence from France in 1956, it banned Jewish emigration. Israel's spy agency, Mossad, smuggled out many Jews, but the operation was exposed in 1961, when a Mossad ship carrying such migrants sank, killing most of those on board.

The next month, a new Moroccan king, Hassan II, took power, and Israel made



King Muhammad VI

intelligence's request, Mossad located Ben Barka and helped lure him to Paris. There, Moroccans and allied Frenchmen abducted him. He was killed and Mossad agents disposed of the body, which was never found.

A decade later, Hassan and his government became the back channel between Israel and Egypt, and Morocco became the site of secret meetings between their officials, ahead of the 1978 Camp David accords and normalisation of relations between the former enemies.

In 1995, Moroccan intelligence joined in an ultimately unsuccessful Mossad plan to recruit Osama bin Laden's secretary, to find and kill the leader of al-Qaeda, according to a former Mossad official who was a partner in that planning, and asked to be found.

For years, Hassan II's successor, King Muhammad VI, has sought Israel's help in winning American acquiescence to Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara, which finally came to fruition in Thursday's announcement. Since 2006, Serge Bardugo, a leader of the small Jewish community remaining in Morocco, has been the king's ambassador in that effort, meeting with Israeli officials and American Jewish leaders. Occasionally, these meetings were attended by Yassin Mansuri, a long-time friend of the king's, who heads Morocco's external intelligence agency. Mossad, established our feeling, of the top IDF, that we will win the war against Egypt," Gen. Shlomo Gazit, who later became the chief of military intelligence, said in a 2016 interview.

Shortly after that intelligence coup, at the Moroccan

Intelligence coup

A crucial moment came in 1965, when Arab leaders and military commanders met in Casablanca, and Morocco allowed Mossad to bug their meeting rooms and private suites. This gave Israel unprecedented insight into Arab plans, which helped it in preparing for the 1967 war. "These recordings, which were truly an extraordinary achievement, established our feeling, of the top IDF, that we will win the war against Egypt," Gen. Shlomo Gazit, who later became the chief of military intelligence, said in a 2016 interview.

The next month, a new Moroccan king, Hassan II, took power, and Israel made

the two shared information gathered by their spies.

**Intelligence coup**

The person shown in the above photograph is Rodda Deevankumar, Age-17, S/o Rodda Ramayya, House No 26-1-12236, Yerukulapalem, Kondeyapalem, Andhra Pradesh, India. He is missing from 07.11.20 at Manipur Kottayam District, Kerala and for the same matter, a case has been registered in Chingavaram Police station as Cr. No. 1050/20, U/s 57 of KP Act and enquiry is being conducted. If anyone get information regarding the above said person, please inform through the phone number provided below.

DYSP Changancherry - 9497961631  
SHO Chinagavanam - 9497961762  
SI Chinagavanam - 9497980314, 0481-2430587

1909/F2/2020/I&PRD

**MISSING**

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1909/F2/2020/I&PRD

**Damodar Valley Corporation**

(Established By the Act XIV of 1948)

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PROCUREMENT OF ENERGY FROM RENEWABLE (SOLAR AND NON SOLAR) SOURCES**

Damodar Valley Corporation, a deemed distribution licensee under the Electricity Act, 2003 intends to procure energy from Renewable (Solar and Non Solar) energy sources in FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22.

Offers are invited from developers to supply energy generated through Renewable (Solar and Non Solar) energy sources as defined in West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (Cogeneration and Generation of Electricity from Renewable Sources of Energy) Regulations, 2013 & in subsequent orders.

The offers, containing acceptance of prerequisites given in **Section A**, along with details as per the **Section B**, shall be submitted in a sealed envelope to the following address within 11.01.2021.

Damodar Valley Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all the offers without assigning any reason whatsoever. It is also not binding on Damodar Valley Corporation to disclose any analysis report on others.

