



Central team takes stock of bird flu outbreak in Kerala
page 8



JEE-Advanced to be held on July 3, says Education Minister Pokhriyal
page 10



Sonia Gandhi asks govt. to cut excise duty on petroleum products
page 10



Pucovski, Labuschagne put Australia on a strong footing
page 13

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NEARBY



Kejriwal urges Centre to extend U.K. flights ban

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday asked the Centre to extend the ban on flights from the United Kingdom till January 31. "The Centre has decided to lift the ban and start U.K. flights. In view of the extremely serious situation in U.K., I would urge the Centre to extend the ban till January 31," the CM said.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Less than 1,000 cases in Delhi for 14 days in a row

NEW DELHI
The Capital witnessed 486 new COVID-19 cases over 24 hours, taking the total number to 6,28,838, stated a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday. Also, 19 more deaths were reported, pushing the toll to 10,644. This is the 14th day in a row that the number of new cases has been less than 1,000.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'Haryana Panchayati Raj Act provisions arbitrary'

CHANDIGARH
Terming the provisions in the Haryana Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2020 as arbitrary and unconstitutional, senior Congress leader Karan Singh Dala has asked Governor Satyadev Narayan Arya to get the Act annulled. Mr. Dala has pointed out that sub-Section 3 of Section 9 of the Act caps the participation of women in local bodies at 50%.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

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GDP likely to contract by 7.7% this fiscal: govt.

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI
India's real GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is estimated to contract by 7.7% in 2020-21, with GVA (Gross Valued added) shrinking by 7.2%, advance estimates released by the National Statistical Office on Thursday show.

India's economy had expanded 4.2% in 2019-20, but entered a recessionary phase with two successive quarters of sharp contraction triggered by the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Following a 23.9% collapse in the economy in the April-June period, the GDP

shrank by 7.5% in the second quarter – leading to a real GDP contraction of 15.7% in the first half of 2020-21.

The economy will surface in the second half to record near-zero growth, or a mere 0.1% contraction, the estimates suggest.

Based on an uptick in several indicators in the past few months, several agencies have upgraded their estimates, with the RBI recently projecting a 7.5% contraction in the year compared to its earlier estimate of a 9.5% decline.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Budaun case: main accused held

Priest was hiding in his follower's house in another village

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

by the local police for information leading to the arrest of Satya Narayan. His two aides and co-accused in the case were arrested on Wednesday.

Controversial remark

Chandramukhi Devi, a member of the National Commission for Women, made a controversial statement after meeting the family of the victim. "I have always told women not to go out at untimely hours under somebody's influence. I think had she not gone to the temple premises in the evening or had a family member accompanied her, the incident could have been

avoided. I have been told it was a planned incident. She got a call from the accused."

Sankalp Sharma, Senior Superintendent of Police, Budaun, told *The Hindu* that apart from suspension, an FIR under 166A of the IPC had been lodged against the SHO for dereliction of duty. "The fact that the police were busy with another incident on the said date is no excuse. There is sufficient manpower in the station to handle more than one case," he said.

He also said the police were not hiding the severity of the injuries mentioned in the post-mortem report.

(With inputs from PTI)

States will get vaccines soon, says Vardhan

'Will ensure seamless last-mile delivery'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday said the government would ensure a seamless last-mile delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine, which "is on the verge of being available in the country".

He was interacting with the State Health Ministers ahead of the second nationwide vaccination mock drill on Friday. He said all the States/Union Territories would start getting their vaccine supplies soon.

The Union Health Minis-

ter directed that robust preparations be made for the roll-out of the inoculation drive.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Vaccine doses to be guarded like ballots'

SAURABH TRivedi

NEW DELHI
The COVID-19 vaccine doses will be guarded with as much caution as ballots are done during elections, said a senior Delhi Police officer on Thursday.

The officer said there will be around 600 such centres in the city. He said instructions have been issued to all district DCAs regarding the security arrangements and crowd management. The area will be guarded round-the-clock by police personnel.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

Farmers hold 'rehearsal' of R-Day tractor parade

Protesters take out rallies on expressways surrounding Delhi, urge government to repeal farm laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Protesting farmers who took part in tractor rallies on the expressways surrounding Delhi on Thursday emphasised that it was only a "dress rehearsal" for the parallel parade that they plan to hold within the capital on Republic Day. They urged the Centre to accept their demands for the repeal of the three farm laws and a legal guarantee for minimum support prices at Friday's talks.

The tractor march started simultaneously from four different points around 11 a.m., with each group returning to their starting points around 4 p.m. More than 5,000 trac-

tors took part, according to a statement from the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a joint front coordinating the protests.

Protesters also joined in buses and private vehicles. However, there was a no-show from a fifth group at Rewasian, as its leaders were detained by the Haryana police.

"This was just a trailer, the complete picture will be shown on Republic Day," said Rakesh Tikait, national spokesperson for the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKA-Tikait), who led hundreds of tractors from Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, travelling along the Eastern Peripheral Expressway.

He said the government could test the farmers as much as it wanted but the farmers would not go home before the farm laws were repealed. "The government still has a day to ponder over repealing the three laws and forming a new law, guaranteeing for minimum support prices at Friday's talks."

Farmers from various parts of Uttar Pradesh continued to join the group as they progressed towards Palwal in Haryana. Minor skirmishes between the farmers and policemen were reported in Bulandshahr and Gautam Buddha Nagar.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2 & 9

'Unlawful conversion' charges dropped against Muslim man

Complainant's wife says he falsely implicated the accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

More than a month after booking a Hardiwar-based Muslim labourer under the new ordinance for allegedly trying to coerce a married Hindu woman from Muzaffarnagar to convert, the Uttar Pradesh government has told the Allahabad High Court that it found no evidence of unlawful conversion against him and has dropped the charges. However, the State police have filed a charge sheet accusing him of criminal intimidation.

The woman, 34, whose husband had lodged the case against the Muslim man, came to the support of the accused and denied that he had ever tried to convert her. She alleged that her husband had falsely implicated the labourer because he had supported her when she faced domestic violence and "mental torture" at home.

An FIR was lodged against Nadeem and an associate, Salman, at Mansoorpur under the U.P. Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 on November 29, 2020 on the complaint of Akshay Kumar Tyagi, a contractor in a pharmaceutical company in Hardiwar, who accused Nadeem of having an illicit relationship with his wife and of trying to convert her to Islam for marriage.

On December 18, the Allahabad High Court stayed Nadeem's arrest till January 7. On Thursday, a Division Bench of Chief Justice Govind Mathur and Justice Saurabh Shyam Shamshery extended the relief to him till January 15. This is the only case under the new ordinance so far in which the HC had stayed the accused's arrest.



Wheels of protest: Farmers taking part in a tractor rally on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

CMYK

AN-NDE



Farmers taking out a tractor rally on Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Highway in Haryana on Thursday. Scores of protesters have been camping at the Delhi borders demanding withdrawal of farm laws. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Rows of tractors take over highways

Protesting farmers take out rally from Singhu border, say it is a prelude to bigger protests ahead

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

In a massive show of strength, thousands of farmers on Thursday took out a tractor rally from the Singhu border at the Capital's periphery with rows of tractors taking over the highways.

In what they termed as a "trailer," farmers who have been protesting against the Centre's three farm laws at the Capital's borders for over 40 days now, said that the parade was just a precursor to what the rally on Republic Day would look like.

Just a trailer'

The tractor rally, which took off from a site several kilometres away from the main protest site at the Singhu border, saw thousands of farmers make their way to the highway, while several others stayed back near the tents and trolleys to arrange for langars.

Rashpal Singh, a farmer



Farmers and their families taking part in the tractor rally at Delhi-Meerut Expressway on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

from Punjab's Jalandhar, said: "Today's tractor rally is just the trailer. Currently there is a great deal of churning going on in the country and the way in which humanity was ending is being arrested through this movement. Farmers are the backbone of this country and what is the point of forcing something on us which we do not want?"

Stating that agitations against several issues would follow, Mr. Singh said, "Aab Inquilab aayegi" [There will be revolution now] and now it will not stop at only farmers' issues. The only good thing that the Prime Minister has done is bringing unity among the farmers. Earlier, there were various strands and now all of us are one unit. We are certain that we will

We are an extremely peaceful lot and we have no intention of getting into face-offs with any person or authority of any kind

GURWINDER SINGH
Farmer from Patiala

win through this agitation."

Holding placards and raising slogans demanding the repeal of the three laws, a group of 25 women from Punjab's Patran town said that they had reached the Delhi border three days ago for the rally.

Take back the laws'

Rajinder Kaur, one of the women present there said, "It looks like the Prime Minister cannot see us or hear us despite us being in such large numbers. He has forgotten that we are the ones who have voted him to power. Through the tractor rally we

would like to tell the government that it better take the laws back."

Seated atop a tractor, Gurwinder Singh, a farmer from Patiala said: "This tractor rally was just the prelude to the main parade. Through today's [Thursday] rally we were successful in displaying our preparations and strength to the government and give them an idea of how the rally on Republic Day will look like. We are an extremely peaceful lot and we have no intention of getting into face-offs with any person or authority of any kind."

Taranjeet Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Nawanshahr district said, "Through this parade we have given an idea about what the government can expect for the rally on Republic Day. The rally that day will be similar and in fact, on a much larger scale as we are going to call for more tractors to join us at the border."

Four farmer leaders involved with tractor rally preparations detained

Nuh SP claims only All-India Mewati Samaj chief was held

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NUH

Four farmer leaders involved with the preparations for the tractor rally on Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway from Nuh in response to a call from Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a joint front of farmer unions, were detained by the Nuh police on Thursday preventing the holding of the rally.

The proposed tractor rally from Nuh's Rewasan village to Palwal on the expressway was part of the five batches of tractors scheduled to march around Delhi on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressway in protest against the three farm laws.

The Nuh police team picked up All-India Mewati Samaj president Ramzan Chaudhary from his house and let off in the evening, said Mr. Padla. Salamudeen Meo, president, Mewat Vikas

"First, they took me to City Police Post and later to Nuh police station. Later in the evening, they took me in preventive custody and produced before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate court," said Mr. Chaudhary. Another social activist and farmer leader, Umar Padla, claimed that a police team reached his house in the morning and stayed there till around noon preventing him from going outside.

Barricades placed'

"The police had been calling me for the past few days seeking details of the proposed tractor rally," he claimed. Two more farmer leaders, Azad Kheri and Rashid Advocate, were taken to the local police stations and let off in the evening,

Narendra Bijarniya, SP, Nuh, said that only Mr. Chaudhary was detained.

Sabha alleged that the police had put barricades at several intersections, including Badkali Chowk, and did not allow the farmers to come out on the Gurugram-Alwar Highway (NH-248A) to reach the KMP.

"Around a dozen tractors from each of the six blocks were scheduled to be part of the march, but the police did not allow it. Eventually, around 30 people in half-a-dozen cars reached Palwal from Nuh to express solidarity with the farmers," said Mr. Meo.

Swraj India national president Yogendra Yadav also tweeted around noon about the detention of Mr. Chaudhary and warned the government against any ill-treatment against him.

Narendra Bijarniya, SP, Nuh, said that only Mr. Chaudhary was detained.

Yamuna frothing: action plan prepared

Haryana, U.P. told to upgrade sewage treatment plants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has prepared a nine-point action plan to prevent frothing in the Yamuna caused due to the discharge of untreated sewage in the river.

The plan, approved by the Delhi Pollution Control

Committee (DPCC), lays down targets to be achieved by various agencies, including the Delhi Jal Board, Delhi Development Authority and municipal corporations, to prevent the discharge of untreated wastewater in the river.

According to the plan,

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been asked to upgrade their sewage treatment plants (STPs) to standards prescribed by the DPCC for treating the wastewater entering the Yamuna through Najafgarh drain and Hindon cut canal.

One dead, three injured as roof collapses in south-east Delhi

Victim was pulled out of debris by fire and NDRF teams

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

One person was killed and three others were injured in an incident of roof terrace collapse in south-east Del-

hi's Sarita Vihar on Wednesday afternoon, the police said.

DCP (South-East) R.P. Meena said that the injured

have been identified as house owner Harish Rotella, Khalil, Shivam and the deceased as Dharmbir. While three of them were rescued earlier, Dharmbir was res-

cued by National Disaster Response Force hours after being stuck.

Welding work

The police said that a call was received at 12.05 p.m. from G-Block in Sarita Vihar regarding a roof collapse. The NDRF was then called. The police reached the spot and found that some weld-

ing work was under way. The three injured persons were rushed to AIIMS where

he later died. The deceased, who lived in Greater Noida, is survived by wife and children.

The police said that legal action in the case was being taken and a probe is under way.

Dharmbir was pulled out from the debris after hours and rushed to AIIMS where

he died. The deceased, who lived in Greater Noida, is survived by wife and children.

The police said that legal action in the case was being taken and a probe is under way.

Air quality of Delhi 'poor', slight improvement likely from tomorrow

'No sudden deterioration of AQI expected in next few days'

STAFF REPORTER
VISAKHAPATNAM

The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida was in 'poor' category on Thursday, according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. The national capital's air quality is expected to stay in the 'poor' category on Friday as well.

"The AQI is likely to marginally improve and stay in the 'poor' to 'moderate' category on January 9 and 10. No sudden deterioration of AQI is expected in the next

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi 255 Gurugram 204
Ghaziabad 294 Faridabad 240
Noida 236 Greater Noida 288

■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Moderate
0-50 51-100 101-200

■ Poor ■ Very poor ■ Severe
201-300 301-400 >401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]

day. The "mixing layer height", which is the height from the ground level up to which pollutants can be dispersed, was "moderate". This led to lesser accumulation of pollutants near the surface.

Also, the speed of surface-level winds was "moderate", which aided in lesser accumulation of pollutants. Faster surface winds help in the dispersion of pollutants.

The AQI of Delhi was 255 on Thursday, as per the CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin.

19-year-old ends life after failing to qualify for armed forces selections

STAFF REPORTER
VISAKHAPATNAM

A Delhi resident allegedly ended his life at Malkapuram in Visakhapatnam, after reportedly being disappointed for being rejected in the selection process to join the armed forces, on Wednesday.

According to preliminary probe, the deceased, a 19-year-old youth from Delhi,

had come to his relative's house to attend the selection process.

He attended the selection process from December 31, 2020 to January 6, 2021, being held at 104 Area in the

area.

After four rounds of selection process, he was rejected in the fifth round. Disappointed with the result, the youth ended his life

Bihar School Examination Board

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER
(Through e-procurement mode only over <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>)
Tender Notice No.: - PR 04/2021

Bihar School Examination Board, Patna invites e-tenders under two bid systems from the reputed, experienced & technologically sound Firms /Companies/ Agencies/ Societies/ Service Provider having adequate infrastructure and experience of handling the works of "Selection of agency to provide (1:1) Internet Lease Line Connectivity on OFC media at the offices of Bihar School Examination Board (Main Building at Sinha Library Road, Patna & Academic Building, Budh Marg, Patna), as per the decision of BSEB".

Scope of work : Selection of agency to provide (1:1) Internet Lease Line Connectivity on OFC media to Bihar School Examination Board, Patna.

Cost of Tender document (In Rupees)	Tender processing Fee (Non Refundable)	Ernest Money (In Rupees)
₹ 500/- (Five Hundred Rupees only)	₹ 590/- (Five Hundred and Ninety Rupees only)	₹ 2,00,000/- (Two Lakhs rupees only)

(Inclusive of GST @18.00% to be paid through e-payment mode (1:1) NEFT/RTGS/Credit Card/Debit card (in Rupees))

Tender Schedule/ Programme :

Date and Time for Activity	Date/Time : Duration
Online Submission Start Date	08/01/2021 (11:00 Hrs.) (https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
Last Date/Time for submission / uploading of offer/Bid	23/01/2021 (14:00 Hrs.) (https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in)
Submission of EMD in Hard copy/Original only in case of Bank Guarantee	23/01/2021 upto 14:30 Hrs. (Bihar School Examination Board, Sinha Library Road, Patna-800017)
Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid	23/01/2021 up to 15:00 Hrs. (https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in) (Bihar School Examination Board, Sinha Library Road, Patna-800017)
Financial Bid Opening Date and Time	Date to be announced later by competent authority

* Tender document fee & tender processing fee to be submitted only via Online mode. EMD to be submitted Offline only in case of Bank Guarantee.

- Detailed descriptions of the items and instructions for submitting your offer can be downloaded from e-tender website <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>.
- For support related to e-tendering process, Bidders may contact at "e- Procurement HELP DESK Address : Mjunction services limited RJ Complex, 2nd Floor, Canara Bank Campus, Khajuria, Ashiana Road, P.S. - Shastri Nagar, Patna 800 014, Bihar First" or may visit the link "Vendor Info" at <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>. Bidders may also raise their concern by following means :
 - Toll Free Number: 1800 572 6571 (Working Hours: 8 AM to 7 PM, All days in week except few selected state holidays)
 - E-mail ID: eproc2support@bihar.gov.in
 - Corrigendum / Addendum, if any, will be published on e-Procurement Portal, Bihar <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> itself.
 - Contact Details : Sh. Jai Kishore Singh, Nodal officer - +91 6299923095, E-Mail ID - eproc-bseb-bih@gov.in
 - Note:- Bihar School Examination Board reserves the right to accept/reject/reschedule any or all tenders without assigning any Secretary

DIP/Shabdharth/0527/20-21

Registrar

DELHI PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCE AND RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
(Established under Act 07 of 2008, Govt. of NCT of Delhi)
Pushp Vihar, Sec-III, M.B. Road, New Delhi-110017

Advt. No. F.10/1445/Admn/DPSRU/2020/11494 Dated: 30/12/2020
Adv. No. 2-2020

Recruitment to the Post of Section Officer (SO)

Delhi Pharmaceutical Science and Research University is a non-affiliating, teaching-cum-research University committed to foster excellence in education, research, technology incubation, product innovation, outreach and extension activities in Pharmacy, Management, and Allied Sciences. The University invites applications from talented individuals fill up the following posts:

S. No.	Nomenclature of Post	Pay Band & Grade Pay	Number of Posts*	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Section Officer (SO)	Rs. 9300/- (34800) with Grade Pay of Rs. 4800/- (6 th CPC), Level-8, entry pay of Rs. 47600/- as per 7 th CPC pay matrix	02*	1. Deputation / failing which by Short Term Contract Basis, initially for a period of 01 Year only. 2. Retired Government of India / Delhi Government Employees may also be considered to be appointed as Consultant (SO) in terms of OM No. F.20/472015-AC/204-248 Dated: 04.12.2015 Issued by Spl. Secretary (Finance), Finance Deptt./GoNCTD (as amended from time to time), initially for a period of 06 Months only, subject to terms and conditions as per RRs / any other applicable DPSRU rules.

* The number of vacancies is indicative and may be increased or decreased.

The number of posts advertised is provisional and can be varied as per the requirement of the University.

For details regarding educational qualification, experience, requisite fees, etc. required for the above mentioned posts please visit the University website www.dpsru.edu.in.

The last date for submission of online/offline application form is 22.01.2021 by 05.00 p.m.

DIP/Shabdharth/0527/20-21

Registrar

Timings

DELHI

FRIDAY, JAN. 08
RISE 07:16 SET 17:42
RISE 01:57 SET 13:28
SATURDAY, JAN. 09
RISE 07:16 SET 17:42
RISE 03:03 SET 14:10
SUNDAY, JAN. 10
RISE 07:16 SET 17:43
RISE 04:10 SET 14:58

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 20 14

Safdarjung 20 14

Palam 19 15

Delhi Pali Today

21°C Dense fog would prevail.

A partly cloudy to cloudy sky.

A spell of rain or drizzle may occur at some places.

Delhi Pali Tomorrow

21°C Few drops of rain likely

during early hours. Dense fog at some places. A partly

cloudy sky becoming clear.

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IN BRIEF

'Remove Bachchan's COVID-19 caller tune'

NEW DELHI

A PIL has been filed before the Delhi High Court for removal of Amitabh Bachchan's caller tune on COVID-19 awareness claiming the government has been paying fees to the senior actor for the service. Delhi resident Rakesh, who claims to be a social worker, said he filed the petition "for all the person who are taxpayers and who are disturbed by such caller tune". The High Court will hear the case on January 18.

Mahua Moitra urges HC to stay proceedings in defamation case

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra on Thursday urged the Delhi High Court to stay the proceedings before a trial court in a defamation case filed against her by Zee News and its editor.

Ms. Moitra's application was made during the hearing of her plea challenging the summons and framing of charges against her in the defamation case. She urged the court to postpone the hearing before the scheduled date of February 18 as the defamation case before the trial court is listed for hearing on Friday.

Following her submission, the counsel for Zee Media Corporation Limited informed the court that they will not get their witness examined before the trial court till the case comes up for hearing in the High Court on February 18.

The case relates to Ms. Moitra's June 25, 2019 speech in Parliament on the 'Seven Signs of Fascism' and a TV show run by the news channel. Ms. Moitra has filed a criminal defamation complaint against Zee News and its editor, Sudhir Chaudhary, for alleging that her June 25 speech was plagiarised.

Subsequently, Zee News filed a defamation complaint against Ms. Moitra for allegedly making statements against them to the media.

'COVID-19 vaccine doses to be guarded like ballots during polls'

Police personnel, private guards, CCTVs to guard around 600 such centres in city

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 vaccine doses will be guarded with as much caution as ballots are done during elections, said a senior Delhi Police officer on Thursday.

The officer said there will be around 600 such centres in the city. He said instructions have been issued to all district DCPs regarding the security arrangements and crowd management at the vaccination centres.

"A meeting was held with the in-charges of the centres where they were instructed to deploy a private security guard and instal CCTVs," the officer added.

The area will be guarded round-the-clock by police personnel. The SHOs concerned have been ordered to



Delhi Police said if required, paramilitary personnel will also be deployed at sensitive vaccine centres. ■ FILE PHOTO

visit the centres and supervise the security arrangements with officers from the Delhi government.

The officer said burglary is a major threat at the centres, which might see some crowding. If required, paramilitary personnel will

also be deployed at sensitive centres.

"Out of over 600 centres, a list of sensitive centres has been prepared where extra security personnel will be deployed. During the vaccine dry run, detailed reports from each centre were

gathered. The shortcomings will be rectified before the vaccination begins. The police officers have been instructed to provide safety kits and place other required arrangements for police personnel deployed for security duty at the centres.

During the vaccine dry run, detailed reports from each centre were gathered. The shortcomings will be rectified before the vaccination begins

POLICE OFFICER

CM urges Centre to extend ban on U.K. flights till Jan 31.

With great difficulty, situation under control in city: Kejriwal



CM Arvind Kejriwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday asked the Centre to extend the ban on flights from the United Kingdom till January 31 due to the COVID-19 situation in India.

