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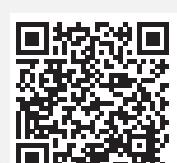
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Pick Gill as opener for
Tests, say Border
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NEARBY



Cases of COVID-triggered fungal infection surface

NEW DELHI
Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi on Monday said that at least 10 patients have come to the hospital in the last 15 days with COVID-triggered Mucormycosis, a "lethal" invasive fungal infection. The hospital said four of the 10 patients have died while five lost their eyesight. Jaws and cheeks of the patients were also affected.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Moradabad woman to undergo further tests

LUCKNOW
The 22-year-old pregnant Hindu woman from Moradabad, whose Muslim husband was arrested under the new ordinance against unlawful conversions, is undergoing 'microscopic examination' after she was admitted to a hospital for the second time in three days with complaints of abdominal pain. U.P.'s child rights panel chief said on Monday that her foetus was secure.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10



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Govt. talks to breakaway leaders as farmers hold hunger strikes

AIKSCC convener evicted after expressing readiness to hold dialogue with Centre

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

As several thousand farmers held hunger strikes and dharnas at Delhi's border and across the country on Monday, demanding a repeal of the three recent agricultural marketing laws, the Centre continued to engage with individual elements in the farmers' movement, in an effort to restart negotiations and broker a settlement.

The national convener of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), one of the farmer groups leading the protest, was removed from his position after he expressed willingness to engage in separate talks with the government, focussing on demands for a minimum support price (MSP) law, rather than the repeal of all the three contentious laws.

Kejriwal joins fast
As the protest reached its 19th day, leaders of the movement held a day-long hunger strike from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal joined the fast in solidarity. Dharnas, or sit-ins, were held across the country, with people coming out in 60% of districts, according to estimates from the AIKSCC.

About hundred farmers



Strong future: A child performing Gatka, a Punjabi martial art, at a farmers' protest site on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border at Ghazipur on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

continued to hold a sit-in on the Haryana-Rajasthan border near Rewari, blocking traffic towards the capital on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway.

The farmers, from Rajasthan and southern Haryana, heading to Delhi to join the protests, were stopped at the border by Haryana Police.

On the Uttar Pradesh border, protesters aligned with the Bharatiya Kisan Union-Tikait temporarily blocked the highway at Ghazipur.

"Farmers are being arrested, and their tractors and trolleys are being stopped.

Farmers from Uttarakhand are also being held back in U.P. We will not tolerate this harassment," BKU leader Rakesh Tikait told presspersons, threatening to completely seal the Ghazipur border. "State government should not interfere. Our fight is long, and our demands are with the Centre."

However, another farmer leader from U.P. and the national convener of the AIKSCC, V.M. Singh, said he was willing to drop the demand for a repeal of the laws if the Centre brought in a law

to guarantee MSP for all farm produce, from both public and private buyers.

"These three laws will automatically become infructuous if the MSP guarantee law is passed. That was always our original demand.

[Other organisations] are now changing the goalposts," he told The Hindu.

Mr. Singh was evicted from his position as AIKSCC national convener on Sunday night for his stand.

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MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 2, 4 & 9

Govt. to use poll roll data to allot COVID-19 vaccine

Those above 50 to get the shots first

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

The COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN) system, a digitised platform, will be used to track the enlisted beneficiaries and the COVID-19 vaccines on a real-time basis, according to the COVID operational guidelines released by the Health Ministry recently.

The guidelines said the latest electoral roll for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections will be used to identify the priority population over the age of 50.

Pre-registration must
The guidelines added that at the vaccination site, only pre-registered beneficiaries will be vaccinated in accordance with the prioritisation, and there will be no

provision for on-the-spot registrations.

The Health Ministry has said that the COVID-19 vaccine will be offered first to healthcare workers, frontline workers and to persons above 50, followed by persons younger than 50 with associated co-morbidities based on the pandemic situation, and finally to the remaining population based on the disease epidemiology and vaccine availability.

The priority group of above 50 years may be further subdivided into those above 60 and those between 50 to 60 years for purposes of a phased rollout, based on the pandemic situation and vaccine availability.

The official said that some doctors who are part of the Delhi government administration are also being trained.

The government will in the next stage train auxiliary nurse midwives and nurses, who would be the actual vaccinators. Training will also be imparted to ASHA and

DESIGNATED DAYS ▶ PAGE 10



All set: A health worker collecting samples for COVID-19 test in Janakpuri, Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO BY SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Anganwadi workers to spread awareness about the vaccine in their areas.

FELUDA test

Also, staff of one lab each in two Delhi government hospitals are being trained to use FELUDA (FNCAS9 Edi-

tor-Limited Uniform Detection Assay) paper strip test for COVID-19 from Monday.

The FELUDA test is done in a lab using a nasopharyngeal swab, just like the RT-PCR test.

According to officials, the FELUDA paper strip test

gives results within one hour, which is much faster than the RT-PCR test.

The training in FELUDA test is being carried out using leftover samples.

On October 22, the Indian Council of Medical Research issued an advisory for the use of FELUDA paper strip tests for COVID-19 detection.

"Today there was an online training for the two labs. From tomorrow (Tuesday), there will be on-the-spot training for both the labs," the official said.

The government plans to purchase 50,000 FELUDA kits once it is available later this week on a "Government e-Market" (GEM), an online purchase platform for government agencies, the official added.

DELHI RECORDS 1,376 NEW VIRUS CASES ▶ PAGE 3

Security officer killed as militants open fire at PDP leader's house

Mehbooba alleges cut in security of party leaders

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

A policeman was killed as militants opened fire at the residence of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Haji Pervez Ahmad in Srinagar on Monday.

An official said the unidentified gunmen tried to barge into the house in the Natipora area after attacking a personal security officer (PSO) guarding the gate.

"If my second PSO had not retaliated, they would have managed to get inside," Mr. Ahmad, who contested the 2008 Assembly poll, said.

The PSO, identified as constable Manzoor Ahmad, was hit in the abdomen and later succumbed to injuries at a nearby hospital.



A search being conducted at the house of the PDP leader in Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Responding to Ms. Mufti's allegation, Director-General of Police Dilbagh Singh said Mr. Ahmad had been asked by the police "to shift because of the congested area being prone to militant attacks".

Advisory violations
Mr. Singh said, "The leader regularly violated security advisories. We reviewed his security and found there was need for PSO and provided two."

The attack was an attempt to disrupt the ongoing District Development Council polls, he said. "The police have found clues on the number of militants involved and the route used. The attackers will soon be brought to book," he added.

AIIMS Nurses Union goes on indefinite strike

They are protesting against alleged hiring of nursing officers on contractual basis

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The AIIMS Nurses Union has gone on an indefinite strike from Monday afternoon after the hospital allegedly decided to hire nursing officers on contractual basis.

Last month, the union had given a notice for strike from December 16 against an "anomaly" in their pay under the Sixth Central Pay Commission, and other demands.

AIIMS director Randeep Guleria appealed to the nurses to call off their agitation and return to work. He termed it "very inappropriate" and said that many people were facing pay cuts due to the pandemic.

Health Ministry order
In the evening, the Union Healthy Ministry directed that there should be no cessation or disruption of nursing



The AIIMS director has appealed to the nurses to call off their stir. ■ FILE PHOTO

functions at AIIMS, nor such an action aided or abetted. "Non-compliance will be treated as offence under the Disaster Management Act read with the Indian Penal Code and action will be taken immediately, which is against our strike demands." The union said the decision to hire nursing officers on contract was the reason why they went on strike from Monday instead of Wednesday.

The Ministry added that while attempts were being made to dissuade the union

from resorting to strike, especially when the government is dealing with a national priority of effectively tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, the AIIMS Nurses Union vide a handwritten letter on Monday informed the hospital administration about its decision to go on strike.

In the letter to the AIIMS director, the union said, "Administration turned down our demand related to 6th CPC anomaly... Adding to this, it's shocking to know that the AIIMS administration decided to recruit nursing officers on contractual basis immediately, which is against our strike demands." The union said the decision to hire nursing officers on contract was the reason why they went on strike from Monday instead of Wednesday.

"I appeal to all the nurses, nursing officers not to go on

strike and not to make us feel embarrassed about the dignity that we have as far as the nurses are concerned... Whatever issues you have, we will try and resolve amicably," Mr. Guleria said in a statement.

The AIIMS director said multiple meetings have been held with the union not only by the AIIMS administration, but also by the economic adviser in the Ministry of Health and also the person who drafted the 6th CPC.

"He explained to them that their interpretation is not correct. And this (demand) is beyond the provisions of the gazette notification. But the union was asking for a salary hike and it was said by the government that they would sympathetically look at this as a fresh demand and asked the Department of Expenditure to consider this," the AIIMS director said.

Gujarat to get 30,000 MW renewable energy park

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday will lay the foundation stone for what is billed as the world's largest hybrid renewable energy park in Gujarat's Kutch district.

The park will generate 30,000 MW power through solar panels and windmills on 72,600 hectares along the India-Pakistan border. It is being set up by the Gujarat government with the participation of private players such as the Adani Group, which is the country's largest renewable power generator, and Suzlon, a dominant player in wind energy.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

M ND-NDE

Leaders of several groups join fast in solidarity with farmers

On Day 19, Delhi Police installs steel containers at borders for more security

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

At Singhu border on Monday, as the farmers' protest entered the 19th day, leaders of various organisations observed a day-long fast in solidarity with farmers across the country.

Avtar Singh Mehma, State Press Secretary of Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab, said 33 leaders were part of the hunger strike.

'A symbolic strike'

"This is a symbolic strike. Farmers are observing the strike at their headquarters in different States, and those who live nearby will be marching towards the Capital on Tuesday," he said, adding that two minutes of silence was observed on stage over the alleged deaths of over 20 farmers near Delhi borders in the last 18 days.

Farmers also observed the strike in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana and other States, Mr. Singh added.

He said the crowd is continuing to swell, and trackers



Farmer leaders sit on a day-long hunger strike at the Singhu border in Delhi on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

and trolleys are being managed at the tail of the protest site. "Whoever joins is being asked to park vehicles by the side and not near the stage so that people have space to move around," he said.

'Boycott Ambani, Adani' The leaders said there is a gherao planned outside houses of BJP MPs sometime this week. "A boycott of Ambani's and Adani's products has already been called," he said, adding that the protest will continue to grow.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police installed another layer of security with steel containers adjoining the cement barricades.

On Thursday, over 20 people from Odisha also joined the protest in solidarity with the farmers. "We want the government to take back the anti-farmer laws. These bills will impact every State as price of wheat, rice, and vegetables will also increase. If the government believes that the protest is only restricted to Punjab and Haryana or

only north India, we're here to change that perception," said Amiya Panday, from organisation Ama Adhikar.

People from all over Sachin Mohapatra, State chief of Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Mahasang (Odisha), said more people will arrive in the coming days. "Only one train runs every week, therefore, it takes time. I am one of the 40 people who meet government officials and these people have come to support me," he said.

Over 2,000 women set to join agitation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Over 2,000 women from families of farmers protesting against the Centre's new agriculture laws at Singhu Border here will join the ongoing agitation in the coming days. The farmers are preparing to intensify their protest to press their demand for repeal of the laws.

Farmer leaders said they are making arrangements to host the women, coming from various parts of Punjab. Tents are being put up, and a separate langar is being planned. Extra temporary toilets are also being ar-

ranged. The aim is to give them a safe and comfortable environment to stay at the protest site, they said.

Farmer leader Harendir Singh Lakhawal said a Delhi-based outfit donated around 200 tents on Sunday that are now being put up at Singhu as well as Tikri borders. Some people have also offered their flats for temporary accommodation.

Shiv Kumar Kakka, one of the 33 farmers who observed a hunger strike at Singhu border on Monday, said it is not an agitation of Punjab farmers alone, but of farmers from across India.

IN BRIEF

Plea in HC for mental health establishments

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre to respond to a plea to issue minimum standards for different categories of mental health establishments under the Mental Healthcare Act.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Preetek Jalan asked the government to give status with regard to publication of the regulations for such mental health establishments by February 5, the next date of hearing.

Farm laws are anti-people and will cause massive price hike: CM



From left: AAP senior leaders Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Arvind Kejriwal fasting on Monday. ■ R_V_MOORTHY

AAP leaders observe 'mass fasting' at party HQ

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who observed a day-long fast on Monday in solidarity with protesting farmers, said the three farm laws were not just "anti-farmer" but also "anti-people".

The Aam Aadmi Party

leaders, including Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, held a "mass fasting" at the party headquarters.

Mr. Kejriwal said: "These laws will cause a massive price hike. These laws are here just to favour some capitalists. So do not think that you are doing any favour to the farmers by supporting them. These laws are already passed so now if these laws are not rolled back then we

all will be in trouble."

He said the farmers were protesting against the laws and doing a favour for all the citizens. "We all need to protest against these laws. Our party is standing besides the farmers. MSP should be legalised," he said.

He also urged politicians to not defame the farmers.

"The farmers are protesting following the method of non-violence. But the BJP leaders are saying they are agents of China and Pakis-

tan. They are calling them anti-nationals and terrorists. The politicians who are saying such things should be ashamed. Imagine what the farmer's son, who is fighting at the border to protect our country, feels when he gets to know that his family members are being called terrorists. This is unacceptable. I request all these politicians who are trying to defame these farmers to immediately stop these dirty politics."

THE SIT-IN THAT SHOOK THE NATION

On December 15, 2019, a group of women launched a months-long protest in Shaheen Bagh against what they perceived as discriminatory laws. The ongoing farmers' agitation at Delhi's borders harks back to the long siege that grabbed headlines around the world



2019
Dec 15 Following protests and violence outside Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) on December 13, a group of women and others gather at Shaheen Bagh to protest the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizen, and the National Population Register. The crowd swells in no time and becomes a hub for protest art



Dec 31 Protesters ring in the New year singing the National Anthem

2020
Jan 20 An advocate files a petition in the Delhi High Court seeking directions to Delhi Police to withdraw closure of the stretch of road where the women are staging the protest

Feb 1 A four-month-old infant whose parents are protesting at Shaheen Bagh dies allegedly due to exposure

Feb 2 A 17-year-old youth fires two rounds at a JMI student, about 50 metres from the stage at the Shaheen Bagh protest. No injuries reported



Feb 24 U.S. President Donald Trump arrives in India for a two-day trip. Interlocutors, who held three rounds of talks with the protesters, submit their report in a "sealed cover" to the Supreme Court



Mar 16 Large-scale communal violence erupts in North-East Delhi leaving 53 people dead and over 200 injured

Mar 22 Petrol bombs hurled in the direction of the protesters. No injuries reported

Office of the Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, P.W.D. Pithoragarh					
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Short term E-Tender notice					
The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites E-tender through Two Bid System on behalf of honble Governor of Uttarakhand for following work. All other information will be available from date 17-12-2020 & onward on website: http://www.uktenders.gov.in					
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion
1	Construction of EVM/VPAT ware house at Takana in Pithoragarh District	6.00	5000.00+18% GST	120 Days	12 Months
Category 'A' and above for Building works in any State Govt./Govt. of India-Govt. undertaking					

Office of the Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Vikasnagar (Dakpathar)					
Dated: 10.12.2020					
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The Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division, Vikasnagar on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand, invites the item rate bids, in two bids system through electronic tendering for following work from the eligible contractors registered in authorized/valid category for the estimated cost of tender in any department of central government/any state government/UT of India.					
Sl. No.	Name of the work	Earnest Money (in Lac Rs.)	Cost of Tender (In Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion
1	Modernization of Kotdasuntur and Musandawala canal in block Sahaspur dist. Dehradun under NABARD (C.M. Announcement No. 105/2020)	3	2500.00 + 450.00 (18% GST)	5 120 days	6 04 months
2	Renovation and Lining of Katapathar canal in block Vikasnagar dist. Dehradun under NABARD (Remaining works of the scheme) (C.M. Announcement No. 405/2018)	0.80	3000.00 + 540.00 (18% GST)	120 days	04 months
Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 18-12-2020					
Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 04-01-2021 up to 05:00PM					
For further details please log on to www.uktenders.gov.in					
(S K Basilyal) Executive Engineer					

Plea seeks ban on betting and gambling websites

HC seeks reply from Centre, AAP govt.

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought response of the Centre and the Aam Aadmi Party government on a plea to ban websites, which are involved in gambling, betting and wagering.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Praetek Jalan asked the Ministries of Finance and Electronics and Information Technology to give their stand on the plea by next date of hearing on January 29, next year.

Avinash Mehrotra, in his plea, said that despite laws enacted by various States prohibiting such activities, a large number of websites providing gambling, betting and wagering games are still accessible in India. His plea also stated that the online gambling system in India is

unregulated and is a place for carrying out hawala operations, money laundering, etc.

"In fact, it is submitted that foreign exchange laws, as well as Income Tax laws, are likely being violated today by the online gambling websites," the petition has alleged.

M. Mehrotra said last year he moved a similar petition, which was disposed of with a direction to the Centre to treat it as a representation. Subsequently, he was informed by the Central government that it did not have the legislative competence to deal with his representation to ban or block websites, his plea said.

He contended that all these activities, though expressly prohibited by law, are being carried out because of lack of enforcement of the laws in question.

BJP is doing drama outside Kejriwal house, alleges AAP

Police harassing our MLAs: Bharadwaj

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday alleged that the BJP is doing "drama" by protesting outside the Chief Minister's residence and the police is harassing its leaders.

"BJP is just doing drama and dirty politics all day. After closing down the civic bodies, the Mayors are sitting at dharna. The people of Delhi want cleanliness and governance and now, they regret electing the BJP. Yesterday, the Delhi Police, which is under the Centre, detained many of our MLAs," said AAP chief spokesperson Saubhab Bharadwaj at a press meet.

"Biggest scam exposed" He alleged that AAP has exposed a "scam" of ₹2,500

BJP to clear up 'confusion' about new farm laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Monday announced it will start a four-day campaign from Tuesday to spread awareness among farmers about the agricultural reforms passed by the Central government and clear any doubts they may have about the new laws.

The party said the Opposition is spreading misconceptions and that the campaign would show farmers how they will benefit from the new rules.

LoP in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said has been made head of the campaign in Delhi along with Delhi BJP Kisan Morcha chief Vinod Sehrawat. Mr. Bidhuri said 16 conferences will be organised in Delhi over the next four days and smaller meetings will also be carried out that will be attended by senior party leaders.

Mr. Bidhuri said the new agriculture laws will bring prosperity to farmers and that Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar have resolved all doubts of farmers regarding these Acts.

Villagers donate firewood to farmers for cooking, bonfires



Logs stacked at the Singhu border protest site in Delhi on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the streets of the village and knocked on each and every door, requesting them to donate wood.

"We told them that our brothers here in Delhi are protesting against the government for rights and they need the wood for food. People gave us as much they could – 5kg or 50kg, depending on their means," he said. The villagers use wood from old trees in farm fields for their chulha (stove).

Recalling an incident with a 95-year-old woman in the village, Mr. Balwinder said when she found out the reason behind the requirement

of wood, her eyes welled up and she requested to be taken along. "She could not come because of her age," he added.

After collecting wood in three trolleys from each household in the village of about 7,000 people, Mr. Balwinder and his two friends went to get it chopped in a town – Nihal Singh Wala – which is 15kms from the village. The wood was then shifted to a truck.

"We left the village at 3 p.m. on Wednesday and reached here about 3 a.m. on Thursday," Mr. Balwinder said.

cores, which is "bigger" than the Commonwealth Games scam that happened under the then Chief Minister Sheila Dixit.

"Today is the 8th press conference on the corruption of the BJP ruled civic bodies. Till today, the BJP has not given a single answer to allegations of corruption made AAP. This ₹2,500 crore scam is the biggest scam in the history of Delhi but the BJP has not responded to this as well," he said.

"The citizens of Delhi are now confident that the civic bodies will not do any work for them; be it sanitation or cleaning the roads or maintaining the park or handling monkey menace. The desperate BJP has attacked the house of Deputy Chief Minister," Mr. Bharadwaj added.

HC criticises CBSE for 'anti-student attitude'

'Board treating students as enemies'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday rapped the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for its "anti-student attitude", saying it was "treating students as enemies" by dragging them all the way to the Supreme Court in certain matters.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan made the observation while hearing a plea moved by the Board challenging a single judge order, which said the CBSE's reassessment scheme for students whose board exams got cancelled due to COVID-19 would apply to improvement candidates also.

"We don't like this anti-student attitude of the CBSE. You are dragging students all the way to the Supreme Court. Should they be studying or going to court? We should start imposing costs on the CBSE. They are treating students as enemies," the Bench added.



The Bench further said that if the scheme applies to all improvement students, "what is the harm in it?"

The single-judge Bench had held on August 14 that the scheme approved by the Supreme Court for assessing students due to cancellation of the CBSE exams in light of COVID-19 will also apply to students, who appeared for improvement examinations as they are equal victims of the pandemic.

"There is no earthshaking emergency for you to come to court now all guns blazing," the Bench said, adding that the CBSE should have gone to the apex court for a clarification, instead of dragging students to court.

Cases of COVID-triggered fungal infection surface

4 out of 10 people with the disease have died: city hospital

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi on Monday said that at least 10 patients have come to the hospital in the last 15 days with COVID-triggered Mucormycosis, a "lethal" invasive fungal infection.

The hospital said four of the 10 patients have died while five patients lost their eyesight. Jaws and cheeks of the patients were affected.

"Mucormycosis or Black Fungus can be a cause of disease and death in transplant patients, and immunodeficient individuals. However, rapid increase in cases seen in recovering COVID patients is causing grave concern," the hospital said in a statement.

Manish Munjal, senior ENT surgeon of the hospital, said: "The frequency with which we are witnessing occurrence of COVID-triggered Mucormycosis with high morbidity and mortality has



Doctors say the rapid rise in cases is 'alarming'. ■ FILE PHOTO

pressed. Eat immunity-boosting food. Also, do not get exposed to polluted air and stay away from contaminated and damp surfaces. The fungus grows in such damp surfaces with black moulds," Dr. Munjal said.

The hospital said that a 32-year-old man, after recovering from COVID-19, developed an obstruction in his left nostril. Over the next two days, his eye swelled up.

"He did not respond to antibiotics or painkillers and started rapidly losing vision on the affected side. The left side of his face became numb and he was brought to the emergency ward in a partially disoriented state," read the statement.

Tests revealed the presence of Mucormycosis.

He was operated upon and then put on critical support for over two weeks. He will be discharged soon but in a "disfigured state", the hospital said.

never been seen before and is shocking and alarming."

"Symptoms of the disease include dry nose obstruction, swelling in the eye or cheeks, black dry crust in nose. Also, you cannot feel your nose and your cheeks are numb," said Dr. Munjal.

He added there is no need to panic as Mucormycosis is not contagious and the fungus targets immuno-compromised people.

