

on Sunday



ED attaches assets of former J&K CM Farooq Abdullah
page 7



'India's pandemic fatality rate is among the lowest globally'
page 8



India-born Vedant Patel named assistant White House Press Secretary
page 9



India bundled out for its lowest Test score, loses opening match
page 14

PRINTED AT - CHENNAI - COIMBATORE - BENGALURU - HYDERABAD - MADURAI - NOIDA - VISAKHAPATNAM - THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - KOCHI - VIJAYAWADA - MANGALURU - TIRUCHIRAPPALLI - KOLKATA - HUBBALLI - MOHALI - MALAPPURAM - MUMBAI - TIRUPATI - LUCKNOW - CUTTACK - PATNA

NEARBY



Four labourers die in roof collapse in west Delhi
NEW DELHI
Four labourers died and two were injured after the roof of a factory collapsed in west Delhi's Khayala on Saturday. The building housed a motor-winding unit. The fire department received a call around 10 a.m., following which four fire tenders were rushed to the spot.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

First DDC polls in J&K end with 51% polling

SRINAGAR
The maiden District Development Council (DDC) polls in J&K concluded peacefully on Saturday and recorded a 51% voter turnout in the eighth phase. The Kashmir valley, however, saw the lowest 29.91% polling. Official figures suggest North Kashmir's Kupwara recorded the highest 63.8% voting in the Valley.
NEWS ▶ PAGE 7

SCHOLARSHIP TEST FOR CSE PRELIMS 2021
22 December 2021
Get a Chance to win our Highest Rated GS PRELIMS TEST SERIES 2021
crack IAS 100% scholarship will be awarded
91-90790791 Register Here - crackias.com/scholarship

MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES
CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

More Punjab farmers head for Delhi to join protesters

Homage marches planned at village and block level for lives lost during agitation

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Even as tens of thousands of farmers are camping on the borders of Delhi to protest against the Centre's farm laws, a large number of farmers and labourers from Punjab are all set to march to Delhi in the coming week to ensure that the ongoing agitation does not lose steam.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union-Ekta-Ugrahan (BKU-U) and the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) announced that batches of farmers and labourers from across Punjab will start moving towards Delhi so that the build-up on the borders keeps swelling.

'Honouring sacrifice'
"The sacrifices of the people who were martyred during the ongoing agitation will not go waste. These sacrifices have made people more determined to take the struggle to its logical end," said Sukhdev Singh, general secretary of the BKU-U.

"Gatherings will be held on December 20 in Punjab's villages to pay homage to these martyrs and the memorial processions will continue on December 21, 22 and 23. Thereafter, a block-level tribute function will be



Help at hand: A farmer undergoing physiotherapy at a medical camp in Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Benefits of new reforms reaching farmers: PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Modi said on Saturday. In an address at the Assocham Foundation week, he urged industry to scale up domestic investments, so as to evoke greater confidence in the country's growth story among foreign investors.

Modi said on Saturday.

Farmers are already reaping the benefits of the reforms brought in six months ago, and better infrastructure and market access for the farm sector could take the rural economy to new heights, Prime Minister Narendra

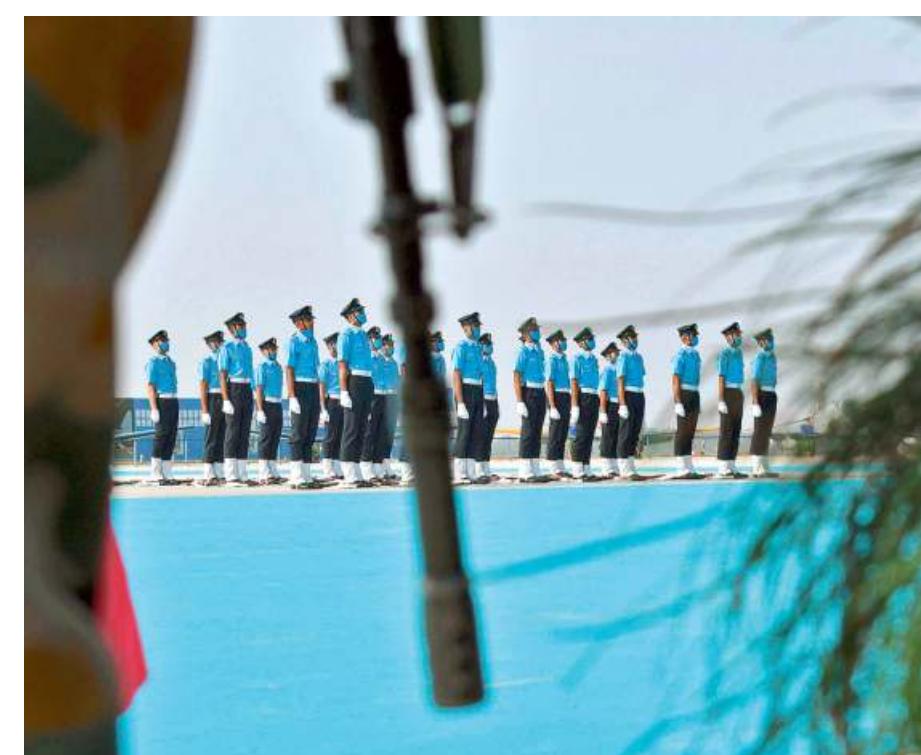
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 2 & 7

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

+ Revamp on hold amid calls for Rahul's return

Ready to soar



In step: Indian Air Force cadets marching during a graduation parade at the Air Force Academy in Dundigal, on the outskirts of Hyderabad, on Saturday. ■ RAMAKRISHNA G (REPORT ON PAGE 6)

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Any exploitation of Sentinel Island will wipe out tribals'

Anthropological Survey of India policy document warns of threat to endangered group from commercial activity

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Any exploitation of the North Sentinel Island of the Andaman Islands for commercial and strategic gain, for if it were to happen, it surely would be a death knell for its occupants," the policy document said.