The Chief Minister said: "The Centre has decided to lift the ban and start U.K. flights. In view of the extremely serious situation in U.K., I would urge the Centre to extend the ban till January 31."

India had suspended all passenger flights connecting the two countries from December 23 to January 7 due to the new strain of COVID-19 in the U.K. He added: "With great difficulty, people have brought COVID-19 situation

issued by the Health Ministry, all passengers coming from the U.K. between January 8-30 would be subjected to self-paid COVID-19 tests on arrival.

Gauri Agarwal of Genestrings diagnostic, the lab conducting the RT-PCR tests at the Delhi airport, said genestrings diagnostic team is ready to receive the U.K. passengers. "It takes 4-6 hours to get the reports, however, as a mandate, all the passengers in the flight, including crew members, will have to be halted until all results are declared. Arrangements are in place to ensure that the RT-PCR tests for all the passengers arriving from the UK get conducted smoothly," added Ms. Agarwal.

under control. Now, why lift ban and expose our people to risk?" Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

Earlier, the Delhi government had said one of the reasons for the large number of cases here was because of the large number of international passengers arriving in the city. So far, nine residents of Delhi have been found infected with the new Covid-19 variant. According to the standard operating procedures

Former IAF corporal arrested for cheating job aspirants of ₹2.7 crore

Accused ran racket for recruitment in Air Force and Railways

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A former corporal in the Indian Air Force was arrested for allegedly cheating several people of ₹2.7 crore on the pretext of getting them recruited in the Air Force and Railways, the police said on Wednesday.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Economic Offences Wing) O.P. Mishra said that the accused has been identified as Chakrvir Chaudhari (35), a resident of Agra, who was a corporal in Indian Air Force, but was later dismissed from service.

The police said that the accused had been absconding in a 2015 case registered against him and a non-bailable warrant was also issued against him, following which

proceedings for declaring him as a proclaimed offender was also initiated last year.

Cheated 18 people

According to the police, Chaudhari, along with his accomplice, Than Singh cheated at least 18 people of approximately ₹2.7 crore through a fake recruitment racket being operated by the duo.

Mr. Singh was arrested in November 2019, but he is out on interim bail owing to COVID-19 pandemic, the police said.

The police said that a probe was initiated against him in 2015 after a complaint was received by Wing Commander Tejveer Singh

in which he alleged that a case of fake recruitment

racket was reported to his unit. When they investigated, he said, it was found that one civilian, Than Singh, a resident of Trilokpuri and an Air Force employee, identified as Corporal Chakrvir Chaudhari of 16 BRD, Air Force Pinto Park, Palam, were running fake recruitment racket for recruitment in Air Force and Indian Railways.

During investigation, the police said, it emerged that the accused were inducing innocent students that they will get them selected in Air Force and Railways. They also issued fake joining letters to students and thus collected about ₹2.7 crores.

Mr. Mishra said Chaudhari was nabbed on Tuesday night from his village.

'No cases of bird flu in the Capital so far'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday said that there has been no reported case of bird flu in the city.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also held a review meeting of the situation and said that 11 teams have been formed for monitoring and collection of samples.

"In the meeting, Mr. Sisodia directed the officials to keep a close watch on the poultry birds coming in from neighbouring States. He also instructed them to keep a close watch on the birds at major bird sites, especially poultry markets, waterbodies, zoos among other potential hotspots. These include, Ghazipur Fish and Poultry Market, Shakti Sthal Lake, Sanjay Lake, Bhalswa Horseshoe Lake, Delhi zoo, and smaller waterbodies in DDA parks among others," an official statement said.

Mr. Sisodia also directed the officials to monitor sample collections on a regular basis and send reports to him.

"Doctors of 48 veterinary hospitals are monitoring bird flu cases across the State. So far, more than 100 samples have been collected and sent to the designated lab in Jalandhar. The report is expected by Monday," he said.

Reply to plea on assistance for bonded labour victims'

HC posts case for hearing on February 8

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The High Court on Thursday sought response from the Centre as well as Delhi government to a plea seeking financial assistance for the rehabilitation of victims of child and bonded labour who have been rescued from the Capital.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh asked the Union Ministry of Labour and the Delhi government to give their respective stands on the plea filed by the father of one of child. The case has been posted for hearing on February 8.

Mohd Kadir Ansari in his petition sought relief for 88 victims of child and bonded labour, which included his own minor son – who came to Delhi from Bihar at the age of 12 years, seeking work.

Mr. Ansari said during the

course of his son's employment, he (the child) was subjected to severe abuse for over two months at the hands of the 'trafficker/ employer'. The accused compelled the child to work for around 14 hours a day and for wages less than the prescribed minimum wages.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh asked the Union Ministry of Labour and the Delhi government to give their respective stands on the plea filed by the father of one of child. The case has been posted for hearing on February 8.

Mohd Kadir Ansari in his petition sought relief for 88 victims of child and bonded labour, which included his own minor son – who came to Delhi from Bihar at the age of 12 years, seeking work.

Mr. Ansari said during the

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Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Sultans of swing



Two boys play outside their home as schools remain closed due to the pandemic in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

BJP has failed, should hold fresh civic elections, says AAP

Manoj Tiwari hits back at Delhi govt. for not releasing funds as recommended by the finance panel

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday demanded that the BJP should dissolve the municipal corporations and hold a fresh election as the BJP has "failed" to run the corporations because the BJP will directly bring money or fund from the Central government. Manoj Tiwari misled the people of Delhi by making false promises and did not bring a single penny from the Centre, he should resign from the post of MP."

'No money'

He said that despite getting funds from the Delhi government, increasing house tax and other taxes, the BJP-ruled corporations are protesting at the Civic Centre, demanding the immediate release of

their pending salaries. "Doctors, nurses, medical officials, teachers, sanitation workers and others who have worked relentlessly in the time of COVID-19 pandemic have not received their salaries."

Mohalla sabhas

Earlier in the day, the AAP held "mohalla sabhas" to expose BJP's alleged corruption in the municipal corporations.

On Monday, the AAP had said that they would hold

2,500 mohalla-level meetings from January 7 to 15.

Addressing the first Mohalla Sabha at Kalkaji Assembly, AAP MLA Atishi said, "There has been a ₹2,500-crore scam in the BJP-ruled municipalities. This scam is the biggest-ever scam in Delhi's history. This money was to be paid to doctors, nurses, sanitation workers and teachers. But the BJP leaders have looted this money, due to which the employees of all these departments could not be paid."

Delhi sees less than 1,000 new virus cases for 14th day in a row

Reopening of government-run medical colleges ordered

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The city witnessed 486 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,28,838, stated a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

Also, 19 more deaths have been reported in 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,644. Of the total cases, 6,14,026 people have recovered and there are 4,168 active cases. This is the 14th day in a row that the number of new cases has been less than 1,000. The positivity rate of COVID-19 cases was 0.63% on Thursday and 6.87% as per the bulletin.

The police officers have been instructed to provide safety kits and place other required arrangements for police personnel deployed for security duty at the centres.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases

6,28,838

Total deaths

10,644

New cases in the past 24 hours

486

New deaths

19

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

up to

60

Meghalaya lawmakers asked to unite for ILP

Hit the streets of Delhi together if need be, says NGO body

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

An umbrella organisation of NGOs in Meghalaya has asked the State's three MPs and all 60 MLAs to unite for the implementation of the Inner-Line Permit (ILP) and hit the streets of New Delhi together, if need be.

Implemented under the British-era Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, the ILP is an official document issued to let an Indian citizen enter a protected area for a limited period. Pressure groups in the northeast view this per-

mit as a shield against the entry of illegal immigrants.

The Confederation of Meghalaya Social Organisations (CoMSO) said MLAs of the ruling coalition headed by the National People's Party (NPP) and the Opposition Congress should leave aside their political rivalry for the 2023 Assembly election and the Union Home Minister respond to it," he said.

"Election-oriented political rivalry is understandable. But they must unite on important issues such as ILP, protection and recognition of

language and border disputes," CoMSO chairman Robertjune Kharjahrin said on Thursday.

Raise the issue'

"We appeal to all the three MPs of Meghalaya to please raise the issue and see how the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister respond to it," he said.

The CoMSO said all the 60 MLAs of the State, who had passed the ILP resolution unanimously, should pursue the matter with the Centre and stage protests in New Delhi.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (U.P.)
Website: www.noidauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms / contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official Website: www.noidauthorityonline.com and <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(B) 1/15/CGM/AO/SM (JAL-OA)/20-21, O/M STP (Providing and laying of Sewage treated water RCC Channel from CCT of 34 MLD to New UGR at Sector-50) Noida, Cost. 74.53 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date 22.01.2021 upto 5.00 pm. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 25.01.2021 at 11.00 am.

Chief General Manager
NOIDA
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL



General public is here by informed that this girl namely Priyanka Kumari D/o Shri Jitender Parsad R/o WZ-743, Palam Gaon Dada Dev Road, New Delhi Age : 24 years, Height : 4'11", Complexion: Shallow, Body : Normal, wearing Blue colour Pant or Top, has been missing since 09.11.2020 from the area of P.S. Palam Village, New Delhi. In this regard DD No. 73A dated 12.11.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Palam Village, New Delhi.

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

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
Fax: 24368639,
Tel.: 24368638/24368641

SHO : PS. Palam Village,
New Delhi
Tel. No. : 011-25365979,
25365981, 7065036227

DP/4/05/SV/20

**Chief Engineer, JSRRDA, 3rd Floor, FFP Building
Dhurwa, Ranchi**

Short e-Procurement Notice

The Government of India has received a loan/credit number "Ln 7995-IN/Cr.4848-IN/Cr.-4848-IN" from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/International Development Association towards the cost of Rural Roads Project (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana) and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works as detailed in the Invitation for Bids. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the bidding document.

The Chief Engineer, JSRRDA, Ranchi, Jharkhand for J.S.R.R.D.A. on behalf of Governor of Jharkhand, invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of Bridges, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana under XVII phase(Batch-II), in the district of Sahebganj-2Pk (2 Bridges), Cost Rs. 305.40 Lakh including their maintenance for five years, from the eligible contractors registered in appropriate classes with RCD/ RDD/ R.W.D. Jharkhand, Ranchi/ CPWD/ M/S in any other State Governments/Central Government.*

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 08.01.2021

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid document will be available online from 08.01.2021 and should be submitted online in www.pmgstendersjhr.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities. The bidders are required to submit (a) Original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with C.E., J.S.R.R.D.A. 3rd Floor, F.F.P. Building, H.E.C. Campus, Dhurwa, Ranchi, up to 18.01.2021 till 15.00 hours, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 18.01.2021 upto 15.00 hours (time).

For further details please log on to www.pmgstendersjhr.gov.in

* Non registered bidders may submit bids, however the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

Chief Engineer,
J.S.R.R.D.A., 3rd Floor
FFP Building, Dhurwa, Ranchi

PR 23885 Rural Work Department(20-21).D

कार्यपालक अभियांता का कार्यालय पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, देवधर

विलियम्स टॉउन, आरो के मिशन स्कूल के बगल में, ई-मेल: eedwsd.deoghar@gmail.com

ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

निविदा सूचना संख्या – 2/DWSD/DEO/2020-21 दिनांक:– 07.01.2021

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	केन्द्र प्रश्नाजित योजना "जल जीवन मिशन" के अन्तर्गत-
1	प्राकलित राशि	10.58.56.000.00 (दस लाख अंतर्वान लाख छह हजार) रुपये मात्र।
2	अग्रधन की राशि	10.58.56.000.00 (दस लाख अंतर्वान हजार पाँच सौ साठा रुपये मात्र।)
3	परिमाण प्रतिक्रिया का मूल	10,00,000 (दस हजार रुपये मात्र)
4	कार्य कार्य करने की अवधि	24 (वौले) माह + 3 (तीन) माह (परिचालन एवं परीक्षण)
5	एवं समय	12.01.2021 को 5.00 बजे अपराह्न तक।
6	प्री बीड मिशन की तिथि एवं समय	27.01.2021 को 12.30 बजे अपराह्न अभियांता प्रमुख के कार्यालय, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग, आराम्भ रुमी।
7	निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	27.01.2021 को 5.00 बजे अपराह्न तक।
8	अग्रधन की राशि एवं परिमाण प्रतिक्रिया के अंतर्वान	30.01.2021 को 3.00 बजे अपराह्न तक।
9	निविदा खाली की तिथि एवं समय	01.02.2021 को 3.00 बजे अपराह्न तक।
10	एवं कार्यालय का पाला	कार्यपालक अभियांता, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, देवधर।
11	निविदा खाली वाले पदाधिकारी के कार्यालय का पाला	कार्यपालक अभियांता, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, देवधर।
12	प्रोक्योरमेंट सेल का हेल्पलाइन नं.	9204931335
13	ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट सेल का हेल्पलाइन नं.	9204931335

केस संबंधी जो पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग में पौष्टीकृत नहीं है, वह इस निविदा में भाग ले सकते हैं तथा वे संवेदकों का कार्य आवंतन के दो माह के अंदर पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग, आराम्भ रुमी से पौष्टीकृत करा लेंगा अनिवार्य होगा। विस्तृत जानकारी हेतु वेबसाईट कार्यपालक अभियांता पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, देवधर।

PR 23892 Drinking Water and Sanitation(20-21)D

SC notice to Rajasthan House Speaker, 6 MLAs

Move comes on pleas against merger of BSP MLAs with Cong.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought responses from the Rajasthan Assembly Speaker and others on two separate petitions against the merger of six BSP MLAs into the ruling Congress legislature party in the State in September, 2019.

The apex court was hearing separate petitions filed by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and BJP MLA Madan Dilawar against the August 24 last year order passed by the Rajasthan High Court.

The High Court, while dealing with the plea filed by Mr. Dilawar, had asked the Speaker to decide within three months the disqualification petition filed by the BJP MLA against the merger.

Boost to Gehlot govt.

The merger was a boost to Ashok Gehlot-led State government as the tally of the Congress increased to over 100 in the House of 200 MLAs.

The pleas filed by BSP and Dilawar against the High Court's order came up for hearing on Thursday before a Bench comprising Justices S.A. Nazeer and K.M. Joseph.

"We will issue notice," the Bench said while seeking responses, including from the Assembly secretary as well as the six MLAs.

Marketing support for women self-help groups

Gehlot govt. to launch portal for them

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

the Local Self Government Departments have jointly formulated a plan to empower the SHGs with focus on quality, branding and marketing of their products. The strategies are expected to make a significant value addition to the production by SHGs.

Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development) Rohit Kumar Singh said on Thursday that a common web portal for SHGs would incorporate different aspects of value assessment, marketing, innovations, training and online applications. "Our emphasis will be on enabling the SHGs to make their presence felt in the market," he said.

Mr. Singh said the women SHGs would be encouraged to gradually shift from farm sector to the non-farm sector with diversification of their activities, which would help their members increase their livelihood.

Bihar man 'abducted, married forcefully'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

A 21-year old man was allegedly abducted at gunpoint and married 'forcefully' on Thursday in Barhia of Lakhisarai district in Bihar. He was later rescued by police from the neighbouring district of Jamui.

In a police complaint, Manoj Kumar alleged that his son Shivam Kumar, 21, was abducted at gunpoint and married with a girl forcefully. "Shivam had recently got a job by clearing the examination for General Duty Service in the Army and was to report in Hyderabad on January 14", he said.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Smt. N JAYALAKSHMI 90yrs

(W/o Late Sri Kumarakshi S Narayanaswamy, Rtd Chief Sub-Editor, Indian Express, Bangalore)

Passed away peacefully on

January 4, 2021, at Chennai.

Grieving daughters / sons in law Rama / V.Kumaraswamy; Lalli @ Vidhya / V.Sankaran; Sudha / Ganesh Radhakrishnan; & Other Family members.

Mortal remains donated for Medical research, as desired by her

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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Friday: Heavy rainfall is very likely at isolated places in coastal and south interior Karnataka, Mahe, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Cold day conditions are likely in isolated pockets of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	29.6	14.8	Kozhikode	—	42.32.8	23.8
Ahmedabad	—	25.8	13.6	Kurnool	0.1	29.6	22.8
Aizawl	—	24.0	—	Lucknow	—	25.9	14.4
Allahabad	—	27.6	13.6	Madurai	6.3	29.5	22.6
Bengaluru	12.6	26.0	16.8	Mangaluru	—	32.1	21.6
Bhopal	—	28.1	13.6	Mumbai	—	30.7	19.8
Bhubaneswar	—	31.5	18.0	Mysuru	—	31.0	20.0
Chandigarh	—	18.6	12.6	New Delhi	6.3	20.3	14.0
Chennai	8.4	29.4	24.0	Patna	—	28.8	14.4
Coimbatore	112.8	29.0	21.6	Port Blair	—	31.2	26.0
Dehradun	13.4	24.8	7.5	Puducherry	66.1	29.2	22.1
Gangtok	—	14.8	6.7	Pune	—	31.1	19.5
Goa	2.6	33.3	24.4	Raipur	—	31.7	18.8
Guwahati	—	27.2	13.0	Ranchi	—	29.4	15.4
Hubballi	—	27	21	Shillong	—	21.5	11.0
Hyderabad	1.7	27.7	19.5	Shimla	0.8	15.6	3.9
Imphal	—	26.4	7.2	Srinagar	—	6.7	0.8
Jaipur	—	21.1	11.2	Thiruvananthapuram	9.3	32.0	23.2
Kochi	14	32.0	23.8	Tiruchi	—	31.1	23.2
Kohima	—	15.5	4.4	Vijayawada	—	29	22
Kolkata	—	30.7	18.5	Visakhapatnam	—	31.1	23.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	21	.83	.65	.122	.119	■■■■■
Bengaluru	.2	.43	.30	.19	.22	■■■■■
Chennai	.8	.55	.30	.39	.42	■■■■■
Delhi	.4	.22	.32	.211	.254	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.5	.54	.37	.66	.71	■■■■■
Kolkata	43	141	.48	.302	.205	■■■■■
Lucknow	16	.31	.27	.128	.132	■■■■■
Mumbai	16	.55	.83	.120	.103	■■■■■
Pune	—	.86	.48	.132	.95	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	19	.37	.27	.140	.129	■■■■■

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.

PM2.5 & 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

MBBS admission fraud: police hunt for accused

Complainant duped of ₹21.5 lakh

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The CBD Belapur police are on the lookout for four people who duped people by promising admissions in a medical college in Dhule.

The police said Yogendra Pratap Singh, Narad Yadav, Jitendra Tyagi, and Kanika started Bidung and Solution Pvt Ltd in Belapur and contacted parents looking for MBBS admissions.

The complaint was filed by Rajendra Patil (45), a farmer from Dhule, who was duped of ₹21.5 lakh. Mr. Patil said he came in touch with the accused while looking for MBBS admissions online on December 5, 2020. On December 12, he and his

son went to the accused's office. While Mr. Singh and Mr. Tyagi introduced themselves as managers, Mr. Yadav said he was the director and their firm had a tie-up with ACPM medical college.

Mr. Patil then paid them ₹6.50 lakh. On December 27, Mr. Patil paid another ₹15 lakh to the accused. Mr. Patil's son then met the dean and found there was no admission in his name.

The police filed a case on January 4 against the accused on charges of cheating, forgery, and criminal breach of trust. "We have two more complainants who have been duped of ₹5.50 lakh," senior police inspector Anil Patil said.

Mr. Chhabria was arrested last week, after the Crime Intelligence Unit of the

Three more U.K. returnees test positive for new strain in Pune

3,729 new COVID-19 cases, 3,350 recoveries in State; 665 fresh cases in Mumbai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Three more U.K. returnees tested positive for the new COVID-19 strain on Thursday, taking its case tally in Maharashtra to 11.

State health authorities said the three patients are from Pimpri-Chinchwad in Pune district and all 11 cases are asymptomatic. Of these, two patients (one each from Pune and Mumbai) have been discharged after 14 days of quarantine and their two consecutive RT PCR tests have returned negative.

State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said 4,858 returnees from the U.K. and other European countries after November 25 had been traced, of whom 3,476 underwent RT-PCR tests and 75 tested positive for the old strain. "The 75 samples have been referred to the National Institute of Virology in Pune for genomic sequencing, while 522 contacts have been traced. Of these, 341 have been tested and 30 were found positive," he said.

Maharashtra on Thursday reported 3,729 new COVID-19 cases as opposed to 3,350 recoveries. The active case tally has risen to 51,111, while the total case tally and recoveries stand at 19,58,282



Covering all bases: Healthcare workers prepare for a dry run of the COVID-19 vaccination drive at Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai on Thursday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

and 18,56,109 respectively. A total of 66 fatalities saw the death toll climb to 49,897.

The State's recovery rate stands at 94.78%, while the case fatality is 2.55%. "Of 1,31,99,201 laboratory samples tested so far, 19,58,282 (case positivity rate down to 14.84%) have returned positive with over 65,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said Dr. Awate.

Pune reported nearly 750 new cases to take its tally to

3,76,658, while 18 deaths saw its toll rise to 7,805. As per district administration figures, the active case tally, which dipped below the 5,500-mark on Wednesday, rose to 5,589. The recovery rate stands at 96.08%. Mumbai reported 665 new cases to take its total case tally to 2,96,985, of which 7,759 are active. Seven fatalities saw the city's toll reach 11,162.

Nagpur reported over 500 new cases, taking its tally to 1,28,353, of which 4,837 are active. Twelve deaths saw the toll reach 3,242. Satara reported a single death as its toll stood at 1,780, while 58 fresh cases saw the total case tally rise to 55,022, of which just 756 are active.

Sangli reported 32 cases and a single death as the district's tally reached 50,352, of which only 443 are active. Its death toll stands at 1,770.

Kolhapur reported just six cases and no fatalities.

Renaming row: CMO tweets Sambhajinagar yet again

NCP leader Ajit Pawar says issue will be sorted out through discussions

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Notwithstanding the objection raised by the Congress over using Sambhajinagar instead of Aurangabad in a government statement, the official Twitter account of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's office on Thursday posted two more tweets where the city was men-

tioned as Sambhajinagar.

On Wednesday, State Congress president and Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat lashed out at the Director General of Information and Public Relations Department, which comes under Mr. Thackeray, for using Sambhajinagar when there was no official notification of renaming Aurangabad.

Marathwada region.

Earlier in the day, NCP leader Ajit Pawar said that the issue would be sorted out through discussions.

"This is a tripartite government and we have decided on a common minimum programme. Issues can arise as three parties are running the government," Mr. Pawar said.

Kapil Sharma accuses Chhabria of cheating

FIR to be filed against car designer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Mumbai Police are in the process of filing a case of misappropriation and cheating against car designer Dilip Chhabria over a complaint lodged against him by comedian Kapil Sharma.

"Comedian Kapil Sharma on Thursday visited the Mumbai Police Commissioner's Office in south Mumbai and lodged his complaint against Dilip Chhabria Designs Pvt. Ltd," the police official said.