"Once you get treated for COVID, you are immunosup-

Delhi riots: police say Devangana creating false narrative in media

'Accused is also trying to show the prosecution in bad light'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday submitted before a local court here that Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Devangana Kalita, accused in a Delhi riots case, was creating a narrative in the media to show BJP leader Kapil Mishra was behind the communal violence.

It added that if the investigation, the prosecution and the country was to continue on the foundation of what is

being reported in the media, then that would be the "end of rule of law".

The police also argued that there was allegedly another narrative of "inscrutable indolence" created by the accused to show the prosecution in bad light. The submissions were made before Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat during the hearing of Ms. Kalita's bail application in the case of larger conspiracy to the riots.

Ms. Kalita's counsel advo-

cate Adit Pujari had earlier referred to a media report which stated that as per an alleged internal report of the police, it was pro-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protesters who carried out an attack on a Bihari Army vehicle.

Mr. Pujari had argued that the riots were not started by anti-CAA protesters but those who supported it, led by Mr. Mishra.

The court has put up the matter for further hearing on December 16.

Court grants bail to school owner in Delhi riots case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday granted bail to a private school owner in a Delhi riots case, saying it was evident that the probe was started late and only began after he was granted bail in another case.

Statements of witnesses were hurriedly recorded whose veracity will be tested at the time of the trial, the court further noted.

While granting bail to Faisal Farooq, owner of Rajdhani School in Shiv Vihar, Additional Sessions Judge

Vinod Yadav said though the accused was in jail for a considerable period of time, the police has hardly been able to bring to record any evidence against him for criminal conspiracy.

The court noted that until June, virtually no investigation was done in the matter.

Mr. Farooq was arrested for his alleged involvement in damaging the property of adjacent DRP Convent School during the riots. He was granted bail in the case in June, after which he was arrested in a second case.

Cold wave likely to grip Delhi by end of the week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The mercury took a dive on Monday with clear skies and cold winds blowing across the Capital.

The maximum temperature fell to 19.4 degrees Celsius, four degrees colder than normal. The minimum fell to 8.4 degrees, which is normal for the season. This comes after a warmer than usual first two weeks of December.

The Meteorological Department said temperatures are set to drop further as cold winds are likely to continue to blow to-

wards the Capital from the Himalayas, which received fresh snowfall over the weekend under the influence of a Western Disturbance.

The weather system also brought light rain to the city, kicking off a dip in temperatures.

Mainly clear sky with moderate fog in the morning is forecast for Tuesday. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to settle between 21 and 8 degrees Celsius, respectively. Cold wave-like conditions are forecast on December 17 and 18.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi 160 Gurugram 101

Ghaziabad 243 Faridabad 120

Noida 176 Greater Noida 256

■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Moderate

0-50 51-100 101-200

■ Poor ■ Very Poor ■ Severe

201-300 301-400 >400

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m., yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

City breathes easier as AQI improves

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

After days of "severe" and "very poor" air pollution, the air quality of Delhi, Gurugram and Noida was in the "moderate" category on Monday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

The air quality of the Capital was in the moderate category after 15 days and is expected to deteriorate to the "moderate to poor" category on Tuesday.

The AQI of Delhi was 160 on Monday as per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin, which is an average of the past 24 hours. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 101 and 176 respectively.

The last time Delhi's air quality was in the moderate category was on November 27 and the AQI was 137.

The effect of stubble burning on the city's air quality was low on Monday. Also, the mixing height will be low at night. This prevents pollutants from getting dispersed easily.

College funds: DUTA seeks meeting with CM

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) on Monday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal demanding the release of grants to the 12 Delhi University colleges that are fully funded by the AAP government.

Stating that funds released by the government to six colleges in September and other colleges later were not enough to pay pending salaries to employees and students, the DUTA said that

close to 2,000 teachers and non-teaching staff have been affected.

The DUTA has requested a meeting with the CM to discuss the matter.

"Withholding grants citing excuses such as non-formation of governing bodies, paucity of funds, audits and corruption charges on these colleges is unwarranted and will cause irreparable damage to the reputation of these institutions and demoralise the employees and students," the letter read.

Stating that funds released by the government to six colleges in September and other colleges later were not enough to pay pending salaries to employees and students, the DUTA said that

Gold robbery solved with arrest of four

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Monday solved a robbery of 4 kg gold worth of ₹2 crore in east Delhi's Shakarpur with the arrest of four.

The accused were identified as Mukesh Sharma, Pardeep Bajaj, Prashant Santra and Uttam Dagur. Two other accused are absconding.

According to the police, a gang of four bike-borne

armed men robbed 4 kg gold from Champak Gayan, a jeweller, maker, on December 9. Mr. Gayan, along with his employee Saurabh, was going to Anand Vihar ISBT in an auto. When they reached Vikas Marg near Mangal Bazar Chowk, robbers obstructed their way and tried to snatch the jewellery bag from Mr. Gayan. When he resisted, they attacked him with a knife and stabbed him several

times. Based on a complaint, an FIR was registered at Shaktarpur Police station.

Clues from CCTV footage were developed. A tip-off was received that Golu gang was involved in the incident and gang leader Mukesh alias Golu and Toni would come to Karol Bagh to meet someone. A trap was laid and they were arrested. Based on information provided by the accused, others were also nabbed.

Delhi records 1,376 new virus cases, 60 deaths

There are 15,247 active cases in the city

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

With lesser number of tests being done, the city witnessed 1,376 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,08,830, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

A total of 36,176 tests were done in the past 24 hours. A drop in the number of tests is observed on bulletins on Mondays, as it reflects tests done on Sunday. Also, 60 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,074. Of the total cases, 5,83,509 people have recovered and there are 15,247 active cases.



A health worker collecting a swab sample in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTO

The overall positivity till now was 8.36%, as per the bulletin.

Vacant beds

Out of the total 18,807 beds available for COVID-19 treatment, 14,561 were vacant, as per the bulletin. About 4,246 people were admitted in hospitals and 9,274 patients were under home isolation.

As per the bulletin, the death rate in the past 10 days was 2.54%.

HC asks Delhi govt. to ramp up testing in affected areas

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday said it expects the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government to increase the number of COVID-19 tests in districts where the infection numbers are high.

The court orally suggested to the government to find out which districts had a high number of infections and increase tests in those areas. The suggestion came during the hearing of a plea by advocate Rakesh Malhotra seeking to ramp up COVID-19 testing in Delhi.

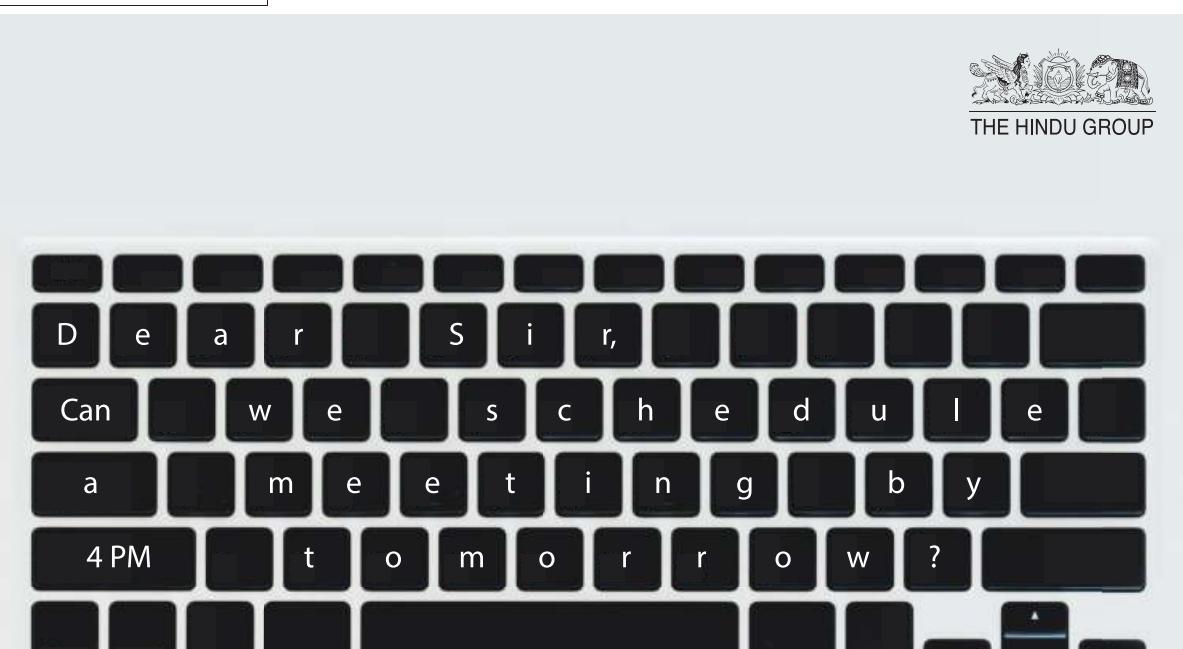
The HC has asked the Delhi government to file a fresh status report within a week indicating updated figures of tests carried out, district-wise infection numbers, and number of containment zones.

The court also asked the Delhi government whether it was planning a fifth serological survey now that the number of infections was coming down in the city.

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Timings**DELHI**

TUESDAY, DEC. 15
RISE 07:07 SET 17:27
RISE 07:39 SET 18:08
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16
RISE 07:07 SET 17:28
RISE 08:42 SET 19:10

THURSDAY, DEC. 17
RISE 07:08 SET 17:28

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	18	08
Safdarjung	18	08
Palam	17	09

Delhi Palam Today
21°C Mist and shallow fog during morning and cool day. Cool winds likely during day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
21°C A cold morning with mist/haze. Dry winds would continue. Pollution level would be slight unhealthy.

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Five killed in U.P. accident**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA****PRATAPGARH**

Five persons, including an police constable, were killed on the spot when the vehicle in which they were travelling dashed against a tree near here, police said on Monday.

Additional SP (East) Surendra Dwivedi said the driver lost control over the vehicle leading to the accident on Pratapgarh Patti road under the Kandhari Police Station, 12 km from the district headquarters on Sunday night.

Impressive victory for Congress in Rajasthan

It wins majority of seats in urban polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**JAIPUR**

After a setback in the recent zila parishad and panchayat samiti elections, the ruling Congress has registered an impressive victory in the urban local body polls held in 12 districts of Rajasthan. The Congress won 620 of the 1,775 posts of ward councillors in 50 local bodies for which the results were announced on Sunday.

With its tally of 548 seats, the Opposition BJP fell behind independent candidates who bagged 595 seats. Seven candidates of the Bahujan Samaj Party, two each of the CPI and the CPI(M), and one of the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party also won.

Having won a significant number of seats, the Independents were likely to play an important role in the formation of boards in several municipal bodies. Of the total urban local bodies which went to polls, 43 were municipalities and seven were municipal councils.

Poor show in rural polls
In the panchayati raj polls, the BJP's zila pramukhs were elected in 12 zila parishads, while the Congress could manage only five zila pramukhs. The Congress and the BJP joined hands to defeat the zila pramukh candidate of the Bharatiya Tribal Party in Dungarpur, follow-

ing which the BTP threatened to sever its alliance with the ruling party.

Pradesh Congress Committee president Govind Singh Dotasra said his party was set to form the boards in 41 municipal bodies, while the BJP was expected to do so only in nine. "The results clearly indicate that the urban voters are drifting away from the BJP. Its claim of sweeping the local body polls has been exposed. Independents fielded strategically by the Congress are going to support us," he said.

'Hard work'

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the people had reposed faith in the Congress. Congratulating the victorious candidates, Mr. Gehlot said the Congress workers had worked hard during the campaign.

The elections witnessed a record polling, with the average voting reported at 79.9%. The highest turnout at 90.32% was recorded at Nagar in Bharatpur district in the polls for the town's municipality.

The voting for chairpersons of urban bodies will be held on December 20. The districts which went to polls were Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Bharatpur, Dholpur, Baran, Sriganganagar, Kota, Sawai Madhopur, Sirohi, Karauli and Dausa.

Rajasthan CM condemns BJP leaders' remarks against farmers

"Centre should find an amicable solution, address their grievances sympathetically"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**JAIPUR**

As the agitating farmers continued their sit-in on the Delhi-Jaipur highway, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday condemned the statements of the BJP leaders decrying their protest. Mr. Gehlot said the farmers' protest was for their genuine concerns, which the NDA government at the Centre was ignoring.

Mr. Gehlot demanded that the Centre find an amicable solution and address the grievances sympathetically, "instead of blaming gangs and anti-national elements for these protests". He pointed out that the farmers had been protesting in a peaceful manner.

"The farm laws that are not in the interest of the farming



Activists and farmers staging a protest against farm laws in Jaipur on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

community must be taken back," Mr. Gehlot tweeted.

In another tweet, Mr. Gehlot said it was most ironic that the farmers who fed the nation were compelled to sit on a hunger strike, because the government was not listening to their woes. "Our farmers have presented an example of peaceful agitation in front of

the nation. The government must shun arrogance," he said.

A large number of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSS) members, accompanied by civil rights activists, staged a demonstration outside the district collectorate here demanding an immediate re-

peal of the agriculture sector laws. The protesters also raised slogans against the BJP's attempts to defame the farmers.

Posters of Sharjeel

BJP national general secretary Arun Singh said in Jaipur earlier on Monday though the farmers were innocent, some elements among them "needed to be exposed". He said the protesters were putting up the posters of individuals like Sharjeel Imam, arrested on charges of sedition during the anti-CAA protests.

Mr. Singh, who is in-charge of party affairs in Rajasthan, said the farm laws had been enacted in the interest of the farmers, but the Congress was opposing the reforms because of "political considerations".

INLD not to take part in civic polls**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****GURUGRAM**

Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) general-secretary Abhay Singh Chautala on Monday announced to boycott the election to various municipal bodies in Haryana slated later this month in protest against the "atrocities" being committed by the Union and State governments on the farmers.

Govt. criticised

Issuing a press statement at Chandigarh to this effect, Mr. Chautala said that it was "painful" and "condemnable" the way the farmers were being snubbed by the Bharatiya Janata Party government. He alleged that the Manohar Lal government robbed the farmers on the pretext of high moisture levels in crops and the Minimum Support Price.

Six injured in stone pelting**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA****MUZAFFARNAGAR**

At least six people were injured in stone pelting during a clash between two groups over sexual harassment of a woman at Chalsina village in the district, police said on Monday.

The incident took place on Sunday when a man entered the woman's house while she was sleeping. He allegedly sexually harassed her when her parents were in the other room.

The victim's family opposed it, which turned into a violent clash after others joined the melee, the police said.

tions in the sessions court. The court was informed that Meena had pointed a revolver at the head of SDM Ram Niwas Mehta and threatened him with the demand that the repelling be ordered "within two minutes".

Camera snatched

Meena also snatched a digital camera of an IAS probationary officer accompanying Mr. Mehta and broke the video cassettes of the videographer who was shooting footage of the demonstration during the polls. He left in a rage after the local villagers brought him under control and per-

suaded him to put the revolver back in his pocket.

Aklera Additional District & Sessions Judge Aseem Kulshreshtha convicted Meena under Sections 506 (criminal intimidation) and 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) of Indian Penal Code and Section 3 (mischief causing damage to public property) of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. After the court handed down the punishment, Meena was taken into custody and shifted to jail.

Meena served as a BJP MLA from 2013 to 2018 dur-

ing the Vasundhara Raje regime. Mr. Mehta, a Rajasthan Adminstrative Service officer, is at present the Joint Secretary in the State government's Home Department.

An alleged attack by a mob led by Meena, when he was an MLA of the then ruling party, on the activists taking part in a 'Jawabdehi Yatra' (march for accountability) in Jhalawar district's Aklera region on January 16, 2016, had made headlines.

Videos had emerged showing the MLA with a lathi charging towards the activists and beating and chasing them away.

Former BJP MLA convicted in criminal case

He had pointed a revolver at an official and sought repelling 'within two minutes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**JAIPUR**

A sessions court in Rajasthan's Aklera town on Monday sentenced former Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Manohar Thana, Kanwar Lal Meena, to three years' imprisonment in a 15-year-old case of criminal intimidation and assault of public servant.

After a Magistrate's court acquitted Meena in 2018 following a protracted trial, the prosecution and the public servant filed revision peti-

tions in the sessions court. The court was informed that Meena had pointed a revolver at the head of SDM Ram Niwas Mehta and threatened him with the demand that the repelling be ordered "within two minutes".

Camera snatched

Meena also snatched a digital camera of an IAS probationary officer accompanying Mr. Mehta and broke the video cassettes of the videographer who was shooting footage of the demonstration during the polls. He left in a rage after the local villagers brought him under control and per-

Bodoland People's Front stakes claim to form Council

Governor has invited BJP-UPPL-GSP coalition to be sworn in on December 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**GUWAHATI**

The Bodoland People's Front, which emerged as the single largest party with 17 seats in the just concluded Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls, on Monday staked claim to form the new Council even as the stage is set for swearing-in of five members of the BJP-UPPL-GSP coalition on December 15.

BPF president Hagrama Mohilary in a letter to Assam Governor Jagadish Mukhi requested that his party has emerged as the single largest party in the

under the Bodoland Territorial Region. BPF is an alliance partner of BJP in the State government, but has been dumped and BJP has joined hands with the United Peoples' Party Liberal and the Gana Suraksha Party to constitute the council as a coalition.

The BPF-UPPL-GSP combine had staked its claim on Sunday with the Governor accepting their claim and directed that they be sworn in on December 15. A five member team, led by UPPL's Promode Bodo, comprising two each from BJP and UPPL and one from GSP, is scheduled to be sworn in at Kokrajhar on Tuesday.

Mr. Mohilary had appealed to BJP to extend its support in forming the council as the results had led to a hung House.

High Court exonerates man of rape charge after 30 years

'Circumstances indicated the girl was a consenting party'

STAFF REPORTER**BHUBANESWAR**

The Odisha High Court has exonerated a man who was convicted of rape and sexual assault charges more than 30 years ago.

The incident had taken place in Odisha's Balangir district on the night of October 3, 1989, when one Shatrughna Nag was found in a compromising position with a girl at the latter's house. The girl's family members thrashed Nag and filed a complaint at the Titlagarh police station.

The man faced trial for offences punishable under Sections 376/511, 354 and 457 of the IPC. In March 1990, the trial court found him guilty and sentenced him to undergo rigorous

imprisonment for three years and to pay a fine of ₹100 under Section 376/511 of the IPC. He was also convicted under other charges. The man, however, secured bail and was released from jail two months later.

The rape convict appealed against the judgment in the Odisha High Court in 1990. As per the judgment delivered on Friday by Justice S. K. Sahoo, circumstances indicated that the girl was a consenting party.

After having been caught red-handed with the convict in a compromising position inside her bed room in the night, the victim tried to put the entire blame upon the convict as the High Court did not award further imprisonment.

Since he had already served seven months of imprisonment during trial and had to go through mental trauma for facing the case over three decades, the High Court did not award further imprisonment.

crime to save her own skin before her family members as well as in her society," says the judgment.

Justice Sahoo set aside the conviction of the appellant under Sections 376/511, 354 and 457 of the IPC.

The High Court, however, found Nag guilty on charges of trespassing (Section 448 of the IPC) to the girl's house. The maximum substantive sentence provided for offence under Section 448 is one year.

Since he had already served seven months of imprisonment during trial and had to go through mental trauma for facing the case over three decades, the High Court did not award further imprisonment.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person, Namely : Betal Nath S/o: Randhir Nath, R/o: Unknwon, Age: about 51 years, Height : 5'8", Complexion : Shallow, Face : Long, Built : Thin, Wearing : Black colour pant, shirt and bare footed has been found in sick condition at JLN Marg, near LNJP Hospital Gate No. 7, Darya Ganj, Delhi where during treatment doctors declared him dead on 10.12.2020. In this regard a case vide GD No. 58A Dated 10.12.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for 72 hours in LHMC Mortuary, Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about this dead person may kindly inform to the following:- SHO : P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi Central Distt., Delhi Tel. No. 011-23274683, 23279311 DP/548/CD/2020

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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over central Maharashtra, Konkan & Goa, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal

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

Agartala 26.0 14.6 Agartala 33.4 24.0

Ahmedabad 27.2 17.1 Aizawl 22.4 9.6

Allahabad 23.6 15.0 Bengaluru 27.8 17.2

Bhopal 0.8 19.1 17.4

Bhubaneswar 30.4 19.4

Chandigarh 16.1 14.1

Chennai 30.3 21.7

Coimbatore 30.0 20.7

Dehradun 21.2 9.4

Gangtok 14.3 8.6

Goa 32.3 23.0

Guwahati 25.8 15.1

Hubballi 29.0 17.0

Hyderabad 30.2 17.6

Imphal 23.7 5.9

Jaipur 23.5 10.0

Kochi 31.6 23.8

Kohima 18.0 6.0

Kolkata 27.4 16.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES **SO₂** **NO_x** **CO** **PM_{2.5}** **PM₁₀** **CODE**

Ahmedabad 20 56 52 116 118 100

Bengaluru 10 61 50 100 104 100

Chennai 17 16 25 68 68 100

Delhi 10 57 54 276 171 100

Hyderabad 5 104 14 104 124 100

Kolkata 14 28 50 363 272 100

Lucknow 9 55 74 248 147 100

Mumbai 22 39 55 258 140 100

Pune 85 74 164 120 100

Visakhapatnam 18 39 51 248 214 100

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

SO₂: 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_x: 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_{2.5} & PM₁₀: 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

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Siliguri, West Bengal recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 328 indicating unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 29

Winter session: Maharashtra allots ₹2,211 cr. for farmers

Supplementary demands of over ₹20,000 cr. tabled for third consecutive session

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

On the first day of Maharashtra Assembly's two-day winter session on Monday, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government presented supplementary demands worth ₹2,199.52 crore with a focus on providing relief to farmers in the State.

Allotments such as ₹2,211.77 crore for farms affected by natural calamities and ₹2,850 crore as bonus for paddy growers made this the third consecutive session of the MVA government with supplementary demands of over ₹20,000 crore.

During the budget session in February and the monsoon session in July, demands worth ₹24,723 crore and ₹29,084 crore were presented. Supplementary demands are additional grants sought out of budgetary provisions to meet the government's expenditure.

The Public Works Department has been allotted ₹3,824.34 crore, the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department ₹3,201.30 crore, the Social Justice Department ₹2,449.16 crore, and the Relief and Rehabilitation Department ₹2,224.34 crore.

In addition, ₹22 crore has been allotted for air conditioning facilities with negative pressure for the storage of COVID-19 vaccine, and ₹1,000 crore to the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation, which is facing losses amid the pandemic.

The other highlights include ₹3 crore towards payment of fees of the legal team representing the State government in the Maratha



Fair warning: Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis (centre) interacts with the media before the start of the two-day winter session in Mumbai on Monday. ■TWITTER

quota case in the Supreme Court. A sum of ₹100 crore has been set aside for the construction of the memorial to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar at Indu Mills, ₹475 crore has been reserved for the MLA development fund and ₹8 crore for the new MLA hostel under construction in Mumbai.