The Sentinelese, with a population of about 50 to 100 on the North Sentinel Island, are not only among the most isolated of nearly 70 PVTGs across the country, but also among the five in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands which include the Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Jarawa, and the Shompens.

rights as eternal and sacrosanct. Therefore, their island should not be eyed for any commercial or strategic gain, for if it were to happen, it surely would be a death knell for its occupants," the policy document said.

The Sentinelese, with a population of about 50 to 100 on the North Sentinel Island, are not only among the most isolated of nearly 70 PVTGs across the country, but also among the five in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands which include the Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Jarawa, and the Shompens.

Knowledge bank
Along with maintaining the territorial integrity of the North Sentinel Island, the document also calls for building a knowledge bank

on the Sentinelese. Since 'on-the-spot study' is not possible for the tribal community, anthropologists suggest the 'study of a culture from distance'.

SPECIAL

Speaking to *The Hindu*, M. Sasikumar, Deputy Director of AnSI and among the few

anthropologists who have circumnavigated and conducted an aerial survey of the North Sentinel Island as late as 2015, said this is the first detailed policy draft for the Sentinelese island, prepared at the request of the Andaman and Nicobar Administration.

"The Andaman administration had written to us to

come up with a policy document. All of us who have worked on the tribe sat together, held discussions and prepared the policy. We have sent the policy to the Andaman administration for their consideration," Mr. Sasikumar said.

The document calls for an insightful study of the 'journal' of John Allen Chau who spent a couple of days on the island, encountered the Sentinelese from close proximity and registered his observations. According to Mr. Sasikumar, Chau's 13-page diary - parts of which are illegible and has sketches of the settlements - is an extremely important anthropological document. Chau had handed it over to the fisherman who transported him to the island in November 2018, a day before he was killed.

"We don't know what is happening on the island. During the British period M.V. Portman had visited it, followed by few anthropologists of the AnSI after independence in 1967 and then it is this American (Chau). These are the only occasions when outsiders have landed on the island. The rest have been observing the inhabitants from a distance," Mr. Sasikumar said.

The AnSI has published the policy inputs in a paper titled 'Draft of the Policies for Great Andamanese and Sentinelese' in their journal recently.

Along with Mr. Sasikumar, AnSI Director Vinay Kumar Srivastava, anthropologist Umesh Kumar, Shiv Kumar Patel and Priyanka Airi Goyal are co-authors of the document.

Four booked under new U.P. law in G.B. Nagar

'They were enticing people to convert'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GAZIABAD

The Gautam Buddha Nagar police arrested four persons, including three women, on Saturday for allegedly enticing people to convert to Christianity.

The leader of the group, Anmol, is a South Korean woman living in Surajpur under a fictitious name, the police said. The four, including Seema, Sandhya and Umesh Kumar, have been booked under Section 295 (a) of IPC and Section 3(5) (I) of Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020.

Complaint received
"We received a complaint from Anita Sharma, a resident of Surajpur, that this group has been luring her to convert to Christianity for some time. They had been offering the locals money and other temptations to convert. They went to her house on Saturday and asked the family members to dispense with idols. Ms. Sharma approached the neighbours and they called the police," said Pradeep Kumar Tiwari, SHO, Surajpur.

He said the three members of the group had converted to Christianity and are Scheduled Caste persons. "It seems Anmol is associated with a missionary group. We are investigating her credentials. The other three hail from Prayagraj and have been living on rent in Greater Noida," said Mr. Tiwari.

MORADABAD MAN, BROTHER GET BAIL ▶ PAGE 8



Cut off: The Sentinelese live in complete isolation.



Health workers taking samples for COVID-19 test near the banks of the Yamuna in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

new COVID-19 cases reported in a day in nearly fourth months. The last time the city saw less than 1,139 cases was on August 24, when 1,061 people tested positive.

According to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government, 32 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the toll to 10,251. Of the total 6,15,914 cases, 5,95,305 people have recovered and there are 10,358 active cases. The over-

all positivity till now is 7.98%.

Mr. Kejriwal said the first wave of the pandemic in Delhi was in June, the second in August and September, and the third began in October.

Citizens' efforts'
"On one hand the pollution level of Delhi was increasing due to stubble burning in the neighbouring States and on the other the number of COVID-19 cases were also increasing. The citizens of Del-

hi took the situation very seriously and fought this battle against COVID as war. Today I am very happy to say that due to the efforts of the citizens the third wave of COVID pandemic in the Capital has come under control," the Chief Minister said.

He said Delhi was the first State to announce ₹1 crore financial assistance to the family of "COVID-19 warriors" who die in the line of duty.

The Chief Minister also drew a parallel with New York. "In the first week of April, New York City reported 6,300 cases in one day. At that point of time it was the highest number of cases reported in a single day... COVID patients were lying outside the hospitals of New York and on the streets. But in Delhi when 8,600 cases were reported in a single day, even then the situation was under control," he said.