**Section A:**

1. The tariff applicable for purchase of energy from Renewable (Solar and Non Solar) energy sources shall be within the Price Cap set in the West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (Cogeneration and Generation of Electricity from Renewable Sources of Energy) Regulations, 2013 & in subsequent orders and subject to the terms and conditions contained therein.

2. Quantum of energy procurement will be approximately Solar : 440 MU and Non Solar : 915 MU.

3. Delivery Point will be at DVC periphery.

4. The seller has to arrange for Open Access up to delivery point.

5. All the open access charges and fees and losses (if any) will be borne by the seller.

**Section B:**

1. Name & address of the Company.

2. Telephone Nos. Fax, E-mail, Website.

## MARKET WATCH

	11-12-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	46,099	-0.30
US Dollar	73.64	-0.03
Gold	48,594	-0.12
Brent oil	49.93	-1.23

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	466.30	-4.70
Asian Paints	2520.95	-5.10
Axis Bank	613.25	-13.80
Bajaj Auto	3327.65	36.80
Bajaj Finserv	8995.05	-33.80
Bajaj Finance	4942.85	49.05
Bharti Airtel	504.40	-0.75
BPCL	397.40	-1.90
Britannia Ind	3732.75	-7.00
Cipla	755.85	-6.90
Coal India	138.25	3.40
Divis Lab	3642.10	-90.15
Dr Reddys Lab	5016.95	-36.15
Eicher Motors	2470.80	-21.85
GAIL (India)	125.85	5.80
Gasim Ind	902.25	-7.25
HCL Tech.	862.25	-4.50
HDFC	2295.90	6.80
HDFC Bank	1382.80	-3.05
HDFC Life	664.50	5.05
Hero MotoCorp	3185.30	-9.00
Hindalco	243.65	0.95
Hind Unilever	2374.75	24.30
ICICI Bank	515.45	8.50
IndusInd Bank	923.75	7.90
Infosys	1163.20	-4.55
Indian Oil Corp	93.85	1.40
ITC	216.30	3.60
JSW Steel	359.65	-2.65
Kotak Bank	1920.40	17.10
L&T	1194.30	3.95
M&M	727.55	-8.60
Maruti Suzuki	7733.55	-2.45
Nestle India Ltd.	18401.10	48.40
NTPC	102.40	5.25
ONGC	96.80	5.15
PowerGrid Corp	193.10	0.35
Reliance Ind	2005.80	-1.20
SB Life	849.70	-6.35
State Bank	272.45	2.90
Shree Cement	23805.00	46.90
Sun Pharma	568.10	2.90
Tata Motors	178.85	1.25
Tata Steel	621.70	11.60
TCS	2783.60	-0.70
Tech Mahindra	919.40	-7.90
Titan	1442.40	18.20
UltraTech Cement	5015.00	50.70
UPL	435.00	-3.45
Wipro	353.50	-2.40

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar.....	73.45	73.77
Euro.....	89.13	89.53
British Pound.....	97.14	97.58
Japanese Yen (100).....	70.63	70.95
Chinese Yuan.....	11.22	11.28
Swiss Franc.....	82.70	83.09
Singapore Dollar.....	54.98	55.23
Canadian Dollar.....	57.58	57.85
Malaysian Ringgit.....	18.11	18.21
Australian Dollar.....	55.39	55.63

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Forex reserves surged by \$4.525 billion: RBI data

MUMBAI

The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$4.525 billion to touch a record high of \$579.346 billion in the week ended December 4, the RBI's data showed. In the previous week ended November 27, the reserves had declined by \$469 million to \$574.821 billion. Foreign currency assets rose by \$3.932 billion to \$537.386 billion. PTI

## WHO pre-qualifies Biological E's TCV

A single-dose injectable Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine of Biological E has been pre-qualified by the World Health Organisation, making the vaccine maker one of two pre-qualified suppliers of TCV to UN agencies. The vaccine was developed in collaboration with the GSK Vaccines Institute for Global Health, Italy.