A sum of ₹80 crore was allotted to the Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj Research, Training and Human Development Institute as demanded by Maratha organisations, while ₹81 crore was earmarked for Mahajyoti, which is engaged in implementing developmental schemes for OBCs. A total of ₹11 crore was allocated towards scholarships for OBC students, and ₹216 crore for VJNT students.

Modelled on the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the Bill provides for completion of investigation and filing of charge sheet within 15 days, and completion of trial in 30 days. It is expected to be cleared on Tuesday.

Shakti Bill tabled

Expected to be cleared today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

the Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Act, 2020, as well as the Maharashtra Exclusive Special Court (for certain offences against Women and Children under Shakti Law). The first Bill has the provision for amendment in the existing sections of the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act for the stricter punishment, while the second one is for establishing special courts, at least one in each district in the State, for trial under the Act. It took 10 months of ground work to prepare the Bill.

Pratap Sarnaik submits breach of privilege notice against media outlets

Sena MLA says fake story published based on actor Kangana Ranaut's tweets

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik on Monday submitted a breach of privilege motion against media outlets for carrying a fake story based on actor Kangana Ranaut's tweets that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) found a Pakistan credit card at his house during a raid.

He added, "This is absolutely baseless and incorrect. It is defamatory and therefore request you to forward the notice to the privilege committee of the Assembly for further action." Mr. Sarnaik, however, did not name any news outlets.

Mr. Sarnaik was in the news for moving a breach of privilege motion against Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami for using 'derogatory' language against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Last week, he appeared before the ED for questioning in a matter involving money laundering related to a private firm. The ED has claimed suspicious transactions between a private firm, Tops Securities Group, and Mr. Sarnaik.

BJP MLAs protest over Maratha quota issue

Stage sit-in on stairs of Vidhan Bhavan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Supreme Court on the Maratha quota case, the government's lawyer was not present. "Why did the government fall short of convincing the court [about vacating stay on the quota]?" Mr. Shelar asked.

However, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar hit out at the BJP for taking up these issues "in desperation". "The government is doing its best to get the Supreme Court's stay on the Maratha quota vacated," he said.

Hundreds gather at plot after rumours of 'free' land

People from Mumbai, Thane and Navi Mumbai camp near govt. land in Vikhroli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Over 500 people, including women, from the city and neighbouring Thane and Navi Mumbai, have gathered over the last 20 days at a government plot on JVLR Link Road in Tagore Nagar of Vikhroli following rumours of land being provided for free, officials said on Monday.

Civic authorities and police removed them from the

spot, but they are still staying put in the vicinity in the hope of getting free land. "These people started earmarking 300 to 400 square feet areas for themselves with bamboo sticks, cloth pieces and other material," an official from Vikhroli police station said.

There were rumours that a woman was giving away land to poor people in the memory of her wealthy fath-

er, who died recently, another official said. However, when authorities of the Brihamumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), police and local administration came to know about it, they went to the spot and removed these people and their material on Saturday and Sunday.

In the last 20 days, the BMC has removed people from the spot three times, but they are still not ready to leave and have gathered on a road next to the land.

"The police also brought a few people to the local police station and warned them, but they are still not listening," the official said.

The Vikhroli police have not yet received complaints from the BMC, the collector or Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority. Hence, no case has been registered against anyone.

Married man arrested for murdering lover

Accused killed woman when she threatened to tell his wife about their child

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Kharghar police have arrested a 32-year-old married man for allegedly killing his 30-year-old lover.

The police said the accused, Pranit Tarpe, married four years ago and lived with his wife and three-year-old daughter at Nere village in Panvel. Two years ago, he met Razia alias Priya Shaikh,

a resident of Kopra village, who worked in a bar. He started visiting her often and now they have a two-month-old daughter, the police said.

On Saturday, Shaikh was admitted to MGM Hospital in Kamothe by her sister Rukhsana Shaikh, brother Javed Shaikh and Mr. Tarpe. She was declared dead and the body was sent for post-mortem to Panvel rural hospital.

Head injury was found to be the cause of death.

Senior police inspector Shatrughn Mali said, "We suspected murder as during admission, we were told that the woman had consumed poison. However, there were no traces of poison." Mr. Mali said the accused fled on seeing the police and was caught at the hospital's gate. Mr. Mali said, "Shaikh of-

ten threatened Mr. Tarpe that she would tell his wife about their relationship and their child. On Saturday evening, they had a fight and in a fit of rage, Mr. Tarpe hit her head with a cooker's lid, and she collapsed. Since there was no external bleeding, he informed her sister and brother, who stayed in a flat above them, that she had consumed poison."

Vintage photos of golden age artiste now in NFAI's vaults

Collection includes original sketch of Gajanan Jagirdar in and as Mahatma drawn by Bal Thackeray

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

In yet another priceless acquisition of vintage Indian cinema memorabilia, the personal collection of renowned yesteryear actor-director Gajanan Jagirdar is now part of the vaults of the city-based National Film Archive of India (NFAI).

Jagirdar, who aligned his talents closely with the theories laid down by legendary Russian theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski, did some of his most memorable work during the golden age of Marathi and Hindi cinema in the 1940s. He was associated with the iconic Prabhat Studios during its heyday.

The film was notable for having been written by famed litterateur P. L. Deshpande, known affectionately as 'Pu La', and directed by Datta Dharmadhikari.

The film was notable for having been written by famed litterateur P. L. Deshpande, known affectionately as 'Pu La', and directed by Datta Dharmadhikari.

While he made an indelible impression as the 18th century Maratha judge Ramshastri Prabhune in the 1944 Prabhat Studio classic *Ramshastri*, Jagirdar branched out to play supporting roles in several noted Bollywood classics of the 1950s and 1960s.

There are several photographs of Mr. Jagirdar in his iconic role as Ramshastri, trying to



Rare memorabilia: NFAI director Prakash Magdum (left) receiving the pictures from late actor-director Gajanan Jagirdar's collection from his son Ashok. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Abraham, and actor Rekha, in the collection. We are really delighted to receive these memorabilia which will be of considerable interest to both film scholars and cineastes," said Mr. Magdum, adding that Jagirdar had also served as the first principal of the fledgling Film and Television Institute of India [then known as Film Institute of India] during 1961-62.

"So, getting his photographs for preservation seems in a way like a homecoming due to the organic connection between the NFAI and the FTII," said Mr. Magdum.

One of the oldest photographs from the collection is from a 1935 film *Asre Havis*. Another still is from a 1938 film *Meetha Jahan* in which Jagirdar appeared with actor Naseem Banu. Other notables include Jagirdar's stellar role as Mirza in V. Shantaram's classic 1941 Marathi film *Shejari*, which was filmed as *Padashah* in Hindi.

"He was one of the first artists from Mumbai to shoot in Lahore and his film *Brahm Khan* (1946) became very popular. Some stunning outdoor photographs of the shooting of that film also form part of this collection," said Mr. Magdum.

इसारखंड सरकार ग्रामीण विभाग (ग्रा०का०मामले)
मुख्य अभियंता का कार्यालय 102, द्वितीय तल्ला, अभियंत्रण भवन, कच्छहरी रोड, रांची
ई-अल्पकालीन पुनर्निवाद आमंत्रण सूचना

ई-निविदा संख्या:- 162/RD/2020-21/RDD(RWA)/SAHEBGANJ दिनांक : 14.12.2020
मुख्य अभियंता, ग्रामीण विभाग विभाग (ग्रा०का



Green over brown

India's climate goals are on track, but future investments must be sustainable

India asserted at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit, co-convened by the UN to mark five years of the Paris Agreement, that it is well on its way to not just fulfilling its national pledge on emissions reduction, but exceeding the commitment. The performance, outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, rests primarily on the estimated present reduction of emissions intensity by 21% over 2005 levels (the goal is between 33% and 35% of GDP by 2030), and the twin pillars of renewable energy and higher forest cover. Indeed, the Emissions Gap Report 2020 of the UNEP includes India among nine G20 members who are on track to achieve their unconditional commitments under the Paris pact, based on pre-COVID-19 projections. Significantly, the G20 bloc as a whole, responsible for 78% of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), was not expected to meet its pledges, but some countries and the EU as a group announced higher ambition at the summit. The brief reduction in global GHG emissions brought about by the pandemic has given all countries an opportunity to review their development trajectories. The unprecedented event has enabled them to deploy an extraordinary fiscal stimulus for rehabilitation of economies – estimated at \$12 trillion globally – making green growth a possibility. India faces a particular challenge, in moving its pandemic rehabilitation spending away from traditional brown sector policies aligned with fossil fuel use to green territory.

At the recent summit, Mr. Modi took credit for expansion of forests, which, according to the national pledge under the Paris Agreement, will serve as a carbon sink of 2.5 bn to 3 bn tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. This is a key goal, given that it has multiple benefits, protecting biodiversity, influencing the climate system and providing resources for communities. But it is fraught with uncertainty. The Centre has questioned the veracity of State afforestation data and said only a fourth of the claims made were deemed credible. Clearly, without a cohesive policy on verifiable afforestation, the carbon sink approach may yield poor dividends, with questions hanging over the spending. Achieving 100 gigawatts of solar power capacity within the overall renewables goal, from 36 GW now, needs a steep scale-up that must actively promote rooftop solar installations. There is little evidence that this is a high priority for most States. Transport-related emissions, which are a major component of the whole, have risen sharply in the unlock phase of the pandemic as people prefer personal vehicles, but the issue received little support from States which failed to reorder cities for cycling and pedestrianisation. Large-scale agriculture insurance against climate disasters also needs attention. In the year that remains before countries meet at the UN Climate Change conference in Glasgow in 2021, India needs to focus on future emissions and plan green investments that qualify for global climate funding.

Eastern disquiet

The battle between the Trinamool and the BJP should not turn into a Centre-State tussle

It is now disconcertingly clear that the Assembly election in West Bengal in early 2021 will be one of the fiercest political combats in the history of India. A spectre of violence is being foretold in a series of murders and clashes in recent weeks. With the ruling party at the Centre, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), determined to displace the party in power in the State, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC), which is equally determined to guard its reign, governments are also being drawn into a partisan conduct. According to one report, more than 50 political murders have taken place in the State since the 2019 Lok Sabha election, when the BJP made deep inroads by winning 18 of its 42 seats. Limited to west and north India in its early stages of growth, the BJP has adopted an 'act east' policy to reinforce its dominance since 2014. Having won Assam in 2016 and gaining a foothold in several northeastern States, the party has set its eyes on West Bengal this year. It is pouring resources and deploying personnel with alacrity. The party's impressive performance in the neighbouring State of Bihar recently has added further tailwind to the BJP's eastward foray. The party's 2019 advances were largely among Hindu migrants from what is today Bangladesh. The controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act is now a key plank of the BJP.

The AITMC that replaced the Left Front which had been in power for 34 years until 2011 is staring at a crisis now. It was successful in mobilising the resentment against the Left, but failed to buttress itself with an alternative governance and political agenda. The Left has joined the Congress in the margins, and it will be a contest between the aggressive Hindutva agenda of the BJP, and the incoherence of the AITMC which is often seen as indulgence of Muslim communal politics, in West Bengal. The police have been ineffective against violent activists of the ruling party. The recent mob attack on the convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda marked a deterioration in the law and order situation. The BJP has responded by roping in the Governor and the Union Home Ministry, which has sought to attach three IPS officers without clearance from the State government. The State government has since refused to relieve them for Central deputation. The battle between AITMC and the BJP should not become a tussle between the Centre and State. The role of the Election Commission will also be under scrutiny in the coming days once it announces the schedule for the election. Governments and constitutional functionaries must stay above the fray, regardless of the high stakes parties might be playing for.

Firing a warning shot across big tech's bows

Lawsuits and regulatory moves in the West suggest that their easy, unchecked expansion may be coming to an end



JAYATI GHOSH

It was a long time coming, but the day of reckoning for the big digital companies may finally have arrived. Despite the growing monopoly power of big tech and their use of anti-competitive practices, earlier attempts to regulate them (such as an attempt by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1998 to rein in Microsoft) had only limited success. The novel coronavirus pandemic further enhanced the monopoly power of the big tech giants.

Timeline and actions

But now, a rash of lawsuits and regulatory moves in the United States and Europe against the big non-Chinese digital companies (particularly Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Google) suggest that the days of their easy expansion in an unregulated environment may be coming to an end. In October 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice brought a lawsuit against Google (<https://bit.ly/37fngUw>) for misusing its dominant position as search engine by undermining competitors; favouring its own content in search results; doing deals with other companies to become the default search engine in many browsers and devices; and then using data on its users and competitors to reinforce its dominance and get even more revenue from advertising.

Then, in early December, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam, sued Facebook (<https://bit.ly/3mebxID>), accusing it of abusing its market power in social networking to crush smaller competitors. The specific instances of Facebook's acquisitions of WhatsApp and In-

stagram were cited, which apparently resulted from concerns that the growing popularity of these platforms could break the company's hold on social media. The FTC complaint (<https://bit.ly/3moqDwY>) cites a Mark Zuckerberg email of June 2008: "It is better to buy than compete"; in another internal communication, he noted that Facebook "can likely always just buy any competitive startups" (<https://bit.ly/37ZBpV7>).

By 2012, just before buying Instagram, he said the photo and video sharing app "could be very disruptive to us", if allowed to grow independently. The purchase of WhatsApp two years later similarly reflected concerns that the instant messaging service could become the favoured social media over Facebook.

The 'wrath of Mark'

Why did these companies agree to be bought up? It was not the price at which they were sold (\$19 billion for WhatsApp and \$1 billion for Instagram) so much as Facebook's ability to make an offer they could not refuse, Mafioso-style, by destroying their ability to expand and attract new users. "Will he go into destroy mode if I say no?" Instagram founder Kevin Systrom is cited as having asked an investor when considering Facebook's offer. "Bottom line I don't think we'll ever escape the wrath of Mark ... it just depends how long we avoid it."

This wrath was expressed by using Facebook's huge user base in a bait-and-switch, offering newer app or website developers various incentives (such as allowing them to use "like" buttons) that promoted their sites or apps to Facebook users, which also meant that Facebook could then gather more data on the online activities of those users. When the new app grew and emerged as a possible threat, Facebook would stop this access and thereby destroy its ability to attract a new user base.

Google and Facebook are hard-



ly the only transgressors. A U.S. House Committee Report (<https://bit.ly/2WaomKW>) that led up to the lawsuits has major indictments of Amazon and Apple as well. Amazon "functions as a gatekeeper for e-commerce", reducing competition and thereby also harming consumers. It has exploitative relationships with other sellers on the platform, which "live in fear of the company" and which Amazon refers to as "internal competitors". Sellers are not allowed to contact shoppers directly, often limited in their ability to sell on other platforms, face "strong-arm tactics in negotiations" and have to choose between getting "atrocious levels of customer service" or better service for a fee. Like the other companies, Amazon profits from ideas and products developed by others, and simply buys up start-ups or even open-source cloud-software developers when it wants.

Apple also favours its own apps and seeks to put rivals at a disadvantage on its products and leaves developers with little choice for reaching consumers. Like Google, it levies high commission fees (of 30%) that end up being charged on consumers. The two companies are voracious purchasers of companies: over the past few years, Google has bought at least one firm a month; Apple buys one every two or so (<https://cnn.com/2JTKIVq>).

The European Union has separately filed cases against Amazon and Google. In November, it filed charges against Amazon (<https://bit.ly/37htcwD>), accusing the com-

pany of using its access to data from companies selling on its platform to gain unfair advantage over them.

Earlier this summer it opened two antitrust cases against Google. It is planning to change the regulatory regime (<https://reut.rs/37YZNq0>) to prevent the anti-competitive practices exhibited, for example, in its Android mobile operating system and its search engine.

Impact on users

The dangers of these aggressive monopolies are not confined to the competitors – users also suffer because of fewer options and weaker privacy controls. Both WhatsApp and Facebook have eroded the privacy protections that they earlier promised, by changing the terms of service communicated through long and complicated messages that most users simply do not read. All these companies hoard the data they collect, which increasingly covers all aspects of their users' lives. For many of them, data are now the biggest source of revenues and profits. All sorts of use can be made of data: marketing and targeted advertising, influencing and manipulating political outcomes, targeting individuals based on particular criteria, enabling surveillance by both governments and private agencies.

The idea in both the U.S. and the EU is to break up these companies – for example, by forcing Facebook to divest both WhatsApp and Instagram, much as the telecom giant AT&T was forced to break up in the early 1980s. Antitrust lawsuits are notoriously difficult to win, but many legal experts agree that these cases are very so-

lid. But this is only one step in the required regulatory control of these digital behemoths, which are now exercising unprecedented market power as well as other kinds of power.

More regulation is clearly re-

quired, in addition to the lawsuits.

The Indian angle is relevant

All this has direct relevance for India, and not only because these companies are so important in India. More than 400 million of WhatsApp's estimated 2 billion users are in India; Amazon has around one-third of the share of online retail in India, neck and neck with Flipkart that was recently acquired by Walmart; India is Facebook's largest single market, with around 270 million accounts; Google completely dominates the search engine space in India, and most smartphones in India are Android-based. And now Facebook and Google are collaborating with India's largest telecom company – Reliance Jio owned by Mukesh Ambani – to create a single gateway for Indians (<https://bit.ly/3abrnSw>) providing everything from information, news media and entertainment to daily purchases of groceries and sundry other services. Apart from their market dominance, another concern is the cosy relationship these companies have established with the ruling party in the country, and the willingness to adopt different standards of fact-checking and privacy in India, so as to benefit the powerful. Reports suggest that Facebook has been unwilling to remove incendiary and violent content for fear of backlash (<https://on.wsj.com/388qyZc>) from Hindu nationalist politicians and stormtroopers. This is not helped by the fact that India still does not have a privacy law, even though the Supreme Court declared privacy to be a fundamental right some time ago. Even the proposed Bill is extremely weak without adequate safeguards. It is time for Indians to wake up and realise that anti-trust regulation and public control over digital companies – including home-grown ones – have become critical for them.

Jayati Ghosh taught economics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Convergence of agrarian discontent in South Asia

With protests becoming catalysts for anti-authoritarian struggle, the air is ripe for new visions of rural emancipation



AHILAN KADIRGAMAR &
HASHIM BIN RASHID

Those familiar with the systematic attack on agriculture in South Asia over the last decades will not be surprised at the ongoing farmers' protests in India. It could have been Pakistan, where farmers protesting for support prices were beaten up and arrested in Lahore only a month ago, or Sri Lanka, where shortages of imported fertilizers and declining subsidies has led to farmers' outcry. In the middle of a long simmering rural economic crisis pushed over the cliff by the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts by South Asian governments to project corporatisation and deregulation as the way forward for agriculture have angered long-suffering farmers.

Contempt for small-holding producers has been a part and parcel of policy-making across the region for decades. Successive governments have imposed a corporate agenda, seeking profits from food production and distribution by relaxing norms for cheap food imports, and encouraging export-oriented produc-

tion, price speculation, agribusiness and retail supermarkets. South Asia's rural landscape has been profoundly reshaped by such 'reforms', dispossessing farmers of their land, and pushing them into wage labour and migration as coping mechanisms. This hollowing out of rural livelihoods does not come with any assurance of stable jobs or a decent quality of life in urban areas.

Pandemic opportunism

The COVID-19 crisis has given a new lease of life to such efforts. India is not the only country to have attempted to seize this moment to deregulate agricultural markets. In Pakistan, at the height of the first lockdown in May this year, the government inked an agreement with the World Bank to further deregulate the country's wheat market. In Sri Lanka, with the national budget just passed for 2021, there are only meagre allocations towards revitalising agricultural livelihoods and policies focused on supporting technologies suitable for agribusinesses. Instead of the current crisis sending governments back to the drawing board, South Asia's authoritarian regimes, complicit with corporate interests, are railroading in anti-farmer agricultural policies.

Corporate agriculture further exacerbates the existential danger faced by South Asian farmers. Such corporate solutions do not address the role of middlemen



and traders in denying farmers a fair price for their labour. Instead, opening up markets to large corporations is likely to spark the same sort of race to the bottom that has been seen in the industrial and service sectors. Deregulation makes farmers' livelihoods even more precarious and threatens food sovereignty through increased dependence on global agricultural trade. It has become far too easy to forget that it was the collapse of global agricultural commodity prices in the 1970s that had a large role to play in the debt crisis that haunts countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Reviving resistance

There is a powerful legacy of rural movements in South Asia that have fought for the rights of farmers, peasants and agricultural workers. Rural movements played a crucial role in the anti-colonial struggle and fought for progressive land and agrarian reform after Independence. Seventy years on, they continue to fight against the

recent waves of anti-farmer policies, while advancing new progressive visions such as peasant agroecology and food sovereignty, which put small food producers and the environment at the centre.

While the issues highlighted by the Indian protests are not entirely new, the current convergence of authoritarianism and corporate capital brings this existential crisis for rural agricultural producers even more sharply in focus. Farmers' movements have been aware of state connivance with exploitative actors, but they must now also contend with a breakdown of democratic process and increased repression. Those in power seem to have been caught off guard by the songs and displays of solidarity in Delhi and many other parts of India over the past two weeks. Just when it seemed like the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests against the Bharatiya Janata Party's Hindutva agenda had been suppressed by severe state violence, the farmers' movement has become the new face of opposition to the Narendra Modi government. These should be ominous signs for regimes across South Asia which continue to act with impunity in the face of demands for economic and social justice.

Voices of movements

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed food sovereignty back into the public imagination. We have been reminded of how precarious our food supplies are. The solution, of course, only begins with making farming a viable livelihood. Dominant assumptions about inevitable rural-urban migration and techno-utopian transformation in agriculture must be challenged. Questions of land redistribution and other rural inequalities must remain a crucial part of the political agenda. The situation of mostly female agricultural workers, the rural landless and Dalits in South Asia remains precarious. Even as rural movements across South Asia fight the ongoing attack on their livelihoods, they must also tackle rural inequality head on.

The air is ripe for new visions of rural emancipation in South Asia. Rural movements are working to transform not just their world but are becoming catalysts for a broader anti-authoritarian struggle in South Asia. The rural movements that swept across South Asia in the 1960s may seem like a distant memory. The current phase of struggles has revived old questions, while raising others about the future of our long ignored rural world.

We must listen to the voices and demands of the rural movements converging across South Asia.

Ahilan Kadirgamar is a Senior Lecturer, University of Jaffna. Hashim bin Rashid is doing his PhD at SOAS, London. Inputs by Amod Shah, doctoral candidate at ISS Hague

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.