Four booked under new U.P. law in G.B. Nagar
'They were enticing people to convert'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GAZIABAD

The Gautam Buddha Nagar police arrested four persons, including three women, on Saturday for allegedly enticing people to convert to Christianity.

The leader of the group, Anmol, is a South Korean woman living in Surajpur under a fictitious name, the police said. The four, including Seema, Sandhya and Umesh Kumar, have been booked under Section 295 (a) of IPC and Section 3(5) (I) of Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020.

Complaint received
"We received a complaint from Anita Sharma, a resident of Surajpur, that this group has been luring her to convert to Christianity for some time. They had been offering the locals money and other temptations to convert. They went to her house on Saturday and asked the family members to dispense with idols. Ms. Sharma approached the neighbours and they called the police," said Pradeep Kumar Tiwari, SHO, Surajpur.

MORADABAD MAN, BROTHER GET BAIL ▶ PAGE 8



(From left) Farmers collect blankets; protesters at the Singhu border in Delhi on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



Mercury hits season's lowest at 3.9°C

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The temperature in the Capital on Saturday dropped to 3.9 degrees Celsius, the lowest this season so far.

"The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, recorded a low of 3.9 degrees Celsius, four notches below normal. The maximum temperature settled at 21.8 degrees Celsius," an official of the India Meteorological Department said.

The mercury dipped to 3.3 degrees Celsius and 3.4 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road and Ayanagar, respectively, as icy winds from snow-laden Western Himalayas continued to sweep the city.

Delhi recorded a "severe" cold day on Thursday as the maximum temperature dropped to 15.2 degrees Celsius, seven notches below normal and the lowest day temperature recorded so far this season.

On Friday, the maximum rose to 19.8 degrees Celsius. A "cold day" is when the minimum temperature is less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum is at least 4.4 degrees Celsius below normal.

A "severe" cold day is when the maximum temperature is at least 6.5 notches below normal.



Sharjeel Imam

sanctions granted by the authorities concerned.

"The requisite sanction has been filed. I have perused the supplementary chargesheet. I take cognisance for commission of offence under Section 124A/153A/153B/505 IPC, the judge said.

The police had filed another supplementary charge sheet against Imam in the case in July this year.

The police had alleged in the chargesheet that Mr. Imam gave inflammatory speeches at several places, including Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University during anti-CAA protests.

The chargesheet said Mr. Imam allegedly gave speeches inciting hatred, contempt and disaffection towards the Centre and instigated the people, which led to the violence.

Shops near protest site see dip in footfall

Businesses along the highway lose customers due to free food and drinks served at the Singhu border

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Despite the presence of thousands of protesting farmers at the Singhu border, business has been hit at shops along the highway.

Several owners of these shops said fewer customers visit them due to the availability of langar services and other facilities at the protest site. The shops, mostly selling soft drinks and other items, have seen a stark contrast in footfall since the agitation began over 20 days ago, said its owners.

Prem Prakash, who has been running the shop located along the highway for over a decade, said: "Business



Langar being prepared at the Singhu border on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

is down to nothing. As compared to the time when the highway was open, there is almost a 50% dip, if not more. It is mostly happening because whatever people re-

C Business is down to nothing. As compared to the time when the highway was open, there is almost a 50% dip, if not more

PREM PRAKASH
Shop owner

quire are available to them now especially due to the langar services."

Procurement a hassle

Procuring stocks for the shop has also proved to be a hassle in recent days, said Mr. Prakash.

"Earlier we used to get items delivered to our shops. Now, we have to car-

ry them ourselves and get the items from Kundli, which also proves to be a long walk. Sometimes the commute ends up being an hour-long affair," he said.

Shailendra, an employee at another similar store, said: "The necessity to stock items is also declining by the day as it has become very difficult to sell the existing items itself. Earlier we used to witness sales of more than a few thousand rupees each day but now it has reduced to ₹2,000/day. When everything is being distributed there [protest site] for free, how will we get any customers?"

Several other shop own-

ers said even though they stand by the farmers, it was becoming difficult for them to sustain their families and pay rent due to the decline in their incomes.

Sumeet Yadav, another shop owner, said: "We are sitting here all day doing nothing. What do we do? Usually, I pay my rent by the 10th of each month but this time I haven't been able to pay till now."

"We are with everyone and we understand the cause but it is also true that our business has been affected and it's not the same as when the highway was open. What do we do?" added Mr. Yadav.

JNU allows its PhD science students to access laboratory from tomorrow

Outstation students will have to self-quarantine for 7 days

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Saturday announced that as a part of its phased reopening of campus, PhD science scholars, who are required to access the laboratory, will be permitted to enter the campus from Monday.

The institute issued a notification, stating that all outstation students will have to undergo a seven-day self-quarantine before joining the university. It also said

students will also have to submit a self-declaration form once they enter the campus. They also need to install Aarogya Setu app.

"Aarogya Setu enables early identification of potential risk of infection and thus acts as a shield for individuals and the community. With a view to ensuring safety in offices and workplaces and labs, employees and students on best effort basis should ensure that Aarogya Setu is installed by all employees or students," the

notice issued by Registrar Pramod Kumar read.

It further read: "Social gathering should be avoided in the academic blocks and other parts of the university. Social distancing norms must be maintained inside the lab. All students and staff working in the lab must wear face masks, gloves and other protective gears."

The Central Library and all canteens and dhabas will remain closed during this period, JNU added.

Mayors vow to get funds released for municipal corporations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Mayors of the three BJP-ruled Municipal Corporations of Delhi on Saturday ended their 13-day sit-in protest outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence here.