Based on the complaint, the police are in the process of registering an offence of criminal misappropriation and cheating against Mr. Chhabria, he added.

Mumbai Police unearthed a major DC Avanti car financing and forgery scam.

"Comedian Kapil Sharma on Thursday visited the Mumbai Police Commissioner's Office in south Mumbai and lodged his complaint against Dilip Chhabria Designs Pvt. Ltd," the police official said.

Based on the complaint, the police are in the process of registering an offence of criminal misappropriation and cheating against Mr. Chhabria, he added.

Search on for man who jumped off Vashi bridge to take a selfie

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Vashi police and fire brigade personnel are still in search of a 28-year-old man from Mankhurd who jumped off Vashi bridge on Monday night on the pretext of taking a selfie. The Vashi police have registered a missing person case.

The police said Santosh Gajdhane, an autorickshaw driver, took three friends for a drive to the bridge at 8.30 p.m. on Monday. He told them he was going to take a selfie and walked towards the bridge's railings. He then jumped into the creek. "With the help of local fishermen, we looked for him, but we could not find him as it was dark. We do not suspect any foul play in the case," police inspector Pramod Toradmal said.

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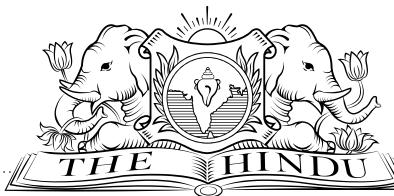
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Fruits of incitement

After the Capitol breach, the task of building bipartisan consensus is that much harder

If the history of nations is replete with ironies, nowhere were they more evident than in the U.S., when the "greatest nation on earth" became hostage to an ugly attempted coup led by a mob, bearing slogans of support for outgoing President Donald Trump. On Wednesday, hundreds of them stormed the Capitol building, as police appeared to be overwhelmed, and members of Congress, who were gathering to certify the results of the 2020 presidential election, cowered behind benches or were evacuated. Although the mob was eventually ejected, lawmakers went on to reconvene and formally certify the results, and Mr. Trump finally committed to an "orderly transition," major social media platforms locked his accounts for violating their civic integrity policies, namely inciting violence with months of contentious posts that made baseless allegations about electoral fraud. The immediate trigger for the mob, said to have been methodically planned online via social media, was the surprise victory of two Democratic candidates, Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, in the January 5 run-off election in Georgia. That election was necessitated by the fact that no candidate won 50% of the popular vote in the November 3 general election. Their win gives Democrats 50 seats in the Senate, which is tantamount to control of the upper chamber of Congress, because the incoming Vice-President, Kamala Harris, will cast a deciding vote in a tie.

To say that the incoming and 46th U.S. President, Joe Biden, has a tough job on his hands after his inauguration on January 20, would be an understatement. The sheer viciousness of the January 6 mob attack, and more than two months of hateful vitriol online and offline following the 2020 election, is proof that political America is deeply polarised, brimming with anger and disenchantment at the ground realities. The "unprecedented assault" on the very soul of democracy (as Mr. Biden put it) has been in the making for more than four years. At the heart of the tsunami of angst that was evident throughout the election campaign is a sense of frustration that grips middle America, including the white middle class and blue-collar workers, over the inevitable changes to the U.S. economy and society. There is a view that the forces of immigration and globalisation have lit the fuses on this explosive combination of racial prejudice and economic insecurity. In reality, Mr. Trump's strident rhetoric exploited this sense of alienation and socioeconomic dysfunction for narrow political and personal gains. Now Mr. Biden has an opportunity to strike a more balanced note by, on the one hand, seeking to revive the moribund spirit of bipartisan consensus and expediently tackling the thorny issue of comprehensive immigration reform, and, on the other, redressing the ills of runaway free-market liberalisation and forging a post-COVID-19 economic vision that can truly deliver on the American dream.

Flu in full flight

The avian flu must be stopped before sustained transmission among humans

Just three months after India declared itself to be free of the avian influenza outbreak, the highly pathogenic avian influenza subtypes, H5N1 and H5N8, have been reported from a dozen epicentres in four States – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala. In addition, thousands of poultry birds have died in Haryana, while Jharkhand and Gujarat, too, have sounded an alarm; the cause in these three States is still unknown. The two subtypes have targeted different birds – crows in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, migratory birds in Himachal Pradesh, and poultry in Kerala. While tests have confirmed H5N1 for causing the deaths of over 2,000 migratory birds in Himachal Pradesh, H5N8 has been identified for killing thousands of poultry in Kerala, and hundreds of crows in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In a bid to stop the spread, as on Wednesday over 69,000 birds, including ducks and chickens, were culled in Alappuzha and Kottayam as per India's 2015 National Avian Influenza Plan. Other States have been asked to be vigilant of any unusual deaths or disease outbreak signs amongst birds, particularly migratory ones. Migratory birds have been largely responsible for long-distance transmission of the virus into India during winter. It then spreads through local movement of residential birds and poultry. Movement of men and material from poultry farms too has been a cause for further spread. This is why States have been asked to strengthen biosecurity of poultry farms, disinfection and proper disposal of dead birds. With backyard rearing of poultry birds common, the task of elimination will be particularly difficult.

A recent European Food Safety Authority report says 561 avian influenza detections were made between August–December in 15 European countries and the U.K. The virus was predominantly found in wild birds, and a few in poultry and captive birds. H5N1 and H5N8 were two of three subtypes found in Europe. Genetic analysis helped confirm the spread from Asia to west-central Europe, suggesting a "persistent circulation of this virus strain, likely in wild birds in Asia". While avian influenza virus crossing the species barrier and directly infecting humans happens occasionally, human-to-human spread has been rare. But mutations or genetic reassortment of an avian influenza A virus and a human influenza A virus in a person can create a new influenza A virus that could likely result in sustained transmission between humans, thus increasing the risk of a pandemic influenza. Hence, all efforts should be directed at stamping out the outbreaks in the affected States. It is also important to undertake genome sequencing of virus samples to track the evolution of the virus.

Reading Hannah Arendt in Joe Biden's America

With a grasp of her writings on totalitarianism and the human condition in crises, Biden could have a vision for change



SHELLEY WALIA

For the first time in the history of the United States, a President has incited insurrection by his neo-Nazi brigade of right-wing supporters, opposing the peaceful transfer of power. It is tantamount to encouraging hostility when the world stood horrified as a witness to the rioters storming the U.S. Capitol. The violence against democracy, a blotch on the American constitutional democracy, interestingly, changed the minds of senators like Kelly Loeffler (Republican) who had previously said that they would object to the Electoral College results.

Healing a polarised nation
The unhinged and angry authoritarian at last stands crushed and humiliated after trying his best to undercut one of the oldest democratic systems in existence. With Joe Biden walking into the White House on January 20, there can be no overplaying the enormity of the tasks ahead of him, what with the deeply polarised nation divided into two belligerent camps. Afflicted with an escalating novel coronavirus pandemic, an ailing economy, racial discrimination, and a climate crisis rebuffed by millions, Mr. Biden's America has four long years to undo the tragic consequences of intolerance and division left behind by the incumbent.

Tragedy, for Joe Biden, is the very condition of life. Having lost his wife and daughter in an accident and a son to cancer, Joe Biden has always had the deep-seated desire to urge politics towards humanism in the wake of the overwhelming systemic racism that has underpinned American culture recently. The bitter assault on democracy is better understood in the recent revelation of his letter written in 1975 to the famous German-American

philosopher, Hannah Arendt (<https://bit.ly/38IEct6>), requesting her to send him a copy of her paper read at the Boston Bicentennial Forum. It reflects his desire to find "deeper causes" underlying the economic and social collapse as well as the scourge of racism.

A contrast to Trump's politics
Arendt sent out a warning in her paper entitled "Coming Home to Roost" which the present generation must heed: "All speculation about deeper causes returns from the shock of reality... the stark, naked brutality of facts, of things as they are." Her focus is largely on her deep-seated interest in political humanism and a free space in the world inhabited by people who are inspired by public principles and an ethics that stands in stark contradiction to the inherent ethno-nationalist populism and alternate-reality politics of Donald Trump. Boastful and deluded like Mussolini, and with an overriding penchant for self-glorification, he is overwhelmingly obsessed with not letting go of his power. More frighteningly, his conception of reality is different and facts have no significance for him.

Arendt returns repeatedly to this theme of the difference in things as they are and things as they can be made to seem – the difference, for example, in "our... outright humiliating defeat" in Vietnam and what Americans had been led to believe would be "peace with honor". The image projected by Mr. Trump of an America for the whites, where there is no place for immigrant "termites", coheres with the public sentiment of the white non-college going population that relates fondly with the language of a President that is no better than a junior school third rater. The invasion of Mr. Trump into the political life of America has been more of a politics of lies projected through the dominance of an image to convince the people that only he could save America. And now when the shaky putsch has failed and the Trump loyalists have de-



parted for home, he has begun to exactly do what the American government is an old hand at: "finding ways and means of how to avoid admitting defeat" and keeping the image of a President as the "mightiest power on earth" and the only one who can keep it intact. A bully is no different.

In asking for the paper, Mr. Biden, to use Arendt's words with which she described President Ford's attitude after the defeat in Vietnam, has taken on the responsibility "to heal the wounds of a divided nation," urging the people to begin a new chapter. As a young man in his thirties, he had already become aware of America's "image-making as global policy", a fundamentally American version of "big lie" techniques devised in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. There, Arendt argues, "lying was guided by ideology and backed by terror"; here, it has been directed at creating images and bolstered by "hidden persuasion" through the manipulation of public opinion.

A parallel, then and now
Interestingly, Mr. Biden, in keeping with the intellectual leanings of the 1960s and the 1970s, has begun to think at a young age of Arendt as a contemporary philosopher speaking on the idea of "image and lies", on disinformation, on violence, on public and private freedom, and on political action. It was the war on terror, on Afghanistan and Iraq that echo Arendt's report on the Holocaust organiser, Adolf Eichmann and his trial which derives its significance from the complex notions of justice and responsibility, ethics and duty. The war, for instance in Iraq

or a few decades earlier in Vietnam was not in support of defending democracy and human rights but to exhibit the power and might of the American hegemon. The fabrication of the hypothesis of "weapons of mass destruction" was exposed when no such lethal nuclear arsenal was discovered. The sham left both the United States and Britain red in the face.

Setting policy right

Mr. Biden had early on in life learnt from political philosophy that the rise of a more workable political and public humanism depends singularly on Arendt's "free spectators of action" who determine the meaning of action and its public relevance that saves humans from the abyss of a miserable existence.

No wonder Mr. Biden has taken keen interest in pressing humanitarian issues such as Sudan's political crisis or the dark contemporary history of Syria. He has already introduced a national security team designed to repudiate Mr. Trump's nationalistic isolationism in order to usher in humility and confidence among America's allies.

His choice to execute the nation's immigration policy is a Cuban-American (Alejandro Mayorkas). Avril Haines will be the first woman to serve as director of national intelligence. And possibly Lloyd Austin would be the first African-American in America's history to head the Department of Defense. As Mr. Biden's choice for Interior Secretary, Deb Haaland will be the first Native American Cabinet Secretary to ensure that the nation would make right the wrongs in the long history of bloodshed and extermination of the natives. This counters not only Mr. Trump's misogyny but also his agenda of withdrawing shamelessly from America's role in the world as a defender of democracy and human rights.

Arendt's castigation of Zionism and the fascism of the American-supported Israeli leadership brings us to the question of how

authoritarian regimes fail to notice the lack of any sense of ethics or humanitarian necessity. It is true that "biological racism" that is visible in the history of apartheid, or in Germany under Nazism, or the resurgence of racist politics under Mr. Trump subsists on the major ideology of enforcing complete submission of the individual self to the state, the evil of incorrigible megalomaniacs striking out at the very dignity of being human.

Schooled in Arendt's writings on totalitarianism and the nature of the human condition in times of crises, Mr. Biden is the right choice for President who hopefully, has the vision for an exceptionally progressive change. It is expected that he will constantly be on his toes with the same readiness as Barack Obama, and alive to what George Santayana warned, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Writings that inspire

America must know that politics of terrorism will not work any more at home or abroad. And it is hoped that many around the world would go to Arendt if only to learn a lesson or two about the vulnerability of our democracy that allows people like Mr. Trump to even stand for election when he is guilty of allowing thousands to die of the pandemic.

Her writings have always been a powerful foundation of inspiration to the people's movements fighting against totalitarian lying and the infringement of basic human rights. Her persistent warnings of failure of the American republican tradition for self-government asks for an ideological position underpinned by a more cognitive existence that is mindful of the facts 'coming home to roost'. For Arendt, if you remain an onlooker and express no reaction appropriate to the circumstances, your inertia will amount to deliberately perpetrating violence and accepting lies to prevail.

Shelley Walia is Professor Emeritus, Department of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh

A hegemony upended by a Frankenstein

The loss of the Republican party in the Georgia run-offs has exposed the limits of Trumpism



SRINIVASAN RAMANI

January 6 was supposed to be a day of reckoning for the delicate balance of power between the American legislature and the upcoming presidency. The Democrats had barely managed to retain control of the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2020, even as their candidate, Joe Biden, had achieved a decisive victory over a first-term President. The Senate elections ended on a near coin flip as Georgia headed to run-offs with no candidate, Republican or Democrat, managing to win 50% of the vote, and the Democrats needing two more seats for a 50-50 split in the Senate, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris providing a tie-breaking vote.

Change in a 'red' State
Georgia, traditionally, has been a Republican State, a fixture of the Deep South in the U.S. that has been a stronghold of the Grand Old Party (GOP), years after the Civil Rights Movement and Lyndon B. Johnson's institution of the Voting Rights Act flipped the Democrats' support bases and won the GOP white majority support. But demographic changes due to urbanisation and changes in the nature of the economy brought in new objective factors favouring the socially liberal and diverse Democrats. The work done by Democrat leader Stacey Abrams in increasing the turnout of the black minorities against overwhelming odds set by a Republican-con-

trolled legislature to constrain voting, provided the heft that the Democrats long needed to change the contours of a traditionally "red" State.

The fact that the Democrats fielded an African-American pastor in Rev. Raphael Warnock who went on to become only the 11th African-American U.S. senator, and a Jewish documentary filmmaker in Jon Ossoff, who at 33 was the youngest senator to be elected since Joe Biden, suggested that this was the outcome of substantive change. The Republican candidates were rich plutocrats in incumbents Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, who positioned themselves on the far-right to secure support. After all, despite Donald Trump's decisive loss, he did manage to enhance the overall vote for the Republicans in 2020 and consolidate support among the white working and small business-owning classes. Loeffler and Perdue branded their opponents as radical socialists, creating a bogey of the demands for welfarism from the progressive wing of the Democratic party even if the policy palette of Ossoff and Warnock was hued closer to the moderate and socially liberal wing. Scare tactics have been successful in the U.S. against progressive candidates in the past, with a willing right-wing media ecosystem providing the misinformation machinery to do that. But the Republicans hit a road block. Unlike the GOP's agenda of retaining control of the U.S. Senate and to continue its well-honed obstructionist tactics to stymie any progressive change – something that characterised the second term of the Barack Obama presidency – Mr. Trump's main agenda was to sow misinformation about the presidential election results



and a quixotic pursuit to overturn the presidential mandate.

By discrediting the 2020 election and calling into question the mail-in balloting in particular, Mr. Trump depressed the GOP turnout in the Georgia run-offs relatively as a section of his most ardent supporters believed that the voting process was already flawed. This helped the Democrats flip the script in Georgia in the run-offs – a motivated Democrat base adeptly organised by Abrams' endeavours helped increase the turnout to a historic high (nearly 4.4 million voters), with African-Americans in particular voting in large numbers.

Advantage Biden

The Ossoff-Warnock wins on January 6 helped the Democrats get a controlling majority in the U.S. Senate and allowed the Biden presidency the breathing space to push for at least minimal reform, away from the Trumpian era. It will now be much easier for Mr. Biden to get his government nominees confirmed and to pass meaningful COVID-19 relief and vaccination measures. Substantive reform, something that progressives seek, would still be difficult as conservative sections among the Democrats could tie up with the Republicans to block policies such as filibuster reform or greater state spending in health care, but this is a definite contrast to a Republican majority which was a cul-de-sac, with reform proposals more or

less becoming dead on arrival to the Senate.

A Democrat control over the Senate, Congress and the presidency is also a welcome change for the world. The Republican party, after all, has transmogrified significantly in the last few years. A classification of major political parties by the Swedish research institute, V-Dem, located the Republicans (as of 2018) as having moved further into the "illiberal Right" (in terms of commitment to democracy). Only three right-wing parties were worse-off among electoral democracies – Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP in Turkey, the Viktor Orban-led Fidesz in Hungary and, to no surprise, the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party in India.

The clipping of the wings of the authoritarian and populist Right in the U.S. at the national level heralds genuine change for liberal democratic positions worldwide, at least on some issues – climate change and immigration. The protectionist driven impulses and the trade "wars" initiated by the Trump regime, will on the other hand take much more effort and coordination in international relations to wither away.

Trump and history

Mr. Trump will be remembered as a narcissist and a pathological liar who managed to rise up to the U.S. presidency and retain support despite his naked recourse to crony capitalism and venality. He did so by playing into the fears and discontent of the white working class and small business sections with globalisation and affirmative actions. But his success was also enabled by a plutocratic Republican party that gained from his rise by pushing for scores of conservative judicial appointments and

achieved comprehensive tax cuts benefiting the ultra-rich and the corporate sectors in the country. Having achieved these sops for the fiscal and social conservative wings of the party, the GOP tolerated Mr. Trump's repeated excesses and lies, even to the extent of allowing him to discredit the 2020 presidential election. Even though Republican office-bearers at the State and judicial levels resisted the soft coup attempt by Mr. Trump's allies (which were based on fiction and falsehoods), the party's senior leaders in the Senate allowed the charade to continue unimpeded till late December 2020, leading a large section of the Republican supporters into believing that the election was stolen.

Self-imposed ignominy

A thoroughly immoral section of the Party led by Senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley among others sought to use a routine certification ceremony in the U.S. Congress on January 6 to repeat lies about the election being stolen. These efforts only emboldened Mr. Trump further and the consequence was there for all to see – the insurrection led by a ragtag bunch of white supremacists and other lumpens egged on by Mr. Trump who sought to violently disrupt Congressional proceedings. The Republican party has brought this ignominy upon itself, and the turn of events in the U.S. have shocked and alarmed the world. It will take a while to overturn the rot in U.S. politics heralded by the Trumpian turn in 2016 but the world will breathe a sigh of relief that the stranglehold of the Republican party has loosened somewhat.

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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.

Central Vista judgment

In the judgment of the Supreme Court on the Central Vista, it is Justice S. Khanna alone who has emphasised the importance of public hearing which is reflective of the democratic principles at the heart of our society. It is this principle which has been lacking in the Centre's decision in going through

with the colossal project, overlooking core issues such as health care, education and other basic needs. For the majority to say that they cannot control government spending amounts to a breach of public trust and going against constitutional mandates. The other surprise is the Supreme Court's observation that it

cannot heighten judicial review when it comes to the construction of the Central Vista and that it has to be judged by ordinary statutory procedures. The existing Parliament was the place where Independence was declared and is a heritage building. The Court would have been within its rights in directing the present Parliament to

be put to better use rather than permitting a new building. This is a classic case where the principle of majoritarianism is becoming destructive to democracy itself.

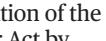
N.G.R. PRASAD,
Chennai

On the margins
As someone who has worked for a little over 30

years at the Rourkela steel plant, it saddened me to read the report, "4 workers die of exposure to toxic gas" (January 7). In almost all such industrial accidents, it is usually the contract labour who pay a heavy price. Such labour are paid much lesser wages than regular employees, but are engaged in undertaking riskier jobs.

A.R. RAMANARAYAN,
Chennai

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Do we have a grip on disinformation in 2021?

PARLEY

Disinformation is increasing and becoming harder to combat, but fact-checking too is evolving

Disinformation, or "fake news", is a malaise that has been worsened by the infodemic of the social media age. In the last few years, it has been used as an effective weapon to polarise communities and upset democratic processes. As we begin 2021, what is the current state of the malady? Pratik Sinha and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen discuss this question in a conversation moderated by P. J. George. Edited excerpts:

The modes and means of disinformation have been perpetually evolving. What is the state of disinformation as we have entered a new year?

Pratik Sinha: In the Indian context, disinformation is not evolving in quality but in quantity. When *Alt News* started in 2017, we used to debunk maybe five, six stories every week. But the nature of disinformation was the same as it is today – primarily old videos and images used to represent something in the present, especially if they have an element of violence or are highly politicised. We saw massive spikes of disinformation on the anti-CitizenSHIP (Amendment) Act protests, elections, the Delhi riots of 2020, and the pandemic. In all of these issues, the kind of disinformation which was perpetrated was pretty simple, and not that difficult to debunk. It's just the organised manner in which it was produced every single day – multiple false claims using photos, images and text.

Going forward, I don't think this is going to change much. In fact, it is just going to keep increasing because political parties have found out that if you put out organised disinformation, then any political narrative can be controlled. At the same time, even though India has a federal structure, the parties which have been targeted are not doing anything about it. They are not introducing any educational reform so that people can be more aware. So, what we are going to see is just a lot more disinformation that is rudimentary, but with a lot of people consuming it day in and day out, and forming their political opinion.

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen: Pratik has

described very clearly the basic dynamics of disinformation in many countries. It's very visible in India, but we also see similar patterns in the U.S. and Brazil and a number of other countries. While the tactics, forms, and communities involved in creating and disseminating disinformation evolve over time, by now we have a very clear sense of what the basic dynamics are. I think of it as the four Ps: You have disinformation that is spread and created in the pursuit of Power. It often comes from the political establishment: sometimes from the governing party, sometimes from the opposition. Then you have disinformation that is spread for Profit. This is mostly sort of low-grade clickbait. Then you have disinformation that's driven by Profound public disagreement. This is bottom-up disinformation, where people in good faith spread information that others think of as disinformation. We see this around vaccines, climate change, community relations in countries such as India. And the final P is that all of this is enabled by Platform companies. Facebook and WhatsApp, Google and YouTube, Twitter, and others enable the creation and spread of this information in ways that set us apart from where we were before the advent of digital media. These four Ps of power, profit, profound public disagreement and platforms will continue to drive disinformation in 2021.

Then there are some things that are changing. Many disinformation actors have embraced formats that are harder to fact-check and harder to moderate, whether by humans or by automated forms. We're also seeing that platforms have been, on rare occasions, willing to go after disinformation very aggressively. [Due to this], we are seeing a migration or a partial migration of disinformation actors away from the large consumer-facing platforms to smaller and more specialised platforms. These could be encrypted messaging applications or chat functions in online gaming platforms, or newsletters, or any number of other platforms where, at this stage, we don't have the same amount of effort or resource to try to combat disinformation.