Farmers' protest

The government says that the three farm laws are in the interest of the farmers. The farmers in turn say that they are detrimental to their interests. Only one of them can be right. If the farmers themselves are of the opinion that the farm laws are otherwise, why should the government be adamant in not scrapping them at once? The determination of the farmers that unless and until the contentious laws are repealed in their entirety is amazing. If the farmers who are the main stakeholders do not want the reform laws, who else is the government wanting to retain them for? The Centre

must hold talks with farmers about what type of reforms, if at all, the government proposes to bring in. The impasse would not have arisen at all had only the government taken farmers' unions into confidence before introducing the laws.

A. JAINULABDEEN,
Chennai

■ Visuals of the farmers' agitation brings to mind K.R. Narayanan's words: 'Beware the patience of the unempowered'. Patience has its limits and the farmers who until now had taken everything in their stride, see the new laws as the last straw. That they have not agitated of a magnitude this

far is in itself proof of the gravity of their concerns. The Centre cannot dismiss it as a mere stage-managed display instigated by vested interests. With more joining in from other States and personnel ready to hand back their medals, the agitation seems to be gaining strength. The government should formulate new laws in consultation with the farming community.

ELIZABETH KOSHY,
Maramon, Pathanamthitta, Kerala

■ The scale of the farmers' protest should serve as an eye-opener to the government to mend its undemocratic ways. Steamrolling Bills through Parliament should stop and

the spirit of federalism needs immediate resurrection. The nation, no doubt, owes a debt of gratitude to the farmers' organisations for the grit displayed in upholding the democratic rights of citizens to protest and trying to force the government to reconsider the laws pushed through in a hurry.

However continuation of agitation may not be in their interest. Instead of

demanding a repeal, the proper course of action would be to seek suspension of its implementation and sit down for a discussion. The interests of all stakeholders need to be balanced. A blind adherence to policies framed in a bygone era of

shortages may turn out to be counter-productive.

MANOHAR ALEMBAH,
Kannur, Kerala

Nursing

The industry-academia gap in the nursing sector is huge and most of the undergraduate trained nurses joining the profession are not immediately employable. Understanding

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
A Profiles page article titled "Central Vista Project: The bid to remake the face of the capital" (Dec. 13, 2020) gave the built-up area of the new parliament building as 64,500 sqft. It should have been 64,500 sqm.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/285763

India needs to rethink its nutrition agenda

Poor nutritional outcomes in NFHS-5 show that a piecemeal approach does not work



DIPA SINHA

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released data fact sheets for 22 States and Union Territories (UTs) based on the findings of Phase I of the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5). The 22 States/ UTs don't include some major States such as Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. While the national picture will only be clear when the survey is completed and data are released for all the States and UTs, what we have so far paints a troubling picture in relation to nutrition outcomes.

Worrying findings

Of the 22 States and UTs, there is an increase in the prevalence of severe acute malnutrition in 16 States/UTs (compared to NFHS-4 conducted in 2015-16). Kerala and Karnataka are the only two big States among the six States and UTs where there is some decline. The percentage of children under five who are underweight has also increased in 16 out of the 22 States/UTs. Anaemia levels among children as well as adult women have increased in most of the States with a decline in anaemia among children being seen only in four States/UTs (all of them smaller ones – Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Meghalaya).

There is also an increase in the prevalence of other indicators such as adult malnutrition measured by those having a Body Mass Index of less than 18.5kg/m² in many States/UTs. What is also a matter of concern is that most States/UTs also see an increase in overweight/obesity prevalence among children and adults, once again drawing attention to the inadequacy of diets in India both in terms of quality and quantity.

The data report an increase in childhood stunting (an indicator of chronic undernutrition and considered a sensitive indicator of overall well-being) in 13 of the 22 States/UTs compared to the data of NFHS-4.



Among the remaining nine States, five see an improvement of less than 1 percentage point (pp) in this five-year period. Sikkim (7.3 pp), Manipur (5.5 pp), Bihar (5.4 pp) and Assam (1.1 pp) are the four States which see some improvement although even these are below the goals set by the government. There was a 10 pp decline in stunting among children under five (low height for age) between 2005-06 (NFHS-3) and 2015-16 (NFHS-4), from 48% to 38%, averaging 1 pp a year. Although in the right direction, this was considered to be a very slow pace of improvement. Poshan Abhiyaan, one of the flagship programmes of the Prime Minister, launched in 2017, aimed at achieving a 2 pp reduction in childhood stunting per year.

All indications from these initial results of NFHS-5 are that we are likely to see an increase in prevalence of childhood stunting in the country during the period 2015-16 to 2019-20. This is extremely alarming and calls for serious introspection on not just the direct programmes in place to address the problem of child malnutrition but also the overall model of economic growth that the country has embarked upon. The World Health Organization calls stunting “a marker of inequalities in human development”.

Over the last three decades, there have been phases where India has experienced high rates of economic growth. But this period has also seen increasing inequality, greater informalisation of the labour force, and reducing employment elasticities of growth. Some expansion in social protection schemes and public programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gu-

rantee Scheme, the Public Distribution System, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), and school meals have contributed to reduction in absolute poverty as well as previous improvements in nutrition indicators. However, there are continuous attempts to weaken these mechanisms through underfunding and general neglect. For instance, in a response to a parliamentary question in December 2019, the Minister for Women and Child Development presented data which showed that only about 32.5% of the funds released for Poshan Abhiyaan from 2017-18 onwards had been utilised. The last few years particularly have been bad with slowdown in economic growth, stagnant rural wages and highest levels of unemployment. This is also reflected, for instance, in the rising number of reported starvation deaths from different parts of the country. Volunteers of the Right to Food campaign have listed over 100 starvation deaths based on media and/or verified fact-finding reports since 2015. While these data present a bleak picture as far as nutrition is concerned, what is worrying is that the situation would be even worse now as a result of the pandemic and lockdown-induced economic distress. Field surveys such as the recent ‘Hunger Watch’ are already showing massive levels of food insecurity and decline in food consumption, especially among the poor and vulnerable households. In the Hunger Watch survey carried out in 11 States, two-thirds of the respondents reported that the nutritional quality and quantity of their diets worsened in September-October compared to before the lockdown. All of this calls for urgent action with

commitment towards addressing the issue of malnutrition.

The NFHS-5 fact sheets, which also present data related to health, nutrition and other socioeconomic indicators, show some positive trends as well. There are some improvements seen in determinants of malnutrition such as access to sanitation, clean cooking fuels and women's status - a reduction in spousal violence and greater access of women to bank accounts, for example. In these too, gaps remain and some States perform better than others.

A piecemeal approach

What these overall poor nutritional outcomes therefore also show is that a piecemeal approach addressing some aspects (that too inadequately) does not work. Direct interventions such as supplementary nutrition (of good quality including eggs, fruits, etc.), growth monitoring, and behaviour change communication through the ICDS and school meals must be strengthened and given more resources. Universal maternity entitlements and child care services to enable exclusive breastfeeding, appropriate infant and young child feeding as well as towards recognising women's unpaid work burdens have been on the agenda for long, but not much progress has been made on these.

At the same time, the linkages between agriculture and nutrition both through what foods are produced and available as well as what kinds of livelihoods are generated in farming are also important. Overall, one of the main messages is that the basic determinants of malnutrition - household food security, access to basic health services and equitable gender relations - cannot be ignored any longer. An employment-centred growth strategy which includes universal provision of basic services for education, health, food and social security is imperative. There have been many indications in our country that business as usual is not sustainable anymore. It is hoped that the experience of the pandemic as well as the results of NFHS-5 serve as a wake-up call for serious rethinking of issues related to nutrition and accord these issues priority.

Dipa Sinha is faculty at School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi

Tax policy in trying times

The events of the pandemic show how it is the need of the hour to modernise India's archaic tax laws



T.C.A. RAMANUJAM & T.C.A. SANGEETHA

of goods and services will be taxed at 2%. Clarity is required in implementation. The taxation of multinational corporations has become a perennial problem.

The nexus rule versus residence rule haunts tax administrations in all countries where multinational corporations operate. Digital taxation has to be amended in accordance with the UN Model Convention. There is need for India to act in sync with the OECD. Canada plans to levy new taxes on foreign technology companies to increase government revenues. Tax avoidance by global web companies has become acute because of digitalisation. In the field of indirect taxes, the government has been vigorously following whether multinational companies are passing on the benefits of tax reduction to consumers. As per the Goods and Services Tax (GST) law, any reduction in the rate of tax on the supply of goods or services has to be passed on to the consumer by way of commensurate reduction in prices. Companies are prone to benefit from GST rate reduction without passing on the benefits to the end consumers. The Anti-Profitting Rules have to be implemented vigorously wherever there is reduction in the tax rate on any commodity or service.

Rewriting the tax law

India's direct tax law needs to keep pace with fast-changing events. The Finance Minister announced a new scheme of faceless assessments and faceless appeals. But at the same time, the dispute resolution mechanism needs change. The International Court of Arbitration ruled that the Indian government's move to seek taxes from Vodafone using retrospective legislation was against the fairness principle. It is necessary that a mechanism is found to negotiate a settlement through mediation and conciliation or, if necessary, arbitration in connection with tax disputes between the tax-paying companies and the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

The Income Tax Act was framed in 1961. It has been amended several times. The government constituted the Akhilesh Ranjan Task Force to rewrite the Income Tax Act. The report is with the government but has not yet been made public. Our archaic laws should be modernised and made compatible with international tax laws. If the report had been made public, we would have had the time to discuss it. There is little time now to implement the recommendations of the Committee during the Budget session. The sooner the report is made public, the better.

T.C.A. Ramanujam is a former Chief Commissioner of Income Tax. T.C.A. Sangeetha is a practising advocate of the Madras High Court

Divided States of America

Support for Trump's fabricated claims betrays fear about the country's changing 'colour'

MOHAMMED AYOOB

The Electoral College is expected to ratify Joe Biden's election to the U.S. presidency on Monday. However, this is unlikely to end the sordid episode initiated by President Donald Trump's refusal to accept the result that has polarised the nation even further while eroding its democratic ethos. Mr. Trump's legal team and his Republican supporters filed close to 60 petitions demanding that results in the battleground States be declared null and void. Each of these petitions was thrown out but that did not deter Mr. Trump from continuing to fantasise that he had won the election but was deprived of victory as a result of fraud.

Matters came to a head last Friday after the Supreme Court summarily dismissed a petition by the Texas Attorney General supported by 17 other Republican States asking for an emergency order to invalidate the ballots of millions of voters in four battleground States – Georgia, Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Following the Supreme Court's unanimous decision Mr. Trump tweeted: “The Supreme Court really let us down. No Wisdom, No Courage!”

Reaction from some of his supporters, encouraged by his defiant posture, was more extreme. For the first time since the Civil War there was a call that bordered on secession. The chairman of the Texas Republican Party declared, “Perhaps law-abiding states should bond together and form a Union of states that will abide by the constitution.” What is equally worrisome is the attitude of the Republican leadership, including the large majority of Republican Senators and members of the House, most of whom have gone along with Mr. Trump's self-delusional stance despite clear evidence, including from Mr. Trump's Justice Department, to the contrary.

A perilous game
This an extremely perilous game as it panders to the basest instincts of Mr. Trump's far-right supporters, many of them white supremacists, who have been out on the streets protesting against the “stolen election”. Some cities, such as Washington,

D.C., and Olympia, Washington, have witnessed violence generated by these elements. What is more dangerous is the perception among a large majority of Republican voters that Mr. Biden's victory was fraudulent. Surveys show that around 40% of Americans believe this baseless conspiracy. This is likely to encourage Republican Senators to put every possible obstacle in the path of Mr. Biden's legislative agenda as well as hold up ratification of his cabinet nominees.

Fear of the white population
There are many reasons for this stark division among the American people. President Trump's nihilistic rhetoric is one. But Mr. Trump's claims have only accentuated a division whose main cause has little to do with economics or political ideology and much to do with race. It reflects the insecurity of the white population. Whites constituted about 73% of the total in 2017. But if one excludes the Hispanic whites, most of whom identify as Latinos rather than whites, this ratio falls to 60.7% of the population. It is expected to fall below 50% by 2045 as a result of immigration and low birth rates. The anti-immigration attitude of many Republicans is a product of this fear of whites becoming a numerical minority, a feeling that Mr. Trump shares as depicted by his virulent anti-immigrant attitude.

The election of President Barack Obama and now Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has increased the apprehension that white Americans are being deprived of their patrimony. The support for Mr. Trump's fabricated claims is largely a product of the anxiety that the U.S. is changing 'colour'. In this sense it is a rerun of the scenario preceding the Civil War of the 1860s. One of the main drivers of that was the emancipation of black slaves that was seen as threatening white privilege. One fervently hopes history will not repeat itself either as tragedy or as farce.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University



DATA POINT

Hunger alert | Four key metrics which represent the nutritional status of children recorded a significant fall in 2019-20 compared to the levels in 2015-16 in many major States, reversing the considerable progress achieved in earlier periods. More worryingly, in some States such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal, the % of anaemic and wasted children was significantly higher than the levels recorded in 2005-06. Even in States such as Kerala, which continues to lead the nation in such indicators, the levels recorded in 2019-20 were marginally poorer than the 2015-16 figures. By Naresh Singaravelu, Suman Sen & Vignesh Radhakrishnan

GRAPHS EXPLAINED | The charts plot the % of anaemic, stunted (low height for age), wasted (low weight for height) and underweight (low weight for age) children across 10 States in three time periods: 2019-20 (red asterisk), 2015-16 (blue circle) and 2005-06 (plus). The higher the % of children in an indicator, the worse the performance of the State. The data are sourced from the three editions of the National Family Health Survey published by the Indian government. In the latest edition of the survey, limited data for 22 States and UTs were disseminated, of which the data of 10 major States were analysed

ANAEMLIA | In all the 10 States, a higher % of children were anaemic in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16. In States such as Gujarat, Himachal, Maharashtra and W.B., a higher % of children were anaemic in 2019-20 compared to 2005-06

WASTED | In 5 of the 10 States analysed, a higher % of children were wasted in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16. In Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra and W.B., a higher % of children were wasted in 2019-20 compared to 2005-06

STUNTED | In 6 of the 10 States analysed, a higher % of children were stunted in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16. Though Karnataka, Assam and Andhra Pradesh did improve, the change was marginal

UNDERWEIGHT | In 7 of the 10 States analysed, a higher % of children were underweight in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16

DATA POINT

DATA POINT

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 15, 1970

A concrete B.B.C. proposal

The Deputy External Affairs Minister, Mr. Surendra Pal Singh, made it clear in the Lok Sabha to-day [New Delhi, Dec. 14] that there was no question of allowing the British Broadcasting Corporation to reopen its office in India until the B.B.C. authorities came up with some “concrete” proposal. The B.B.C. authorities had raised the question of the Government allowing it to reopen its office during the visit to London of the Minister of State for Information, Mr. I.K. Gujral. Mr. Gujral had suggested the B.B.C. making a proposal in this regard.

Mr. Surendra Pal Singh defended the Government action in ordering the closure of the B.B.C. office in India because of its continued “anti-India stance”. Showing of the Louis Malle film on India by the B.B.C. despite Indian protests was not the only reason. It came as a climax to the anti-Indian slant in the B.B.C. broadcasts even before, he told Mr. Mehta Lal Meena and others.

The Deputy Minister also confirmed reports that the B.B.C. had asked permission to send a correspondent to cover the British Prime Minister's forthcoming official visit to India. The Government of India did not agree to the nomination of a particular individual against whom there were some complaints. It had no objection if another person was suggested by the B.B.C., he said in reply to Mr. A.B. Vajpayee.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 15, 1920

The next Viceroy

The “Times” Parliamentary correspondent wrote under date November 22: -- The names of candidates for the Viceroyalty of India continue to be actively canvassed, but, in the best-informed quarters, it is regarded as increasingly probable, if not, indeed, a foregone conclusion, that the appointment will go to Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Madras. He has all along been the strongest of the candidates possessing what is thought to be, in present circumstances, the essential qualification of having direct and continuous experience of Indian affairs and political currents. Other candidates similarly qualified were Sir George Lloyd, Governor of Bombay, Lord Ronaldshay, Governor of Bengal, and Sir Harcourt Butler, Lieutenant-Governor of Agra and Oudh. The appointment of Lord Willingdon will create a precedent. Hitherto the Viceroy has not been chosen among the Governors of Provinces.

FROM PAGE ONE

Govt. talks to breakaway leaders amid protest

The Centre has offered a written assurance that MSP will continue, but has so far refused to consider a legal guarantee. "If the government invites us for talks, I am willing to negotiate on behalf of U.P. farmers... So far, we have supported the demand for repeal of the three laws, but we cannot support a deadlock. We cannot be so rigid," Mr. Singh added.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, meanwhile, met groups of farmers who support the farm reforms, albeit with amendments. Speaking to journalists after the meeting at Krish Bhawan, Mr. Tomar said, "The government is ready for talks at any time. We wanted to have a clause-by-clause discussion on these laws. We are engaging with farmers. We have given our proposal to the farmers. The farmer leaders have to

November sees food inflation drop to 9.43%

"While this provides welcome relief, it is unlikely to prove adequate for any imminent rate easing," she said.

The Reserve Bank of India, in its monetary policy review earlier this month, had said that inflation is likely to remain elevated, barring transient relief in the winter months from prices of perishables. "This constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth," it noted.

Among the major States, Bihar recorded the highest inflation at 9.8% in November, followed by West Bengal (9.42%), Andhra Pradesh (9.08%) and Telangana (8.99%). On the other end of the spectrum, Delhi, with 3.43% retail inflation, Pun-

Gujarat to get mega renewable energy park

The park will have dedicated zones for wind and solar energy storage as well as an exclusive zone for wind park activities.

During the day-long visit to his home State, Mr. Modi will also lay the foundation stone for a desalination plant and a fully automated milk processing and packing plant in Kutch.

To meet the growing demand for water, Gujarat has turned to harnessing its vast coastline, taking steps to

33 more test positive on IIT Madras campus

Institute has 104 infected persons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Another 33 persons have tested positive for COVID-19 on the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT Madras). With this, a total of 104 persons – 87 students, 16 mess employees and a resident – have tested positive for the infection, even as the Health Department and the Greater Chennai Corporation are in the process of lifting 300-odd samples.

Sources in the Health Department said preliminary investigation into the possible source of infection pointed to the common mess that was closed down two days ago after a number of cases were reported. However, this being a pandemic, the department was not ruling out the possibility of transmission caused by the movement of people and meeting at common places. The lack of maintaining physical distancing in the mess could be one of the reasons.

Pointing to the need to maintain physical distanc-

decide and convey when they are ready for the next meeting."

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister and JJP leader Dushyant Chautala also urged the unions to take a step back and end the stand-off in the larger interest of the farming community.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who has previously acted as a mediator with farm leaders, also struck a conciliatory note. "Agriculture has been one sector which has been able to avoid the adverse effects of the pandemic... There is no question of taking retrograde steps against our agricultural sector ever," he said, addressing industry group FICCI.

(With inputs from Ashok Kumar in Gurugram, Vikas Vasudeva in Chandigarh and Dinakar Peri in New Delhi)

jab (5.36%) and Kerala (5.49%), recorded the lowest price rise in the country.

Although lower food inflation has moderated CPI, core inflation still remains high at around 5.5% and protein inflation is still high within the food index, warned Rajani Sinha, chief economist and national director of research at Knight Frank India. "High household inflationary expectations during the pandemic has made the CPI inflation sticky even in a weak demand scenario," she said.

Wholesale price index-based inflation rose further to 1.55% in November, from 1.48% in October, as per provisional official data released on Monday. Food price inflation moderated from 5.78% in October to 4.27% in November.

RTC employees call off strike in Karnataka

Govt. to fulfil nine out of 10 demands



No movement: A view of the Kempegowda bus station in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ SOMASHEKAR G.R.N.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

After a high drama on Monday, employees of road transport corporations (RTCs) in Karnataka called off their strike that began on Friday, bringing relief to lakhs of people who were put to hardship owing to the non-availability of buses.

Farmers' leader Kodihalli Chandrashekhar, who was leading the employees, made the announcement at Freedom Park here after receiving a written assurance from the Karnataka government on fulfilling nine out of

the 10 demands. The government had approved these demands on Sunday after a series of meetings, but on Monday, protesters demanded a written assurance from Transport Minister Laxman Savadi.

On behalf of the government, BMTC Chairman N.S. Nandiesha Reddy handed over the written assurance to the employees.

A section of protesters

demanded that the strike be continued till their demand that they be considered government employees was conceded.

from him, State Election Commissioner V. Bhaskaran told reporters here on Monday. A decision will be taken on the matter after studying his explanation, he said.

On Sunday, the Commission had received a number of complaints, including those from UDF convener M. M. Hassan, BJP State president K. Surendran and K.C. Joseph, MLA, seeking action against Mr. Vijayan.

Mr. Vijayan had stated that the COVID-19 vaccination would be provided free to all, during a press briefing on Saturday.

The third and final phase of polling in the local body elections was held on Mon-



After the rampage: Wistron company's iPhone manufacturing plant in the Narasapura industrial area.

ings in the melee, she alleged.

Sensing trouble, Ms. Srinivas took all the women staff into a room and locked them up. The women staff waited for some time till the mob moved on. Ms. Srinivas later took the women to a safe exit

and sent them out, she has said in the complaint.

The police are now recording the statements of Ms. Srinivas and the women staff members to identify the attackers.

Meanwhile, a group of eight policemen who went to

suring everyone in our supply chain is treated with dignity and respect. We have teams on the ground and immediately launched a detailed investigation. We are also dispatching additional Apple team members and auditors to the facility," Apple said in a statement.

themselves from the stones. Additional policemen rushed and brought the situation under control. Police have taken up a case against the attackers, charging them with assaulting government servants while on duty and criminal intimidation.

Off the road



Narrow escape: Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya had a narrow escape on Monday after his car veered into a ditch near Choutappal in Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana. Mr. Dattatreya, his assistant and the driver escaped unharmed. ■ SINGAM VENKATARAMANA

RTC employees call off strike in Karnataka

Govt. to fulfil nine out of 10 demands



No movement: A view of the Kempegowda bus station in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ SOMASHEKAR G.R.N.

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78.64% turnout in final phase of local body polls

Brisk polling in many areas amid triangular contest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOZHIKODE

The northern districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode and Malappuram recorded a 78.64% turnout in the final phase of the local body election in Kerala on Monday.

Of the four districts, Malappuram recorded 78.86%, Kozhikode 79.1%, Kannur 78.46% and Kasaragod 77.14% turnout. The voter turnout in Kozhikode and Kannur Corporations stood at 70.39% and 71.16% respectively.

Barring urban areas, including the Kozhikode and Kannur Corporations, polling was heavy in most parts of the four districts. Many areas of the region which witnessed fierce triangular contests involving the United Democratic Front (UDF), Left Democratic



Democracy at work: A queue of voters outside a polling station in Chembra, Tirur on Monday.

Front (LDF) and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance had seen brisk polling since the early hours of the polling.