## SPORT

## No stopping Vishnu Prasad, Amir

Former wins LGB Formula 4 class, the latter claims a double

# Centre set to unveil 'ambitious' PSE divestment policy: Bajaj

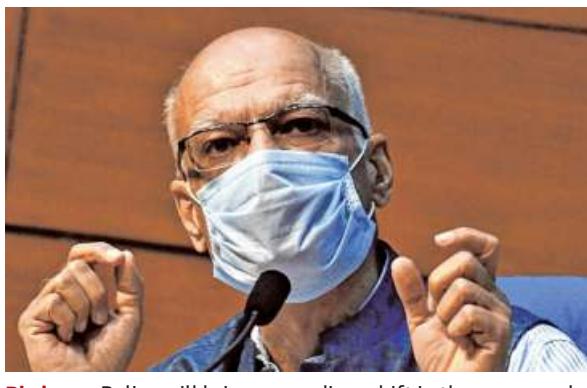
Barring 1-4 public sector players, other strategic sector PSEs too to be privatised'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The new public sector enterprises policy for strategic disinvestment is far more ambitious than most would 'anticipate', Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj said on Friday.

Conceding that the policy, promised in May, had been delayed, Mr. Bajaj said the government didn't want to do something 'routine'.

"Let me say the policy will be very ambitious, more than what is anticipated by all of you," he told participants at FICCI's AGM. "It will happen very soon [and mark] a first time in India. This would bring a paradigm change in the way people



**Big bang:** Policy will bring a paradigm shift in the way people think in the government, says Mr. Bajaj. ■ KAMAL NARANG

think in the government," he added.

Asked if public sector banks would be included, Mr. Bajaj said that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

had already mentioned that even strategic sectors would have only one to four public sector players. "The rest will be privatised," he said.

Observing that there had

been some 'cooling off' in economic activity after the festive season, Mr. Bajaj said things hadn't gone down as much as expected.

"There will be a few blips here and there, but we are positive and cautiously optimistic," he added.

'Growth' would drive the review of the monetary policy framework due in March, he hinted, when asked if the current inflation targeting framework could be revisited.

"We will make sure that we have taken care of the factor that targeting has not affected the policy options... we will take adequate steps to ensure growth happens," he said.

## AUM of NBFCs heading for contraction in FY21'

Revival likely in the next fiscal: CRISIL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Heading for a contraction in the current fiscal, the first time in more than a decade, assets under management (AUM) of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) are set to grow again at a relatively subdued 5-6% next fiscal. The turnaround will be led by larger entities with stronger parentage, top executives at CRISIL said.

"Despite an estimated GDP growth of 10% next fiscal, the overall NBFC sector growth is likely to be slower because access to funding remains a challenge due to concerns about the impact of the pandemic on asset quality," Gurpreet Chhatwal said.

Competition is expected to be more intense from banks which are flush with low-cost deposits

wal, president, CRISIL Ratings, said in a web conference. "Additionally, competition is expected to be more intense from banks which are flush with low-cost deposits and better placed with improved capital buffer than in the previous years," he added.

While growth would be a challenge in the near term, it is significant to watch out how asset quality pans out as we approach the next fiscal, Mr. Chhatwal said.

## ACMA monitoring shortage of semiconductors for impact

Situation precipitates need to localise auto electronics: Jain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) said it is monitoring the shortage of semiconductors and that the immediate impact on the auto sector is not known.

"ACMA is keenly watching the situation as it unfolds," Deepak Jain, president, ACMA, said on Friday. "It is still not clear as to what extent and for how long the shortage of semiconductors will impact vehicle production in India." He added that any stoppage of vehicle lines would have a ripple effect on the entire auto component

manufacturing ecosystem.

Mahindra and Mahindra on Thursday said production and sales may drop in the fourth quarter due to a global supply shortage of microprocessors. Auto parts supplier Bosch had on De-

## Centre cancels 1.63 lakh GST registrations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government has cancelled more than 1.63 lakh GST registrations over October and November due to non-filing of returns by the taxpayers concerned for more than six months, Revenue Department sources said. This exercise is aimed at weeding out fake firms, fly-by-night operators, and circular trading entities.