Do you think the traditional media has improved its game or is it going round in circles when it comes to disinformation?

RKN: The fact-checking community has evolved in really impressive and important ways over time, in particular, when they fact-check powerful and prominent individuals who seem keen that others' disinformation should be countered but not their own. In terms of journalism, we have seen some recognition of two problems that have plagued news organisations while dealing with disinformation historically. One of them is that a fundamental driver of disinformation is powerful people who lie, and who have weaponised the journalistic convention of quoting powerful people verbatim in headlines, even if what they say is untrue. Any fact-checking happens much later in articles that many readers never get to.

RASMUS KLEIS NIELSEN

themselves, [statements by] Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have hardly been fact-checked by any news organisations. I think one television channel tried to do a fact-check, and three of its anchors were asked to leave and some advertisements were withdrawn.

When it comes to organised disinformation on social media, again, the mainstream media in India has acknowledged the issue but not many news organisations actually do fact-checking. Even if any mainstream media organisations are doing so, they are not looking at the most dangerous claims that are being put out. The main purpose of disinformation in India is to target minorities, and there's very little fact-checking that has been done to reduce that harm.

India also has another problem. Not only is the mainstream media not fact-checking people, but it is actually putting out disinformation. If not disinformation, these are pluses by the government. The government claimed that Arsenicum Album 30, a homeopathic drug, can prevent people from having COVID-19 and so, many organisations carried that claim. Many mainstream media organisations gave Baba Ramdev unlimited bandwidth to put out his claims on Coronil.

Platforms such as Facebook,

Powerful people have weaponised the journalistic convention of quoting them verbatim in headlines, even if what they say is untrue. Any fact-checking happens much later in articles that many readers never get to.

Google, Twitter and YouTube have amplified disinformation with algorithms that prioritise engagement and revenue. Do you see 2021 being any different on this front?

PS: From the point of view of India, it is not going to be very different. As I said, one of the most common forms of disinformation in India are old images and old videos. Now, platforms claim that they don't want to be the arbiters of truth, but it takes very little technological work to have something as basic as a database of images. We have developed a similar technology for the *Alt News* app with a database of images with dates that the users can look up. There is no question here of the platform deciding what is the truth. This major vector of disinformation can be controlled if platforms are willing to go that extra mile. When I've had an audience with some of these platforms, I have suggested that that they bring us in, as we are the people who are bridging journalism and technology and have ideas on how to deal with these issues. But all our requests have fallen on deaf ears. Second, a lot of their decisions are not well-thought-out. They are constantly reacting to situations and do not seem to have any plan.

RKN: I agree that technology has the potential to deal with these problems. But at a very fundamental level, there are key parts of these problems that are political and social in nature. Several of these companies took major initiatives around the 2020 U.S. elections. And if you are a user in India, you would have every right to ask, 'Am I not equally important?' The companies have some tough questions to answer in terms of how they treat us.

While questioning science and questionable science have both been aspects of disinformation earlier, the pandemic period saw an overabundance of this. Where's the slip up happening due to which established science such as vaccines is being called into question?

RKN: Science is arguably the single most powerful way we have of arriving at the best obtainable version of the truth. There are clear examples

of misinformation and disinformation that is in direct conflict with the best available scientific evidence. These are harmful as they can be around vaccines or public health emergencies and, for that matter, climate change. It's a particularly problematic form of disinformation and one where we actually have a ground truth that we can compare the claims against. However, we need to recognise that in a rapidly developing situation, research in science by its very nature deals with uncertainty rather than certainty. Large and powerful institutions that make decisions based on scientific input have to recognise that the scientific consensus will evolve as we get new data, and different analyses sometimes overturn established findings. Think of a situation like the early parts of the pandemic. Very important international health organisations made a number of claims about the way in which the disease is transmitted that we now know are wrong. I don't think we should blame them for that. There are some areas in which there is a clear scientific consensus and an established ground truth, but there are other areas in which this is less clear.

PS: From the Indian perspective, I'll give it a two-part-answer. One is how journalism deals with science. I know *The Hindu* has one, but most news organisations don't have a science team that is trained to cover science. They treat science as press releases, dutifully putting them out without examining the facts. Problem number two is that none of us expected a pandemic; we were just not ready for the fact that during a pandemic, we will have science that is constantly changing. Even recently, we debunked a video where people were circulating an old mask protocol. The other thing that happened, especially in India, was that alternative medicine thought of this as a very good chance to gain prominence. A number of cures were put out claiming to be COVID-19 cures. These claims are there on Amazon and Google and many people are buying these drugs; again, no fact-checking. So, in India, we are facing a much bigger problem, not just because we have what the rest of the world has, but because the journalism industry in India is not equipped to handle the science.



Pratik Sinha
is the co-founder of *Alt News*, a fact-checking website



Rasmus Kleis Nielsen
is Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and Professor of Political Communication at the University of Oxford



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Getting ready for vaccination

Training more and more healthcare workers to become COVID-19 experts is the way forward

KUMUD MOHAN RAI & PRABHAT CHAND

With the announcement that India has approved two COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use, we may finally be seeing some light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. That's good news.

But India is also at a fork in the road: are we prepared to dramatically increase the number of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who are trained for immunising and treating us? If not, none of these advances will matter for millions of our citizens.

This is a problem that can be solved. If we do it right, we will not only be able to provide care for 1.6 billion people, but also have a model to show the world on how vaccination and treatment can be done quickly and skillfully. If the world's second-most populated nation can vaccinate and treat its people, other countries with far fewer daunting challenges can learn from India and save millions of lives.

Over 4,00,000 frontline workers in India have been trained to respond to COVID-19. This number represents a massive ramping up of skills for many professionals who had never had this training. Thousands have learned about contact tracing, quarantine strategies, ventilator management, personal protective equipment, and psychological issues.

Learning from one another
India was a beneficiary of a successful global innovation called Project ECHO. It's a low-cost solution for increasing the capacity of health workers in underserved communities to provide patients with the best possible care. Using videoconferencing technology, community health workers, nurses and doctors – generalists by training – learn specialty care from subject matter experts and from each others' community informed knowledge. ECHO started as a strategy for treating Hepatitis C, and is now responsible for newly trained experts in HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, addiction, mental health, and many other conditions.

The number 4,00,000 is impressive, but it's not enough to meet the demand in India. There are many

States, particularly rural ones, where we are gravely understaffed for the needs of our people. ECHO gives us the ability to reach healthcare workers in the most remote areas and afford them training comparable to what a healthcare worker in one of our largest cities would receive.

The fact is that India, led by the Serum Institute of India, has the largest vaccine manufacturing capacity in the world. We need to plan smartly before COVID-19 vaccines become widely available. Who will deliver these vaccines? How do we store and handle the vaccines? How do we overcome cultural and religious barriers for those who are reluctant to accept a vaccine? How do we counsel people about side-effects so that they come to embrace the vaccine even if they start out with reservations? Knowing how to answer these questions requires cultivating real skills.

And beyond vaccines, new treatments are on their way. As of last August, there were more than 20,000 peer-reviewed publications on COVID-19, and more than 100 are coming out every day. Who can make sense of this avalanche of knowledge? How will healthcare workers – many new to COVID – keep track of the most important information?

More training
Training more workers to treat more people is the best solution – for our personal and economic health. Simply put, we need more health experts to support vaccination and treatment. The ECHO model is worth ramping up even more to identify new healthcare workers who can be trained to be COVID-19 experts.

At the end of the day, our personal, community, and national health hinges on a trained and plentiful workforce that is constantly up to date with the right knowledge and skills to care for all of us. We now have the model for successfully addressing not only this pandemic but future ones. Let's build on what we have accomplished so far.

Dr. (Col.) Kumud Mohan Rai is Chairman of ECHO India and Dr. Prabhat Chand is Professor of Psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Sciences, Bengaluru



NOTEBOOK

Rallying at the seat of power

Some protests strengthen democracy, others weaken it

SUHASINI HAIDAR

The seat of power has always been a platform for protest. As a child, I would marvel at the fact that the 'Boat Club' on Rajpath, just a few hundred metres from Parliament, North and South Block, and Rashtrapati Bhavan, could be used by protesters of all political colours and hues. Protest marchers would begin at the Boat Club and walk to Gol Methi Chowk, just next to the Prime Minister's residence. As a teenager one witnessed the tens of thousands of farmers led by the Bharatiya Kisan Union "occupy" the lawns from India Gate up to Vijay Chowk for a week in 1988, and then the Mandal anti-reservation agitation of 1990. Years later, it was the anti-corruption movement of 2011 and the protests against the gang-rape of a young woman in Delhi in 2012 that saw crowds overrun parts of "Lutyens' Delhi", as the area surrounding Parlia-

ment is known. In later years, protests in these areas were no longer allowed, and the government now restricts marches to a small strip of road near the Parliament Street Police Station, while larger protests like those against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the ongoing protests against the farm laws have been relegated to the outskirts of Delhi.

During the Arab Spring, one covered protests in Syria against President Bashar al-Assad, and in Libya, against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi where police would take down details of those protesting and those covering the protests. However, "pro-regime" protesters were allowed to gather at will, threaten civilians, and even fire in the air. In Egypt, the second round of Tahrir Square protests in 2013 actually reversed the course of democracy, and installed another authoritarian government – that of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

The point of rallying at the seat of power is simple: not only are the protesters ensuring that their voice is heard, as it should be in any democracy, they also believe that the buildings of power and the manicured lawns are public property and therefore lay claim on them as members of the public. As a journalist, you learn to quickly appreciate the power of protest when you are about to be trod underfoot in a crush of people. You are trained not to move towards the middle of the crowd, but to stay at its periphery, and move to a height on the side if possible. You are also given a first-hand look at the answer to important questions: when does a cry for justice turn into a movement to overturn a government, or even a coup? Also, when a government is elected by millions, can a crowd of less than a hundred thou-

sand really represent a challenge to it? Finally, is a government more "in control" if it allows large protests to gather against it, or if it quells all protests so the protesters don't have a chance of "Storming the Bastille" as it were?

The answers in my reporter's notebook are simple: protest is a legitimate part of democracy, and when protesters fight to overturn a government action, or even to demand elections to overturn a government, they only strengthen that democracy. It is those that seek to overturn democracy as a system itself that are the worry: like the mobs on Capitol Hill who bore loyalty to one man over the democratic process, or those we have seen bringing authoritarian movements to power by overrunning democratically elected governments in different parts of the world. They do democracy its greatest disservice.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 8, 1971

Bandits decamp with Rs. 18 lakhs

An armed gang broke into the State Bank's branch at Chittaranjan, about 45 kms. from here [Asanol], this afternoon [January 7] and decamped with Rs. 18,71,000 in what is stated to be the country's biggest bank robbery so far. A guard of the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works was shot dead by the dacoits, and two other employees of the public sector undertaking who had taken the money to deposit in the bank were injured by bomb splinters, according to an official report. The dacoits also took away a double barrel gun from the bank's guard before making good their escape.

The report said that as soon as the money was taken in and kept in the cash enclosure at about 1:20 p.m., five or six people crashed in and exploded more than 50 bombs. The glass panes at the counter were blown to pieces and the hall was filled with thick acrid smoke. One of the members of the gang ordered the bank employees not to move from their places and hang their heads down, while others entered the cash enclosure by jumping across the counter. As the C.L.W. guard sought to resist the dacoits, one of them took out a pistol and shot him dead. As they carried the three cash boxes, the dacoits exploded several more bombs, scaring away the bystanders. They got into a waiting car and fled away.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 8, 1921

The Duke's visit
(From an Editorial)

H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught is arriving in Madras on Monday next. It is scarcely necessary to remind our readers that the Indian National Congress has passed a unanimous resolution asking the people not to participate in the functions and festivities arranged by the Government in connection with the visit of the Duke. "We need not remind our Madras friends," says "Young India" of the 5th instant, "of the Nagpur Congress resolution which must be so fresh in their mind. We hope they will be able to keep before His Royal Highness a true perspective of the state of affairs in the country by their silent but unmistakable protest that these Councils do not represent the electorate meaning thereby the majority thereof, and to impress upon the Duke the fact which he might carry to his Majesty that India will be satisfied with and is determined to have nothing short of full Swaraj and a complete retrieval of the Khilafat".

FROM PAGE ONE

PM Modi terms protests 'unlawful'

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala called the incident "reprehensible". He said, "We in the INC believe that rulers are borne by the vote of the people and not by force. Use of force to subvert democracy is unacceptable and condemnable".

General secretary of the CPI D. Raja chose the occasion to remind Mr. Modi that he had travelled to Houston in 2019 to campaign for the re-election of President Donald Trump.

"Mr. Trump has been destroying pillars of democracy in the United States. He refused to accept the verdict and engineered this violence. It is ironical that our Prime Minister talked about a smooth transition of power when he attended Howdy Modi programme and campaigned for Mr. Trump," he said, adding that "subversion of democracy has become the character of right-wing leaders".

States will get vaccine supplies soon: Vardhan

During the meeting, senior officials from Kashmir raised the issue of not having enough technology to work with the Ministry's digital platform Co-WIN which provides real-time information on vaccine stocks, their storage temperature and beneficiaries of the vaccine. The officials sought for an offline system for collecting and storing data.

Ministers demand
Ministers from States, including Bihar and Odisha, demanded that MPs, MLAs and panchayat members

should be included in the priority group for the vaccine, while others wanted the Centre's assistance in getting the technical glitches cleared.

Equal distribution
The States also sought an equal distribution of the vaccine and the maintenance of a smooth supply pipeline to ensure adequate supply. Dr. Vardhan said the "dry run will also familiarise the State, district, block and hospital level officers on all aspects of the vaccine rollout".

Farmers conduct Republic Day 'rehearsal'

Iraj Raja, Superintendent of Police (Rural), Ghaziabad, said no permission was sought for the rally but "the administration was in no mood for confrontation as long as there was no law-and-order problem."

Another group was supposed to have come from Rewasan in Nuh district to join them in Palwal, but failed to get started. Mewat Vikas Sabha president Salamudeen Meo said that All-India Mewati Samaj president Ramzan Chaudhary was detained by the Nuh police, and three other farmer leaders put under house arrest. Nuh SP Narendra Bijarniya said only Mr.

Chaudhary was detained and let off in the evening. On the other side of Delhi, larger groups gathered at Tikri, Kundli and Dhansara on the border with Haryana and moved towards each other, completely jamming one side of the three-lane Western Peripheral Expressway for several kilometres.

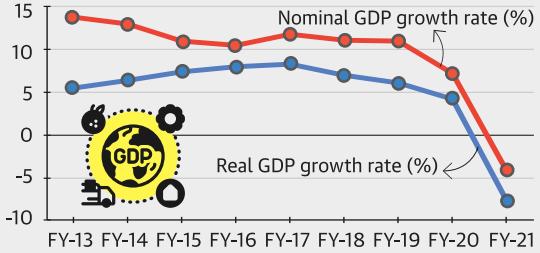
According to organisers, similar tractor marches were held in many districts of Punjab, Haryana and U.P., as well as protests in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Bihar.

(With inputs from Ashok Kumar, Anuj Kumar, Shrinivari Ghosh, Priscilla Jebara)

GDP likely to contract by 7.7% this fiscal: govt.

Shrinking economy

India's real GDP and nominal GDP may contract by 7.7% and 4.2% in 2020-21 respectively, according to the government



Just two sectors are estimated to record positive growth in GVA, with agriculture continuing its strong run through the first half of the year into the second half (3.4%) and electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services posting (2.7%).

The sharpest decline in the pandemic-dented year is expected in trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting (-21.4%), followed by construction (-12.6%), mining and quarrying (12.4%) and manufacturing (-9.4%). Public administration, defence and other services are also projected to contract by 3.7%, while financial, real estate and professional services shall record a marginal 0.8% decline year-on-year, as per the NSO report.

SBI group chief economic adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh said, "It's now official. Due to the pandemic, India will witness negative GDP growth rate for the first time after 1979-80. This estimate, however, has a shelf life of only two months and is only used as an input for Budget arithmetic. We believe that GDP and GVA for 2020-21 would be revised further downwards in estimates that will be released in February and May."

Real GVA at basic prices is estimated at ₹123.39 lakh crore in 2020-21, against ₹133.01 lakh crore in 2019-20, while the real GDP in 2020-21 is likely to attain a level of ₹134.40 lakh crore, as against the provisional GDP estimate for 2019-20 of

Central team assesses bird-flu spread in Kerala

It is also evaluating the risk to public health posed by the outbreak of H5N8

STAFF REPORTER
ALAPPUZHA

A three-member Central team reached Kerala on Thursday to assess the situation following the outbreak of avian influenza (H5N8) in Alappuzha and Kottayam districts.

The team, comprising Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's public health expert Ruchi Jain, National Institute of Virology, Pune, scientist Shailesh Pawar and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Delhi, physician Anith Jindal held discussions with the Alappuzha district administration officials at the collectorate here in the morning.

Later in the day, the team visited Karuvatta, Pallippad and Thakazhi, the bird flu

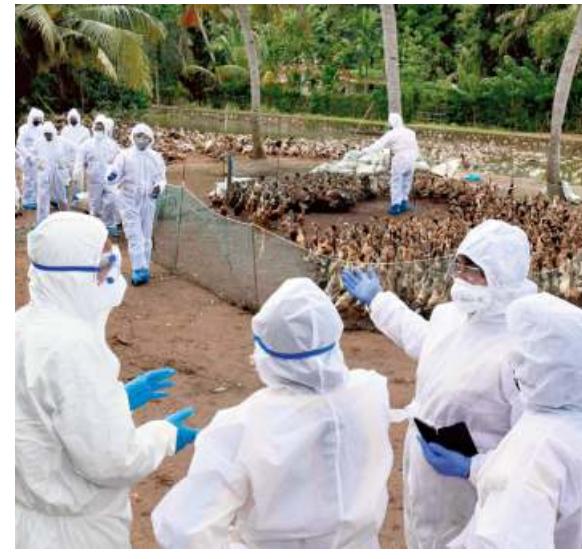
hotspots. The Central team is primarily looking at the circumstances that led to the outbreak, its spread and bird culling operations being undertaken as per the Central government guidelines.

The team is also evaluating the public health risk posed by H5N8. The risk of transmission of the virus to humans is considered to be very low.

Over 20 farmers hit

District Collector A. Alexander apprised the team of the culling operations and measures taken to tackle the spread of the disease in the district.

Mr. Alexander said that a total of 43,206 ducks had been culled so far in the district.



Exercising caution: A team of health experts visiting a bird flu affected area in Alappuzha district on Thursday. •PTI

As many as 32,550 eggs had been destroyed. The Collector informed the team that ducks belonging to more than 20 farmers died/were

culled in the district.

The team also collected details of measures taken for COVID-19 prevention and control in the district.

Meanwhile, Animal Husbandry Department officials said that joint efforts to tackle the spread of avian influenza in the districts had entered the final phase.

"On Thursday, the third day of the culling process, 6,132 ducks and 620 chicken were culled in the district.

"rapid response teams will sanitise the areas on Friday. The situation is under control," said P.K. Santhosh Kumar, District Animal Husbandry Officer.

According to officials, more than 68,000 birds, mostly ducks, died/were culled in Alappuzha.

In Kottayam

In Kottayam district, 7,729 birds were culled, while more than 2,000 ducks died. The Animal Husbandry Department will continue to carry out surveillance over a radius up to 10 km from the hotspots.

In a statement, K.M. Deepak, Director of Animal Husbandry, said that joint efforts to tackle the spread of avian influenza in the districts had entered the final phase.

Bird flu has been detected in five places in Kuttanad at Nedumudi, Thakazhi, Pallippad and Karuvatta in Alappuzha district and Neendoor in Kottayam district.

Another team

Meanwhile, another two-member team from the Centre will visit Kottayam and Alappuzha districts on January 8 and 9 respectively.

Minhaj Alam, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, and S.K. Singh, Director, National Centre for Disease Control, will hold discussions with the respective district administration authorities regarding the bird flu and COVID-19 outbreaks.

IN BRIEF



Congress leader K.K. Ramachandran no more

KOZHIKODE Congress leader and former Minister K.K. Ramachandran, 78, died after a cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Kozhikode on Thursday. Ramachandran had represented the Sultan Bathery and Kalpetta Assembly segments in Wayanad district for 27 years.

Telangana HC gets first woman Chief Justice

HYDERABAD Justice Hima Kohli was sworn in as Chief Justice of the High Court for the State of Telangana here on Thursday at Raj Bhavan. She is the first woman Chief Justice of Telangana High Court.

Chandrasekhar Rao undergoes medical tests

HYDERABAD Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao underwent diagnostic tests at a corporate hospital on Thursday on the advice of doctors who checked his health condition the previous day after he complained of a burning sensation in lungs and suffered from cough.

TDP demands CBI inquiry into temple attacks

VIJAYAWADA The TDP has urged Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan to order a CBI inquiry into the series of attacks on Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh. The TDP team met the Governor here on Thursday and submitted a memorandum to him in this regard.

Chittoor villagers tense as elephants stay put

CHITTOOR The three wild elephants that entered Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district from the Tamil Nadu forests a fortnight ago are still roaming around in the Karvetinagaram range. As the group moved into the interior areas, nearly 70 km away from their entry point, tense situation prevailed in villages in Karvetinagaram and Puttur.

Notice against Kerala Speaker to be taken up

Assembly Budget session begins today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Opposition notice for discussion on a resolution seeking to remove Speaker P. Seeramakrishnan for his alleged role in the gold smuggling case will be taken up during the 14-day Budget Session of the Assembly beginning on Friday.

On the breach of privilege notice moved by the Congress member V.D. Sathesan against Dr. Isaac, the Speaker said the report of the Privileges and Ethics Committee would be placed in the House as soon as it is submitted.

On the complaints of violating party whip from two factions of the Kerala Congress (M), the Speaker said he had already heard the factions led by Jose K. Mani and P.J. Joseph. After the joint hearing, the Speaker said he would take a call on which faction was the official one.

Mr. Ummer had said in the notice that the Speaker had lowered the esteem of the Assembly by associating with the accused in the high-profile case relating to the smuggling of gold via the diplomatic channel of the

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HC defers proceedings on order on church takeover

Kerala govt. has appealed against single judge order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHE

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court deferred till January 15 further proceedings based on a single judge order directing the Central Reserve Police Force to take over the Kothamangalam Marthoman church if the Ernakulam District Collector did not comply with its earlier order in this regard by January 8.

The Bench, comprising Justice Alexander Thomas and Justice T.R. Ravi, passed the order on an appeal filed by the Kerala government against the single judge order.

The single judge had passed the order on a contempt of court petition filed by the Orthodox faction against the Ernakulam Dis-

trict Collector for not complying with an earlier High Court directive.