Largely peaceful

The polling was largely peaceful as no major incidents were reported from the region. As many as 20,603 police personnel

were deployed in the four districts in view of the history of election-time tension in the region, especially Kannur.

A mild clash broke out

Apple undertakes detailed investigation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Tech giant Apple on Monday said it is undertaking a detailed investigation following the violent incident at its supplier Wistron's Narasapura facility in Karnataka last week.

"Apple is dedicated to en-

gaging with our suppliers to ensure that everyone in our supply chain is treated with dignity and respect. We have teams on the ground and immediately launched a detailed investigation. We are also dispatching additional Apple team members and auditors to the facility," Apple said in a statement.

Additional policemen rushed and brought the situation under control. Police have taken up a case against the attackers, charging them with assaulting government servants while on duty and criminal intimidation.

Our survey team officers were asked to sign a document that gives the current points of pitching border survey stones, but in the absence of any authenticated document, we refused to sign," Mr. Nakul said.

"The reply is awaited," he said when asked about why such a doubt arose at this point after the exercise was being jointly done for 53 days.

The entire border dispute arises only in the iron ore rich portion of the border areas, and there is complete agreement in the non-mining areas.

IN BRIEF



Nambi Narayanan meets SC-appointed panel

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Former Indian Space Research Organisation scientist Nambi Narayanan on Monday appeared before the three-member committee appointed by the Supreme Court for finding "ways and means to take appropriate steps against the erring officials" in the infamous ISRO spy case of 1994.

HC turns down Ebrahim Kunju's bail petition

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court on Monday dismissed a bail plea of former Public Works Minister and Indian Union Muslim League leader V.K. Ebrahim Kunju in the Palarivattom flyover case.

Gold smuggling case: ED questions Swapna Suresh

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials on Monday questioned UAE gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh at the Attakalangara Women's Prison here.

between the police and UDF workers following an argument over maintaining physical distancing at Theruvarampara in Nadapuram. Police fired tear gas shells to disperse IUML workers. A police vehicle was damaged. Six bombs were seized from Muzhakkunnu in Kannur.

The prominent political leaders who cast their votes in their wards included Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Industries Minister E.P. Jayarajan in Kannur; and Revenue Minister E. Chandrashekharan in Kasaragod.

Orators. Mr. Narasimha was a member of the Space Commission, Consultative Group of Eminent Senior Scientists, Government of India, and of the Bureau of the International Union of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics.

He had been in hospital for a week



Roddam Narasimha passes away

Orators. Mr. Narasimha was a member of the Space Commission, Consultative Group of Eminent Senior Scientists, Government of India, and of the Bureau of the International Union of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics.

SEC seeks explanation from Kerala CM

Complaint filed against CM for his comment on COVID-19 vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The State Election Commission (SEC) has sought an explanation from Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on the complaint that he had violated the model code of conduct with his announcement that COVID-19 vaccination will be provided free of cost to everyone in the State.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had lodged separate complaints with the Commission stating that Mr. Vijayan had breached the model code.

The Commission has written to the Chief Minister seeking a written explanation from him, State Election Commissioner V. Bhaskaran told reporters here on Monday. A decision will be taken on the matter after studying his explanation, he said.

On Sunday, the Commission had received a number of complaints, including those from UDF convener M. M. Hassan, BJP State president K. Surendran and K.C. Joseph, MLA, seeking action against Mr. Vijayan.

Mr. Vijayan had stated that the COVID-19 vaccination would be provided free to all, during a press briefing on Saturday.

The third and final phase of polling in the local body elections was held on Mon-

day in four northern districts.

Counting will begin at 8 p.m. on Monday. He was brought in last Tuesday with massive bleeding in the brain. He was in the hospital for a week," Sunil Furtado, neurosurgeon at the Ramaiah Memorial Hospital, told *The Hindu*.

A distinguished scientist, Mr. Narasimha held various positions at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. He was also the Director of the National Aerospace Lab-

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CM NK

Govt. open to talks on farm laws: Rajnath

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There is no question of taking "retrograde steps" against the agricultural sector "ever" and the recent reforms have been undertaken with the best interests of farmers in mind, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Monday as protests by farmers continued.

"We are, however, always willing to listen to our farmer brothers, allay their misgivings and provide them with assurances. Our government is always open to discussion and dialogue," Mr. Singh said at the annual meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Talking of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, he said agriculture had been one sector that had been able to avoid the adverse effects and, in fact, came out the best. "Our produce and procurement have been plentiful and our warehouses are full."

Mamata govt. should take a stand on farm laws: Oppn.

Bring a Bill to make Central laws ineffective, say Left and Cong.

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress should make its stand on farm Bills passed by the Centre clear by bringing a Bill in West Bengal Legislative Assembly, the Left parties and Congress leadership said here on Monday.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Abdul Mannan and Leader of Left Legislative party Sujan Chakraborty said a session of the Assembly should be convened immediately to pass a Bill to make the laws passed by Centre not applicable in the State.

Both pointed out that several States like Rajasthan, Punjab, Kerala and Chhattisgarh have passed legislation to make the Central laws ineffective there.

"We have written three letters in the past few months seeking the convening of the Assembly but the State government has not listened to us. It is clearly double standards by the Trinamool Government not to

Centre must involve CMs, says Cong. leader

It can ease the stand-off with farmers: Anand Sharma

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Anand Sharma

The Union government should involve the Chief Ministers and find a way out of the stand-off with farmers on the three farm laws through dialogue and negotiations, the Congress's Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha, Anand Sharma, said on Monday at the 93rd annual general meeting (AGM) of the FICCI.

"Today what we are seeing is turbulence and protests on the farm laws. Reforms must be participatory, not arbitrary. There must be consultations. Nothing should be rushed through or done without building a consensus. That results in what we are seeing – agitation, conflict and the loss of trust," he said.

"I personally feel that through dialogue, negotiations and persuasion, everything can be resolved. We have Chief Ministers of States and they must be involved and let's get over this crisis too, together as a nation."

Calling himself a votary of reforms, Mr. Sharma said that any reform must be backed by a national consensus as that gave confidence to partners countries and investors.

He said India lost 10% of its GDP because of the pandemic and the shock because of a "stringent lockdown". The government should make money available to the poor sections as that would help revive the economy by improving consumption.

Though India was not thrown off-balance despite the shock, it was debatable whether India was witnessing a V-shaped recovery or a K-shaped recovery, he stated.

The former Union Commerce Minister claimed that India was facing crises of low capital expenditure, investment and an impending banking crisis.

Call for consensus

The chariot of democracy must have the government as well as a robust, effective and responsible Opposition, he pointed out.

Mr. Sharma cited the example of the United States and how the Supreme Court there had taken charge after a bitter election, to argue for a similar role for the judiciary in India as well. Indian judiciary had an independent role and the Supreme Court had a constitutional duty and mandate to uphold the Constitution.

Pare down demands, JJP tells farmers

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister and Janmabhumi Party leader Dushyant Chautala on Monday said the farmer unions should pare down their demands to end the stand-off.

Speaking to media persons at the party's office in Delhi, Mr. Chautala said the farmers were initially seeking a few amendments to the three laws and a guarantee on minimum support price, and putting forward a new demand every day would only prolong the talks. "It has been 17 days since the agitation began and no one knows how long it might continue. It should be resolved at the earliest. It is in the larger interest of the farmers," he said.

He said Centre was ready to agree on a "few things", and the farmer unions too should take a step back on their demands. "The stand-off will harm agriculture," said Mr. Chautala. "A solution can be reached only through talks and not by being adamant," he said.

Mr. Mannan said that he raised the issue of transfer of police officers and expressed apprehension that these are not routine transfers but made keeping in mind the upcoming Assembly polls in the State.



Congress workers protesting in Kolkata on Monday. ■ AFP

pass such laws," Mr. Chakraborty said.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLA added that the TMC government has passed two Bills making the same provision effective in the State as the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government has passed.

Both pointed out that several States like Rajasthan, Punjab, Kerala and Chhattisgarh have passed legislation to make the Central laws ineffective there.

"We have written three letters in the past few months seeking the convening of the Assembly but the State government has not listened to us. It is clearly double standards by the Trinamool Government not to

pressured serious concern at rise in political violence and decline in law and order @MamataOfficial. He deplored politically inspired police postings @WBPolice and stressed need of fair elections. Governor over the law-and-order situation," the Governor tweeted.

Mr. Mannan said that he raised the issue of transfer of police officers and expressed apprehension that these are not routine transfers but made keeping in mind the upcoming Assembly polls in the State.

Met Governor
Earlier in the day, Mr. Mannan met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on the issue of law and order situation.

Abdul Mannan, Leader of Opposition, called on me today at Raj Bhawan. He ex-

pected serious concern at rise in political violence and decline in law and order @MamataOfficial. He deplored politically inspired police postings @WBPolice and stressed need of fair elections. Governor over the law-and-order situation," the Governor tweeted.

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IN BRIEF



No public New Year celebrations in Shimla

SHIMLA There will be no public New Year celebrations in Shimla, Kullu, Kangra and Mandi as the Himachal Pradesh government has extended night curfew in the four districts till January 5 to contain the spread of COVID-19. The decision to extend the curfew was taken in a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur here on Monday, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Bhardwaj said. The curfew will be in place from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., he said. PTI

Forest officer's house damaged in bomb attack

IMPHAL The house of forest range officer Sashikumar Seram in Chandel, a border district in Manipur, was partially damaged on Monday morning in a bomb attack, the police said. The house is located in the crowded residential area at Nongmeibung in Imphal east district. Mr. Seram alleged that he had received an extortion note from the Kangleipak Communist Party (Noyon group), a banned underground organisation. Police have registered a case. No arrest has been made.

Kolkata book fair will be held in 2021: organisers

KOLKATA The Publishers and Booksellers Guild on Monday expressed hope of organising the 45th edition of the International Kolkata Book Fair in 2021, but behind its usual schedule of January–February due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Guild is in regular touch with the State government and waiting for its advice. "We are confident of organising the fair this year. But we can't exactly say when due to a host of factors, including the participation of international guests," the Guild president said. PTI

Another CBI case filed against Soni Ispat Ltd

NEW DELHI The CBI has registered yet another case against Indore-based Soni Ispat Limited, which manufactures stainless steel slabs, and others for allegedly cheating the Bank of India (BoI) of ₹12.12 crore. The loan account was classified as a non-performing asset in May 2011 and declared a fraud in June last. Apart from the company, Rajiv Lochan Soni, Jagdish Chandra Naredi, Sharang Soni and Vijay Soni have been named as accused.

India, Britain to discuss upgrade of ties

U.K. Foreign Secretary's visit will include talks on strategic partnership, set stage for post-Brexit ties

SUHASINI HAIDAR
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and other Ministers on Tuesday during his three-day visit to India, expected to prepare for a possible visit by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in January.

India has invited Mr. Johnson as a guest for the Republic Day celebration. While the visit has not been confirmed yet, Mr. Raab, the U.K. Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, will discuss a range of agreements, including one for an upgrade of the relationship to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership", to be signed during Mr. Johnson's visit, officials told *The Hindu*.

From 2004 "India and the United Kingdom enjoy a strategic partnership since 2004 which has been marked by regular high-level exchanges and growing cooperation in diverse areas," said a statement by the External Affairs Ministry announcing the visit from December 14 to 17.

"Mr. Raab's visit will pave the way for further strengthen-



More on agenda: Narendra Modi with British PM Boris Johnson at the G7 summit in France in 2019. India has invited Mr. Johnson to the Republic Day celebrations. ■ GETTY IMAGES

thening of the partnership across trade, defence, climate, migration and mobility, education and health sectors in the post-COVID, post-Brexit context," it added.

The U.K. Foreign Secretary (who is the equivalent of the British Foreign Minister) will be accompanied by the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, Philip Barton, who was, until recently, the High Commissioner of the U.K. to India.

Mr. Raab's visit comes days after Mr. Johnson's controversial remarks in the U.K. Parliament that seemed to confuse India-Pakistan ten-

sions with the farmers' protests at the Delhi borders. The U.K. Prime Minister's office later clarified that he had "clearly misheard the question", adding that the British Foreign Office was "following the issue of protests in India closely".

Neither the External Affairs Ministry nor the British High Commission responded to a question on whether the issue or the U.K.'s comments would be discussed during Mr. Raab's visit.

Wide range According to the officials, India and the U.K. will discuss the framework of the Com-

prehensive Strategic Partnership, which will include defence and strategic relationship, Indo-Pacific policy, trade, and cooperation on renewable energy ahead of the PM's visit.

Mr. Johnson's visit to India will be one of his first forays abroad in 2021, after the U.K. formally leaves the European Union (EU), and officials are hopeful of an announcement that India and the U.K. would begin talks for an "early harvest" Free Trade Agreement (FTA) during the visit.

Defence agreements

A mutual defence logistics support agreement is in an advanced stage of negotiation, while a government-to-government (G2G) mechanism for defence deals and a defence training Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are also in the works. In addition, the two sides may conclude a defence technology and industrial capability cooperation (DTIC) agreement, the MoU for which was signed in April 2019.

Government sources said the two countries were close to signing a G2G agreement on jet engine technology development. The U.K. has also

made a pitch to India for joint technology development of sixth generation fighter technologies which can go into India's fifth generation advanced medium combat aircraft. It has offered the design of its Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carrier for the Indian Navy's proposed second indigenous carrier. The aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* would be in the Indian Ocean next year on its maiden deployment.

Meanwhile, the U.K. has already announced its plans to deploy a Liaison Officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) meant to improve Maritime Domain Awareness.

Mr. Raab will meet Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar and Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal on Tuesday, and will leave for Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to travel to Glasgow for the next UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November 2021, and both sides are keen on expanding their partnership on fighting global warming and building renewable energy technologies, officials said.

U.P. woman denies forced marriage

District officials deny miscarriage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

A 22-year-old pregnant Hindu woman from Moradabad, whose Muslim husband was arrested on December 5 under the new Uttar Pradesh ordinance against unlawful conversions, recorded her statement before a magistrate on Monday, officials said.

Superintendent of Police, Moradabad Rural, Vidyasagar Mishra said the woman, identified as Pinki, in her statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, said she had married Rashid in Dehradun in July of her free will.

With in-laws

After recording her statement, the woman, who had been put up in a government shelter, left with her in-laws, the officer told *The Hindu*.

The woman was referred to the Meerut Medical College for further tests after complaining of abdominal pain, a senior government doctor said. She had been admitted to the district hospital for the second time in three days on Sunday with complaints of abdominal

pain and light spotting, the doctor said.

The administration had earlier denied a report in a British newspaper, *The Telegraph*, quoting Ms. Pinki's in-laws as saying that she was forced into a miscarriage.

More tests to be done

Nirmala Pathak, senior consultant at the district women's hospital in Moradabad, said that following her complaint, the woman was referred to the medical college for further tests.

On a possible miscarriage, Dr. Pathak said, "The foetus was visible in the ultrasound. But the heartbeat could not be observed clearly." She, however, said the woman's vitals were fine and she had no signs of external trauma.

Chief Medical Officer M.C. Garg said the woman's health was "not an issue", adding there was no confirmation of miscarriage.

Earlier, State Commission for Protection of Child Rights Chairperson Vishesh Gupta told *The Hindu* that the foetus was secure. The panel would submit a report to the government, he said.

Stealth frigate *Himgiri* is ready

Offshore Patrol Vessel *Saksham* too launched into water, to join Coast Guard

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Himgiri, the first of the three stealth frigates being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, under Project 17A for the Navy, was launched into water on Monday.

In Goa, the fifth and last of the offshore patrol vessels (OPV) in the series *Saksham* being built at Goa Shipyard was launched into water and is expected to be delivered to the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) by October 2021.

PI7A ships with a displacement of around 6,670 tonnes will be the most advanced state-of-the-art guided missile frigates once inducted, the GRSE said in a statement. The contract for the construction of the three stealth frigates is valued at over ₹19,293 crore.

This project is unique in that it is being built simultaneously at two locations, at the GRSE and the Mazgaon



Grand entry: People witnessing the launch of stealth frigate *Himgiri* in Kolkata on Monday. ■ PTI

Docks in Mumbai. Fincantieri of Italy is the know-how provider for technology upgrade and capability enhancement in this project.

The indigenous OPV project was launched on November 13, 2016.

Since then, two vessels have been commissioned and all five have been launched, the ICG said in a statement. "In spite of the ongoing COVID-19 situation and disruptions in supply chains, it is creditable for the

shipyard to complete the 100% hull construction and launch the vessel within 18 months from keel-laying, which was in June 2019," the ICG said.

The vessel is in advanced stages of outfitting.

Older patients, mostly men, opt for such facilities, says SURVEY

**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI**

Patients seeking care at private hospitals tend to be older and a larger share consist of men compared with those seeking medical care at public hospitals, show data released by the National Health Agency (NHA).

In its briefing on "The role of private hospitals" published recently, the agency says they account for over half of the empanelled hospitals, nearly two-thirds of claim volumes, and three-

quarters of claim outlays in the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). This, when private hospitals are making a smaller contribution in extending the geographic reach of PM-JAY to underserved areas. The top PM-JAY packages by value – including knee replacement, cataracts, haemodialysis and cardiovascular surgeries – are overwhelmingly provided by private hospitals.

The period for the analysis was from September 23, 2018 to February 29, 2020.

Rising fraud

Medical audits have also revealed that private hospitals are more likely to indulge in

fraud and abuse than public

hospitals and more likely to discharge patients early post-surgery to cut costs.

"Ensuring the accountability of private hospitals to provide efficient and high-quality care is a pre-eminent challenge for scheme implementation. Offering a robust public sector alternative in the form of high-performing

States can designate days for immunisation, says Ministry

'National-level training can be done on virtual platforms'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Setting the stage for a national rollout of vaccination against COVID-19, the Union Health Ministry operational guidelines said a vaccination team will include a vaccination officer (anyone legally authorised to give injections may be considered as potential vaccinator), doctors (MBBS/BDS), staff nurse, pharmacist, and support staff.

In addition, at least one person from the police, home guard, Civil defence, NCC, NSS, NYK, who will check the registration status of the beneficiary at the entry point and ensure guarded entry to the vaccination session for 100 beneficiaries. "While most healthcare and frontline workers would be vaccinated at fixed session sites, vaccination of other high-risk populations may re-

quire outreach session sites,

and mobile sites/teams. States/Union Territories can identify specific days for vaccination and also conduct the vaccination process similar to the election process," said the document.

The Ministry added that national and State training of trainers may be conducted on virtual platforms and cascaded to district and sub-district levels using a mix of virtual and face-to-face training.

ment, IEC/communication and support to the vaccinator.

The 113-page operational guideline document noted that based on the number of registered beneficiaries and the priority accorded, vaccination sessions will be planned to allow one session for 100 beneficiaries. "While most healthcare and frontline workers would be vaccinated at fixed session sites, vaccination of other high-risk populations may re-

SC to hear petition on Emergency

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine whether a "simplicitor declaration" that the Emergency of 1975 was unconstitutional will be feasible or desirable after the passage of 45 years.

A Bench led by Justice S.K. Kaul reluctantly, and after much persuasion from senior advocate Harish Salve, agreed to consider the limited question on a request made by 94-year-old Veera Sarin, who said the "errors of history should be corrected and never happen again".

"Something wrong may have happened at a particular point of history... But it has been 45 years. Many of the persons are no longer with us..." Justice Kaul, leading a three-judge Bench, expressed his doubts. But Mr. Salve, for Ms. Sarin, replied "this may perhaps be the right time to do it".

"There was abuse of powers... If we do not tend to correct the errors of history, it will go on. We have to revisit this error. She [Sarin] wants a declaration that the Emergency was unconstitutional. For that, she cannot go to any other court," Mr. Salve submitted.

Release our funds, MPs urge Centre

Govt. rules out MPLADS quota for now

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

At a meeting of the Standing Committee on MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds of the Rajya Sabha headed by Deputy Chairman Harivansh, members of all parties unanimously asked the government to release funds for the projects sanctioned in 2018 and 2019, which were under way before the funds were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the meeting, the government, according to sources, unequivocally said that resuming the funds before March 2022 was out of the question as the ₹3,900 crore required have not been budgeted.

The sources said the MPs, however, pointed that many projects that were approved earlier and under way had also not received funds since the suspension. "We all agreed unanimously when the government brought in changes to suspend the MPLADS funds to aid the fight against the pandemic. However, that does not mean the projects which were approved long before should not be completed," a committee member said.

In their representations, the MPs had argued that the funds become more critical during the pandemic. The government does not

We agreed when it was suspended during pandemic. That does not mean projects approved long back should not be completed

STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBER

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NHRC notice to Maharashtra police on Arnab's complaint

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission on Monday issued notices to the Maharashtra police and the Prisoners Department acting on a complaint by Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami alleging that a colleague of his had been "arrested arbitrarily and tortured in custody". Mr. Goswami alleged that the FIR in the case.

work's assistant vice-president of distribution Ghanashyam Singh had been assaulted and mentally tortured after being arrested on November 10 in connection with the alleged TRP rigging case, the NHRC said.

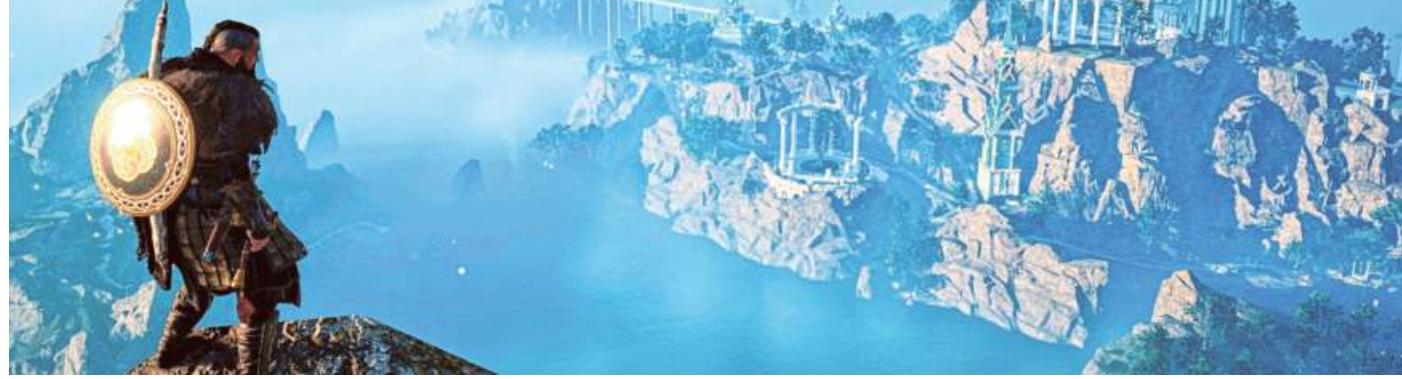
The commission noticed that there are allegations of physical torture, false implication and mental harassment of the office-bearer of an eminent media house, which cannot be acceptable in a democratic country like India," the NHRC said.