More than 11,000 GST registrations were cancelled in Ahmedabad and nearly 20,000 in the Chennai GST and central excise zone. Officials said that cancellation proceedings were being initiated for about 29,000 more taxpayers who had not filed their GSTR-3B returns for more than six months.



N.K. Singh

"With the abolition of the Planning Commission, many economists and policy makers have argued about an institutional vacuum. We need to give serious consideration for a consultative forum for credible policy dialogue between the Centre and the States," he said.

### Rebuilding Trust

Urging a review of both the Seventh Schedule and Article 282 of the Constitution so as to give more flexibility to States in implementing centrally sponsored schemes, Mr. Singh said these issues needed urgent consideration to reinforce trust in fiscal federalism.

"Many have argued that the trust between various forms of government is wanting. Are there new seeds of suspicion and mistrust? Are the existing arrangements governing Centre-State relations – legislative, executive and financial – envisaged in the Constitution adequate to meet the aspirations of Indian society?" he asked.

Mr. Singh also seemed to back the idea of linking the grant of fiscal headroom to States meeting specific reform outcomes, a term of reference for the Commission.

## L&T said to be poised for key civil projects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Units of Larsen & Toubro Ltd. (L&T) have emerged as the lowest bidder in multiple construction projects, officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Heavy Civil Infrastructure business of L&T's construction arm has emerged as the lowest bidder for the Main Plant of Kudankulam 5&6 units of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL), they said.

The work includes construction of the reactor building and other associated safety related structures for the two new units.

L&T is also said to be the lowest bidder for the first 7,955 km elevated section of Chennai Metro's new 26.09 km Line-4.

## SIAM data affirms Nov.'s increase in PV wholesales

Festive season spurred 12.7% jump'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Wholesale sales of passenger vehicles jumped 12.7% in November driven by the festive season, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said on Friday.

"We should avoid getting caught," AIBA's director general wrote in an e-mail in 2016 to executives of the three companies.

The CCI did not respond to Reuters queries. Lobby group AIBA and Carlsberg declined to comment, citing ongoing CCI proceedings.

United Breweries, part-owned by Heineken, said it had cooperated with authorities and would make submissions to the CCI. Heineken didn't respond to requests for comment. The world's largest brewer, Anheuser-Busch InBev, which acquired SABMiller in 2016, said it takes "antitrust compliance very seriously".

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said earlier this week that retail sales of passenger vehicles rose 4.17% to 2,91,001 units.

"We have witnessed an increase in wholesale numbers in the month of November, where passenger vehicles grew by 12.7% and



two-wheelers by 13.4% over the corresponding month of last year, primarily on account of the festive season," said Rajesh Menon, Director General SIAM.

However, retail two-wheeler sales fell 21.4% last month, FADA data show.

"Retail sales of two-wheelers lag behind wholesale sales... but would even out over a period," Mr. Menon said, adding the economic scenario will determine the industry's outlook.

## Tenno Sho expected to score in Racing Patrons Trophy

BENGALURU: Tenno Sho, who has been well tuned, is expected to score in the Racing Patrons Trophy (1,600m), the main event of the races to be held here on Saturday (Dec. 12). False rails (width about 8.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1. BELOVED PRINCE PLATE (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only (Terms), 1-45 p.m.; 1. Chiosok (12) Sai Vanishi 57, 2. Golden Vision (4) Arshad 57, 3. Impressive (1) Zervan 57, 4. Jokshan (6) I

## IN BRIEF



## De Kock named Test captain

JOHANNESBURG  
Quinton de Kock was on Friday named South Africa's Test captain for the 2020-21 season. A 15-man squad for the two-Test series against Sri Lanka (December 26-30 at Centurion and January 3-7 at Johannesburg) was also announced. de Kock was appointed captain of the limited-overs teams last season. AFP