State Attorney K.V. Sohan contended that the directive was beyond the power of the single judge. It amounted to interference with the sovereign power of the State over law and order issues. He further argued that if the court found that the action of the Collector was contemptuous, the single judge

could only refer it to a Division Bench. In fact, the single judge order violated the rules on contempt proceedings.

The Bench orally observed that the issues raised by the State required a serious hearing. It would examine whether the single judge could issue a directive of this nature in a contempt proceeding at admission stage.

Meanwhile, other sources said the area around the Yadanapura hillock, where the medical college and the quarters were located, was a natural habitat for leopards and other wildlife. Approval for a slew of constructions, including government buildings in the area, has led to habitat degradation and squeezed the leopards to the periphery, resulting in such conflict situations.

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Forest Dept. has placed cage on the premises to trap it



Curious cat: A CCTV grab of the leopard straying into the Chamarajanagar Institute of Medical Sciences.

CCTV footage showed the animal racing along the corridor and going down the stairs. But within seconds it reappeared, peeped inside an open door but back-

tracked and went out of view again. One of the residents who saw the leopard alerted other residents in the quarters and Forest Department personnel were informed,

Meanwhile, the Forest Department had placed a cage on the campus to trap the leopard in case it ventures out

again, besides issuing a set of instructions for the inmates to adhere to, especially in the evenings and nights.

Deputy Commissioner, Chamarajanagar, M.R. Ravi said the medical quarters abuts the Yadanapura hillock and leopards had been sighted in the area frequently. But it was unclear whether it was the same leopard or there were others too living in the vicinity. He said the footage showed the leopard peeping into a house, which had the door open and retreating from there and it was at that point, around 9.30 p.m., that its presence was noticed.

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SC expresses concern over farmers' stir

CJI says mass gathering may lead to a COVID-19 spread as during the Tablighi Jamaat congregation

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde on Thursday voiced the Supreme Court's apprehension that mass gatherings of protesting farmers will lead to a "problem similar to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation" in March last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Same problem will arise from the farmers' protest... Don't know if they are protected from COVID-19... You must tell us what is happening," the CJI, heading a three-judge Bench, addressed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

"We will find out the status," Mr. Mehta responded.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Jammu-



All hands on deck: Family members of farmers shouting slogans at Kundli in Haryana on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

based advocate Supriya Pandita, represented by advocate Omprakash Parihar, seeking a CBI probe into circumstances leading to the swelling of migrant workers,

anxious to leave the national capital for their villages and hometowns, at the Anand Vi-har Bus Terminal for buses, and the Tablighi Jamaat congregation, which even saw

foreign delegates, in violation of the social distancing norms. Both incidents happened last March, the month which saw a complete lockdown to prevent the spread of the infection.

Report sought

The court issued notice to the Union and Delhi governments, and asked Mr. Mehta to file a detailed report on the guidelines to prevent COVID-19, including restrictions on mass gatherings.

When Mr. Parihar submitted that there was "no trace of Maulana Saad", the chief of Nizamuddin Markaz, the CJI stopped him, saying "we are interested in preventing COVID-19 and compliance of guidelines here... and you

are worried about one person".

The petition accused the Centre, the Delhi government and the police of failing to stop the spread of the virus. The advisory, the petition said, "clearly states that religious leaders are to regulate mass gatherings and ensure no overcrowding. There should be a metre's distance between people, non-essential travel should be avoided".

The petition quoted the advisory, which mandates that "any event [social, cultural, political, religious, academic, sports, seminars and conference] except marriages is restricted to a maximum of 50 persons in the NCT of Delhi till March 31".

Congress leader points out 'gap' in Haryana Panchayati Raj Act

They restrict women's right to contest to 50%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Terming the provisions in the Haryana Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2020 as arbitrary and unconstitutional, senior Congress leader and former Haryana Minister Karan Singh Dalal has asked Governor Satyadev Narayan Arya to get the Act annulled.

In a letter to the Governor, Mr. Dalal pointed out that sub-Section 3 of Section 9 of the Act, which was notified by the State government on December 7, is "arbitrary, irrational, discriminatory and unconstitutional".

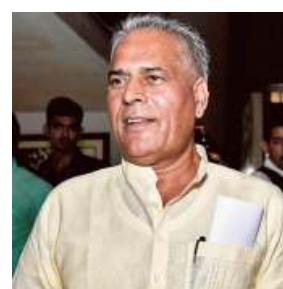
Mr. Dalal said the amendments violate Article 243D of the Constitution. "The rationale behind the constitutional provision is to empower women and make the local governance institutions more inclusive and participatory. It facilitates more women at the grassroots democracy to participate in public life, but the present Haryana government has diminished the rationale behind the Constitutional provision," he wrote.

Mr. Dalal said the amendment quoted the advisory, which mandates that "any event [social, cultural, political, religious, academic, sports, seminars and conference] except marriages is restricted to a maximum of 50 persons in the NCT of Delhi till March 31".

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He also met Arunachal Pradesh Governor Brigadier B.D. Mishra (retd.) and Chief Minister Pema Khandu to discuss national security and the safeguarding of the borders, besides assuring the IAF's support to the State. "The proposal to construct an ALG in Dirang (West Kameng district) and Anini (Dibang Valley, bordering Tibet) was also discussed with the Chief of Air Staff," a spokesperson from the Chief Minister's Office said on Thursday.

"It is very unfortunate that the right to contest for women has been restricted to 50% by the government by amending the Act. The amendment means that their right to contest in all the seats which are not reserved for other than women which is totally biased, irrational, unconstitutional."



Karan Singh Dalal

passage of time, many States have increased the reservation to 50% as a result of which the representation of women had even reached about 55% in Uttarakhand as many women were elected from non-reserved seats too," he wrote.

"However, before the hearing, the Special Task Force moved an application in the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate for not extending the judicial remand," he said.

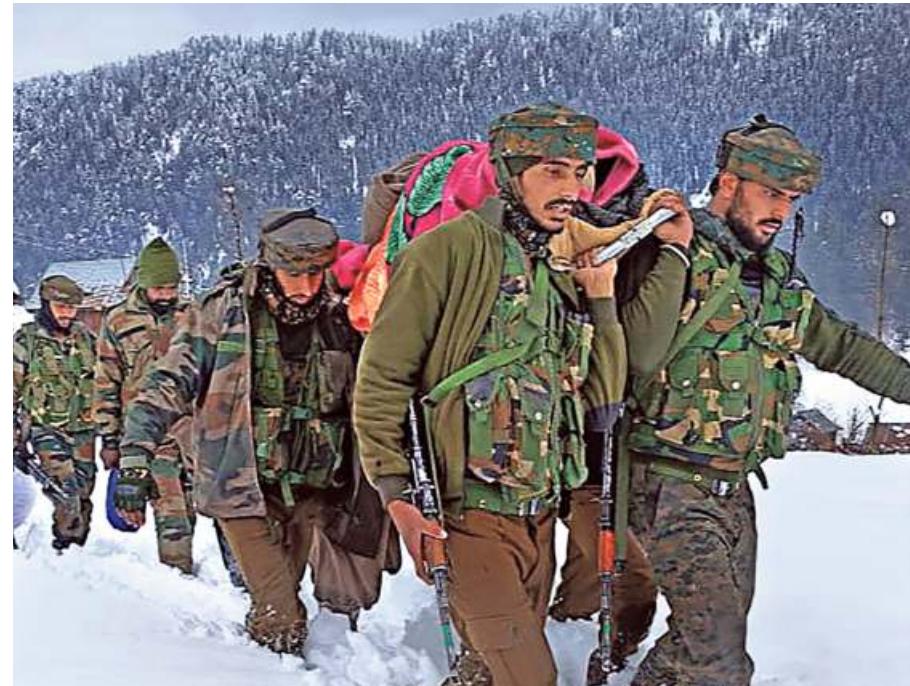
The STF informed the court that the case crime number 151/2020 PS Chandpa had been amalgamated in crime no. 199/2020 PS Maant, Mathura.

The CJM accepted the application and ordered the accused to be released in the Chandpa case.

The accused were arrested by the Mathura police when they were going to meet the family of the victim of the alleged gang rape and murder in Boolgarhi village of Hathras which falls under the Chandpa police station.

"We had previously in the bail plea said the investigation of these two cases is being done on the same set of facts against accused persons which is not legally permissible. In a way, the STF has back-pedalled," Mr. Chaturvedi said.

White knights



Guns 'n' roses: Army jawans carrying Shabnam Begum, who developed labour pains, to hospital over 2 km in knee-deep snow at Karalpura in Jammu and Kashmir. Ms. Begum gave birth to a baby boy later. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

IAF chief visits Arunachal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshall R.K.S. Bhadauria on Thursday concluded his two-day visit to air bases and advanced landing grounds (ALGs), mostly in Arunachal Pradesh, under the Eastern Air Command of the Indian Air Force.

He also met Arunachal Pradesh Governor Brigadier B.D. Mishra (retd.) and Chief Minister Pema Khandu to discuss national security and the safeguarding of the borders, besides assuring the IAF's support to the State. "The proposal to construct an ALG in Dirang (West Kameng district) and Anini (Dibang Valley, bordering Tibet) was also discussed with the Chief of Air Staff," a spokesperson from the Chief Minister's Office said on Thursday.

"It is very unfortunate

that the right to contest for

women has been restricted to 50% by the government by amending the Act. The amendment means that their right to contest in all the seats which are not reserved for other than women which is totally biased, irrational, unconstitutional."

Further details can be seen in the bidding documents which is available in the e-procurement portal <https://www.tendersrissa.gov.in>. Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the web site. Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Koraput.

OIPR-25034/11/0014/2021

+ In-house proceedings are not publicised: SC

'They are confidential in nature'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in a press release issued on Thursday, rebuffed being the "source of information" for recent media reports about complaints making "insinuations" against members of the higher judiciary and the "likely" action Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde may take on them.

The release stated that in-house procedure on such complaints was "totally and wholly confidential". The court "never" released such information.

Though the release does not mention any particular media report or issue, recent days have seen news reports about steps being taken by Chief Justice Bobde to deal with a letter of complaint sent to him by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on October 6, 2020.

In his letter, Mr. Reddy has accused Justice N.V. Ramana, the second most senior judge of the Supreme Court of influencing the roster of the Andhra Pradesh High Court to favour the Telugu Desam Party.

STOP CORONA WASH YOUR HAND, WEAR MASK & MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE			
DELHI JAL BOARD: DELHI SARKAR OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (T) VARUNALAYA PHASE-II, KAROL BAGH NEW DELHI-110005			
<p>Applications are invited from the eligible officers for filling up the post of Member (Drainage) in Delhi Jal Board on deputation basis initially for a period of one year in the Pay Band of Rs 37,400-67,000 with a grade pay of Rs. 10,000/- (Pre-revised) Level-14 under 7th Central Pay Commission, within 45 days from the date of this advertisement to the Member (Administration), Delhi Jal Board. For further information, please visit our website www.delhijalboard.nic.in.</p>			
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)		(VILAS RAMPAL) ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (T)	
<small>Advt. No. J.S.V. 299 (2020-21)</small>			

 GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA National Competitive Bidding Through E-Procurement Tender Identification No.12/EE/RWSS/KPT/2020-21/01.01.2021																	
<p>The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Koraput on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids in Double cover (P1 contract) from the eligible class of experienced registered contractors through e-Tendering system for the Piped water supply works as detailed in DTCN. The bid should be submitted on-line in the website www.tendersrissa.gov.in separately for the works.</p>																	
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1. Nature of Work</td> <td>Rural Piped Water Supply Work (Civil)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Estimated Cost</td> <td>Varies from 14.34 Lakhs to 116.56 Lakhs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. No. of Works</td> <td>12 Nos.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Tender cost</td> <td>Rs.6000/- to 10000/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Class of Contractor</td> <td>"D", "C", "B" & "A"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Availability of Bid document in the web site</td> <td>Dt.20.01.2021 17 hours to 30.01.2021 17 hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Date of Seeking clarification</td> <td>During the Office hours of 20.01.2021 to 29.01.2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8. Date of Opening of Bid</td> <td>Dt. 02.02.2021 at 11 hours</td> </tr> </table>		1. Nature of Work	Rural Piped Water Supply Work (Civil)	2. Estimated Cost	Varies from 14.34 Lakhs to 116.56 Lakhs	3. No. of Works	12 Nos.	4. Tender cost	Rs.6000/- to 10000/-	5. Class of Contractor	"D", "C", "B" & "A"	6. Availability of Bid document in the web site	Dt.20.01.2021 17 hours to 30.01.2021 17 hours	7. Date of Seeking clarification	During the Office hours of 20.01.2021 to 29.01.2021	8. Date of Opening of Bid	Dt. 02.02.2021 at 11 hours
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<p>Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Koraput. OIPR-25034/11/0014/2021</p>																	

SC notice to Centre on plea to debar legislators

Response sought in four weeks

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre and the Election Commission of India (EC) to respond to a plea to debar legislators, disqualified under the Tenth Schedule, from contesting by-elections during the rest of the tenure of the House.

A Bench led by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde issued notice and asked the government and the EC to respond in four weeks.

The petitioner, Jaya Thakur, referred to recent political events in several States in which Members of Legislative Assemblies resign, fol-

lowed by the collapse of the incumbent government. They surface again as Ministers in the new government formed by a rival political party.

"Once a member of the House incurs disqualification under the Tenth Schedule, he cannot be permitted to contest again during the term for which he was elected. Article 172 makes a membership of a House co-terminus with the term of five years of the House except in circumstances mentioned therein," the petition said. It referred to recent events in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

CAUVERY NEERAVARI NIGAMA LIMITED			
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)			
Office of the Executive Engineer, Hemavathy Dam Division, Gorur Hassan District.			
Short term tender Notification No.13/2020-21/ Call-2 dated:06.01.2021			
<p>The Executive Engineer, CNNL, Hemavathy Dam Division, Gorur- 573120 Hassan Taluk Hassan Dist., As Per KW-4 Format, invited Percentage Basis tender (Two covers) through e-procurement only vide No. 13/2020-21/call-2 dated 06.01.2021 on behalf of the Managing Director, CNNL, Bangalore from the eligible contractors of CPWD/KPWD/ WRD/ & in any other Central or state government organization as Class I contractor & Enrolled as Cat-1A in CNNL. Details:- Development of important lakes, parks and other infrastructure works in Hassan city, including the development of channapatna tank as a tourist destination. Approx., Cost put to tender Rs. 12691.00 lakhs, EMD declaration shall be submitted in prescribed format, as uploaded in tenderwizard, stipulated period 24 months, The contractor can have access e-tender documents from 07-01-2021 to 18-01-2021 through website www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in on payment (Non Refundable) of transaction fees as fixed by E - portal (2) Last date for submission of completed Technical and Financial bid is 18-01-2021 upto 16.00 hrs, (3) Pre bid meeting date: 15.01.2021, (4)Opening of Technical bid (Cover-I) 19-01-2021 at 04.30 PM onwards. (if possible) (5) Cover-II (Financial bid) will be opened after approval of Technical bid from the Competent authority. For further information etc., contact in the undersigned office during working hours or through website www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in(Department)</p>			
Sd/- Executive Engineer, CNNL, Hemavathy Dam Division, Gorur			
<p>HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19? CALL APATHAMITRA ON 14410  Wear Mask  Follow Physical Distancing  Maintain Hand Hygiene</p>			

DR.BABU JAGJIVAN RAM LEATHER INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.,
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)
Lidkar Bhavan, Millers Tank Bund Area, Vasantha Nagar, Bangalore – 560052.
Phone No: 080-2228895/2228897 e-mail: lidkar2018@gmail.com

Date: 04-01-2021

E- TENDER NOTIFICATION

Dr.BABU JAGJIVAN RAM LEATHER INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION Ltd., (LIDKAR) invites Tenders from Manufacturers / Fabricator/ Dealers for supply of Footwear and Leather Goods Manufacturing Machineries as per the terms and conditions laid down in the Tender Document. Tenders are floated through e-procurement and Tenders shall submit the Tenders through e-procurement only. For necessary details visit the Website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> help line No. 080-25501216/1227.

SI. No.	Particulars	Footwear and Leather Goods Manufacturing Machineries
1.	Tender Reference No and date	Lidkar/Comm/2020-21/014 dtd: 23-12-2020
2.	Pre Bid Meeting Date, Place and Time	12.01.2021 at 5.00 PM
3.	Last date & Time for submission of Tender	30.01.2021 at 5.00 PM
4.	Date & Time of opening of Technical bid	01.02.2021 at 11.00 AM
5.	Date & Time of opening of Financial Bid	Will be intimated to Technically qualified bidders

Interested eligible bidders registered in e-procurement portal can download the bid documents by visiting the website <http://e-proc.karnataka.gov.in>. Prospective suppliers willing to participate in this tender shall necessarily register themselves with e-procurement portal.

Sd/-
Dy. General Manager (C&D) & Tender Publishing Authority

Lidkar Offers 20% New Year Special Discount on all Lidkar Products upto 13-01-2021

Visit Lidkar Leather Emporium Today Only.

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IN BRIEF



HC allows Varavara Rao to be in private hospital

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court on Thursday allowed 81-year-old poet Varavara Rao, accused in the Bhima Koregaon violence case, to continue to be in a private hospital till January 13, following a plea. He had been shifted from the Taloja Central jail to the hospital in view of his multiple ailments.

Nirav Modi's sister to help ED recover ₹579 cr.

NEW DELHI Nirav Modi's sister Purvi, who is also an accused in the Punjab National Bank fraud case, has agreed to assist the Enforcement Directorate in repatriating various assets in India and overseas, amounting to ₹579 crore, the agency said on Thursday. Ms. Purvi and her husband had sought court's permission to turn approvers in the case.

Court reserves orders on plea by Sushant's sisters

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court on Thursday reserved its order on a plea filed by sisters of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput to quash the FIR filed against them by Rhea Chakraborty alleging abetment of his suicide. A Division Bench was hearing a plea filed by Meetu and Priyanka Singh seeking to quash the FIR filed by the Bandra police.

Panel to study adverse findings of health survey

NEW DELHI The Health and Family Welfare Ministry has set up a technical expert group to examine the adverse findings from the National Family Health Survey-5 and "recommend programmatic and policy interventions to improve" indicators relating to malnutrition, stunting, anaemia, and C-section. The committee is chaired by Joint Secretary Preeti Pant.

Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia to head Gauhati HC

NEW DELHI The Union Law Ministry on Thursday notified the appointment of Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia as the new Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court. He is presently a judge in the Uttarakhand High Court. He started as an advocate in 1986 and practised in the Allahabad HC, specialising in constitutional and service matters.

4 States warned of virus spike

Health Secretary writes to Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Health Secretary Rakesh Bhushan on Thursday wrote to Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, urging them to take steps to curb the spike in COVID-19 cases.

These States have been reporting an upsurge in the number of daily new cases in the recent days, said a release issued by the Health Ministry.

The States have been advised to maintain a strict vigil and take steps to keep a check on the rising cases, especially in view of the new virus strain being observed in certain countries and reported in a few States in India.

In his letter, Mr. Bhushan has drawn the attention of the States to the low and declining testing rates. Any laxity at this crucial juncture may squander the results of the collective actions in containing the transmission, he noted.

The health authorities in the States have been advised



Practice session: Workers getting ready for a vaccination dry run in Mumbai. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

to proactively promote wearing of masks and other COVID-19 appropriate behaviours while the vaccination drive starts. "It is important to ensure no complacency in the collective efforts in containment and management of COVID-19," the Health Secretary said.

Bharat Biotech trial
Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech on Thursday announced

"successful completion" of volunteer enrolment for Phase-3 clinical trials of its indigenously manufactured vaccine, Covaxin.

In a tweet, the company said, "COVAXIN successfully completes Phase 3 clinical trials enrolment of 25,800 volunteers."

Suchitra Ella, joint managing director of Bharat Biotech International Ltd., said: "We sincerely express our

gratitude to clinical trial sites, principle investigators & healthcare workers for their relentless support and trust in our public-private partnership vaccine discovery. My deep appreciation to all the volunteers for reposing trust and expressing Pro Vaccine Public Health Volunteering in the Phase-3 Clinical Trials of India's first fully indigenous COVID-19 Vaccine."

Judges should not be hypersensitive: Justice Lokur

It is high time judges sat down for introspection'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Judges should not be "hypersensitive" about criticism, former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B. Lokur has said.

It was high time judges sat down for an introspection on what had gone wrong and what was to be done, he said.

N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Group of Publications and former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, said there should be a "robust, strong, uninhibited and informed criticism of the functioning of the judiciary".

They were speaking at a webinar on "Keys to governance: independence of judiciary" organised by the India International Centre and the D.S. Borker Memorial Foundation on Thursday. Other speakers were senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy and Professor Tarunabh Khaitan.

The discussion was mod-



Justice Madan B. Lokur

provision was vague, arbitrary and had a chilling effect on free speech.

'Shocking case'

He said the case against Mr. Bhushan was "shocking" and one must push the line with well-informed criticism of the judiciary.

"It is important for people to have the opportunity and entitlement to criticise the judiciary, to call it out when judiciary is corrupt or arbitrary or allows itself to be submissive to external influences. Was the January 12 press conference of the judges a contempt? A lot of people applauded [the four judges, including Justice Lokur, who held the press conference]", Mr. Ram said.

Ms. Guruswamy said the contempt of court law should be scrapped. Justice Lokur, however, said it was for each individual judge to decide whether or not to accept post-retirement assignments.

JEE-Advanced to be held on July 3

Pass in Class 12 enough to take the test

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Joint Entrance Examination (Advanced), 2021, the entrance test for the elite Indian Institutes of Technology, will be held on July 3, Education Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan Nishank announced on Thursday.

The 23 IITs will relax their eligibility criteria again this year, allowing students who scored less than 75% in the Class 12 board exams to apply.

At its meeting on December 31, 2020, the IIT Joint Admission Board also decided to shortlist 2.5 lakh students to write JEE-Advanced, from among those who attempt the qualifying examination JEE-Main 2021.

This is 55% higher than the 1.6 lakh students who registered for JEE-Advanced in 2020, which may have seen lower registrations than usual due to COVID-19. However, it is also significantly

higher from the 2.24 lakh students shortlisted in 2019.

JEE-Advanced will be conducted by IIT Kharagpur this year. Apart from centres all across India, the exam is likely to be conducted in Dubai, Dhaka, Kathmandu and Singapore as well in 2021, according to organising chairman Debadish Chakravarty. However, this will depend on prevailing conditions in the summer, given the uncertain course of the pandemic.

COVID-19 was responsible for a relaxation in eligibility criteria last year, and this has been extended to 2021 as well.

Earlier, students had to score a minimum of 75% in their Class 12 board examinations or rank in the top 20 percentile of the qualifying examination in order to be eligible for JEE- Advanced. However, a simple pass in Class 12 will be sufficient this year.

WhatsApp updates privacy policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

WhatsApp has updated its terms of service and privacy policy regarding how it processes user data and partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the platform's products.