The Director-General of Police and the Director-General of Prisons were asked to submit their reports within four weeks.

Appeal against Dawoodi Bohra child custody norm

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Inspired by exploration



DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Award-winning composer Jesper Kyd chats about experimenting on the soul-stirring scores of Assassin's Creed Valhalla, while paying homage to his heritage

"When I was asked to work on Assassin's Creed Valhalla, the first thing they told me was the setting, and I was immediately interested," starts Jesper Kyd, seated amid an array of instruments in his home studio in Los Angeles during a video call with *Metro-Plus*.

Being Danish and having Vikings as part of his growing up, the pull of his heritage towards Assassin's Creed Valhalla just fit right.

Kyd's latest work is part of the 2020 video game that focusses on Viking histories, and their tumultuous battles with the Anglo-Saxons. The game is a deep dive into nature-rich exploration and gruelling wars, fuelled by stunning graphics and, of course, an evocative score.

Faith to the Norse

From the beginning, the self-taught BAFTA-winning composer knew he wanted to play his own instruments for Valhalla, and it presented a lot of relearning opportunities for the composer.

"Ubisoft was looking for faithful and non-orchestral scores for the authentic world they had

CThis world is in vast environments of Nature – mountains, forest, fjords – it is so rich. Other Assassin's Creed games have taken place in cities, so the feeling is different.

created. I had to research instruments and the time period, to give it that realism," he recalls. "I acquired these instruments, and had to figure out how to compose for these instruments."

Kyd had fun with this playtime; he explains the music style he wanted to create couldn't be summoned through hiring solo artistes. He wanted something abstract, so it was important that the score was modernised through filters and other edits for contemporary gameplay.

"I was told the first music I sent to the team was too dark as I had thought of Viking music as dark pulses and percussion," he shares, "They wanted music for landscape exploration when not necessarily engaged in a mission or side-quest. It was interesting to find out what Viking music would sound like if not dark – that is

THE PULL OF THE DARK

The recent years have seen a breed of soulful music from Scandinavian composers such as Atli Örvarsson (*Defending Jacob*), Hildur Guðnadóttir (*Chernobyl*, *Joker*), Ludwig Göransson (*Black Panther*, *Tenet*), and, of course, Kyd himself. Ask him about this cultural convergence between the US' creative arts industry and Scandinavian countries and he feels pride, but answers simply, "Scandinavia is a pretty dark place; Denmark not as bad as Norway and Sweden which have rougher winters. This is something we learned to embrace early on. I am not afraid of the dark and going dark. There is a certain melancholy I recognise in Scandinavian music; when I hear it, it reminds me of home."

where spirituality came in, taking inspiration from the Norse gods, the complex afterlife belief system, and interesting stories you find along the way."

As an example, he recalls a theory of how Ragnarok inspired the Vikings who began as farmers facing constant natural disasters; as a result of which they morphed



Battle cries Screenshots from the video game ; (above) Jesper Kyd

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

into warriors.

One of the most important and abstract concepts of the composing experience for Valhalla was 'soul'. From the beginning, the 48-year-old was mindful that the score has a great deal of soul infused into every strum, hum, breath, and beat, in order to make the gaming experience much more goosebump-raising.

"This world is in vast environments of Nature – mountains, forest, fjords – it is so rich. Other Assassin's Creed games have taken place in cities. So it was important, for Valhalla, to have these long pieces of epic music that takes a while to develop." Much of the music is in the live performances. Kyd said this direction could not have been achieved by explaining to a performer, as it was a personal experience.

Valhalla, however, is still an Assassin's Creed game, not just a Viking game. The universal core is the Animus, the Virtual Reality machine that helps the protagonist read a subject's genetic memory and project the output onto an external screen in three dimensions, pushing forward the various plots of each game.

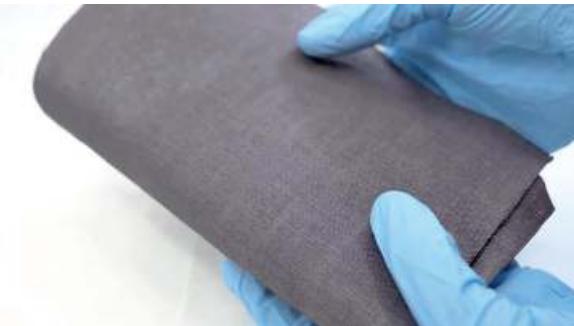
Synthesizers are musical catnip for Kyd, and Valhalla offered up new ways to experiment with them. He went all out, even though these tools have outputs he could plug straight into the board or computer. "In order to get the most authentic and acoustic room-toned sound as possible, I needed to find a way to match them with the live performances, which have a lot of air in them. The mics are not very close as I wanted to simulate the feeling of being outside in Nature. I tried to do that with synthesizers too. I would run them through an old Danelectro amp from the 1950s, put mics in front of this amp and record it like a live performance."

This plugs into the 'interior mindset' music profile Kyd has pursued throughout his composing career, since the *Hitman* games. It is all about tapping into the atmosphere to achieve the right intensity for a stealth-based experience for the gamer. "I don't like to make it apparent. I like surprising people and doing the opposite to what is expected. I like toning things down and making it primal. I used a *morin khuur*, a very old Mongolian cello which doesn't belong in Viking settings."

Kyd concludes he actually used a lot of instruments that are not traditionally Scandinavian, "but as long as I used these unusual instruments in a way that elevated the interior mindset, I went for it."



TECH-A-BYTE



Away with ye radiation!

Many of us have heard of Faraday cages, formations of a metal mesh which are helpful in staving off radiation, ideal for those who are paranoid of the woes of 5G. In fact, researchers Yury Gogotsi and his team at the Drexel Nanomaterials Institute, Drexel University, have come up with a way to coat ordinary textile fibres in a metallic compound that makes them effective Faraday cages that are also flexible, durable and washable. This Faraday fabric is an infusion of ordinary cotton with a compound called MXene.

"We have known for some time that MXene has the ability to block electromagnetic interference better than other materials, but this discovery shows that it can effectively adhere to fabrics and maintain its unique shielding capabilities," said Gogotsi in a statement.

Faraday cages work because radiation in radio frequencies is blocked by certain metals. Also because of its wavelength, the metal doesn't even have to be solid. Many facilities are lined with such materials to prevent outside radiation from interfering with sensitive measurements.



A scream for screens

Smartphone brand Vivo and CyberMedia Research (CMR) have revealed the findings of the second edition of study 'Smartphones and their impact on human relationships 2020', showing some remarkable preferences of screen-time and mental health, post-COVID-19, including a 25% increase in average daily time spent on smartphones.

Seventy-four percent feel that periodically switching off their mobile phone can actually help them spend more time with your family, 66% of Indians believe that their smartphone improves their quality of life, while 70% of Indians feel that if their smartphone usage continues increasing, it is likely to impact their mental/physical health. However, only 18% of users have actually switched off their phone on their own.

So, how long have you spent on your phone during the lockdown this year?

GAMESPOT

A hundred sci-fis rolled into one

The game we have been waiting for this entire decade is finally here. Cyberpunk 2077 has its flaws but is definitely worth the wait

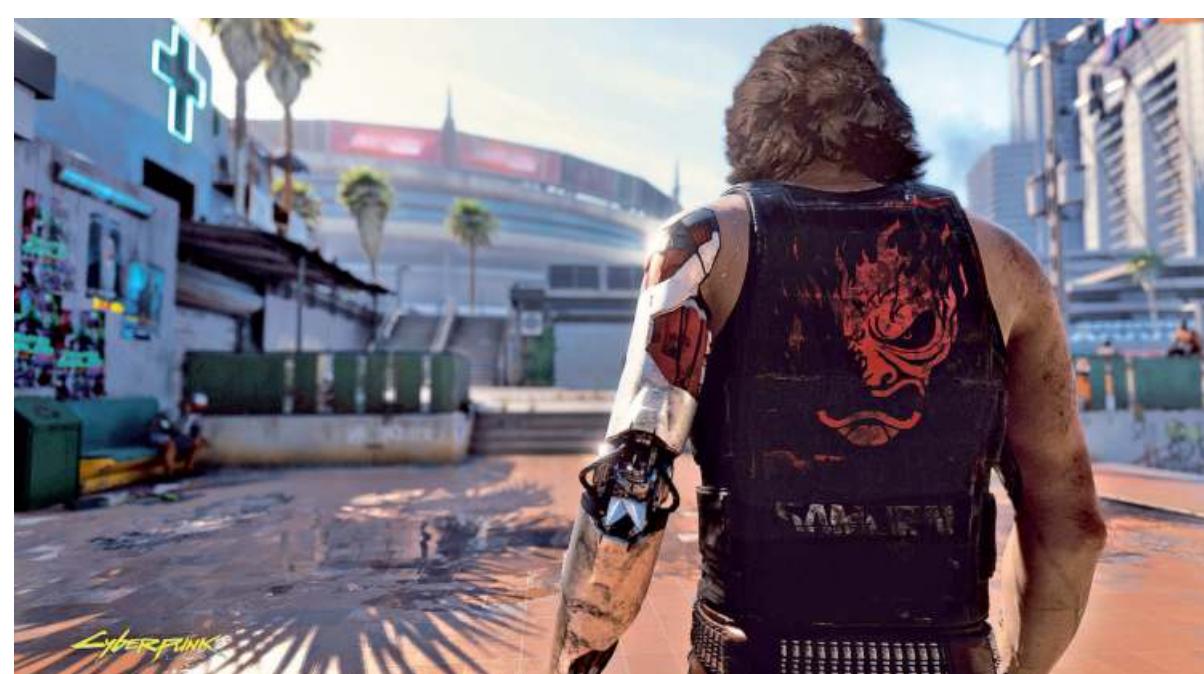
JULIAN ALMEIDA

Ever since its first teaser in 2012, the world has been thirsty for Cyberpunk 2077, a Grand Theft Auto-like game set in the pen-and-paper world of Mike Pondsmith. Our expectations grew when CD Projekt, the makers of Cyberpunk 2077, redefined the open-world role-playing games with The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt. Finally, after months, nay, years of hype, is Cyberpunk 2077 worth it?

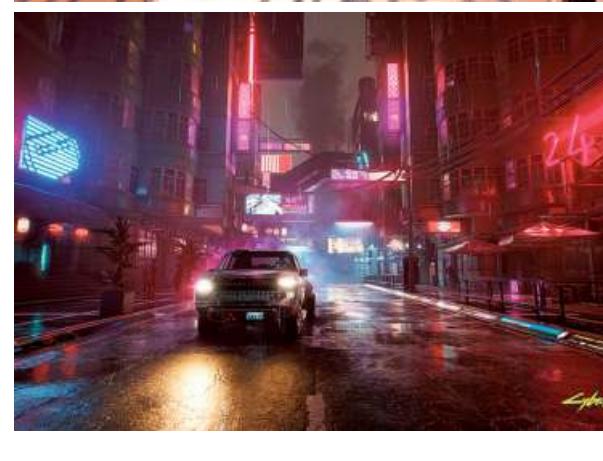
The answer is an enthusiastic yes.

You play as a mercenary known as V, who is stuck with the ghost of an anarchic dead rocker, played by Keanu Reeves. The story of Cyberpunk 2077 plays out like 100 sci-fi movies rolled into one with the explosive force of an '80s Hollywood blockbuster. A lot of the magic of the game is in the things to do around in Night City, which is home to all kinds of vices and violence (the game is for adults only).

You can get an incredibly detailed version of V as you have a large amount of choices while creating the character. There are three possible lifepaths or origin stories for your character – Nomads, Street Kid and Cor-



In technicolour Screenshots from Cyberpunk 2077 ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



draw you into its world. There are, however, bugs and glitches. On older gen consoles the game looks ghastly with blocky enemies. While I did not run into game-breaking bugs, I did experience a lot of clipping and artefacting issues. Enemies when shot sort of crumble in a weird way. I was not expecting this after a year of delays with the excuse of making the game perfect.

Cyberpunk could have done without the hype machine. Drumming up those expectations with well-manicured PR videos, has, in part, contributed to that underwhelming feeling. So make sure you adequately 'de-hype' yourself and wait until things are fixed. CD Projekt is known for going to any lengths to fix things in their enhanced editions.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel

CYBERPUNK 2077
DEVELOPER +
PUBLISHER: CD
Projekt Red
PRICE: ₹2,499 on
PC; ₹3,999
Playstation 4, Xbox
One; Coming soon
to Playstation 5,
Xbox Series X as
free upgrade

about corporate exploitation and technology used in unnatural ways to make works of art. It is one of the game's most fascinating aspects along with its denizens.

inadvertently pushes you into gunfights. So, you may want to optimise your skills for maximum carnage. Driving in the game is top-notch and you want to get behind the wheels of the unique cars in the game. Some of the best experiences are in driving around, taking in the sights and diving into various quests.

Cyberpunk 2077 looks breathtaking and edgy, with every scene designed to

MD NO-NDE



A splash into cyberspace



ATHIRA M

"It's my cameraman's number that I have given on my Facebook page. Otherwise people keep calling to meet me in person!" says Abdul Sami, 34, with a laugh. The Guntur-native is getting used to attention after he started a fishing channel, Abdul Sami Fishing, one-and-a-half years ago. With over 1.5 lakh subscribers, it is now a source of income as well for Sami.

The business of fishing vloggers is booming, with subscribers running into lakh and millions. Kerala has the largest number of these vloggers, followed by Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra.

The huge Malayali presence is because of the different kinds of water bodies in the state, such as sea, lakes, rivers and ponds. The numbers have increased this year, post the lockdown," says Midhun Surendran from Kozhikode in Kerala, who runs Mallu Angler (101K subscribers) and is the admin of a Facebook group of fishing enthusiasts.

Starring the catch of the day
Content is diverse and exciting, as these vloggers fish from the shore as well as do inshore and offshore fishing. Besides extensive coverage of the process, they talk about technique, give tips and highlight features of the catch. The fish varieties generally featured in the vlogs are grouper, red snapper, rohu, catla, king fish, mangrove jack, barracuda, barramundi, sting ray, different varieties of snakehead, among others. Besides showing traditional fishing traps and spear gun fishing, some vloggers demonstrate the use of ingenious bait, made using rice bran powder, chicken intestine, maida paste and even cauliflower.

These vloggers include members from the fishing community, who make videos documenting their day at sea, such as Ugal Meenavan Mookaiyur (821K subscribers) by K Kingston from Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu and Kadal Raasa-Fishing (173K subscribers) by D Gandhi of Puducherry.

A graphic designer and son of a fisherman R Desappan, Gandhi used to run YouTube channels that

EARN YOUR WAY

A vlogger can apply for monetisation to YouTube after getting 4,000 watching hours and 1,000 subscribers. Once the content is analysed for authenticity, one can start earning. "However, the revenue depends on the number of views and not on the number of subscribers. It took me three months to make 100 USD. If the videos garner one million views a month, you get ₹12,000-15,000 per month. The amount goes up if the video goes viral," says Sebin. There are vloggers who get as high as ₹15 lakhs per month.

A basic combo pack of fishing gear costs ₹1,500, which is not enough to catch all varieties of fish. Reels are priced at ₹2,000 and up and some high-end models cost ₹75,000-80,000.

focussed on cinema, sports and cooking earlier. "When it came to creating original content, I couldn't find a better option than fishing. So, for my channel, I ventured out into the sea for the first time. Videos featuring my father get more views!" says Gandhi.

Presentation, quality and variety go into the making of a successful channel, says Sebin Cyriac who has 1.34 million subscribers for his channel, Fishing Freaks. "It is a family affair for me. My videos often feature my 85-year-old grandmother, Rosamma Joseph, who introduced me to fishing, my parents, brothers, sisters-in-law and their families, friends, neighbours.... One epi-

sode had 24 of us, when we travelled to Chellanam (in Kochi) a day after my elder brother's wedding!" says Sebin, who was all set to move to Canada before vlogging changed his life.

To stand out

The presence of too many channels has forced vloggers to think different. "It is important to showcase something new. So I am going on a three-month fishing trip in Dubai to create novel content," says Ahammed Bisher of Folks Channel, who just back from a four-day deep-sea fishing trip off the shore in Kozhikode.

Vlogger, Unni George from Kumbangal near Kochi, adds that he often looks for adventure in his videos. One of them shows his encounter with an Arapaima weighing 37 kilograms, a strong predator he caught at a quarry in Angamaly. The fish though endemic to Amazon, is grown in commercial farms in Kerala and escaped to water bodies during flash floods.

Meanwhile, Maruthu Palanichamy (Konkan Fishing), a native of Kambam in Tamil Nadu and currently settled in Bengaluru, brings his 15-year experience into his vlogs. He stands out because he travels across the coastline to fish, covering parts of Tamil Nadu, Goa and Karnataka. "That is



Hooked online (Clockwise from left) Unni George (right) and Shano Angamaly with an arapaima; Sebin Cyriac and his parents; Abdul Wajid with a stingray he caught; Ahammed Bisher holding a catla

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

why my channel is in English. Also, I use inflatable boats for fishing expeditions, which isn't common in the angling community," he says.

Money matters

A vlogger's revenue can run into several lakh rupees, inclusive of the amount obtained through product promotions. There is no better example than Unni George. His vlog, OMKV Fishing&Cooking founded in 2018, became the means to clear his debts after a kidney transplantation. "OMKV, short form for 'Odu Meene Kandam Vazhi', is my life now! I couldn't risk my health by doing heavy jobs after the transplant. So I decided to try my luck on YouTube and that clicked," says 34-year-old Unni.

However, even with sophisticated gear, there is no guarantee that you get a great video every time. A small percentage of vloggers focus on catch-and-release content. A crusader is 27-year-old Ngurang Nega from Arunachal Pradesh who creates awareness about the golden mahseer, an endangered variety, on his channel, Mahseer Fishing Arunachal Pradesh. "Even local people aren't aware of the need to conserve the fish. So I fish for the mahseer and introduce it to the viewers before releasing it," Nega says.



Small but significant

The Habitats Trust awards conservation grants to revive the population of the iconic Mahseer fish and the Malabar Tree Toad that is found only in the Western Ghats

K JESHI

Did you know that the Malabar Tree Toad spends all its life on trees? It is found only in the evergreen forests of the Western Ghats and nowhere else in the world. "They can be sighted only when they descend to the ground at the beginning of the Southwest monsoon to breed in forest streams," says Ravi Chellam. Ravi is the CEO of Bengaluru-based Metastring Foundation that spearheads a citizen-driven conservation initiative of this endangered species across the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The Metastring Foundation has won the Lesser-known Species Grant from The Habitats Trust, which facilitates and funds conservation work of organisations and individuals. "We plan to use the grant to conduct workshops and awareness programmes for local citizens across the Western Ghats," says Ravi Chellam of Metastring Foundation. They have developed an Android App, called 'Frogwatch' which allows easy documentation of amphibians in the frogwatch page (part of the India Biodiversity Portal). Users can upload their records of amphibians in the form of images, audio files, or lists.

The other winner is Neethi Mahesh, a river ecologist from Coorg. She has been awarded the Conservation Hero Grant for her work on Mahseer, a large freshwater fish distributed in Indian rivers. Five years ago, Neethi along with a group of scientists and NGOs, came up with a first of its kind freshwater fish telemetry project to highlight the plight of Khudree Mahseer and its riverine habitat. "Once an abundant game and food fish in India, it has now become endangered and with an extremely limited range," says Neethi. The Cauvery River that flows through Coorg district in Karnataka is where her project is located.

Excerpts from an interview with Trisha Ghose, Project Director of The Habitats Trust:

Can you tell us more about the grants?

• The Habitats Trust founded in 2018 by Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson of HCL Technologies and Trustee of Shiv Nadar Foundation, draws attention to India's natural habitats and indigenous species that require urgent protection. The grants facilitate conservation work through funding on a partnership model. There are four categories

– Strategic Partnership (₹5 lakhs),



One with Nature (Top to bottom) The River Cauvery, Neethi Mahesh with farmers (below) Trisha Ghose ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Lesser-Known Habitats (₹15 lakhs), Lesser-Known Species (₹10 lakhs) and Conservation Hero (₹10 lakhs). Over the two years of the Grants program, the team has done 41 field sites and interacted with conservationists who work in difficult and remote landscapes. We have awarded seven conservationists with grants amounting to over one crore rupees.

Why is it important to choose niche projects?

• Most existing funding programmes support mega-mammals – charismatic species such as the tiger, elephant or rhino. Lesser-known species rarely come into the limelight. It is not enough to just save the elephant, we must also protect the corridor it uses. We cannot just focus on the tiger. There have to be concerted efforts to conserve the herbivores that form its diet. If we are to truly support our fishing communities, we need to focus on unaddressed habitats like coral reefs that are home to 25% of marine life.

What is your selection process?

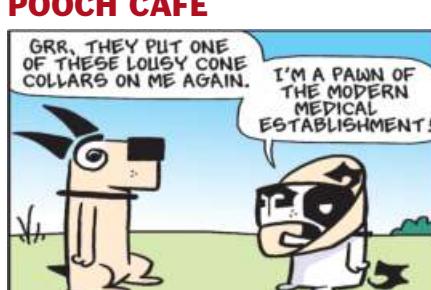
• We have an online application portal where people can

submit their proposals. We use a ranking system to assess several parameters, including conservation need, methodology, expected impact, and whether the model is sustainable. After evaluation, we shortlist and make field visits. Our jury comprises distinguished individuals, including MK Ranjitsinh, one of the prime architects behind the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972; Brian Heath, CEO for the Mara Conservancy, Kenya; and environmentalist Bahar Dutt to name a few.

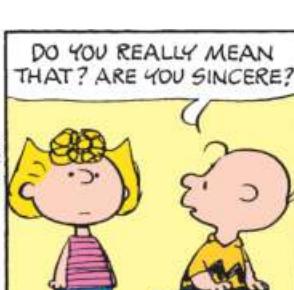
Have the grants helped in reclaiming a lost habitat or improving the numbers of a lesser-known species?

• With lesser-known species, one of the greatest challenges is the lack of data or research to work towards their conservation. Through the grants, we have supported conservationists to build a repository of knowledge for two species in particular, the Indian pangolin and the Malabar tree toad. In 2018, Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra was awarded the Lesser-known Species Grant for their project aimed at the conservation of the Indian pangolin through community participation in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Through our partners we are also experimenting with tools for habitat restoration.