They had been on a hunger strike for the past three days. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta met the Mayors and offered

them juice to end the hunger strike after which they declared that though they were ending the strike for the time being the movement to demand financial dues amounting to ₹13,000 crore would continue.

"Today [Saturday], even on the 13th day, the corporation leaders are sitting outside the CM's residence on hunger strike in this severe cold not for their convenience or benefit but for the salary of sanitation workers, doctors, nurses, health workers, teachers and other corporation employees who worked to keep Delhi safe, clean and healthy amid the pandemic," Mr. Puri said.



"It is utterly unfair that the Delhi government is not providing constitutionally allocated funds to pay the corporation employees. It is the moral responsibility of the Delhi government to provide financial strength to the civic

bodies under them but even in such a critical situation, Mr. Kejriwal did not come for five minutes to meet the corporation leaders," he added.

Mr. Puri said the corporation leaders were fighting for the people of Delhi, for the rights of corporation workers, and for better civic amenities. He alleged that the CM was "wasting crores of public tax money for shining his photo" on hoardings but not releasing the funds for the corporations.

Meanwhile, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday said that a school teacher of a BJP-ruled civic body had written to the President that he should either tell the cor-

poration to release their salaries or he should give him permission to die by suicide.

A complete lie: AAP

AAP civic bodies' in-charge Durgesh Pathak said that when the party asks the BJP to pay salaries of municipal employees, they say that ₹13,000 crore is pending from the Delhi government to the corporations.

"It is a complete lie. A recent court order regarding clearance of pending salary of municipal employees has no mention of this imaginary ₹13,000 crore. During the court hearing, BJP's standing counsel never mentioned ₹13,000 crore," he said.

'Over 800 arrests made, 5,000 kg drugs recovered'

Police share data from Jan. 1-Nov. 31

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Till November this year, 844 people have been arrested and over 5,000 kg drug recovered from them, according to data shared by Delhi Police said on Saturday.

The data has record from January 1, 2020 till November 31. A total of 695 cases

sioner S.N. Shrivastava said: "The Delhi Police is taking several measures. We need to spread awareness so that no one commits such a crime. A drug addict should get treated and the source of supply also should be destroyed."

Data last year

In 2019, the police had registered 681 cases and arrested 872 people.

They recovered 47,461 kg charas, 2,010 kg opium, 5,055,532 kg ganja, 631,035 kg heroin, 1,696,660 kg poppy head and 1,106 kg cocaine. Twenty tablets alprazolam, 0.325 kg methaqualone, 500 tablets buprenorphine, 7,495 kg amphetamine.

Delhi Police Commis-

States get more time to set up biodiversity committees

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

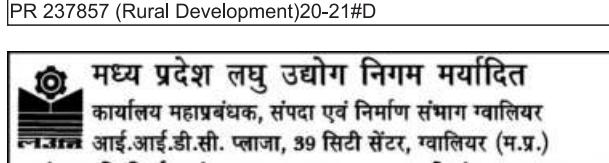
The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has extended the time limit for constitution of biodiversity management committees (BMC) and preparation of people's biodiversity registers (PBR) in view of the ongoing pandemic.

The National Biodiversity Authority informed NGT Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel that monitoring would be conducted with all State biodiversity boards and necessary steps for compliance will be taken.

COVID-19 pandemic

Following submissions made before the Bench, the Tribunal observed: "We also find that in view of COVID-19 situation, it will be necessary to take a liberal view about the delay caused. Accordingly, the time for remaining compliance is extended up to June 30, 2021 and compensation amounts will stand waived if compliance is ensured by that date." The green panel extended the time limit after several States sought an extension on account of the pandemic.

The Bench said: "...The indigenous and local community are a repository of traditional knowledge and their knowledge and practices help in conservation and sustainable development of the biodiversity."



निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

मध्य प्रदेश लघु उद्योग निगम मर्यादित

आई.आई.डी.पी.सी.पा.जा. 39 सिटी सेंटर, हायलाइन (म.प्र.)

क्रमांक तितनि/निर्माण सं.-सं./2020/05 दिनांक : 18.12.2020

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

शुल्क पत्र

इस कार्यालय के हाथ आमंत्रित की निवादा सूचना संख्या RE-RDD/SD/HZ/17/2019-20 पीओआर संख्या 237086 (Rural Development) में प्रकाशित निवादा की विधियों में अधिकारी कार्यालय निवादा सूचना दिया जाता है।

कार्यालय अभियंता का कार्यालय

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

PR 237857 (Rural Development)20-21#D

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

शुल्क पत्र

इस कार्यालय के हाथ आमंत्रित की निवादा सूचना संख्या RE-RDD/SD/HZ/17/2019-20 पीओआर संख्या 237086 (Rural Development) में प्रकाशित निवादा की विधियों में अधिकारी कार्यालय निवादा सूचना दिया जाता है।

कार्यालय अभियंता का कार्यालय

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

PR 237857 (Rural Development)20-21#D

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

शुल्क पत्र

इस कार्यालय के हाथ आमंत्रित की निवादा सूचना संख्या RE-RDD/SD/HZ/17/2019-20 पीओआर संख्या 237086 (Rural Development) में प्रकाशित निवादा की विधियों में अधिकारी कार्यालय निवादा सूचना दिया जाता है।