## Stokes opts out of Sri Lanka series

LONDON  
Star all-rounder Ben Stokes, who is currently grieving the loss of his father, and exhausted fast bowler Jofra Archer were left out of the 16-member England squad for the upcoming two-Test series against Sri Lanka. However, both Stokes and Archer are expected to be back for the high-octane series against India beginning in February next year. PTI

## Bottas sets fastest time as Hamilton returns

ABU DHABI  
Valteri Bottas went fastest on the opening day of F1 practice for the Abu Dhabi GP ahead of Lewis Hamilton, returning after missing last week's Sakhir GP due to COVID-19, to complete a one-two for Mercedes. REUTERS

## Lebron James is Time's Athlete-of-the-Year

LOS ANGELES  
LeBron James, who won an NBA title with Los Angeles Lakers and formed a coalition to battle voter suppression, was on Thursday named *Time* magazine's 2020 Athlete-of-the-Year. *Time* lauded James' 'More than a Vote', a non-profit organisation aimed at encouraging Black citizens and others to exercise their right to vote. AFP

## Hole-in-one gives Olson first-round lead

HONOLULU  
American Amy Olson, buoyed by a hole-in-one, took a one-shot lead in the first round of the US Women's Open. Thailand's Moriya Jutanugarn, Japan's Hinako Shibuno and South Korea's Kim A-Lim were second. AFP



## Former India footballer Ethiraj passes away

BENGALURU  
Former India football player D. Ethiraj, a centre-forward in the 1962 Asian Games gold medal-winning team, passed away here on Friday. He was 87. Ethiraj also led Services to Santosh Trophy triumph in 1960-61.

## Bumrah's willow takes the centrestage

Green suffers concussion; India gains the upper hand on a bowlers' day

## WARM-UP GAME

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SYDNEY

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah headlined the opening day's play with a maiden First Class fifty and then chipped in with two wickets in an impressive bowling effort, putting the Indians in the driver's seat against Australia-A in the pink-ball warm-up game here on Friday.

Bumrah (55 n.o., 57b) was the top-scorer as the visitors folded up for a disappointing 194 in 48.3 overs.

## Strong comeback

But the Indians came back strongly with the ball to baffle out Australia-A for 108 at stumps, as 20 wickets fell on a curtailed day when almost an hour was lost due to heavy rain.

On a day when the recognised batsmen struggled, Bumrah, whose Test batting average is 2.9, produced a stellar performance, smashing the ball six times to the

fence and twice over it.

Earlier, after skipper Ajinkya Rahane had opted to bat, Prithvi Shaw (40) and Shubman Gill (43) showed glimpses of why they are rated so highly.

However, the rest, including the seasoned Rahane, failed to impress.

## SCOREBOARD

## Indians — 1st innings:

Prithvi Shaw b Sutherland 40, Mayank Agarwal c Burns b Abbott 2, Shubman Gill c Carey b Green 43, Hanuma Vihari b Wildermuth 15, Ajinkya Rahane c Carey b Wildermuth 4, Rishabh Pant lbw b Wildermuth 5, Wriddhiman Saha c Sutherland b Abbott 0, Navdeep Saini c Maddinson b Conway 4, Mohammed Shami c Carey b Abbott 0, Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 55, Mohammed Siraj c Harris b Swepson 22; Extras (lb-1, nb-3): 4; Total (in 48.3 overs): 194.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-9, 2-72, 3-102, 4-102, 5-106, 6-111, 7-111, 8-116, 9-123.

## Australia-A bowling:

Abbott 12-6-46-3, Conway 11-3-45-1, Sutherland 9-0-54-1, Green

6.1-2-20-1, Wildermuth 8-4-13-3, Swepson 2.2-0-15-1.