POOCHE CAFE



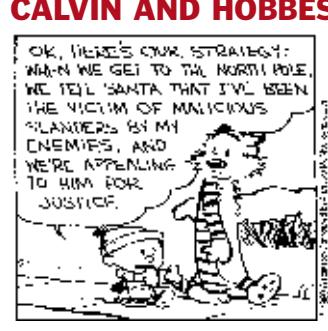
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



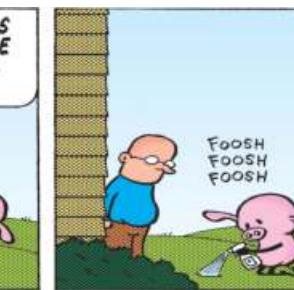
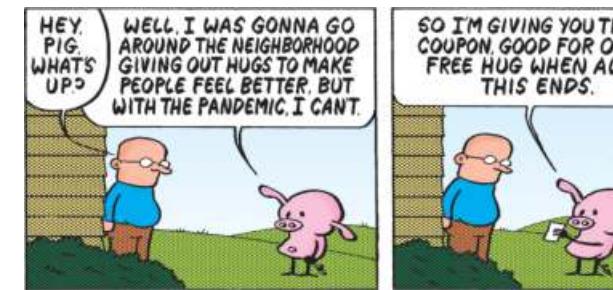
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



U.S. agencies hit by massive cyberattack

Hackers allegedly linked to Russia targeted govt. departments; users warned against using SolarWinds

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. government issued an emergency directive to federal agencies in the wake of a major cyberattack, as multiple media outlets reported at least two departments – including the Treasury – had been targeted by hackers with ties to Russia.

In a statement on Sunday, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) said it had ordered federal agencies to immediately stop using SolarWinds Orion IT products following reports that hackers had used a recent update to gain access to internal communications.

"The compromise of SolarWinds' Orion Network Management Products poses unacceptable risks to the security of federal networks," said CISA Acting Director Brandon Wales.

"Tonight's directive is in-



Break-in: IT company SolarWinds admitted that hackers had exploited an update between March and June. •ISTOCKPHOTO

tended to mitigate potential compromises within federal civilian networks... we urge all our partners in the public and private sectors to assess their exposure to this compromise and to secure their networks," he added.

The U.S. government earlier Sunday admitted its computer networks had been hit

by a cyberattack.

"We have been working closely with our agency partners regarding recently discovered activity on government networks," a spokesperson for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency told AFP.

"CISA is providing technical assistance to affected en-

ties as they work to identify and mitigate any potential compromises."

IT company SolarWinds over the weekend admitted that hackers had exploited a backdoor in an update of some of its software released between March and June.

"We have been advised this attack was likely conducted by an outside nation state and intended to be a narrow, extremely targeted, and manually executed attack, as opposed to a broad, system-wide attack," the firm said.

The hacks are part of a wider campaign that also hit major cybersecurity firm FireEye, which said its own defenses had been breached by sophisticated attackers who stole tools used to test customers' computer systems.

FireEye said it suspected the attack could have affected numerous high profile

targets across the globe. "Victims have included government, consulting, technology, telecom and extractive entities in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East," the firm said.

Microsoft alerts users

Microsoft also alerted its users to what it described as a sophisticated campaign aimed at "high value targets" in government and cybersecurity and which it said represented "nation-state activity at significant scale."

U.S. media reports said the FBI was investigating a group working for the Russian foreign intelligence service, SVR.

Russia's Embassy in the U.S. hit back against what it said were the "unfounded" media claims that the Kremlin was involved in the attacks.

British spy thriller author John le Carre dies aged 89

The former spy wrote 25 novels, a memoir over six decades

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

John le Carre, the British writer best known for his Cold War espionage novels *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*, has died aged 89, his agent and family said on Sunday.

The author, a former British intelligence officer whose real name was David Cornwell, wrote 25 novels and one memoir in a career spanning six decades, selling 60 million books worldwide.

He is survived by his wife, Jane, and four sons.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy was adapted for television in 1979, with Alec Guinness starring as the enigmatic spycatcher George Smiley, and became a classic. Gary



John le Carre

Oldman reprised the role in the 2011 film, winning an Oscar the following year.

"All who follow are in his debt," Mr. Oldman said. "His characters were drawn deftly and deeply... For me, inhabiting George Smiley remains one of the highpoints of my life."

His friend, the novelist Robert Harris, called le

Carre "one of those writers who really was not only a brilliant writer but he also penetrated popular culture – and that's a great rarity".

Le Carre once said he owed his career in the shadows and later literary success to an "impulsive adolescent decision" to flee an unhappy life. It involved a spell in Bern, Switzerland, learning German, where he took his first steps in British intelligence, doing odd-jobs across the border in Austria. He later returned to study at Oxford University.

He later transferred to the overseas spy agency MI6. It was as an MI6 officer that he had his first success with *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* in 1963. For obvious reasons, he had to use a pseudonym.

Google hit by brief outage

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

Google users in the U.S., Europe, India and other parts of the world were briefly unable to access their Gmail accounts, watch YouTube videos or get to their online documents during an outage on Monday.

Tens of thousands of complaints popped up around 7 a.m. Eastern time along the East Coast of the U.S. The vast majority of those people, about 90%, could not log in, according to the site Downdetector.

The problem appeared to cleared up just before 8 a.m.

U.S. lifts Sudan off terror list

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KHARTOUM

The U.S. on Monday removed Sudan from its state sponsors of terrorism blacklist, less than two months after the Arab nation pledged to normalise ties with Israel.

The move opens the way for aid, debt relief and investment to a country going through a rocky political transition.

President Donald Trump had announced in October that he was delisting Sudan, 27 years after the U.S. first put the country on its blacklist for harbouring Islamist militants.

Sri Lanka's youngest virus victim triggers campaign against forced cremations

The 20-day-old baby, who died of COVID-19, was cremated against his family's wishes

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO



Municipal workers carrying a body of a COVID-19 victim for cremation in Colombo. •AP

dies "can be buried or cremated". The island is witnessing a surge in cases – totalling over 32,000 now – since the second major outbreak in October.

Making up about 10% of the country's 21 million-strong population, Sri Lanka's Muslim community has been urging the government to revise its pandemic guidelines that go against Islamic religious beliefs, but to no avail.

In barely two days, baby Shaykh was in the news as Sri Lanka's youngest victim of the virus, cremated against his family's wishes because of the government's policy of allowing only cremation, based on unsubstantiated claims that bodies of COVID-19 victims could contaminate groundwater. "We were repeatedly told the cremation has to be done within 24 hours," Mr. Fahim recalled.

Ever since COVID-19 struck Sri Lanka in March, the government has been enforcing cremations for all victims, despite the World Health Organization saying bo-

theries can be buried or cremated". The island is witnessing a surge in cases – totalling over 32,000 now – since the second major outbreak in October.

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Ever since COVID-19 struck Sri Lanka in March, the government has been enforcing cremations for all victims, despite the World Health Organization saying bo-

gislator Rauff Hakeem told Parliament recently. "The community is getting ahead with a civic resistance programme of refusing to accept the bodies. This is a traumatic situation for the entire community... the trauma aside, this is going to have serious implications for generations to come," he said, "pleading" with the government to revise its guidelines.

Many in Sri Lanka see the government's policy mandating cremations as part of a series of attacks targeting Muslims over the last few years. According to Farzana Haniffa, professor, Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo, the Rajapaksa administration has cultivated a position in relation to its base, where the demonising of Muslims is needed, and has to be maintained. "The denial of Muslims' burial rights is just yet another step in that pursuit," she told *The Hindu*. "It is unfortunate that the government, with so much power and such a huge mandate, sees the need for this," Ms. Haniffa said.

However, the recent passing and forcible cremation of baby Shaykh, has set off a silent protest. Dozens of Colombo residents tied pieces of white cloth on the gates of the crematorium this weekend, expressing solidarity, but they had been removed on Monday reportedly by the police, according to a tweet from Ali Zahir Moulana, a former parliamentarian.

As calls to stop mandatory cremations grew louder over the past week, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa directed officials to find land suitable for burials, local media reported. There has been no official announcement on the development.

Maldives offers help

Meanwhile, neighbouring Maldives, an Islamic country of nearly 400,000 people, has stepped in to help. Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid said on Monday in a tweet: "On special request from Sri Lankan President @GotabayaR, President @ibusolih is consulting stakeholder authorities of the Government of Maldives to assist Sri Lanka in facilitating Islamic funeral rites in the Maldives for Sri Lankan Muslims succumbing to COVID-19 pandemic."

Six years after Mr. Fahim and his wife had their first child, baby Shaykh was born last month, bringing much joy to the family in an otherwise stifling pandemic year. "I drive a rented three-wheeler to make a living. We were struggling financially, but our baby boy made us so happy," Mr. Fahim told *The Hindu*. "It is not easy to talk about our child, but I have put my feelings aside to speak up, only in the hope that what happened to our son doesn't happen to even one more person. Our wounds will begin to heal only when they put an end to forced cremations."

New York nurse receives first COVID-19 vaccine in U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NEW YORK

A nurse in New York became the first person in the United States to receive the coronavirus vaccine on Monday.

Sandra Lindsay, a critical care nurse at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center, received the Pfizer-BioNTech shot live on television shortly before 9:30 a.m. (1430 GMT).

"First Vaccine Administered. Congratulations USA! Congratulations WORLD!" President Donald Trump tweeted.

Ms. Lindsay said the jab "didn't feel any different from taking any other vaccine."

"I feel great. I feel relieved," she said.

"I hope this marks the beginning of the end of the very painful time in our history. I want to instill public confidence that the vaccine is safe... We're in a pandemic so we all need to do our part," Ms. Lindsay said.

Governor Andrew Cuomo, watching the landmark moment via video-link, told Ms. Lindsay he hoped the vaccine would give her and other frontline health care workers "a sense of security and safety."

"It's going to take months before the vaccine hits critical mass. So, this is the light at the end of the tunnel, but it's a long tunnel," he said.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, JAGATSINGHPUR. Tel.No.06724 - 223485, e-mail - eerwss_icte@nic.in e-Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.27 of 2020-21	
The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Jagatsinghpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Lump sum composite bids in Double Cover system in online mode for Execution of 3 nos & 2 nos of individual villages Retrofitting RPWS schemes in one package.	
1. Name of work : Execution of 3 nos & 2 nos of individual villages Retrofitting RPWS Schemes in one package	
2. No. of work : 2 Nos.	: 2 Nos.
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.3,46,40,223.00 & Rs.3,03,26,253.00	: Rs.10,000/- Each
4. Cost of Tender paper : A & Special Class	
5. Class of Contractor : 16.12.2020 to 06.01.2021	
6. Availability of Tender in Website : 16.12.2020 to 06.01.2021	
7. Submission of Bid in Online : 16.12.2020 to 02.01.2021	
8. Date of seeking Clarification : 07.01.2021 (11.00 A.M.)	
9. Date of Opening of bids : Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Jagatsinghpur	
10. Name and address of O.I.T. : www.tendersissa.gov.in	
11. All other details can be seen from the web site : O-682: Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Divn., Jagatsinghpur.	
Office of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Jagatsinghpur, OIPR-25024/11/0009/2021	

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RWS DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR PLOT NO. 1214 (P), AT : TAPOVAN, P.O: KHANDAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR-30 Tel-(0674) 2384108, E-Mail: eerwss_bbsr@nic.in Govt. of Odisha - e-Procurement Notice Bid Identification Notice No. 20 of 2020-21	
The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage bid through e-procurement in double/single cover system according to norm of e-procurement.	
1. Nature of Work	: Supply all labour , material T&P for laying of rising main and Distribution pipe line of HDPE/GI/DI, construction of pump house, compound wall, RCC ESR, UGR, SV chamber, Stand post, chlorination arrangement, installation of IRPs with other ancillary works for different water supply scheme under Khordha Division.
2. No. of tender	: 14 Nos.
3. Tender Paper Cost	: Rs.6000.00 to Rs.10000.00
4. Value of Work	: From: Rs. 26.21 Lakhs to 276.62 Lakhs
5. Class of Contractor	: C" & "A"
6. Date & Time of availability of Bid document in portal	: 16.12.2020 4.00 P.M. to 28.12.2020 Upto 3.00 P.M.
7. Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	: 16.12.2020 4.00 P.M. to 19.12.2020 Upto 3.00 P.M. during office hour
8. Date & Time of opening of tender	: 29.12.2020 at 11.00 A.M. in the O/O E.E., RWS&S Divn., Bhubaneswar
9. Time of Completion	: 180 days to 360 days
10. The bidders have to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the web site : https://www.tendersissa.gov.in. Comrigendum if any shall only be published in web site mentioned	
Executive Engineer, RWS & S DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR OIPR-25011/11/0004/2021	

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT Buildings (C&M) circle, (Medical Works), Madurai– 625 002. Notice Inviting Tenders (Lumpsum Contract / Pre qualification Tender) (Two Cover System) Tender Notice No:16SE/BCMC(MW)/2020-2021/D	

MARKET WATCH

	14-12-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	46253	0.34
US Dollar	73.55	0.12
Gold	48371	-0.45
Brent oil	50.02	0.18

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	467.00	0.70
Asian Paints	2548.15	27.20
Axis Bank	615.90	2.65
Bajaj Auto	3289.00	-38.65
Bajaj Finance	4989.65	54.80
Bharti Airtel	503.05	-1.35
BPCL	405.45	8.05
Britannia Ind	3776.95	44.20
Cipla	789.30	33.45
Coal India	143.35	5.10
Divis Lab	3599.80	-42.30
Dr Reddys Lab	5022.80	5.85
Eicher Motors	2400.45	-70.35
GAIL (India)	125.45	-0.40
Grafix Ind	911.45	9.20
HCL Tech	873.00	10.75
HDFC	2302.65	6.75
HDFC Bank	1372.15	-10.65
HDFC Life	655.75	-8.75
Hero MotoCorp	3113.65	-71.65
Hindalco	246.35	2.70
Hind Unilever	2370.75	-4.00
ICICI Bank	525.80	10.35
IndusInd Bank	921.25	-2.50
Infoys	1164.55	1.35
Indian Oil Corp	96.20	2.35
ITC	215.90	-0.40
JSW Steel	357.50	-2.15
Kotak Bank	1939.35	18.95
L&T	1249.65	55.35
M&M	711.70	-15.85
Maruti Suzuki	7696.80	-36.75
Nestle India Ltd.	18591.80	190.70
NTPC	104.60	2.20
ONGC	101.50	4.70
PowerGrid Corp	194.30	1.20
Reliance Ind	1991.30	-14.50
SBI Life	850.20	0.50
State Bank	274.20	1.75
Shree Cement	23722.20	-82.80
Sun Pharma	576.25	8.15
Tata Motors	177.65	-1.20
Tata Steel	626.75	5.05
TCS	2797.70	14.10
Tech Mahindra	909.40	-10.00
Titan	1463.45	21.05
UltraTech Cement	5073.75	58.75
UPL	442.15	7.15
Wipro	349.35	-4.15

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 14		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.38	73.70
Euro	89.19	89.58
British Pound	98.53	98.96
Japanese Yen (100)	70.75	71.06
Chinese Yuan	11.22	11.27
Swiss Franc	82.84	83.21
Singapore Dollar	55.06	55.31
Canadian Dollar	57.54	57.80
Malaysian Ringgit	18.08	18.18
Australian Dollar	55.49	55.74

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Burger King debuts at 131% premium

NEW DELHI In a remarkable market debut, shares of Burger King India on Monday zoomed almost 131% against its issue price of ₹60. The stock opened at ₹115.35, a huge premium of 92.25% against the issue price on the BSE. It later closed at ₹138.40, a gain of 130.66%. PTI

States get ₹6,000 cr. in GST compensation dues

NEW DELHI The Centre has so far borrowed ₹42,000 crore since October and released the funds to States to meet GST compensation shortfall, the Finance Ministry said on Monday. The latest instalment of ₹6,000 crore was released to the States on Monday, out of which ₹5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 States and ₹483.40 crore has been released to 3 Union Territories (UT). PTI

IPO fundraising more than doubles in 2020

MUMBAI Strong markets led to a 2.25-time jump in funds raised via initial public offerings in 2020 to ₹45,000 crore. A strong pipeline may help the figure exceed ₹50,000 crore next year. Companies had raised ₹20,300 crore via IPOs in 2019. The total may exceed ₹50,000 crore if LIC's IPO goes through next year, Kotak Investment Banking's head of equity capital markets V. Jayasankar told reporters. PTI

Oaktree pips Piramal, Adani in DHFL bid

NEW DELHI U.S.-based Oaktree pipped Piramal Enterprises and Adani Group to emerge as the highest bidder for DHFL after fresh bids were invited under the insolvency process, according to sources. According to the sources, Oaktree raised the bid to ₹36,646 crore while Piramal Enterprises offered ₹35,550 crore. Gautam Adani's roads-to-mining group has improved its bid to ₹33,100 crore. PTI

CII urges Centre to disinvest aggressively, monetise assets

Fiscal management needs 3-year perspective, as recovery expected only in FY22'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has urged the government to look at fiscal management from a three-year perspective, as complete recovery was expected only in FY22.

In its recommendations for the Union Budget, it has also suggested aggressive disinvestment, including bringing down stake in majority public sector banks (PSBs) to below 50%, as well as monetisation of assets.

The industry association submitted its recommendations to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday. "CII has suggested that the Budget proposals should focus on growth, and alongside, look at fiscal management from a three-year perspective."

"Aggressive disinvestment and monetisa-



Larger good: Govt. must cut its stake in PSBs to below 50%, except in large banks such as SBI and BoB, says CII. ■ AFP

tion of assets can augment government revenues at a time when tax revenues have fallen sharply," Uday Kotak, president, CII, said.

He added that the Centre should prioritise expenditure in three areas – infrastructure, healthcare and sustainability – and that the Budget proposals should bring down its stake in PSBs to below 50% through the market

providing support for employment generation. The representative body has suggested that healthcare expenditure be increased to 3% of the GDP over three years.

"Achieving the vision of India being a \$5-trillion economy is contingent on having a strong financial sector. Government should bring down its stake in PSBs to below 50% through the market

route, over the next 12 months, except for 3-4 large PSBs such as State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and Union Bank," he said, adding that there was a need to create government-owned, professionally managed Development Finance Institutions to finance key sectors of the economy.

The CII said that to raise revenues, the government should consider aggressive disinvestment of both loss-making and a few profit-making PSUs, given the capital markets were performing well. In addition, sale or lease of government surplus land should be considered.

To boost private investments, he has sought a stable tax regime, stability of long-term interest rates at current levels and ensuring sanctity of contracts for government entities.

Fuel demand drops 3.6% year-on-year in November

Rises sequentially for 3rd straight month



While petrol had reached pre-COVID levels in September, diesel had returned to normal in October. ■ MURALI KUMAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

India's fuel demand fell 3.6% year-on-year in November, reversing the return to normal consumption levels attained in the previous month.

Total demand for petroleum products in November fell to 17.83 million tonnes from 18.51 million tonnes a year earlier, provisional data published by the Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell showed.

Fuel consumption, however, posted a month-on-month increase for the third straight month, helped by reviving transportation and business activity.

India consumed 17.75 million tonnes in October – the month in which fuel demand posted its first yearly increase since February as a spurt in diesel demand ahead of the festive season pushed consumption to pre-COVID-19 levels.

The question from a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde came when submissions were made by senior advocate C.A. Sundaram, for Cyrus Investments, about Ratan Tata's 'personal interest' to have taxi aggregators use Tata cars.

"What is wrong in head of family wanting information or wanting to control decisions?" the CJJ asked.

Mr Sundaram argued that Tata company owned many listed firms running to ₹65 lakh crore with public shareholders. "So, there should be some independence in decision making."

Diesel demand, which had soared 7.4% year-on-year in October, dropped 6.9% in November to 7.04 million tonnes.

Month-on-month, the demand slightly improved from 6.99 million tonnes.

But month-on-month, it posted a 2.8% fall.

Telcos spar amid farmer protests

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio has sought action against rivals Airtel and Vi, alleging that the two telcos were encouraging the public to migrate from Jio to show support for farmers by spreading 'frivolous rumours'.

In its letter dated December 10 to regulator TRAI, Jio had alleged that the two companies were either directly or indirectly involved in "supporting and furthering the insinuations and false and frivolous rumours of Reliance being an undue beneficiary of the farm bills". The company added that this had resulted in its receiving a "large number of port out" requests from customers citing "this as the sole reason for porting out of Jio without having any complaints or other issues related to Jio services".

Airtel, in its reply to TRAI, refuted Jio's allegations and said it had operated in the industry for 25 years. "During this period, we have competed hard... and striven to serve our customers with excellence. At the same time, we take great pride in treating our competitors and partners with respect."

"The current complaint deserves to be dismissed and thrown out with the contempt that it deserves. It is in poor taste and is scurrilous, to say the least," it added. Vi, in a statement, termed Jio's charge as 'baseless' and said it was intended to "malign our reputation."

"We strongly refute such irresponsible comments on us," the telco added.



Multiple bids received for Air India in sale process: Centre

Transaction enters stage 2, tweets Pandey; Tatas in the ring

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

The Indian government said on Twitter it has received multiple bids for its stake in state-run carrier Air India, the auction for which ended on Monday evening.

"Multiple expressions of interest have been received for strategic disinvestment of Air India. The transaction will now move to the second stage," according to a tweet from the Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management.

Tata Sons, India's auto-to-steel conglomerate, is expected to have submitted an initial bid for the loss-making airline, sources aware of the matter told Reuters.

A Tata spokesperson declined to comment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in Janu-



ary renewed its push to sell its entire interest in the loss-making airline, which has been kept aloft by a bailout since 2012.

An effort to auction a majority stake almost two years ago drew no bids, forcing the government to ease terms. It has also extended the deadline multiple times this year due to COVID-19 and further eased the terms to attract bidders.

The airline industry

around the world has been hammered by a slump in travel due to restrictions aimed at containing the novel coronavirus.

Tata already operates two airlines in India – full-service carrier Vistara, which is in partnership with Singapore Airlines, and budget airline AirAsia India along with Malaysia's AirAsia Group.

A successful bidder would win control of Air India's 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international landing and parking slots at domestic airports, as well as 900 slots at airports overseas.

It would also get 100% of the low-cost arm Air India Express and 50% of AISATS, which provides cargo and ground handling services at major Indian airports, the bid document showed.

"What is wrong in head of family wanting information or wanting to control decisions?" the CJJ asked.

Mr Sundaram argued that Tata company owned many listed firms running to ₹65 lakh crore with public shareholders. "So, there should be some independence in decision making."

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Month-on-month, the demand slightly improved from 6.99 million tonnes.

But month-on-month, it posted a 2.8% fall.

Pick Gill over Shaw for Adelaide Test, say Border and Gavaskar

The legends feel the latter currently plays too many strokes early in his innings to be consistent overseas; they also think he needs to tighten his defence



Right candidate: Border and Gavaskar feel that Gill, right, should partner Mayank. ■ TWITTER/BCCI & FILE PHOTO

INDIA IN AUS

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

With two days remaining for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy to begin, both India and Australia are far from certain about some of the key batting slots. But the two legends after whom the trophy for the Test series is named were unequivocal about their choice for Mayank Agarwal's opening partner.