कार्यालय अभियंता का कार्यालय

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

PR 237857 (Rural Development)20-21#D

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

शुल्क पत्र

इस कार्यालय के हाथ आमंत्रित की निवादा सूचना संख्या RE-RDD/SD/HZ/17/2019-20 पीओआर संख्या 237086 (Rural Development) में प्रकाशित निवादा की विधियों में अधिकारी कार्यालय निवादा सूचना दिया जाता है।

कार्यालय अभियंता का कार्यालय

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

PR 237857 (Rural Development)20-21#D

ग्रामीण विकास विधेय प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग

शुल्क पत्र

इस कार्यालय के हाथ आमंत्रित की निवादा सूचना संख्या RE-RDD/SD/HZ/17/2019-20 पीओआर संख्या 237086 (Rural Development) में प्रकाशित निवादा की विधियों में अधिकारी कार्यालय निवादा सूचना दिया जाता है।

कार्यालय अभियंता का कार्य

Timings

DELHI

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| SUNDAY, DEC. 20 | |
| RISE 07:10 | SET 17:29 |
| RISE 11:45 | SET 23:12 |
| MONDAY, DEC. 21 | |
| RISE 07:10 | SET 17:30 |
| RISE 12:17 | SET 00:00 |
| TUESDAY, DEC. 22 | |
| RISE 07:11 | SET 17:30 |
| RISE 12:47 | SET 00:06 |

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 22 04
Safdarjung 22 04
Palam 19 06

Delhi Palam Today
21°C Shallow fog or thick smoke haze during morning and pleasant day with partly cloudy sky. Pollution level may deteriorate.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
21°C Rise in temperatures likely. Foggy morning. A pleasant day with partly cloudy sky.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR
Delhi 290 Gurugram 260
Ghaziabad 295 Faridabad 260
Noida 301 Greater Noida 292
■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Moderate
0-50 51-100 101-200
■ Poor ■ Very Poor ■ Severe
201-300 301-400 >400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday
(Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

Four die in roof collapse

Heavy metal items fell on the victims, say eyewitnesses

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Four labourers died and two others were injured after the roof of a factory collapsed in west Delhi's Khayala on Saturday. The building housed a motor-winding unit.

The fire department received a call about the incident around 10 a.m., following which four fire tenders were rushed to the spot, said Delhi Fire Service (DFS) director Atul Garg.

Six labourers, including three women, were inside the factory when the roof collapsed, said Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Subodh Kumar. The workers were rescued by a team of officials and rushed to the two nearest hospitals: Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital and Guru Gobind Singh Hospital, Mr. Kumar said.

Four of the six labourers were declared brought dead while two others are under-



National Disaster Response Force team at the collapse site in west Delhi's Khayala on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

tire area. By the time rescue teams arrived, we had pulled out two women from the debris. Their faces were badly crushed due to heavy metal items falling on them... their faces were beyond recognition," said Ramesh Sahu, a local.

The factory belongs to Mahendra pal, a resident of Uttam Nagar.

Lucky break

Aslam, a factory worker, said he was lucky as he had arrived 15 minutes late to work. "I was at the factory gate when I heard screams from the top floor. I, along with other workers, rushed to help and rescued several people. As per the duty chart, I had to report to the top floor where the accident happened," said Aslam.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Patel Nagar has been informed for further legal proceedings and legal action is being taken, Mr. Kumar said.

going treatment.
The deceased have been identified as Saina (36), Gudi (45), Twinkle (25) and Ramesh (35).

Locals were the first responders along with the workers on the other floors of the factory.

A loud sound rang across the building when tons of metal items fell on the people working on the top floor.

"Power supply to the entire building tripped and a cloud of dust covered the en-

Pollution project: problems outscore solutions

Govt.-appointed panel flags shortcomings in University of Washington study

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

A committee appointed by the Delhi government has raised red flags over a study commissioned to find sources of air pollution on a real-time basis. The study – being done for the government by the University of Washington in St. Louis – is "likely to be cancelled", multiple officials told *The Hindu*.

The study sought to find sources of air pollution in and around Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO



The study is likely to be cancelled, a Delhi government official said.

Environment Minister Gopal Rai is expected to take a final call on how to go forward with the study later this week. The causes of pollution in the city has been a matter of constant debate between the city and the Central government.

The Delhi government has been stating that stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana is the major cause of

air pollution in the city during winters, while the Centre has many times pointed out that local pollutants in the city are also a main reason.

Total cost of ₹1.2 crore

The study, with a total cost of ₹1.2 crore, was allotted to the university on "nomination basis" without an open tender and was supposed to be completed by March 2020.

When contacted, the Delhi government spokesperson and the Minister's office did not comment on the "problems" with the study.

The committee flagged multiple issues with the study, including methodology used and data generated.

This was conveyed to the team from the university in October and again in November, said officials.

The team finally replied in December. "After looking into the reply, the panel said in its report that the study has many limitations and it has not helped in finding sources

of pollution on a real-time basis," a second official said.

The government has paid about ₹50 lakh for the study till now, which is the first of two installments for the study, officials said, adding that if the study is now done by another agency, they can use a lot of the data generated from the current study.

On July 3, 2018, the Delhi Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had approved a proposal for the study.