Users have received in-app prompts informing them of the update in terms of use that take effect on February 8. Key updates include more information about WhatsApp's service and how it processes user data; how businesses can use Facebook-hosted services to store and manage their WhatsApp chats; and how WhatsApp partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the company products.

Users will need to accept these updates to continue using WhatsApp. As part of Facebook Companies, WhatsApp receives information from, and shares information with, other Facebook Companies.

New freight corridor a big boost: PM

He flags off world's first 1.5 km-long electrified double stack container train

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the New Rewari-New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor and flagged off the world's first 1.5-km-long electrified double stack long haul container train.

Mr. Modi said the project was part of the mission to modernise the country's infrastructure and was being seen as a game changer for the India of 21st century. The section, which became operational after a hard work of five to six years, would be beneficial to farmers, industrialists and businessmen in the National Capital Region, Haryana and Rajasthan.

More jobs, investment
The corridor would lead to the development of growth centres and points in several cities, creation of job opportunities and conditions attracting more investments. It would give a new fillip to the



Plans on track: PM Narendra Modi flagging off the double stack container train through video link from New Delhi. ■ PTI

local industries and manufacturing units by providing them faster and cheaper access to the national and international markets. They would get easy access to the ports in Gujarat and Maharashtra, he noted.

A portion of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section, was started last month and through it, farm produce were being transported from Punjab and coal from Jharkhand was being supplied to the National

Capital Region, Haryana and Punjab. Compared to the previous freight train average speed of 25 km/hour, the maximum of 90 km/hour had now been achieved, Mr. Modi pointed out.

In all, 133 railway stations in nine States would be impacted by the Dedicated Freight Corridor. New multi-modal logistic parks, freight terminals, container depots/terminals and parcel hubs would be developed at these places. It would not only benefit villages, farmers, the

poor and the small businesses, but also attract big manufacturers, he said.

With the launch of the double stack long haul container train between New Ateli in Haryana and New Kishangarh in Rajasthan, India had also entered the club of nations with such high capabilities, he stated.

Northeast link

Given the rapid infrastructural expansion, all the Northeast State capitals would soon be linked to the national rail network. The work of indigenously developing high-speed tracks was also under way.

Earlier, Mr. Modi listed several initiatives, including a digital payment of ₹18,000 crore to farmers under the direct benefit transfer scheme, taken by the government in the past couple of weeks, to highlight the speed with which important projects were being implemented despite the COVID-19 induced crisis.

China must respect rules, says France

Macron adviser refers to LAC stand-off

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after the Chinese Ambassador in India objected to the outgoing U.S. Ambassador's comments on the India-China stand-off, a senior French diplomat, on Thursday, said that "when China breaks rules, we have to be very robust and very clear". When it came to direct threats to India, he said, France had always been supportive on Kashmir at the UN Security Council and did "not let the Chinese play any procedural games".

"Let us not go for confrontation – it's much easier to say this from Paris, [than] from Delhi when you almost have a problem in the Himalayas and when you have Pakistan at your border. And I mean on direct threats to India, we have always been very clear. Whether on Kashmir we have been very supportive of India in the Security Council, we have not let the Chinese play any kind of procedural games," Emmanuel Bonne, Diplomatic Adviser to French President Emmanuel Macron, said at a webinar organised by the Vivekananda International Foundation on Thursday.

Referring to the stand-off in eastern Ladakh, he said that when it came to the Himalayas, the statement had been "perfectly clear". "What we say publicly, we

NIA conducts searches in Jammu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches at five locations in Jammu and one location in Punjab's Tarn Taran district on Thursday.

The narco-terror case is related to the seizure of about 61 kg of heroin, along with arms and ammunition, on September 20 last year along the International Border at Arnia in Jammu.

The NIA said the accused hatched a conspiracy to carry out anti-national and unlawful activities and to help terrorist organisations such as Babbar Khalsa International by collecting funds and channelling the proceeds of drugs for furthering their activities. The case was first registered by the local police in September in connection with unprovoked firing at a police patrol and was re-registered by the NIA on November 26.

"The searches were conducted at the residences of six accused persons, namely Jasraj Singh, Sham Lal, Bishan Dass, Ajeet Kumar, Gurbakh Singh and Gurpartap Singh," the NIA said in a statement. Gurpratap Singh, a resident of Tarn-Taran, is the kingpin of this module, it said. "In September 2020, Gurpratap Singh received 10 kg of heroin from Pakistan-based handlers," the NIA said.

Key nutrition committees fail to meet

Members upset with collapse of system

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The government's three top committees on nutrition responsible for providing policy directions, monitoring the implementation of various schemes and reviewing the nutritional status of various States and Union Territories have failed to meet even once since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, though they are required to meet every quarter. This is despite global warnings of rising levels of hunger, malnutrition and child mortality.

A leading member of one of these bodies, Chandrakant S. Pandav, who is also known as the "Iodine Man of India", told *The Hindu* that "he is depressed and angry" and the "collapse" of the nutrition system as the "situation has gone from bad to worse, which could have been prevented". These committees were set up after the Cabinet ap-



A farm worker taking a break for lunch in Telangana. ■ AFP

2020. According to the NITI Aayog's website, the NTBN has met only twice and its last meeting was held in August 2018.

Bad to worse
Asked if the meetings were scuttled because of the focus on COVID-19, Dr. Pandav said: "COVID-19 is the reason why these meetings should have been held urgently. COVID-19 has scuttled everything. I am depressed and angry. The situation [poverty and hunger] has gone from bad to worse, which could have been prevented. We could have used imaginative ways of engaging communities, but we lost the opportunity to reach them."

Another expert, who is a member of the EC that met last in February 2020, said: "COVID-19 has put a lot of pressure on the underprivileged, especially women and children, who need nourishment at a time income levels have gone down. We need to put our heads together to ensure this."

Highest in 73 years
"In the midst of a collapsing economy because of corona, the Modi government is trying to convert the disaster into an opportunity to fill its treasury. Today the price of crude oil is \$50.96 per barrel or just ₹23.43 per litre. Despite this, diesel is being sold for ₹74.38 and petrol at ₹84.20 per litre. This is the highest in the last 73 years."

The government was resorting to profiteering through excise duty instead of providing relief to common people, she said.

Follow our fuel tax, Sonia tells Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday demanded that the Modi government charge the same rate of excise duty on petroleum products as the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance did and give relief to common people.

Excessive taxation by the Modi government had led to the highest ever price of petroleum products in the past 73 years and the government had so far collected ₹19 lakh crore in excise duty in the past six years, she alleged in a statement.

Ahead of a fresh round of talks between the Centre and the farmers' union on Friday, Ms. Gandhi urged the government to withdraw the three farm laws.

Villagers take body to bank for funeral expenses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

People in a Bihar village took a man's corpse to the bank to withdraw money from his account for the cremation. The man had ₹1,17,298 in his account.

Since he had not named a nominee, bank officials expressed their inability to release the money. The infuriated villagers kept the body

inside the bank for three hours. Later, when the local police intervened, the bank officials gave ₹10,000 to the villagers under their corporate social responsibility fund for the cremation. The man had ₹1,17,298 in his account.

The incident took place on Tuesday. Sexagenarian Mahesh Yadav, a daily wager and a bachelor with no living relatives, died at Singriwan village in the Shahi-hanpur police station limits in rural Patna.

Withdrawals barred

The villagers searched his house for money for the cremation, but found only the

passbook of the local Canara Bank branch. "The deceased Mahesh Yadav had not done his KYC formalities for the last two years despite our regular reminders and consequently withdrawals from his account were barred as per banking rules and regulations," said bank manager Sanjeev Kumar.

Pepper CURRY for the winter-battered soul



Come winter and every part of the country whips up warming seasonal brews. The common ingredient in all of them? Pepper

AKILA KANNADASAN

There is a drizzle outside when we sit for lunch.

On the menu, is amma's *milagu kuzhambu* (pepper curry) and hot rice. I scoop a heapful of rice on my plate, add a dash of gingelly oil, and two spoonfuls of the curry. The drizzle becomes a steady downpour and by the time I wolf down the rice, there is thunder and a howling wind. But I am prepared to deal with the weather: the curry, a tangy concoction of pepper, pepper, and more pepper, leaves my palate with a mild burning sensation typical to the spice. It keeps me warm on the inside, at least for a while.

Come winter and every part of India starts whipping up winter curries specific to the region. In Tamil Nadu, *milagu kuzhambu* is a seasonal special. "During my childhood, my grandmother would serve this curry or pepper *rasam* with hot rice and *appalam* during winters," recalls 74-year-old YouTuber Gita Rajamani, who runs the popular channel Agrahara Recipes from her home in Kallidaikurichi, Tirunelveli district. "Back then, in Sirazhi where I grew up, it would sometimes rain for 15 days straight and this curry was a dinnertime staple to keep warm," she adds.

"During winters, when nights were dark and the stone mortar



and pestle kept in the corner of the house was too cold to be held to make *idli* batter, *milagu kuzhambu* came to our rescue," says Gita. Made with plenty of tamarind, that Gita says is a "natural preservative", the curry would be stored in a stone pot and was good to be had for 15 days. "Pepper was the chief spice employed in Tamil cuisine," she points out. "Green and red chillies were actually introduced to us by the Portuguese; but now though, we use more chillies."

Pepper was used extensively in winter, in curries and *rasams*. Betel leaves were used to keep lungs healthy during cold weather, points out Gita. "I make a *rasam* with the leaves; once the regular tamarind *rasam* is done simmering, I place a betel leaf over it, switch off the stove, cover,

and let the juice seep into the *rasam*," she explains adding that she removes the leaf a little later.

In western Tamil Nadu, horsegram *dal* and *rasam* are winter delicacies and in places such as Coimbatore where the weather generally leans towards the colder side, the lentil is cooked through the year. "In my household, we make *kollu paruppu* (*dal*) twice a week, especially during winter since the dish is considered heat-inducing," says Dharchana Muruganandam, who grew up in Pollachi. "We make *rasam* with the water the *dal* has been cooked in; the dish has crushed shallots in it instead of garlic," she explains.

Gita says that horsegram can also be incorporated in a *thogayal* (thick chutney) by grinding the boiled lentil with onions, tomatoes, pepper, and garlic. "It goes well with *rasam*," she says

adding that she spent several years in western Tamil Nadu before she got married. Gita recalls a Tamil saying with a laugh: 'Elachavankku ellu, kolathavanukku kollu', which translates to: 'Sesame for the slim man, horsegram for the plump man', "because horsegram helps break down fat in the body".

Childhood staple

Food blogger Swayampurna Mishra has a treasure trove of lamb memories to fall back on every winter.

She says, "I'm from Odisha, and my mother would make this amazing lamb curry when I was a child. I remember it being made every single Sunday through the winter: it was familiar and spicy and it would warm us right up."

She adds that, admittedly, making a child feel warm was not that mean a feat in her childhood home. "It doesn't get as cold in Odisha as it does in parts of the North, but I think every person from that part of the country remembers their childhood lamb curry as a winter ritual."

(With inputs from Meghna Majumdar)

Warmth of flavour (Clockwise from left) Pepper curry, pepper *rasam* and Odia lamb curry

■ SWAYAMPURNA MISHRA, GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Milagu kuzhambu (pepper curry)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tsp tamarind paste
- Turmeric to taste
- One sprig curry leaves
- 5 to 6 red chillies
- A pinch of asafoetida
- 1 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp urad dal
- 1 1/2 tsp toor dal
- 2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 1/2 tsp pepper corns
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- Gingelly oil to sauté
- Salt to taste
- Jaggery to taste

METHOD

Roast pepper and coriander seeds, toor and urad dal, and red chillies with two tsp oil. Introduce half a teaspoon fenugreek seeds, cumin, asafoetida, and curry leaves when the pepper corns start to sputter. Turn off the stove. Now, add salt to taste. Once the mixture cools, grind to a fine paste adding a little water. Heat four to five teaspoons of oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds and once they sputter, add half a teaspoon fenugreek seeds, half a teaspoon cumin seeds, a pinch of asafoetida, turmeric powder, the ground paste, tamarind paste, jaggery, and water to get the runny consistency of a curry. Simmer till it thickens and the oil separates. Serve with hot rice.



HORS D'OEUVRES



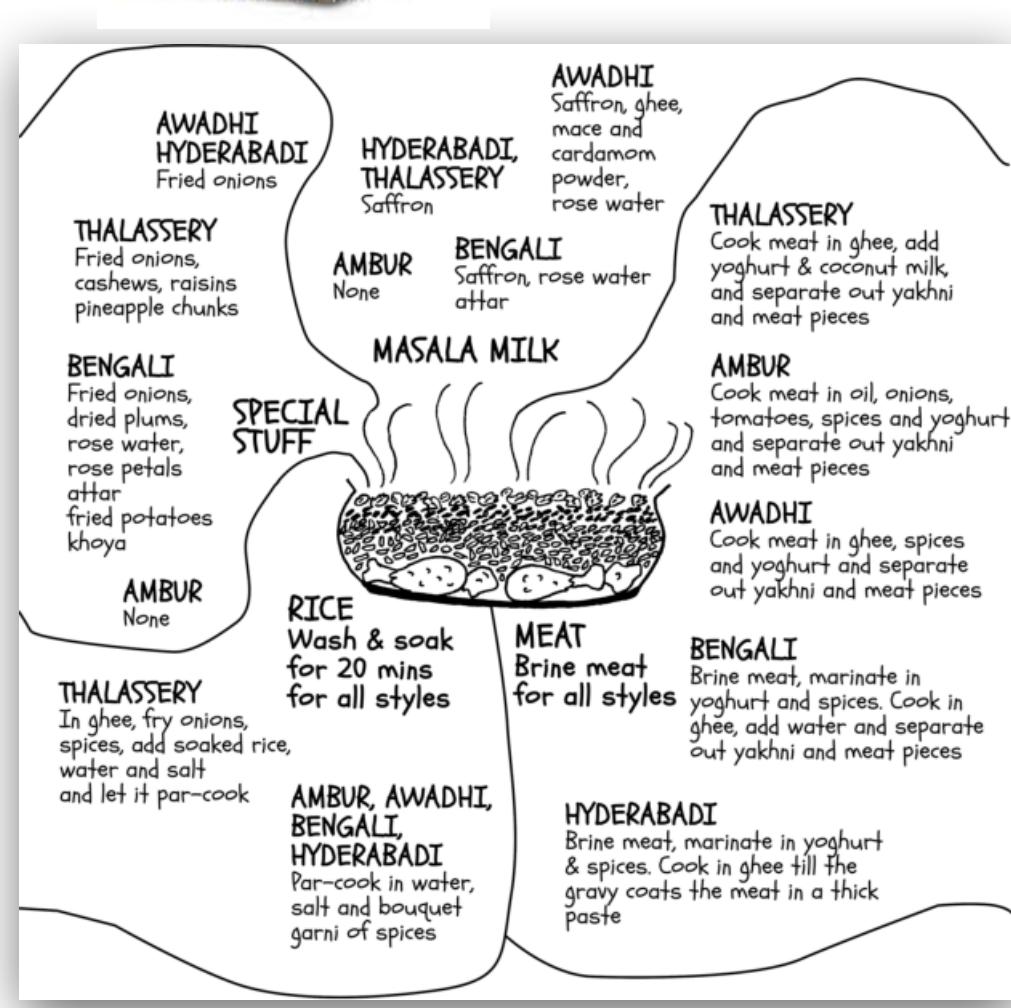
Flavoured cuppa

Bengaluru-based Levista Coffee introduced four variants of 'flavoured coffee' recently. The flavours include vanilla, caramel, hazelnut and choco-orange. The flavoured coffee would be available across Tamil Nadu and Karnataka through select retail stores, and nationally through e-commerce platforms. The company already has three variants of instant coffee — classic with 100% coffee, premium with 80% coffee and strong with 60% coffee, as well as institutional packs that have 57% coffee in them. The variant with 70% coffee is among its most-sold in the country and Levista plans to garner a considerable market share with this. Other than this, the company also offers filter coffee in two variants, with 80% coffee as well as 60% coffee. A 50 gram jar is priced at ₹250.



What's in a name?

Ever wondered where Maggi noodles, your go-to comfort food which satisfies hunger pangs in "just two minutes", got its name from? Not many know. Recent media reports have been trying to trace Maggi's lesser-known history, which is set in Switzerland. During the Industrial Revolution, the women of Switzerland found it difficult to find time for cooking, after the long hours spent working in factories. Enter: Julius Michael Johannes Maggi. Julius, along with the Swiss Public Welfare Society, created a protein-rich ready-made soup that could be made in two minutes, and named it after his surname in 1872. In 1947, the company reportedly merged with Nestle. Under the wing of Nestle and its branding and advertising strategy, the dish saw a new lease of life. In 1984, Nestle brought Maggi to India, and it instantly became a household name.



Questions galore

Krish Ashok has also etched out a diagram explaining what makes some of the country's *biryani* variants distinctive, for the book

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ing into an aside about decibels, bats and the way that ultrasound travels, and then concluding confidently: "We can, it turns out, feel a good *pani puri* in our bones." Quite literally.

"I keep clarifying that a lot of what I talk about is applicable to urban Indian cooking, that has evolved in a very specific way over the last few decades. We don't always have access to fresh produce, and the quality of what we get — both meat and vegetables — is dubious, with concerns about pesticides and other things. So we tend to err on the side of overcooking, just to be safe," he says.

He points out that because of a lack of inherent flavour in produce, urban Indian cuisine tends to be spice-heavy, while that in rural or small-town India "has always been minimal." He adds: "I would argue that it is a lot closer to Italian cooking, in that it relies on a fewer but more quality ingredients that are grown locally," giving the example of the "magnificently tasty" eggplants of Tirunelveli.

An added segue is his observation that hinterland cooking is simplistic in technique, with fewer steps, because "the rural wo-

prefer learning these hows and whys, instead of the how-many-teaspoons. That is the gamble Krish Ashok and Penguin Random House have taken with their recent book *Masala Lab: The Science of Indian Cooking*.

With chapters covering everything from zero-pressure cooking to the science of spices and more, the title offers explanations and cheat sheets galore. Tongue-in-cheek writing coupled with scientific explanations by experts

make up a large portion of this book, and the result is oddly gripping. Take, for instance, a small segment titled "Mouthfeel" — Ashok begins by describing the crunch of a *pani puri* before mov-

ing on to the science of how to make a soft *pani puri* without breaking the skin. The book is a mix of science and cooking, with a focus on the science behind cooking.

In the end, it all boils down to *biryani*.

The fermentation behind a good *uthappam*; the multi-layered acids in *chaat*; the structure of *chakki*-ground wheat flour. As diverse as the food offerings in our country are, the science behind them is even more so. And of the veritable army of reluctant chefs created in urban India during lockdown, at least a few must

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Getting into character Young actors during rehearsals ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

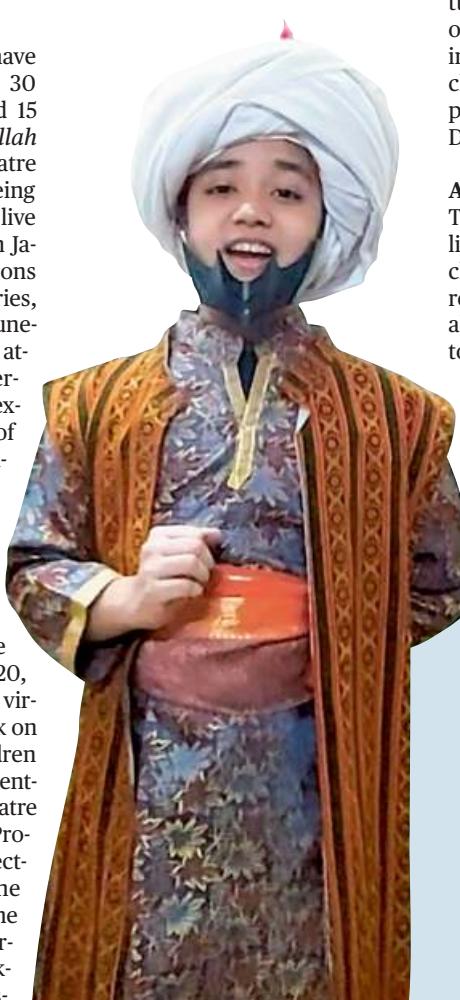
Swatantra Theatre's ongoing four-day online live children's theatre festival tells stories of the famous funnyman in Urdu literature

Mullah Nasruddin walks on a virtual stage

NEERAJA MURTHY

Homes across Maharashtra have turned into theatre spaces as 30 children between ages six and 15 years don various roles for *Mullah Nasruddin* – a children's theatre production. The play is being staged for a four-day online live theatre festival that took off on January 7. With eight productions based on Mullah Nasruddin stories, this theatrical experiment by Pune-based Swatantra Theatre is an attempt to help children understand the character better and explore the beauty and dialect of Urdu. "Such stories spark an understanding, ignite curiosity and allow children to explore their creativity," shares the group's creative director Dhanashree Heblerik.

Swatantra Theatre holds a children's theatre festival twice every year. In the chaos of 2020, the group that is active with its virtual productions for adults, took on the challenge to involve children too; the little actors' group presented its first online live virtual theatre festival in November 2020. Produced by Yuvaraj Shah and directed by Abhijeet Choudhary, the play was made possible due to the parents' support during rehearsals. "Parents have become backstage artists, light persons, cos-



tume designers... and the vibrancy of a live theatre is experienced during the production time. Also, the children made the posters of the play themselves by painting," adds Dhanashree.

A no-pressure zone

To accommodate the children's online classes and ensure they did not clash with rehearsals, as well as to reduce their screen time, the team altered its one-month rehearsals into a three-month programme and held sessions twice a week, instead of daily. Calling theatre a 'no-pressure space', Dhanashree says, "The most intangible benefit of theatre is Emotional Quotient, which helps to read people, respond accordingly and also handle emotions better."

FULL OF WIT

The Mullah stories to be performed include:

Poshak Ki Izzat
Badshah Ke Teen Sawaal
Marizon ka Ilaj
Kissa Andhe Bhikari ka
Mulla Ka Mukadama
Khoja ki Buddhimani

Sometimes the children would turn off the camera due to boredom and the trainers had to explain the concept of live theatre which is the camera and not the stage. "There have been many challenges, but we kept evolving and developed techniques to work smoothly with this virtual medium," she says.

The Online Live Theatre Festival can be watched on Swatantra Theatre's YouTube Channel (Livestreamed through Zoom) until January 10, from 8 pm onwards

Are you a Young Earth Champion?

Calling for ideas that could make our communities more sustainable

It has taken being indoors for us to realise just how energising it is to be outdoors. The pandemic has also emphasised the need for us to be more compassionate towards our planet, given that Nature saw a revival in the lockdown.