"I know you guys have got big raps on [Prithvi] Shaw. It seems to me he plays a shot against the new ball. It looks good on flat tracks, but in Australia, you've got to be a little bit more watchful about your shot selection. He seems a little bit loose outside the off-stump. If I am the Indian selector, I would be looking very closely at young Gill."

Gavaskar agreed with Border on both counts: picking Gill ahead of Shaw and Shaw

playing too many strokes for an opener. "He [Shaw] has got to spend a little more

this kid. He'll be my pick out of the guys I saw," Allan Border said on Monday in a virtual chat with Sunil Gavaskar ahead of the series-opener starting Thursday.

"Trying to bat the way he's batting at the moment is not going to make him a consistent player. Yes, he'll score runs once in a while but to do that consistently, he has got to tighten his defence. I agree with AB that he is playing far too many shots at the start of the innings."

As for the other selection issue India's team management is faced with, Gavaskar voted in favour of Rishabh Pant over Wriddhiman Saha.

"Rishabh played in all the four Test matches two years ago and he also got a hundred in the tour game.

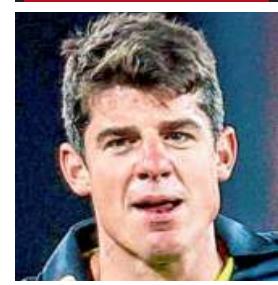
He seems to have got under the skin of some of the Australian players with his chirping behind the stumps. I guess the team will probably look to have him. Of course, when you have just come off a hundred a few days earlier, he would be the choice of the management, I think," he said.

Pant at No. 6

"With uncertainty at the top, I think they would like to strengthen their batting and I think Rishabh Pant will play. I am hoping he plays at 6, that will allow you to pick five bowlers to try and pick 20 Australian wickets."

Watch the first Test from 8:30 a.m. on December 17, Live on Sony Six, Sony Ten 1 and Sony Ten 3.

QUICK SINGLES



Abbott ruled out, Heniques drafted in

ADELAIDE
All-rounder Moises Henriques was on Monday called up to Australia's injury-hit Test squad to face India after paceman Sean Abbott was ruled out with a calf strain. Abbott, who has a "mild calf strain", was expected to be fit for the second Test, said Cricket Australia. AFP

Quick century was big confidence-booster: Pant

SYDNEY
Rishabh Pant said the hundred he struck in the pink-ball warm-up game was just the confidence-booster he needed. Pant, who struggled with fitness and form in this year's IPL in the UAE, created a happy selection dilemma for the Indian team management. PTI

Did India miss a trick by not retaining Hardik?

He could have been an X-factor batting at No. 6 or 7

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

The Indian think-tank might have missed a trick when Hardik Pandya flew back home after the conclusion of the limited-over leg of the Australian tour.

An inspired Hardik tore into the South African pace attack with his blistering 93, surfacing at No. 7. And India reached a combative 209 on a spicy pitch. His unbeaten 52 on a seaming Nottingham surface against England was valuable too.

Even when he is able to bowl little owing to fitness concerns, a case can be made to look at the wiry Hardik as a pure, high-octane lower middle-order batsman who can swing games with his bat-speed, reflexes and an improving defence.

Dangerous customer
The dangerous No. 6 or 7 is one the bowlers are wary of, after denting much of the top and the middle-order.

Hardik could have waded into them with strokes of thunder much like he did

self as a Test player with his attacking batsmanship at No. 6 or 7. He would go hard against a tiring bunch of bowlers.

Although he could send down a few overs of off-spin, the Aussies kept Symonds in the Test line-up principally because of his shock value as an explosive batsman. His 156 against old enemy England in the Melbourne Test of 2006 was a resounding, match-winning effort.

And Australia was in trouble at 121 for five when Symonds' counter-attacking 162 – he rallied with the tail – catapulted the host to 463 at the expense of the Indian attack in Sydney, 2008.

In attitude and spirit, Symonds and Hardik are similar cricketers. Match-winners whom the adversaries fear. The Indians could have kept Hardik in the Test squad down under. Undiluted aggression can scatter game-plans.



Taking flight: Hardik's aggression could have scattered Australia's gameplans in the Test series. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Barca vs PSG headlines last-16 match-ups



Clash of titans: Barcelona's Lionel Messi will be up against Neymar, who many consider his heir apparent. ■ AP, REUTERS

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain, last season's beaten finalist, will face Barcelona in the last 16 of the Champions League while Liverpool was paired with RB Leipzig in Monday's draw.

Bayern Munich, which beat PSG in the 2020 final to win a sixth European crown, plays Lazio in the knockout phase.

Chelsea, winner in 2012, has a tough task against Atletico Madrid.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Juventus will play Portuguese Porto, winner in 2004, while Real Madrid takes on

last season's surprise quarterfinalists Atalanta.

With the matches due to be played in February, PSG will hope Neymar will have recovered from an ankle injury which forced him to be stretchered off the pitch in the 1-0 Ligue 1 defeat to Lyon on Sunday.

The pre-quarterfinal line-up:

Borussia Monchengladbach v Manchester City; Lazio v Bayern Munich; Atletico Madrid v Chelsea.

RB Leipzig v Liverpool; Porto v Juventus; Barcelona v Paris Saint-Germain; Sevilla v Borussia Dortmund; Atalanta v Real Madrid.

First legs to be played on February 16-17 and February 23-24, and second legs on March 9-10 and March 16-17.

Daruvala optimistic after 'season of two halves'

The Indian, who ended his rookie F2 year with a win, wants to fight for title in 2021

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

After a troubled start to his rookie season in the Formula 2 championship, India's Jehan Daruvala finished on a high with a win in the final race in Bahrain last week.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Daruvala said, "It was a difficult season with two halves. The first half was very difficult with bad starts but to finish the second half of the season strongly with a podium and win meant a lot."

After failing to score points consistently in the first half of the season, Daruvala became a regular points-contender in the last

five rounds, missing out only twice, as he finished 12th in the overall standings.

Explaining his early struggles, Daruvala said, "After the pre-season, I just wasn't on top of stuff, especially with the start procedure. So I worked hard at the factory to nail a simple procedure rather than trying to get exceptional starts, and it worked."

The 22-year-old also had issues with his engine, leaving him with a significant power handicap in the first half of the season, especially in places with long straights like Spa and Monza.

"After the first race in



Daruvala... on a high.

Monza, we finally changed the engine and since then things began to fall in place," Daruvala added.

The Indian, who was selected by the former Force India team as a part of its ta-

lent hunt programme back in 2011, is now planning for a second season in F2 and hopes to build on the momentum.

While he has not finalised his team for next year, he topped the timings on two out of three days in the post-season test in Bahrain with his current team, Carlin Racing.

Daruvala signed off, saying, "Testing went very well, and I have learned from this year on things like tyre management and starts. My target next year is to do what I did in F3 in 2019, where I finished third and fought for the title till the last race."

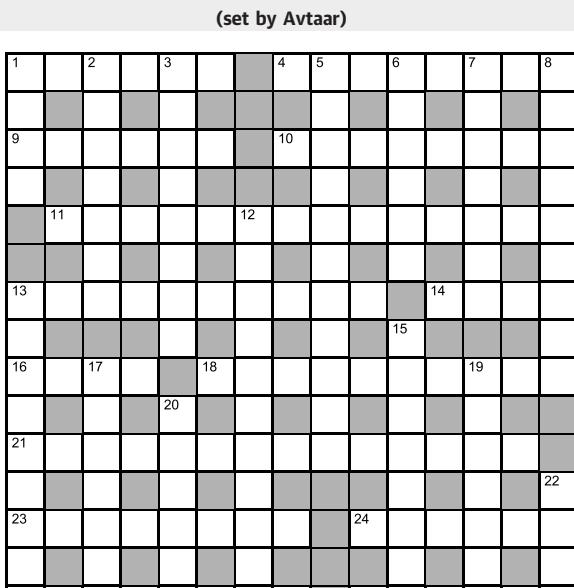
CROSSWORD

13119

(set by Avtaar)

Never go off the grid.
We have gone digital. Come solve online
at <https://www.ergo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY



ACROSS

- American beauty's partner (6)
- Spooner clears the account of old king and settles down (5,3)
- Brit left slyly, taking Yankee's top hat (6)
- Members' stands? (8)
- Free tea, every now and then, with bus ticket – to outdo all others? (4,3,7)
- Articles about logo designed by Indian minister (10)

14 Unofficial control, say (4)

16 Preacher Avtaar's holding a mass (4)

18 Escapes using steps behind an endless chasm (10)

21 Design network with intricate gauge that computers use to communicate with each other (6,8)

23 Spanish saint's follower, IMO, is wanting in original imagination (8)

24 Lout attracted to VIP's consort (6)

25 Decline visit by daughter (2,2,4)

26 Member of old Jewish fraternity – she's frequently seen going out (6)

DOWN

- Administer contest on the radio (4)
- Greasy stuff in herb is fodder for livestock (7)
- Really short bum established agency (8)
- Picked up headgear supplies for drilling (11)
- Moving around estuary's wide outer circle is most easily handled (6)
- Field scientist shifted base to southern tip (7)
- Bath covered with balls and glass cylinders (4,5)
- Shocking love tag (4-7)
- Washer holds up dog for trimming (9)
- Cool fellow – a bloated bachelor – gets ditched (8)
- Rider volunteers to leave military administrator outside entrance to courtyard (7)
- Thinking about spiced congee? (7)
- Unevenly vesiculated ugly audio-visual devices (6)
- The old sailor is first to pay the penalty (4)

SUDOKU

4	1			3		5		
				5		1		9
7	5	6	9					
5					6	2	4	
6	7	2						8
			9	6	4			7
1	7			3				
8	7			3				6

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13118

C	E		A	T				
Q	U	A	H	O	G	W	D	R
X	E	G	R	M	E	A		
N	O	N	S	E	C	R	A	B
I	S	E	N	S	E	B	Y	
M	I	D	N	I	G	H	T	M
O	U							A
B	U	S	T					
S	A	I						
C	H	R	I	S	M	A	E	V
A	O	A	O	O	O	E	E	
C	R	O	D	P	E	N	U	
W	D	R	O	E	S	B	R	
O	U	S	E	N	U	M	B	
A	S	S	T	E	D	O	N	K
S	T	E						

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Penance for progeny

When Dasaratha performed the putrakameshti yaga, in order to beget sons, a divine being emerged from the sacrificial fire, with a golden pot of porridge in his hands. The divine person instructed Dasaratha to give the porridge to his wives. Since Kausaly

TV PICKS

ISL: Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 11 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Wednesday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

IN BRIEF



Neymar gets 'reassuring' prognosis

PARIS
Neymar has received a 'reassuring' prognosis after an X-ray on his injured ankle that forced him to be stretchered off in a Ligue 1 match at the weekend, Paris Saint-Germain said on Monday. "The clinical opinion following a left ankle sprain sustained last night, is reassuring," the club said. AFP

Storm postpones finish of US Women's Open

HOUSTON
Dangerous weather halted play for the day in Sunday's final round of the 75th US Women's Open here before leaders could even tee off, setting up a Monday finish to the year's last Major golf championship. Japan's Hinako Shibuno was in lead after three rounds with American Amy Olson one stroke back. AFP



Ex-Liverpool manager Houllier passes away

PARIS
Gerard Houllier, the French coach who won the UEFA Cup, FA Cup and League Cup with Liverpool, has died aged 73. Houllier, who managed Liverpool from 1998 to 2004, was also France's national coach from 1992 to 1993. AFP

Messi bails out Barca

More misery for Arsenal; Liverpool held by Fulham

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Lionel Messi saved Barcelona from another embarrassing result by scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over lowly Levante.

Messi struck with 14 minutes remaining of a lacklustre display from Barca at the Camp Nou.

Liverpool remains tied at the top of the Premier League with Tottenham after being held to a 1-1 draw at Fulham, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's own goal condemned Arsenal to another shocking home defeat, going down 1-0 to Burnley on Sunday.

Leicester took advantage of slip ups by the top two in a 3-0 rout over Brighton.

Important results: Premier League: Fulham 1 (De Cordova-Reid 25) drew with Liverpool 1 (Salah 79-pen); Arsenal 0 lost



One vs many: Up against a stubborn Levante, it was left to Lionel Messi to once again conjure a way out. • AP

to Burnley 1 (Aubameyang 73-og); Leicester 3 (Maddison 27, 44, Vardy 41) bt Brighton 0.

Laliga: Barcelona 1 (Messi 76) bt Levante 0.

Serie A: Atalanta 3 (Gosens 44, Malinovskiy 55, Toloi 63) bt Fiorentina 0; Napoli 2 (Lozano 53, Petagna 68) bt Sampdoria 1 (Jankto 20); Bologna 1 (Christante 24-og) lost to Roma 5 (Poli 5-og, Dzeko 10, Pellegrini 15, Veretout 35, Mkhitarian 44); Genoa 1 (Sturaro 61) lost to Juventus 3 (Dybala 57, Cristiano Ronaldo 78-pen, 89-pen); AC Milan 2 (Hernandez 58, 90+1) drew with Parma 2 (Hernani 13, Kurtic 56).

Bundesliga: Augsburg 2 (Serdar 32-og, Richter 90+3) drew with Schalke 2 (Raman 52, Boujellab 61); Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Bailey 4, 27, Wirtz 55, Alario 90+1) bt Hoffenheim 1 (Baumgartner 50).

44); Genoa 1 (Sturaro 61) lost to Juventus 3 (Dybala 57, Cristiano Ronaldo 78-pen, 89-pen); AC Milan 2 (Hernandez 58, 90+1) drew with Parma 2 (Hernani 13, Kurtic 56).

Bundesliga: Augsburg 2 (Serdar 32-og, Richter 90+3) drew with Schalke 2 (Raman 52, Boujellab 61); Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Bailey 4, 27, Wirtz 55, Alario 90+1) bt Hoffenheim 1 (Baumgartner 50).

The results (quarterfinals): Mohammadan Sporting 1 (Tirthankar Sarkar 8-pen) bt Gokulam Kerala 0; Real Kashmir FC 1 (Danish Farooq 22) bt Southern Samity 0; George Telegraph SC 1 (Tanmoy Ghosh 46) bt Peerless SC 0; United SC 0 (4) bt Kalighat MS 0 (3) via tie-breaker.

Thumping win for Golden Hawks

Vaibhav Kumar (4/24) and Pratham Singh (56) were instrumental in Golden Hawks' eight-wicket victory over R.P. Academy in the first Tripathi Premier League at the Tripathi Sports Complex here.

The scores: R.P. Academy 150 in 37 overs (Aniket Seth 34, Vaibhav Kumar 4/24, Milind Tandon 3/21) lost to Golden Hawks 152/2 in 22 overs (Pratham Singh 56, Vaibhav Sharma 46 n.o., Pawan Negi 38 n.o.).

Aniket hits unbeaten century

Aniket Dhankar smashed an unbeaten 107 in Rising Academy's 143-run victory over Uttarakhand Academy in the semifinals of the first Ratan Lal Saini cricket

tournament at the D. Force ground here.

The scores: Rising Academy 207/6 in 40 overs (Aniket Dhankar 107 n.o., Rohan Sharma 30) bt Uttarakhand Academy 64 in 23.5 overs.

Yash Solanki shows the way

Yash Solanki's 100 highlighted Airliner Academy's 180-run win over Achiever Academy in the Airliner Cup cricket tournament at the Bharati College ground here.

The scores: Airliner Academy 348/9 in 30 overs (Yash Solanki 100, Tarun 34, Sharang Ashthana 3/54) bt Achiever Academy 168 in 26 overs (Aryan Gehlot 84, Nikhil 3/30).

Narrow win for Uday Gupte Academy

Half-centuries by Kavya Gupta, Ekansh Gulati, Kavan Gambhir and Abhishek

Gusain helped Uday Gupte Academy beat a fighting Cricket Academy of Prasad by 17 runs in a high-scoring encounter of the B.R.

Sharma memorial cricket tournament at the Mohan Meakin ground at Ghaziabad.

The scores: Uday Gupte Academy 292/3 in 40 overs (Kavya Gupta 69 n.o., Ekansh Gulati 61, Kanav Gambhir 59 n.o., Abhishek Gusain 52) bt Cricket Academy of Prasad 275/8 in 40 overs (Hrituraj 92, Parvesh Nehwal 70, Deepak Tyagi 32).

Aaradhy cracks unbeaten ton

Uttar Pradesh (under-19) batsman Aaradhy Yadav (115 n.o.) guided T.N. Memorial to a five-wicket victory over Lal Bahadur Shastri Club in the seventh

10-man JFC holds MCFC

SPORTS BUREAU

Mumbai City FC held Jamshedpur FC (JFC) 1-1 in the Indian Super League (ISL) on Monday.

The result: Mumbai City FC 1 (Ogbeche 15) drew with Jamshedpur FC 1 (Valsikis 9).

Tuesday's match: Hyderabad FC vs SC East Bengal, 7.30 p.m.

Sporting in semifinals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Mohammedan Sporting entered the 123rd IFA Shield football semifinals with a 1-0 win over Gokulam Kerala FCon Monday.

The results (quarterfinals): Mohammedan Sporting 1 (Tirthankar Sarkar 8-pen) bt Gokulam Kerala 0; Real Kashmir FC 1 (Danish Farooq 22) bt Southern Samity 0; George Telegraph SC 1 (Tanmoy Ghosh 46) bt Peerless SC 0; United SC 0 (4) bt Kalighat MS 0 (3) via tie-breaker.

Azad eyes selector's post

CRICKET

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder Kirti Azad has jumped into Delhi cricket in the role of a prospective State selector.

The new regime at the Delhi and District Cricket Association, under the new president Rohan Jaitley, had invited applications to the post of three State selectors and coaches.

Among those who have applied for the senior selector's job are K.P. Bhaskar, who was the coach of the Ranji Trophy team two seasons ago when Delhi reached the final, Bantu Singh, Gursharan Singh, Ashu Dani and Karun Dubey.

A former National selector, Azad ventured into politics at the cost of cricket.

"It was not that I did not have time for cricket but politics kept me busy. It would not have been fair for me to hog a post (at DDCA) and not do justice," said Azad.

An issue at DDCA

Azad is now keen to help this generation. "I am comfortable doing the job of a selector. I have the time and the experience to watch the

youngsters. Selection (in all age groups) has always been an issue at DDCA and I know this area needs immediate attention," he added.

The three-member Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) of Atul Wassan, Robin Singh (Jr) and Parvinde Awana will conduct the interviews of the candidates.

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Azad is among many former players who have applied.

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"It was not that I did not have time for cricket but politics kept me busy. It would not have been fair for me to hog a post (at DDCA) and not do justice," said Azad.

Prabhakar for coach's job

Former India all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar, also a former Delhi and Uttar Pradesh coach, is among those who will be interviewed for the senior coach's position.

Others in the fray are Raj Kumar Sharma, Gursharan Singh and V. Arvind.

Yash Vardhan on target



Yash Vardhan. ■ FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Junior Asian champion Yash Vardhan of India won the 10m air rifle event at the sixth edition of the International Online Shooting Championship (IOSC) on Sunday.

The 17-year-old, with a score of 251.9 points, won the title by a margin of 1.2.

Martin Strempp (Austria) was second and Oleksandr Halkin (Ukraine) third.

Ananya enters quarterfinals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Fifth seed Ananya Dogra beat Anandita Sharma 8-7 (6) in the pre-quarterfinals of the under-16 girls' event in the AITA Championship series junior tennis tournament here on Monday.

The results (pre-quarterfinals): Under-16: Boys: Aryan Thakur bt Mehraab Singh Rai 8-0; Rakshit Dhankar bt Parmarth Kaushik 8-1; Akshat Dhull bt Lakshya Gupta 8-6; Anirudh Sangra bt Manvir Singh Hundal 8-1; Arnav Bisht bt Arpit Garg 8-4; Aditya Chauhan bt Umang Singh Gogi 8-5; Kartikey Sunil Kumar bt Akshit Ratti 8-1; Navya Verma bt Yash Solanki 8-0.

Girls: Harleen Kaur Dhanda bt Radha Sadhra 8-2; Bhumi Gupta bt Krittika Katoch 8-3; Vanya Arora bt Saira Saundh 8-0; Gurman Kaur Sandhu bt Bhumi Kakkar 8-6; Ananya Dogra bt Anandita Sharma 8-7(6); Maitreyi Phogat bt Rubani Kaur Sidhu 8-6; Riya Kaushik bt Sidhakaur 8-1; Radhika Vasudeva bt Shriya Singh 8-3.

DELHI ROUND-UP

S.N. Dubey memorial cricket tournament at the Dubey Sports ground here.

The scores: L.B. Shastri Club 211/7 in 40 overs (Krish Agarwal 69, Aryan Dabas 49)

lost to T.N. Memorial 215/5 in 38 overs (Aaradhy Yadav 115 n.o., Kirti Vardhan 29, Ronak Kumar 26, Gautam Kumar 3/39).

Pranav, Aryan bat well

Pranav Rajvanshi (87 n.o.) and Aryan Dalal (44) set up Mount Club's five-wicket victory over San Time Academy in the Shanti Devi memorial cricket tournament at the D Force ground.

The scores: San Time Academy 196/7 in 40 overs (Abhishek Deewan 109, Hitesh Boora 25, Anshul Kumar 3/32) lost to Mount Club 200/5 in 34 overs (Pranav Rajvanshi 87 n.o.,

Aryan Dalal 44, Yugal Saini 29).

Sparsh stars for Ashish Nehra Academy

Sparsh Goyal (4/19) and Deepanshu Chaudhary (39)

helped Hari Singh Academy beat Ashish Nehra Academy by seven wickets to enter the final of the Satish Sharma memorial (under-16) cricket tournament at the Pioneer ground.

The scores: Delhi Colts 155 in 33.1 overs (Tushar Tyagi 47, Rohit Kundu 4/42) bt Triaksh Club 146 in 35 overs (Tushar Parashar 63, Deepak Dhillion 4/34, Dharmender Sharma 3/24).

Sanjeev Tank cricket tournament

The second Sanjeev Tank memorial (under-14) cricket league will be played at the Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar College ground, near Gokulpuri Metro Station, from December 21. Entries close with Rakesh Tank (9818791768) and Dharmender Sharma (3/24) struck timely blows to

enable Delhi Colts score a narrow nine-run victory over Triaksh Club in the Ghevra Cup Cricket tournament at the Ghevra Ground.

The scores: Delhi Colts 155 in 33.1 overs (Tushar Tyagi 47,

Rohit Kundu 4/42) bt Triaksh Club 146 in 35 overs (Tushar Parashar 63, Deepak Dhillion 4/34, Dharmender Sharma 3/24).

Maruti Suzuki India to hike price from January.

New Delhi: Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday said it will increase prices of its vehicles from January to offset the adverse impact of rising input costs.

Over the past year, cost of the company's vehicles have been impacted adversely due to increase in various costs, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing.

The company has already increased prices by 10% in November.

Maruti Suzuki India said in a statement that the price increase will be gradual and will be implemented in phases.

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