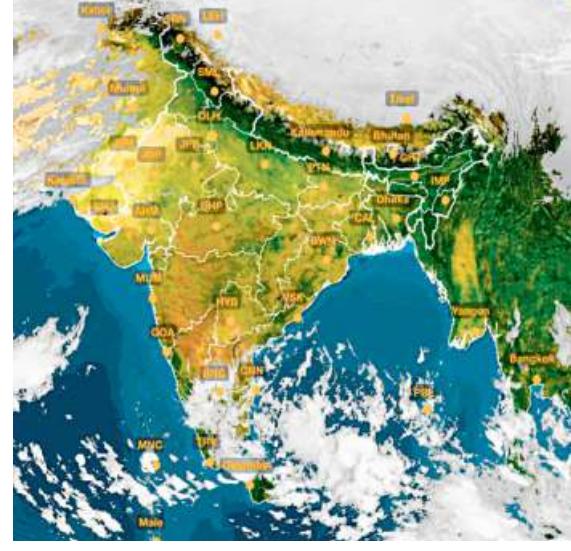
Delhi's AQI

The Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi was 290 (poor) on Saturday and is likely to be in the "poor to very poor" category on Sunday.

The cold day conditions are forecast to intensify and surface winds are forecast to slow down. AQI is forecast to stay in the poor to very poor category on Sunday and may deteriorate further from Monday," said monitoring agency SAFAR.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18:00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Cold/severe cold wave conditions likely at a few/isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN |
|-------------|------|------|------|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Agartala | — | 23.9 | 9.3 | Kozhikode | — | 33.5 | 24.5 |
| Ahmedabad | — | 27.4 | 12.9 | Kurnool | — | 30.3 | 20.1 |
| Aizawl | — | 20.0 | 11.1 | Lucknow | — | 20.2 | 4.3 |
| Allahabad | — | 22.5 | 5.6 | Madurai | 0.4 | 27.6 | 23.1 |
| Bengaluru | — | 25.6 | 17.2 | Mangalore | — | 36.0 | 21.4 |
| Bhopal | — | 23.4 | 6.6 | Mumbai | — | 33.3 | 19.6 |
| Bhubaneswar | — | 27.6 | 16.5 | Mysuru | — | 30.5 | 20.0 |
| Chandigarh | — | 21.8 | 3.9 | New Delhi | — | 21.8 | 3.9 |
| Chennai | — | 30.3 | 25.3 | Patna | — | 20.6 | 6.0 |
| Coimbatore | — | 27.0 | 20.7 | Port Blair | — | 30.9 | 25.1 |
| Dehradun | — | 23.6 | 3.7 | Puducherry | 7.4 | 29.2 | 21.5 |
| Gangtok | 0.4 | 8.5 | 6.1 | Pune | — | 29.1 | 15.6 |
| Goa | — | 33.5 | 22.0 | Raipur | — | 27.4 | 14.2 |
| Guwahati | — | 23.5 | 11.0 | Ranchi | — | 23.4 | 7.0 |
| Hubballi | — | 29.0 | 18.0 | Shillong | — | 14.9 | 2.6 |
| Hyderabad | — | 28.8 | 15.0 | Shimla | — | 17.1 | 5.4 |
| Imphal | — | 20.5 | 3.2 | Srinagar | — | 7.7 | 6.6 |
| Jaipur | — | 25.2 | 6.6 | Thiruvananthapuram | 0.1 | 31.6 | 24.8 |
| Kochi | — | 32.0 | 24.0 | Vijayawada | — | 29.4 | 21.9 |
| Kohima | — | 18.0 | 6.2 | Visakhapatnam | — | 28.6 | 22.8 |
| Kolkata | — | 22.4 | 12.5 | | | | |

(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 | 15 | 65 | 90 | 100 | 125 | ■■■■■ |
| Bengaluru | 13 | 76 | 47 | 108 | 108 | ■■■■■ |
| Chennai | .8 | 7 | 49 | 135 | — | ■■■■■ |
| Delhi | 19 | 36 | 162 | 370 | 273 | ■■■■■ |
| Hyderabad | 13 | 56 | 29 | 208 | — | ■■■■■ |
| Kolkata | 19 | 25 | 49 | 310 | 183 | ■■■■■ |
| Lucknow | .2 | 90 | 61 | 411 | 358 | ■■■■■ |
| Mumbai | 13 | 42 | 27 | 347 | — | ■■■■■ |
| Pune | — | 63 | 12 | 190 | .128 | ■■■■■ |
| Visakhapatnam | 17 | 8 | .68 | 202 | .133 | ■■■■■ |

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

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiry about the authenticity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, shall not be held responsible for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the products or services mentioned therein. The Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor & Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/ company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

KARUNA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL
VILAYODI - CHITTUR - PALAKKAD - KERALA - PIN - 678103
Ph: 09447176762, 0995428260, 09961150000, 04923-221050
E-mail: karunamedicalcollege.hrd@gmail.com

WALK-IN INTERVIEW

The following doctors are urgently required
MD/MS/DNB- General Medicine • Microbiology
• Paediatrics • General Surgery • Emergency Medicine
• Anatomy • Biochemistry • Community Medicine
DM/MCh/DNB- Cardiology • Neuro • Nephro • Gastro
Candidates may please walk in for an Interview at the above address from 20th Dec to 05th Jan 2021. Time: 10 AM to 3 PM
For more details contact or apply with Bio - data to the address of the undersigned.