## Australia-A — 1st innings:

Marcus Harris c Gill b Shami 26, Joe Burns c Pant b Bumrah 0, Nic Maddinson c Saha b Siraj 19, Ben McDermott lbw b Shami 0, Alex Carey c Pant b Saini 32, Sean Abbott c Pant b Shami 0, Jack Wildermuth c Pant b Bumrah 12, Will Sutherland c Gill b Saini 0, Patrick Rowe (not out) 7, Mitchell Swepson c Saha b Saini 1, Harry Conway run out 7; Extras (lb-1, w-1, nb-2): 4; Total (in 32.2 overs): 108.

## Fall of wickets:

1-6, 2-46, 3-46, 4-45, 5-56, 6-83, 7-84, 8-97, 9-99.

## Indians bowling:

Shami 11-4-29-3, Bumrah 9-0-33-2, Siraj 7-1-26-1, Saini 5.2-0-19-3.

## 'Kohli is a proponent of all-out aggression'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ADELAIDE

Batting great and former India coach Greg Chappell has called Virat Kohli the "most Australian non-Australian" cricketer of all time. Chappell invoked Mahatma Gandhi before crediting Kohli's intensity for bringing about a paradigm shift in Indian cricket.

"Many previous Indian cricket teams tended to play with undue deference to their opponents, as if in accord with the Gandhian principle. Sourav Ganguly was the first Indian captain to try to change that

approach. It worked to a degree in India, but usually hit a hurdle overseas," Chappell wrote in *Sydney Morning Herald*.

"Virat Kohli does not believe in passive resistance. He is a proponent of all-out aggression. His idea is to dominate the opposition."

"Kohli is the most Australian non-Australian cricketer of all time. He embodies the new India. As the premier player and captain of the world's pre-eminent cricket power, he feels an abiding responsibility to the wider game."

Off-spinner Washington is expected to lend his weight as a net bowler.

## Natarajan, Shardul and Washington to stay back

## AMOL KARHADKAR MUMBAI

Shardul Thakur, T. Natarajan and Washington Sundar have been retained as back-up and net bowlers for India's Test series in Australia, starting on December 17.

While left-arm seamer Natarajan, a stand-out performer in the T20I series, was scheduled to stay on as a net bowler, Shardul was asked to stay back once Ishant Sharma was ruled out of the series.

Off-spinner Washington is expected to lend his weight as a net bowler.

## Paes rejuvenated and ready for action

Veteran tennis star targets more records in Olympics and Grand Slams

## Y.B. SARANGI KOLKATA

India tennis great Leander Paes on Friday said that he felt rejuvenated after a long coronavirus-induced break and would go for more records in Olympics and Grand Slam participation.

Paes, who owns the record of 46 Davis Cup wins and has participated in seven consecutive Olympics, also revealed his new goals.

"I am embarking on trying to finish up 100 Grand Slams (main draws). Am at 96 at the moment," said the 47-year-old at the launch of Motovolt smart electric cycles here. Paes, who had an-

presents itself to get the record of eight Olympics. I already have the record at seven, but if we can push the record up one more time to eight Olympics, my belief is that India would forever stay in the history books as to the most number of Olympics played in tennis. Hope To kyo happens.

## Hectic schedule

"The reason for 'One Last Roar' season was I was physically and emotionally tired because of the travel, hard work, 4.30 a.m. wake-up calls, the 12-hour-15-hour a day (schedule) and living a champion's life. The career

was really long and I started to feel it at the end of 2019. After this long break of 10 months, I feel rejuvenated and happy."

Paes, who last played a competitive match in March, said he would love to take to the court in 2021.

"I am still waiting for the calendar to come out. The Australian Open has been pushed back. We don't know whether it will happen. We don't know whether the Olympics are going to happen. We hope the vaccine can be distributed fast so that all of us can get back to life," said the winner of 18 Grand Slam titles.

After Manvir Singh gave ATKMB the lead in the 54th minute, Victor equalised 11 minutes later by converting the penalty after HFC's Nikhil Poojary was fouled inside the box after receiving a through-ball from Souvik Chakrabarti.