In order to elevate the voices of the youth about climate change, and listen to their ideas on how to combat it, Sony BBC Earth is launching Young Earth Champions in partnership with actor Bhumi Pednekar, a strong advocate of environmental con-



servation through her flagship initiative – Climate Warrior.

This nation-wide contest for all climate-conscious students is a platform that recognises and rewards innovative ideas and inspires young minds to think about a more sustainable future. The contest will be open for Class V to Class IX, who can send innovative ideas that will make our cities and communities more sustainable. The aim for children to be catalysts for conservation early on.

Pednekar along with an expert will judge this initiative and select one Young Earth Champion who will be featured on the channel. The top 10 winners will also get to virtually interact with Pednekar.

Details at sonybbcearth.youngearthchampion

The game is afoot

Aadyam revives *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, directed by film and theatre veteran Akash Khurana, this month



Singular experience The play features actors Vivek Madan, Arghya Lahiri, and Nadir Khan in 15 roles ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

APARNA NARRAIN

Eerie, atmospheric, terrifying... It's how Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (featuring the world's greatest consulting detective Sherlock Holmes, and the faithful Dr Watson) has been described.

Now, with Aadyam's revival production, there is another word to describe this story: comical.

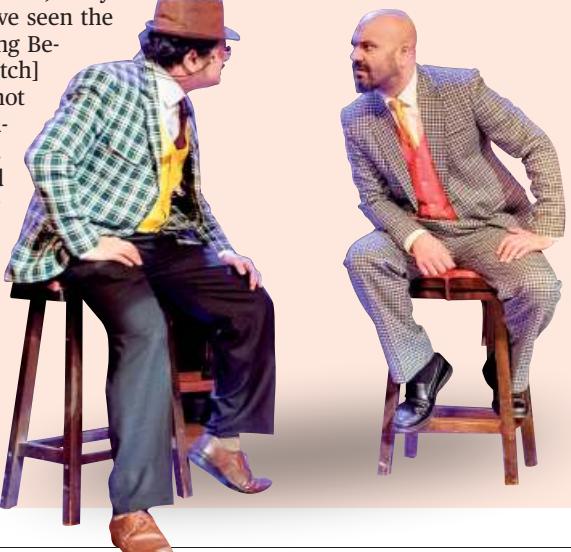
Adapted by Steven Cannicini and John Nicholson, the play was first staged by Aadyam in 2015. The new production, the second play of Aadyam's Digital Edition, which has been directed by film and theatre veteran Akash Khurana, features actors Vivek Madan, Arghya Lahiri, and Nadir Khan. The pre-recorded production will be streamed online on January 9, 16 and 17.

Talking about the play, Akash says, "It retains everything about the original [novel] without being a bad parody or a ridiculous spoof. It actually enhances the spirit of the novel. That's what I found wonderful because you have to be totally in love with the text to be able to keep the magic and yet do your own take on it. The fact that we've been asked to revisit it and do online [shows]... Obviously, the taste of the pudding has worked. It's been tested and the audience has loved it."

Reimagining Sherlock Holmes

Do people have a fixed idea of how they want to see Sherlock Holmes every time the stories are adapted for stage or screen? "Some people may have a fixed idea but the problem is that the new generation doesn't read," says Akash. "They may have seen the show [Sherlock starring Benedict Cumberbatch] which, in any case, is not the original [it is a modern-day adaptation].

The fact that they liked it means the character works. I do believe that some of the people who watched the play went back and read the original stories. So, in a larger context, it helps to introduce people to something that is special."



The experience of doing theatre with no live audience present owing to the pandemic was unusual, but Akash found that it also led to people pushing their creativity and trying out variations of art forms. "What our company discovered is that it's tough to restrain people who want to be creative and be out there. My company, AKvarious Productions, actually had performances online through the six-seven months. So, it's not dampened people's spirits; it's hampered activity to some extent. But definitely, the way things are done has changed. While things are opening up now, March to November were desperate times. The silver lining was that come what may, things survive if not thrive."

The three actors: Vivek, Arghya, and Nadir, together play 15 roles – a particular challenge for the director working with the actors mostly online. "The text kind of provides for those variations in terms of basic guidelines. Then the rapport that I have with the actors is so comfortable; they are so bright on the take," he says.

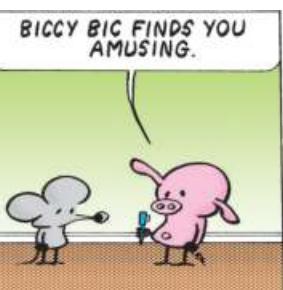
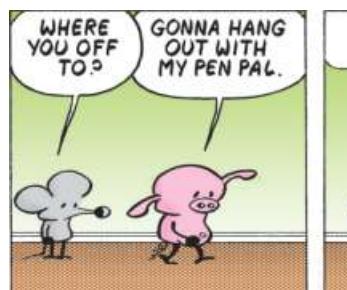
The actors went on the floor for only about a week whereas the original production required about three to six months of rehearsal. "For this, we did about 15 online sessions. Ultimately, we shot it over two days," says Akash. "We added several kinds of cameras; we could pick and choose angles and make it more of a 'tactile' experience. For me, that's the victory. That we got this almost, if not better than the original, with one-tenth of the rehearsals."

The shows begin at 7 pm. Tickets are available on insider.in.

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Mob rule in Capitol

A violent mob loyal to President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol and forced lawmakers into hiding, in an attempt to overturn the November election result. Police say four people died during the assault.



HOW IT UNFOLDED

- 8.30 (local time), Jan 6:** Protesters begin gathering
- 12.00:** Donald Trump holds rally in front of the White House, telling supporters "we will never concede"
- 13.00:** Pro-Trump mob approaches barricades to the Capitol building, trying to get inside
- 14.30:** Demonstrators breach security, forcing delay in the constitutional process to affirm Joe Biden's victory. Shots fired inside Capitol. One woman is killed. Three other people die due to medical emergencies during siege
- 15.25:** Trump issues tweet calling for his supporters at Capitol to "remain peaceful", but does not tell them to disperse
- 16.00:** National Guards deployed to assist police on-scene
- 16.40:** Trump urges supporters to "go home" but continues to call election fraudulent
- 18.00:** Capitol building secured as citywide curfew goes into place. Police say two pipe bombs and cooler of Molotov cocktails found near Capitol. At least 52 people arrested
- 19.00:** Twitter and Facebook temporarily block Trump's accounts over his continued claims of election fraud
- 3.40, Jan. 7:** Congress formally confirms Joe Biden as presidential election winner. Minutes later, Trump acknowledges result



HOW THE WORLD RESPONDED

- NETHERLANDS** We saw that, unfortunately, the ground is fertile for populism, despite the advances in science and industry. I hope the whole world and the next occupants of the White House will learn from it **HASSAN ROUHANI**, Iran President
- ISRAEL** The rampage at the Capitol yesterday was a disgraceful act and it must be vigorously condemned **BENJAMIN NETANYAHU**, Israeli PM
- FRANCE** We will not give in to the violence of a few who want to question democracy **EMMANUEL MACRON**, French President
- EUROPE** In the eyes of the world, American democracy tonight appears under siege **JOSEPH BORRELL**, EU foreign policy chief
- NEW ZEALAND** Democracy – the right of people to exercise a vote, have their voice heard and then have that decision upheld peacefully should never be undone by a mob **JACINDA ARDEN**, New Zealand PM

We love you, Trump tells rioters

Before the violence, Rudy Giuliani had told the morning crowd at Ellipse, 'Let's have trial by combat'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Wednesday began as a day of reckoning for President Donald Trump's futile attempt to cling to power as Congress took up the certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory. It devolved into scenes of fear and agony that left a prime ritual of American democracy in tatters.

Mr. Trump told his morning crowd at the Ellipse that he would go with them to the Capitol, but he did not. Instead, he sent them off with an incendiary rhetoric.

"If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," he said. "Let the weak ones get out," he went on. "This is a time for strength."

His lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, told the crowd, "Let's have trial by combat." And then, they went on and stormed the Capitol building.

What happened on Wednesday was nothing less than



New low: Supporters of Donald Trump climbing the west wall of the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday. ■AP

an attempted coup, said Democratic Representative Diana DeGraffenreid. Senator Ben Sasse, Republican, a frequent Trump critic, said, "Today, the United States Capitol – the world's greatest symbol of self-government – was ransacked while the

leader of the free world cowered behind his keyboard."

Mr. Sasse went on: "Lies have consequences. This violence was the inevitable and ugly outcome of the President's addiction to constantly stoking division."

Police said they recovered

two pipe bombs, one outside the Democratic National Committee and the other outside the Republican National Committee, and a cooler from a vehicle that had a long gun and Molotov cocktail on Capitol grounds.

But Mr. Trump, in a video posted 90 minutes after lawmakers were evacuated, told the rioters, "We love you. You're very special," while asking them to go home.

Authorities eventually regained control as night fell.

Heavily armed officers brought in as reinforcements started using tear gas in a coordinated effort to get people moving towards the door. They then combed the halls for stragglers, pushing the mob farther out onto the plaza and lawn, in clouds of tear gas, flash-bangs and percussion grenades. Video footage also showed officers letting people walk out the doors of the Capitol despite the rioting and vandalism.

Only about a dozen arrests were made in the hours after authorities regained control.

Early on, some inside the Capitol saw the trouble coming outside the windows. Democratic Representative Dean Phillips of Minnesota surveyed the growing crowd on the ground not long after Mr. Trump had addressed his supporters by the Ellipse, fuelling their grievances over an election that he and they say he won, against all evidence. "I looked out the windows and could see how outnumbered the Capitol Police were," Mr. Phillips said.

Representative Scott Peters, Democrat, said he was in the House chamber when the siege began. He said security officers urged lawmakers to put gas masks on and herded them into a corner of the massive room. "This is how a coup is started," said Representative Jimmy Gomez, Democrat. "This is how democracy dies."

China compares U.S. violence to 2019 Hong Kong protests

State media, Foreign Ministry slam 'stark contrast' in reaction

ANANTH KRISHNAN

Commenting on the violence in Washington and storming of the U.S. Capitol, China on Thursday said it "hopes the people in the U.S. can enjoy peace" as it compared Wednesday's events with the protests in Hong Kong.

"We believe that the people of the United States want stability and peace, and hope they can soon enjoy security and stability, especially amid the grim situation brought about by the pandemic," said China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying.

The Foreign Ministry as well as state media in China compared the developments in Washington to protests in Hong Kong, where in 2019 protesters had stormed the legislative headquarters.

Ms. Hua also tweeted a video of that incident on Thursday.

"While U.S. mainstream media denounced the protesters at the U.S. Capitol as 'mobs', they had called the violent protesters in Hong Kong 'democratic heroes', saying that the U.S. people were standing with them," the official Xinhua news agency quoted Ms. Hua as saying.

Thought-provoking

"The stark contrast in the reactions and choice of words are thought-provoking and worthy of our reflection," she said.

"What words did they use about Hong Kong? ... The mainstream media in the U.S. are condemning the incident, calling it 'violence', 'thugs', 'extremists', and 'disgrace'. What words did

they use to describe Hong Kong? 'Beautiful sight', or 'fighters of democracy,' added Ms. Hua.

Similarity with the protests in Hong Kong was a common theme in China's state media's coverage, even if the difference in contexts – between protesters who were looking to overturn a fairly contested election and those who were calling for direct elections and universal suffrage to be introduced in China's Special Administrative Region – was left unsaid.

"Double standards are rampant," said the Communist Party-run Global Times in an editorial.

"In Hong Kong, violent actions are described as a 'beautiful sight', in the U.S., people involved in this chaos are called 'mobs', it said.

After Capitol siege, friends and foes slam Trump's poll fraud claims

Even after the Washington violence, the President continued to insist that the November election was stolen from him

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The storming of the U.S. Capitol by a violent mob while Congress was ratifying Democratic candidate Joe Biden's presidential race did not occur out of the blue. It was, as commentators have pointed out, the denouement of U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated declarations that he would not necessarily accept electoral defeat.

Over the last two months, Mr. Trump had encouraged his supporters to challenge the results, which he said were fraudulent, without providing adequate evidence to back his claims.

Not just Trump
Mr. Trump was not alone in supporting the chain of events that led to the attack. Many in the GOP – both in Washington and across States – had supported his claims of a "false" election. On Wednesday, in what was described as an "eleventh

hour" act by some commentators, these individuals either resigned or were shocked by the mob into changing their positions.

NEWS ANALYSIS

"I don't buy this [massive electoral fraud]. Enough is enough. We gotta end it," Trump loyalist Lindsey Graham, a Senator from South Carolina, said on the Senate floor. Mr. Graham was one of those who had difficulty accepting the outcome of the election. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said in November that Mr. Graham had pressured him into rejecting legally cast ballots in the State, which Mr. Biden had won.

Deputy National Security Adviser Matt Pottinger, First Lady Melania Trump's Chief of Staff Stephanie Grisham, and the White House Social Secretary resigned after the Capitol was attacked. More resignations are expected,



On the rampage: Donald Trump called the rioters "very special people" in his video address from the White House. ■AFP

including from the Cabinet, according to the U.S. press.

Some Republicans who had said they would raise objections to the certification of votes in certain States changed their minds after the mob attack – examples include Kelly Loeffler, who just lost her Senate seat in Georgia, and Senator James Lankford, an Oklahoma Republican. Others, like former GOP presidential candidate

Mitt Romney, who had already accepted the Biden victory, said that no congressional audit would satisfy voters who believed that there was fraud, especially since Mr. Trump continued to make that claim.

Tell the truth?

"The best way we can show respect for the voters who were upset is by telling them the truth," said Mr. Romney.

Senators Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, two GOP presidential hopefuls, stuck to their guns and raised objections to the certification of some votes. A photo of Mr. Hawley giving protesters (when they had not yet started rioting) a fist pump before they breached the Capitol went viral across news websites.

"Senator Hawley has blood on his hands in the Capitol coup attempt," the Kan-

sas City Star editorial board said of the 41-year-old, who was the first lawmaker to say he would object to the certification.

As a result of Wednesday's events, talk of the 25th Amendment, a statute that governs the removal of a sitting President from office due to reasons of incapacity, increased.

Unfit for office?

"The president incited an assault on the seat of government because he cannot accept the reality of his election loss," said Pennsylvania Representative Madeleine Dean. "He is clearly unfit for office and must be removed from command."

Several Democratic lawmakers wrote to Vice-President Mike Pence asking him to invoke the amendment. CNN reported that Cabinet officials were discussing invoking the statute as well, according to a "well-placed GOP source".

Among other questions being asked by commentators on TV news and social media were whether Wed-

nnesday represented a security failure and would the security response have been the same had the rioters been black or Muslim.

Almost 15 hours after it began the process, the U.S. Congress completed ratifying the Electoral College certification of votes. Mr. Trump did not concede the election, but said there would be "an orderly transition on January 20th" via White House official Dan Scavino's account. Mr. Trump's own Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts had been temporarily suspended.

The last time the Capitol Building was attacked was when British forces burned it in August 1814.

Discussing the incident in *The Washington Post*, Joel Achenbach writes: "In recounting this inauspicious chapter in our history it might behoove us to acknowledge that few Americans care about this strange little war. It was fought beyond the tall ridgeline in American memory of the Civil War." After Wednesday's events, this may no longer be the case.

'Alarming' U.K. virus variant needs bolder response: WHO

UN health body calls for tougher measures than before

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COPENHAGEN

The World Health Organization's European branch on Thursday said more needed to be done to deal with the alarming situation brought on by a recently discovered variant of the novel coronavirus.

The WHO's regional director for Europe, Hans Kluge, called the current situation "a tipping-point in the course of the pandemic".

"This is an alarming situation, which means that for a



People wearing masks walking along Oxford Street in London.

flatten the steep vertical line in some countries," Mr. Kluge said, referring primarily to the new variant first discovered in the U.K..

While it is natural for viruses to change over time and the variant is not believed to cause more severe symptoms, its "increased transmissibility" still raises concerns, according to WHO Europe. "Without increased control to slow its spread, there will be an increased impact on already stressed and pressurised health facilities," Mr. Kluge said.

Indian-American named U.S. Army's first CIO

The position was created in July 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

Indian-American Raj Iyer has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the U.S. Army after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020.

One of the highest ranking Indian-American civilians in the U.S. Department of Defense, Dr. Iyer, who holds a PhD in Electrical Engineering, serves as the Principal Adviser to the Secretary of the Army and directs representation of the Secretary in matters relating to information management/ information technol-



Raj Iyer

ogy (IT), the Pentagon said in a statement. Equivalent in rank to a three-star General, Dr. Iyer will supervise an annual budget of \$16 billion for the U.S. Army's IT operations. Over 15,000 civilians and military personnel posted across 100 countries work under him.

Pak. ATC court issues arrest warrant for Masood Azhar

The JeM chief has been charged with terror financing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan on Thursday issued an arrest warrant for Masood Azhar, chief of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), on charges of terror financing.

The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Gujranwala issued the warrant during a hearing in a terror financing case instituted by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police against some members of the JeM. "ATC Gujranwala judge

Natasha Naseem Supra issued an arrest warrant for Masood Azhar and directed the CTD to arrest him and present him in the court. The CTD told the judge that the JeM chief was involved in terror financing and selling jihadi literature," an official told PTI.

Six others held
Azhar is believed to be hiding in a "safe place" in his native town Bahawalpur. Following the Pulwama terror attack in February 2019 in India, Pakistan's Punjab province police had launched a crackdown on terrorism financing, and in this connection arrested six activists of the JeM in Gujranwala, some 130 km from Lahore.

The CTD said its teams raided the whereabouts of the JeM's "safe house" and arrested its members – Muhammad Afzal, Muhammad Amir, Allah Ditta, Muhammad Ajmal and Muhammad Bilal Makki – and recovered lakhs of rupees from their possession.

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	48,093	-0.17
US Dollar	73.31	-0.21
Gold	50335	-1.54
Brent oil	54.25	0.55

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	513.85	-17.05
Asian Paints	2792.25	-13.10
Axisc Bank	671.10	16.85
Bajaj Auto	3437.95	-24.75
Bajaj Finserv	8988.00	201.65
Bajaj Finance	5081.00	50.70
Bharti Airtel	545.25	19.95
BPCL	392.20	4.90
Britannia Ind	3552.80	13.10
Cipla	826.55	1.75
Coal India	136.50	1.40
Divis Lab	3803.05	-76.80
Dr Reddys Lab	5270.90	-17.40
Eicher Motors	2649.80	4.45
GAIL (India)	133.45	-0.55
Gasim Ind	993.85	9.25
HCL Tech.	962.55	-15.65
HDFC	2661.35	-22.50
HDFC Bank	1416.25	-4.30
HDFC Life	704.30	-14.75
Hero MotoCorp	3055.25	-28.30
Hindalco	272.90	13.85
Hind Unilever	2368.85	-48.45
ICICI Bank	541.10	-5.60
IndusInd Bank	952.05	29.70
Infosys	1262.15	-19.95
Indian Oil Corp	94.50	0.40
ITC	202.80	-2.60
JSW Steel	405.40	3.70
Kotak Bank	1952.40	-18.00
L&T	1338.95	24.95
M&M	744.40	8.30
Maruti Suzuki	7566.05	-62.55
Nestle India Ltd.	18127.30	-387.95
NTPC	97.00	-0.85
ONGC	97.90	0.95
PowerGrid Corp	197.05	0.90
Reliance Ind	1911.15	-3.10
SBI Life	914.15	3.85
State Bank	287.70	2.65
Shree Cement	25002.15	177.80
Sun Pharma	601.90	-3.40
Tata Motors	196.75	1.35
Tata Steel	722.80	39.00
TCS	3032.80	-18.70
Tech Mahindra	994.75	-2.40
Titan	1542.35	-30.25
UltraTech Cement	5397.95	-50.40
UPL	482.50	10.10
Wipro	406.75	0.35

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 07		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.13	73.45
Euro	89.66	90.05
British Pound	99.33	99.77
Japanese Yen (100)	70.55	70.86
Chinese Yuan	11.31	11.36
Swiss Franc	82.77	83.13
Singapore Dollar	55.19	55.44
Canadian Dollar	57.47	57.73
Malaysian Ringgit	18.10	18.22

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



L&T unit bags ONGC order up to ₹5,000 cr.

NEW DELHI
L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering (LTHE) on Thursday said it had bagged an order worth up to ₹5,000 crore from Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). The engineering and construction company did not provide the exact value of the contract, but as per its project classification, the value of a large order ranges between ₹2,500 crore and ₹5,000 crore. PTI

Lapsed LIC policies can be revived till March 6

NEW DELHI
To encourage individuals to continue their risk cover amid the pandemic, LIC on Thursday launched a campaign where lapsed policies can be revived. The insurance behemoth has launched a Special Revival Campaign starting from January 7 till March 6 for its customers to revive lapsed individual policies subject to conditions. PTI

FCA India unveils 2021 Jeep Compass

MUMBAI
Fiat Chrysler Automobile (FCA) India on Thursday unveiled the 2021 Jeep Compass which will continue to be manufactured in India at FCA's joint venture manufacturing facility in Ranjangaon, near Pune. "Dispatches of the SUV to Jeep brand dealerships across the country will commence shortly," the firm said in a statement.

Odisha okays ₹5,358-cr. investment proposals

Bhubaneswar
A high-level clearance authority chaired by Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik approved three major investment proposals totalling ₹5,358.40 crore. The three industrial projects in the metal and metal downstream, cement and refinery and petrochemicals sectors are expected to generate 3,667 jobs in the State, the Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Ltd. said.

India's fiscal deficit may exceed 7% in current fiscal, say sources

Government finances in poor condition because of a shortfall in tax receipts'

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

India's fiscal deficit for the year ending in March is likely to exceed 7% of gross domestic product, three sources told Reuters, as revenue collections suffered from a lockdown and restrictions to rein in the spread of COVID-19.

The government had in February projected a deficit of 3.5% for the current year. It estimated government borrowing of ₹7.8 trillion, later revised to ₹12 trillion, to provide relief to millions of people and businesses hurt by the pandemic.

"The fiscal deficit will be bigger than what is estimated by some ... our revenue collections suffered due to the complete lockdown in the first three months and



Yawning gap: The revenue shortfall from tax and divestment of state-run firms could be ₹7 trillion, sources said. ■REUTERS

that is hard to recover," said a source with direct knowledge of budget discussions. "We're looking at a 7% plus."

Two of the sources said the revenue shortfall from tax and divestment of state-run companies could be as much as ₹7 trillion.

A Finance Ministry spo-

kesman declined to comment. The government has yet to release any revised fiscal deficit estimates.

The pandemic and stringent lockdown imposed in the early stages hit India hard. Asia's third-largest economy recorded its first-ever recession with a contraction

of 23.9% in the April-June quarter and a 7.5% fall in the September quarter.

India on Thursday estimated GDP will contract by 7.7% in the full fiscal year.