Secretary

</

CLASSIFIEDS

thehinduads.com

REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL

V VIJETHA IAS ACADEMY
www.vijethaiasacademy.com

Online
TARGETED PRELIMS PROGRAM 2021
120 Tests / 8050 MCQ's
Fee Rs. 3600 + GST

Starts: 4th Jan, 2021
011-42473555
9650852636
New Delhi-60

GENERAL
BUSINESS OFFERS
FINANCE

ALL KINDS of Loan Available @ 4% P.A From SCF to 500C.R: 89251 40796, Email: alwinresources@gmail.com

REAL ESTATE
SELLING

Industrial Plot Sale SIDCO-Hosur Land-72Cents Built up Area-2300sqft Power-950HP. Mobile - 9443070674/ 944374101

FARMHOUSE / LAND / RESORTS

125 ACRES Non Continuous Land Nr.Sattur Dam, Sult for Solar, Agri Rs.1.55L/Acre with Bank Loan 6381767971

HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries and satisfy themselves about the authenticity of an advertisement before responding to it. The publisher & owner of this newspaper, does not accept any liability for any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the owner, publisher, printer, editor, or any other employee(s) of this newspaper / company be held responsible in any manner what so ever for any claims and/or damages for publication / advertisements in this newspaper.

GENERAL

SITUATIONS VACANT

FINANCE

LOOKING FOR young energetic chartered accountant for Chennai with minimum 3 years post qualification experience. Experience on arrangement of Bank funding/ CMA preparation/ TEV report preparation a must.. Salary at par with industry standards. Jobwitsapp@gmail.com

GENERAL

PRODUCTION MANAGER for CNC, VMC & Multi Spindle Automatic Machine Shop @ Chennai, min 5 yrs experience
CNC / VMC PROGRAMMER to work independent

CV to ragu@baluauto.com
98840 50175
www.baluauto.com

MARKETING

MARKETING MANAGER for cloud based USA SAAS product sale 2 all industries +5yrs experience with Eng/ MBA Good prospect subrahmian@gmail.com

BUSINESS OFFERS

Folding,E-Cycles,Fat,etc., Bikes, Health,Kids Items Sale #527710489

NEED DISTRIBUTORS and Investors for our Trading & Export biz on Attractive terms. Ct:8667706030

BUSINESS FOR SALE

FACTORY WITH land 2.5Acres,building 12000ft Sale @ Raipur Ct:7338884439

PARTNERSHIPS

INVESTOR REQUIRE for Successful Running Factory. Contact: 8428662266

FINANCE

ACCESS HOLDINGS & Investments: Quick Process Loan for Business People: Loan Against Property, Secured Loan, UnSecured Loan, SME & Corporate, NPA Releases & Cheque Basic. Minimum 2Core Ct:9150791926

MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridgrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

COSMOPOLITAN

PUNJABI GIRL 54" / 05 Aug 1989/ Kolkata/ 18.28 hrs/ Masters in Law (USA) Frist. in Research & Academia M. 9810150595

Wanted groom below 33 years, preferably from teaching/research professionals for Hindu girl, 27 years, doing PhD. Belongs to liberal, middle class family with diverse cultures of Bengali-Malayali parentage. Caste and horoscope unimportant. Email: pamolee@yahoo.com

GROOM Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

BRIDE Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

WANTED Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

DOCTOR Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

DIVORCEE Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

DOCTOR Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

SLIM BEAUTIFUL Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

PRIYANKA MBBS 25/178CM Fair Kannai Uthiram Woman@Health/Seeks Doctor Chettiar/Ary Other Caste:8056941767

Telugu Devanga, MD Paed., 28, Chennai, Alliance from MD / MS Doctors. Phone: 917683007

SAIVA PILLAI - Doctor, doing PG in Psychiatry at Chennai, Star Uthirai, 26/18, Father Doctor having repaired Hospital, only daughter seeks Doctor from Saiva Pillai / sublet with good family background. Contact: 944301151.

ENGINEER Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

MALAYALAM Details, Name, DOB, Marital Status, Height, Weight, Education, Profession, Income, etc. Qualify for US set-up.

NAIR GIRLS MBBS, MD 33 Makayiram & MBBS 28 Makam working in Delhi proposals invited from well qualified grooms employed in Delhi/other parts. Contact: 9434289192

MENTAL GIRL 25/151 cms Chennai settled doing MDS seeks DOCTORS only.9566074556

MALAYALAM

TAMIL

✓ NAIR GIRL Alliance invited from professionally qualified girls (IAS/ IPS/IFS , Govt Jobs, Lecturer Banking, Gulf) for fair 27/165. Poorame financially sound Girl MA Ed (English) PhD (doing @ Chennai) from Mavelikara , Kerala settled in T.Nagar Chennai. 9444734238 , 9496273432 (Not Bureau)

DIVORCEE NAIR girl 37 MSC SE SW at Toronto fair, non-vegetarian 158 cm athletic. Proposals from boys of Comparable Profile, preferably from Canada/ US/ UK. 9446227067 nair55@gmail.com

NAIR 40 yrs/5'4", M.D.S. parents settled in Chennai, seeks alliance from well educated professionals. Nair matrimonial id E4449735. Contact 9444000025

NRI Match for beautiful slim girl, US Citizen, 27 yrs/ 5', UC Berkeley graduate, currently doing Master's in Public Health at Harvard. Girl is outgoing, intelligent and a feminist. Both parents doctors, well settled in the San Francisco Bay Area, California. Looking for smart, well-settled, professionally educated Nair girl 32-38 yrs old with Indian roots & values, currently working & residing in the US WhatsApp No. +001 6503059860.