Roy Krishna tested HFC goalkeeper Subrata Paul in the ninth minute with a brilliant header off a Pritam Kotal cross, just two minutes after firing a shot straight at the keeper.

After the break, ATKMB continued to mount pressure on its opponent and found the breakthrough when Manvir received the ball off a goal-kick. The Indian forward sprinted into the box, got lucky with a ricochet off an onrushing Odei Omaindia and found the back of the net. However, Victor spoiled ATKMB's party.

**The result:** ATKMB 1 (Manvir 54) drew with HFC 1 (Victor 65-pen)

**Saturday's match:** Odisha FC vs FC Goa, 7.30 p.m.

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After Manvir Singh gave ATKMB the lead in the 54th minute, Victor equalised 11 minutes later by converting the penalty after HFC's Nikhil Poojary was fouled inside the box after receiving a through-ball from Souvik Chakrabarti.

Roy Krishna tested HFC goalkeeper Subrata Paul in the ninth minute with a brilliant header off a Pritam Kotal cross, just two minutes after firing a shot straight at the keeper.

After the break, ATKMB continued to mount pressure on its opponent and found the breakthrough when Manvir received the ball off a goal-kick. The Indian forward sprinted into the box, got lucky with a ricochet off an onrushing Odei Omaindia and found the back of the net. However, Victor spoiled ATKMB's party.

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## TV PICKS

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m., 8.30 p.m., 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m., 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)  
**Abu Dhabi Grand Prix:** Qualifying, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.25 p.m.  
**ISL:** Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.15 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



Amandeep wins by three shots, Seher second

GURUGRAM  
Amandeep Drall produced two birdies in the last four holes on the final day to claim a three-shot win over Seher Atwal in the eighth leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Friday.

Amandeep, with a one-over 73, held off Seher (71) on the final day. Jahanvi Bakshi, lying ninth after the second day, rose to third with the day's best card (three-under 69). PTI

**Ferrari chief Louis Camilleri resigns**  
ABU DHABI  
Chief Executive Officer Louis Camilleri announced his departure from Ferrari on Friday for personal reasons on the eve of this weekend's season-ending Abu Dhabi GP. AFP



TENNIS MONICA (USA)  
Alejandro Alex Olmedo, who won the Wimbledon and Australian Championships singles titles in 1959 and was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1987, has died. He was 84 and succumbed to brain cancer on Wednesday. He also led USA to Davis Cup triumph in 1958. Olmedo turned pro in 1960. AP

## Solskjaer's position under the scanner

Neither United nor Guardiola's City can afford to lose the Manchester derby

## PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Manchester United's early Champions League exit means Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's position is back under scrutiny ahead of Manchester City's visit to Old Trafford for a game neither side can afford to lose.

The Manchester derby is the most eye-catching fixture during a Premier League weekend that includes a trip to Crystal Palace for leader Tottenham and a date at Fulham for champions Liverpool. Both Manchester clubs have recovered from slow starts to the campaign after having barely two weeks of pre-season.

Solskjaer's men, following a run of four straight league wins, can claim to be in the hunt for a first league title since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 sent the Red Devils into a spiral of decline.

A fourth defeat in six Premier League games at Old Trafford this season could



Compelling rivalry: A lot will be at stake for United's Solskjaer and City's Guardiola. ■ FILE PHOTO

see the Red Devils finish the weekend eight points off the leader, albeit with a game in hand.

City are a point behind United, in seventh, but Pep Guardiola's men appear to be coming into form after recording back-to-back league wins for the first time this season. In stark contrast to United's Champions League

woes, City's serene progress into the last-16, with two games to spare, allowed Guardiola to leave Kevin De Bruyne and Gabriel Jesus in reserve for the derby.

City were repeatedly undone by United's quickfire counter-attacks last season – losing three of four meetings – and have shown signs in

defeats to Tottenham and

Leicester this season that they have not resolved the issue.