Another senior government source said finances were in poor condition because of the shortfall in tax receipts, but the government has little room to cut spending as revival of the growth remains top priority.

"We could see the worst-ever fiscal deficit numbers in the current financial year," said another government source, adding the fiscal deficit could touch 8% of GDP.

The final deficit estimates will be announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Feb. 1, when she presents the annual budget.

IL&FS Solar repays ₹845 cr. debt, move to aid resolution

IL&FS unit's customer pays it back in full instead of monthly

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

IL&FS Solar Power Ltd. (ISPL) said the company had repaid its entire debt amounting to almost ₹845 crore across all its creditors.

ISPL had undertaken construction and financing of a 100-MW AC solar power project for Embassy Energy Private Ltd. (EEPL) for which it had raised secured and unsecured loans.

EEPL, as the owner of the project, was servicing ISPL through a monthly instalment structure under the terms of Deferred Payment



Agreement (DPA). However, EEPL in exercise of its rights under the DPA decided to fully repay the financial assistance extended by ISPL towards the project, enabling ISPL to clear its debt.

"The prepayment by EEPL has enabled ISPL to recover the amounts due to it under the DPA, which otherwise would have been payable to ISPL over the next 12 years with the last instalment falling due in February 2033," IL&FS Group said.

"This payment by ISPL supports the overall resolution process for the IL&FS Group and will be a key intermediate step in the resolution of ISPL, an entity for which no bids were received pursuant to the publicly solicited bid process launched in November 2018," it said.

The bank has issued Basel III-compliant perpetual debt instruments in the nature of debentures.

These debentures are eligible for inclusion in additional tier 1 capital to the tune of ₹1,000 crore, according to a regulatory filing by the bank.

The coupon rate on the bonds is 8.64% per annum, payable annually, according to the lender.

SBI raises \$600 mn via bonds, bids total \$1.9 bn

Bank returns to market after two years



\$2.1 billion resulting in final pricing at the tight end of the range i.e. T+140 bps," the bank added.

"The successful issuance demonstrates the strong investor base SBI has created for itself in offshore capital markets allowing it to efficiently raise funds from the world's leading fixed-income investors, even during periods of heightened volatility," said C. Venkat Nageswar, Deputy MD, International Banking Group, SBI, with a peak order book of

World food price index rises for seventh straight month in Dec.

For whole of 2020, the index averaged at a 3-year high: FAO

REUTERS
ROME

World food prices rose for a seventh consecutive month in December, with all the major categories, barring sugar, posting gains last month, the United Nations food agency said.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index, which measures monthly changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar, averaged 107.5 points last month versus 105.2 in November. For the whole of 2020, the benchmark index averaged 97.9 points, a three-year high and a 3.1% increase from 2019.

It was still down more than 25% from its historical peak in 2011.



2020, the index averaged 6.6% above 2019 levels.

Export prices for wheat, maize, sorghum and rice all rose in December, moving higher in part due to concerns over growing conditions and crop prospects in North and South America as well as Russia, the Rome-based FAO said.

The dairy index climbed 3.2% on the month, however, over the whole of 2020, it averaged some 1% less than in 2019. Bucking the rises in other indices, average sugar prices dipped by 0.6% in December. Last month, the FAO revised down its harvest forecast for the 2020 cereal season for a third month running, cutting it to 2.74 billion tonnes from a previous 2.75 billion tonnes.

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USTR slams India's digital tax, holds off on tariffs

Levy to ensure fair competition: govt.

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

Digital services taxes adopted by India, Italy and Turkey discriminate against U.S. companies and are inconsistent with international tax principles, the U.S. Trade Representative's office said on Wednesday, paving the way for potential retaliatory tariffs.

USTR, releasing the findings of its "Section 301" investigations into the digital taxes, said it was not taking specific actions at this time, but "will continue to evaluate all available options."

The probes are among several still open USTR Section 301 investigations that could lead to tariffs before President Donald Trump leaves office or early in the administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

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In the latest report, the USTR also said the Indian, Italian and Turkish taxes were "unreasonable" because they are "inconsistent with principles of international taxation, including



due to its application to revenue rather than income, extraterritorial application, and failure to provide tax certainty.

Australia calls the shots on day 1

Pucovski, Labuschagne revive the innings after Warner falls early to Siraj

INDIA IN AUS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Debutant Will Pucovski and Marnus Labuschagne came up with half-centuries as Australia recovered from an early setback to build a promising first innings in the rain-hit third Test against India here on Thursday.

Following David Warner's departure for five, Australia recovered to 166 for two at stumps after more than three hours' play was lost to persistent drizzle at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Labuschagne was batting on 67 while Steve Smith, who has struggled for runs this series, was unbeaten on 31. Pucovski contributed 62 in an impressive maiden Test innings.

Another debutant Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj, in only his second Test, shared the wickets in a clash both sides are desperate to win with the four-match series level at 1-1.

After Tim Paine chose to bat in front of 8,692 socially-distanced fans, rain started falling 35 minutes into the opening session. It was enough time for Siraj to grab the key wicket of Warner on his return from injury, caught by Cheteshwar Pujara.

But a 100-run partnership between Pucovski and Labuschagne swung the momentum back in Australia's favour before the 22-year-old fell leg before to Saini.

The patient Labuschagne,



Battle of debutants: Navdeep Saini celebrates, Will Pucovski walks off in disappointment. • AFP

who has been Australia's best batsman in this series, survived an edge off Jasprit Bumrah on 11, which just failed to carry to slip, but was otherwise authoritative.

He brought up his ninth Test 50 with a boundary off Siraj, while Smith looked in ominous touch at the other end after failing to reach double figures in his four previous innings. The former captain hit five boundaries in his 31 which came off 64 balls.

Dropped catches

Pucovski resumed on 14 and Labuschagne swung the momentum back in Australia's favour before the 22-year-old fell leg before to Saini.

India tried to unsettle Pucovski early on with short-

balls and he rode his luck, being dropped twice. The first came on 26 when R. Ashwin enticed a thin edge, only for wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant to miss what should have been a simple catch.

Three overs later, Pant did it again. Pucovski, on 32, got a glove to a rising Siraj ball and as Pant dived, the ball popped out of his hand. He made another grab and seemed to have caught it, but replays showed the ball hit the ground first.

He then survived a run-out opportunity after a misunderstanding with Labuschagne, but refocused to bring up his 50 with a boundary off Saini.

But Saini, in the team for

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

Will Pucovski lbw b Saini 62 (11ob, 4x4), David Warner c Pujara b Siraj 5 (8b), Marnus Labuschagne (batting) 67 (149b, 8x4), Steve Smith (batting) 31 (64b, 5x4); Extras (nb-1): 1; Total (for two wkts. in 55 overs): 166.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-6 (Warner, 3.3 overs), 2-106 (Pucovski, 34.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 14-3-30-0, Siraj 14-3-

46-1, Ashwin 17-1-56-0, Saini 7-

0-32-1, Jadeja 3-2-2-0.

Toss: Australia.

England women to make

'historic' trip to Pakistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON England women will tour Pakistan for the first time in October, joining the men's side in an unprecedented joint trip, cricket chiefs announced on Thursday.

the hospital.

The former India cricket captain thanked the doctors and health care staff at the hospital for taking care of him. "We come to hospitals to get our life back," he said.

A press statement issued by the hospital earlier in the morning said that the report of his routine blood tests was satisfactory and his ECG was normal.

Absolutely fine: Ganguly

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, on Thursday, was discharged from Woodlands Hospital here. He was admitted to the hospital on January 2 after a mild heart attack.

"I am absolutely fine. Hopefully, I will be able to fly soon," Ganguly told media persons while coming out of

No England team has played international cricket in the country since 2005.

Eoin Morgan's white-ball team had already committed to a two-match Twenty20 series in Karachi on October 14 and 15.

Athletic got off to a dream start in its first match under new coach Marcelino when forward Inaki Williams latched on to a low through ball and raced towards goal, beating one defender before firing low into the net in the third minute.

Barca quickly responded, however, with a sensational team goal, Messi delivering a superb pass to pick out Frenkie de Jong by the byline and the Dutchman volleyed the ball back across the area for Pedri to head home.

Messi and Pedri combined beautifully to put Barca ahead, the youngster receiving a pass from the Argentine before returning it with a delightful backheel and Messi rolled the ball into the bottom corner in the 38th minute.

Messi struck again in the 62nd minute to finish off another brilliant team move,

According to reports, he was conscious when paramedics arrived on the scene before he was rushed to Riyadh. Santosh crashed around 135km into the stage on a gravel track and had to forfeit the stage. This was Santosh's seventh attempt at the Dakar Rally, considered the world's most gruelling off-road motorsport event.

The January 2-16 rally, divided into 12 stages, has competitors traversing 7,646km. Stage 4 is, incidentally, the longest stage of the rally, covering 813km.

Athletic got off to a dream start in its first match under new coach Marcelino when forward Inaki Williams latched on to a low through ball and raced towards goal, beating one defender before firing low into the net in the third minute.

Barca clung on to earn a first win in four matches away to Athletic, having failed to score on its last three trips to San Mames.

Juventus inflicted a first Serie A defeat of the season on league leader AC Milan as a Federico Chiesa double led the Italian champion to an exhilarating 3-1 win at San Siro.

Stefano Pioli's side remains top of the table on 37 points, one ahead of second-placed Inter Milan, which lost to Sampdoria earlier in the day.

The results: LaLiga: Athletic Bilbao 2 (Williams 3, Muniaín

90) lost to Barcelona 3 (Pedri 14, Messi 38, 62).

Serie A: Cagliari 1 (Joao Pedro 20) lost to Benevento 2 (Sau 41, Tuia 44); Sassuolo 2 (Boga 52, Raspadori 83) bt Genoa 1 (Shumurodov 64); Crotone 1 (Golemec 71) lost to Roma 3 (Mayoral 8, 29, Mkhitaryan 35-pen); Lazio 2 (F. Caicedo 6, Immobile 75) bt Fiorentina 1 (Vlahovic 88-pen); Torino 1 (Bremer 84) drew with Verona 1 (Dimarco 67); Sampdoria 2 (Candreva 23-pen, Balde 38) bt Inter Milan 1 (de Vrij 65); Bologna 2 (Tomiyasu 19, Svanberg 40) drew with Udinese 2 (Pereyra 34, Arslan 90+2); Atalanta 3 (Muriel 16, Zapata 49, Gosenis 61) bt Parma 0; Napoli 1 (Petagna 58) lost to Spezia 2 (Nzola 68-pen, Pobega 81); AC Milan 1 (Calabria 41) lost to Juventus 3 (Chiesa 18, 62, McKennie 76).

Santosh injured in crash during Dakar Rally

Put in medically-induced coma after being airlifted to Riyadh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI Indian racer C.S. Santosh was injured in a crash in the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday and put in a medically-induced coma after being airlifted to a hospital in Riyadh.

C.S. Santosh is currently receiving treatment at the Saudi German Hospital in Riyadh, after a high-speed crash on Wednesday in Stage 4 of the Dakar Rally. He has no major physical injuries except for the dislocated right shoulder and head

trauma. The latest scans have also shown no major issue that could impact his full recovery," Hero MotoSports said in a statement.

The medical team attending to him have decided that the best approach to manage the injury is to reduce the body functions to a minimum and keep him in a sedated condition or an artificial coma. He is receiving the best possible medical care and will continue to be under constant observation for the next few days," it added.



Hors de combat: C.S. Santosh, clicked during Stage 2 of the Dakar Rally, is under observation in a Riyadh hospital. • REUTERS

According to reports, he was conscious when paramedics arrived on the scene before he was rushed to Riyadh. Santosh crashed around 135km into the stage on a gravel track and had to forfeit the stage. This was Santosh's seventh attempt at the Dakar Rally, considered the world's most gruelling off-road motorsport event.

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TV PICKS

Australia vs India: Sony Ten 1, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.
FA Cup: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m. (Saturday)
ISL: Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 4.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Zeel Desai in last eight

SPORTS BUREAU

MONASTIR (TUNISIA)
Fourth seed Zeel Desai beat Jade Bornay of France 6-3, 7-5 to make the quarterfinals of the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here on Thursday.

Other results:
\$15,000 ITF men, Cairo: Pre-quarterfinals: Maxence Beauge (Fra) bt Faisal Qamar 6-7(5), 6-2, 6-2.

First round: Grigoriy Lomakin (Kaz) bt Aryan Goveas 7-6(3), 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Pre-quarterfinals: Eric Vanshelboim (Ukr) bt Paras Dahiya 6-4, 2-6, 6-0.

Serena, Barty to headline warm-ups

Players to arrive from January 15 and undergo mandatory two-week quarantine

AUS OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty and 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams will spearhead the two WTA tournaments in Melbourne ahead of the Australian Open, with the top 32-ranked women split evenly across the simultaneous events, organisers said on Thursday.

Radical change

The onslaught of COVID-19 has forced a radical change to how the early 2021 tennis season will look, with the Australian Open pushed back three weeks to February 8.

Players will arrive in Australia from January 15 and undergo a mandatory two-week quarantine before two



A new season begins: Serena Williams' presence at the Australian Open warm-up tournaments will be welcome news for fans. ■ AP

WTA 500 and two ATP 250 events are held alongside the ATP Cup, all at Melbourne Park.

Organisers have branded it the Melbourne Summer

Series and named each tournament after areas of Victoria State.

That will see the women play the Gippsland Trophy and Yarra Valley Classic from

January 31-February 6, marking Barty's first appearance in 11 months after opting out of the US and European swing last year over coronavirus fears.

As well as Williams, the likes of World No. 2 Simona Halep, defending Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and previous Australian Open winners Naomi Osaka, Victoria Azarenka and Angelique Kerber will take part.

The leading men's stars, including Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, will compete in the 12-team ATP Cup, which will be run at the same time and at the same venue.

Those that didn't qualify will play in two ATP 250 tournaments – the Great Ocean Road Open and Murray River Open, featuring top names including David Goffin, Stan Wawrinka, Grigor Dimitrov and Nick Kyrgios.

"There's no doubt this will be a historic week of tennis, and is the biggest-ever Australian Open lead-in week we have seen," said Tennis Australia's major events chief Cameron Pearson.

Sanjeev Rajput pips Swapnil Kusale

Double delight for Abhay in skeet

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Olympian Sanjeev Rajput shot a 459.9 to pip Swapnil Kusale by 0.8 point in the men's 50-metre rifle 3-position event in the National shooting selection trials at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Thursday.

Sanjeev, who has won the quota for Tokyo, had topped the qualification with an impressive score of 1181. Another Olympic quota winner in the event, the young Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar shot 1179, but placed fifth.

In men's skeet, Abhay Singh Sekhon 56 (120); 2. Arjun Thakur 52 (116); 3. Karam Sukhbir Singh 42 (118). **Women:** 1. Ganemat Sekhon 55 (120); 2. Zahra Deesawala 51 (114); 3. Asees Chhina 40 (111).

fect rounds of 25.

In women's skeet, Ganemat Sekhon was in top form as she shot 55 in the final to beat Zahra Deesawala by four points. Ganemat had topped qualification with 120.

The results: 50m rifle 3-position: Men: 1. Sanjeev Rajput 459.9 (1181); 2. Swapnil Kusale 459.1 (1171); 3. Akhil Sheoran 445.6 (1172).

Skeet: Men: 1. Abhay Singh Sekhon 56 (120); 2. Arjun Thakur 52 (116); 3. Karam Sukhbir Singh 42 (118). Women: 1. Ganemat Sekhon 55 (120); 2. Zahra Deesawala 51 (114); 3. Asees Chhina 40 (111).

Junior men: 1. Abhay Singh Sekhon 56 (120); 2. Rajveer Singh Gill 53 (109); 3. Bhavesh Singh Gill 43 (116). **Junior women:** 1. Raiza Dhillon 51 (107); 2. Areeba Khan 49 (108); 3. Parinaz Dhalwal 41 (111).

Enhancing the performance of players

Nupur tries to integrate the physical and psychological aspects

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Nupur Kaul was unable to achieve her dreams as a tennis player and opted to open the Mind Studio to enhance the performance of every player coming her way.

"Being a former National skater and international tennis player, I try to integrate the physical and psychological aspects to provide a holistic learning approach to the athletes," said Nupur.

Specialising in psychology in college in Mumbai, Nupur went to Sheffield Hallam University in the UK to acquire a second Masters Degree in Sports and Exercise Psychology.

The 28-year-old Nupur op-



Nupur. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Clark in the new venture Accelerate Tennis in Gurugram.

Nupur suggests that even the best of athletes have a sports psychologist in their team.

"We conduct many activities to enhance an athlete's on-court performance. Analysing matches and being a part of the training sessions is essential for a sports psychologist," said Nupur.

Mind training

Observing that more athletes were "giving mind the importance it deserves", Nupur said "tennis is like playing chess with a racket".

Coach Todd Clark said: "Nupur is open to new ideas."

"Together, our aim has always been to adapt the traditional off court activities to physical on-court activities which can directly enhance the players performance."

Nupur would continue to "integrate the physical and psychological aspects" with

The bottomline is that being mentally strong "requires extensive work" and does not happen overnight. Nupur is willing to guide the athletes to reach that stage.

On the attack

Stuart Baxter's boys played relentlessly, attacking football to come back strongly after conceding a goal early on.

Odisha, however, remains at the bottom of the table, despite taking its tally to five points. A place above is Blasters, which has a point more.

Mauricio fires Odisha to its maiden win of the season

Despite the 4-2 victory over Blasters, Baxter's side continues to remain at the bottom

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

On a wet night at the GMC Stadium, Bambolim, Odisha FC's long drought finally came to an end. The 4-2 victory over Kerala Blasters on Thursday was its first of the season at the ISL – it came in its ninth match.

Odisha, however, remains at the bottom of the table, despite taking its tally to five points. A place above is Blasters, which has a point more.

On the attack

Stuart Baxter's boys played relentlessly, attacking football to come back strongly after conceding a goal early on.

Diego Mauricio was their hero. The Brazilian striker scored twice and was also responsible for the own goal credited to Blasters midfi-



Tormentor: Mauricio proved a thorn in Kerala Blasters' flesh. ■ ISL/SPORTZPICS

lder Jeakson Singh.

Though Odisha rattled the Blasters defence at the outset and even won a corner in the third minute, it found itself behind four minutes la-

ter. After K.P. Rahul's failed attempt with a header, Jordan Murray scored from an acute angle against a fumbling Odisha goalkeeper, Arshdeep Singh.

Fifteen minutes later, however, Odisha equalised off a swift counterattack. Jerry Mawihmingthanga's through ball into the box found Mauricio and went in off a deflec-

tion off Jeakson's leg.

Odisha took the lead towards the end of the opening half through Steven Taylor, who did well to convert a well-taken free-kick by Mawihmingthanga. That goal separated the two sides at half-time.

After the break, Odisha began to put the Blasters defence under constant pressure. Mauricio made it 3-1 eight minutes into the second half, thanks to another assist from Mawihmingthanga.

The Brazilian scored another 10 minutes later to seal Odisha's victory. Substitute Gary Hooper's strike, with 11 minutes left, was not enough for Blasters.

The result: Kerala Blasters 2 (Jordan Murray 7, Gary Hooper 79) lost to Odisha FC 4 (Jeakson Singh 22-og, Steven Taylor 42, Diego Mauricio 50, 60).

Friday's match: NorthEast United ed FC vs Hyderabad FC. +

Sixers down Wizards despite Beal's 60 points

Boston Celtics snatches victory over Miami Heat in a close game

NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

Joel Embiid's 38 points and 28 from Seth Curry saw Philadelphia 76ers withstand a 60-point performance from Washington's Bradley Beal in a 141-136 NBA win over the Wizards on Wednesday.

Tobias Harris and Shake Milton scored 19 points each and Ben Simmons added 17 points and 12 assists as the 76ers notched up their fifth win in a row and pushed their league-leading record to 7-1.

The Sixers led by as many as 21 points in the third quarter, but the Wizards hung around and knotted the score at 131-131 with four minutes left to play.

From there Sixers scored eight straight points to pull away, the defeat more painful for the Wizards as Russell Westbrook departed in the waning minutes with a



On a spree: Bradley Beal was unstoppable but couldn't carry his team with him. ■ AFP

hand injury after contributing 20 points, eight rebounds and 12 assists.

Beal's 60 points tied him for the franchise record set by Gilbert Arenas in 2006.

The night's 11 games played out hours after President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol in Washington.

"We play tonight's game with a heavy heart after yes-

terday's decision in Kenosha and knowing that protesters in our nation's capital are treated differently by political leaders depending on what side of certain issues they are on,"

players from Boston Celtics and Miami Heat said in a joint statement before their game.

The marquee match-up in Miami was the first meet-

ing between the teams since the Heat eliminated the Celtics in the Eastern Conference finals.

The rematch saw the Celtics emerge from a close game with a 107-105 victory.

Oklahoma City Thunder edged the Pelicans in New Orleans 111-110. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 21 points and George Hill made two free-throws to seal the win with 12.1 seconds left to play.

The results: Atlanta Hawks 94

lost to Charlotte Hornets 102;

Miami Heat 105 lost to Boston Celtics 107; New York Knicks

112 lost to Utah Jazz 100; Golden State Warriors 101 lost to LA Clippers 108; Sacramento Kings 128 bt Chicago Bulls 124;

Phoenix Suns 123 bt Toronto Raptors 115; Milwaukee Bucks

130 bt Detroit Pistons 115; New Orleans Pelicans 110 lost to Oklahoma City Thunder 111; Indiana Pacers 114 bt Houston Rockets 107; Orlando Magic 105 bt Cleveland Cavaliers 94; Philadelphia 76ers 141 bt Washington Wizards 136.

Premier sport

"Shooting is one of the premier sports at the moment. It is a priority for us, to take all necessary steps for the shooters.

"We have huge expectations from shooting and we have a huge reservoir of talent at the grassroots level.

"Our athletes represent the country in the Olympics,

Now, a hostel facility at Dr. Karni Singh Range

Priority for us to take all necessary steps for shooters: Kiren Rijiju

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

The long-felt need of the shooting fraternity was addressed with the inauguration of the 162-bed hostel facility at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range by Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday.

A scheme that was neglected when the range was renovated at a huge cost for the Commonwealth Games in 2010, the air-conditioned hostel was readied at a cost of ₹12.26 crore by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

Premier sport

"Shooting is one of the premier sports at the moment. It is a priority for us, to take all necessary steps for the shooters.

"They must have a standard of living where we provide the basic facilities," said Rijiju.

"We have huge expectations from shooting and we have a huge reservoir of talent at the grassroots level.

"To that end, the management of the hostel would be in the hands of a professional agency.

The shooters assembling for the national camps, na-



Big boon: Union Sports minister Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the 162-bed hostel facility for shooters on Thursday.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.

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Rijiju.

In fact, the minister em