## Title race

United and City are just two of five genuine title contenders, with Chelsea perched just two points behind Tottenham and Liverpool at the top of the table. A slip in the standards set by Liverpool and City in recent seasons promises the most open race for years.

Arsenal is the only member of the so-called 'Big Six' which has lost touch with the top of the Premier League. The Gunners are a lowly 15th in the table after their sixth defeat in 11 games at the hands of Tottenham last week.

The main problem for Mikel Arteta's men is the lack of goals – only the current bottom three have scored fewer than Arsenal's 10 so far and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has not found the net from open play in the league since the opening weekend.

But the Spaniard was buoyed by his side's reaction after the defeat to Spurs.

## Ankita in doubles final

SPORTS BUREAU  
DUBAI

India's Ankita Raina and Ekaterine Gorgodze of Georgia reached the doubles final with a 6-7(1), 6-3, [10-2] victory over Anna Blinkova of Russia and Heather Watson of Great Britain in the \$100,000 ITF women's tennis tournament on Friday.

Ankita and her partner had earlier knocked out the second seeds.

**Others results: Quarterfinals:** Ankita & Gorgodze bt Kirsten Flipkens (Bel) & Andreja Klepac (Slo) 7-6(3), 6-1.

## Pranjala beats Charlotte

SPORTS BUREAU  
MELBOURNE

Y. Pranjala defeated Charlotte Kempenaers 6-3, 7-5 in the third league match of the UTR Pro tennis tournament here.

It was the second win in the league for Pranjala, following the one against Ellen Perez. She had lost to Storm Sanders.

## National shooting trials in January

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has announced a set of two selection trials for rifle and pistol shooters at the Dr Karni Singh shooting range, Tughlakabad, from Jan. 6 to 18.

These will be followed by a set of two more in February, and will form the basis for choosing teams for the World Cups to be held in India and Korea.

The national federation has released a set of about 200 shooters, eligible to participate in the trials, on its website *thenrai.in*.

All shooters have to produce COVID-19 test reports, timed within 48 hours before the first trial. Only one person will be allowed to accompany a shooter, and with valid COVID-19 negative report.

and lodging. Ammunition will be provided against payment on valid arms license.

Entries will be accepted only through NRAI's online system till Dec. 28. Thereafter, entries will be accepted on triple fee till Jan. 2.

The NRAI also announced that entry fees paid for the trials scheduled in April this year, would be returned. There will also be mixed team events in rapid fire pistol and rifle 3-position events.

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## Chirag Duhani advances

**Other results: Quarterfinals:** Lakshmi Dev Chauhan 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

B.N. Kumaran bt Karan Singh 2-6, 6-4, 6-1; Digvijay Pratap Singh by Chinmay Dev Chauhan 6-3, 6-4.

42) bt Delhi Colts 277/9 in 40 overs (Sumit Goli 106, Dharmender Sharma 50, Manvinder Singh 38 n.o., Tushar Tyagi 32, Suryakant 3/47).

### Rudraksh and Meenakshi scalp three

Three wickets each by Rudraksh Bhandari and Meenakshi Vashishet set the stage for Telefunken Club's nine-wicket win over West Delhi Academy in the Airliner Winter Cup cricket tournament at the Rohini ground.

**The scores:** West Delhi Academy 82 in 23 overs (Aditya Jaiswal 31, Rudraksh 3/2, Meenakshi Vashishet 3/25) lost to Telefunken Club 86/1 in 21 overs (Parikshit Sehrawat 36).

**NEXA ROUND-UP**



Tennis Hall-of-Famer Olmedo passes away

SANTA MONICA (USA)  
Alejandro Alex Olmedo, who won the Wimbledon and Australian Championships singles titles in 1959 and was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1987, has died. He was 84 and succumbed to brain cancer on Wednesday. He also led USA to Davis Cup triumph in 1958. Olmedo turned pro in 1960. AP

**MARUTI SUZUKI**

**NEXA**

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