SC- AD 41 Widow issueless, Teacher Pvt Chennai , suitable Widower/ Divorcee with Child/Children only - 882553678

SUITABLE MATCH required for Mudaliar girl 26 years slim, 165 cm, wheat complexion, M.S. Bio Chemistry, doing research, Star Aiyam, girl willing to settle abroad. Contact: 944530218

NAIDU ISSUELESS, Divorcee 45/ 151cms, ACS, MBA, Emily in PSU, seeks bridgegroom, Chennai. CNB-8778873501

HINDU NADAR, affluent family, 26/160, Kumbar / Avittam, MBA, fair, good looking, seeking educated, affluent family from same community. Nair matrimonial id aadhyayan1911@gmail.com

NAIDU (CNB): 26 / Slim, V. Fair, MBBS, Business Family, Chennai, seeks Elite Groom – Business/ Doctor - 8939012419

HINDU NADAR 30/165 Pooradath, MBBS, Asst.Commandant CRPF, SC-AD, Bar/Chennai, seeks Elite Groom / Businessman

SC-AD 24 YRS 5.3 Ft BDS seeks BDS/ MBBS groom Chennai based. contact:9444301934

LOOKING for groom for my daughter, 33, B.Tech, MBA, Senior Manager in Bank, 5.2' SC Adidavard, Chennai. Contact: 9444694644, 9092867899

RC CHRISTIAN Nadar Girl Fair, 152cm / 5'6" M.Phil, working as Assistant Professor in a Reputed Women's College, Mount Road, Chennai. Both Parents Doctors (Private) Suitable Alliance, Employed / Settled in Chennai / With Clean Habits from Same Community. Contact: 9814812514

HINDU NADAR Poosam Kadagam 23/ B.Tech (IT) 153cm, Homely, Well educated family. Seeks Suitable educated Chennai girl. Contact: 944157888

CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar Girl Fair, 152cm / 5'6" M.Phil, working as Assistant Professor in a Reputed Women's College, Mount Road, Chennai. Both Parents Doctors (Private) Suitable Alliance, Employed / Settled in Chennai / With Clean Habits from Same Community. Contact: 9814812514

HINDU SC PR Kongu 36, MBBS DCH Doctor, working in Govt Hospital seeks suitable groom. Ct: 9436-80937

DKV 29/164/56 fair BTech (NTB) MBA (IT), MCA Chennai seeks bridegroom from educated family.

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR MSC, 33, Rasi/Simman / Star/Magam, Working in Bank, Seeking Suitable Groom.

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

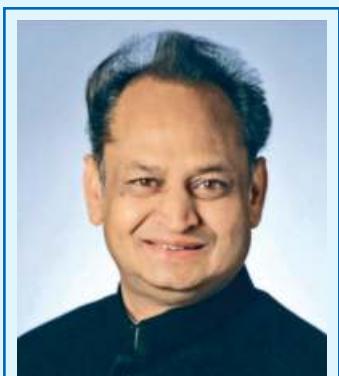
HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9442126376

HINDU NADAR 30/154 BE MBBA, Sr Consultant / SWE Bengaluru, Poornam, 16/PA



Ashok Gehlot
Chief Minister, Rajasthan



Government of Rajasthan



ONE STOP SHOP

Investing Made Easy

Easy application on Raj Nivesh Portal for investment proposals above Rs. 10 crore

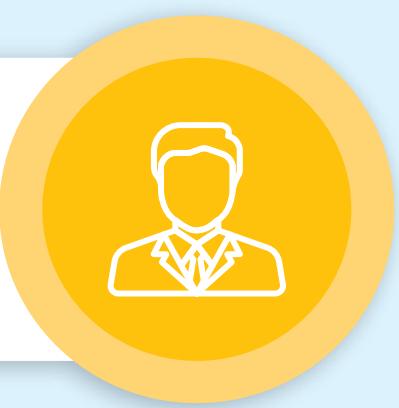


Facilitating large investment proposals



'Board of Investment'
under the chairmanship
of Chief Minister for
expediting decisions

Officers from 14 departments deputed under one roof



Time bound clearances and approvals



Policy formulation, resolution of inter-departmental issues and approval of customized packages



Exemption from Permissions & Inspections for MSMEs for 3 Years

The Rajasthan Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Act, 2019



Scan to download MSME Act

- Exemption from prior approval and inspections required under any State Law for 3 years
- Easy online application process
- Issuance of Acknowledgement Certificate at a click
- No application fee
- No documents to be uploaded

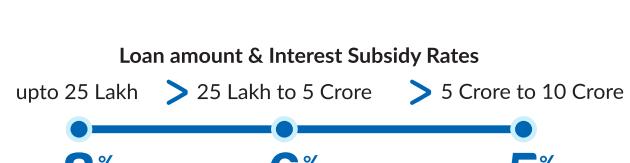
Subsidised Loans to Promote MSMEs

Mukhyamantri Laghu Udyog Protsahan Yojana (MLUPY Scheme) 2019



Scan to download MLUPY Scheme

- Subsidised loans - New units, Expansion/ Diversification/ Modernization of existing units
- Covers manufacturing, service & trade sectors
- Open to individual applicants, companies, self-help groups, societies, partnership & LLP firms



Favorable Policy Environment

Rajasthan Industrial Development Policy 2019



Scan to download Policy document

- Development of conducive industrial infrastructure
- Balanced regional industrial development
- Fostering Entrepreneurship & Innovation
- Environment protection & sustainable industrial development
- EoDB & Pro-industry outlook

Best Incentive Packages for Thrust Sector Enterprises

Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme (RIPS 2019)



Scan to download Scheme document

- Stamp Duty and Land Conversion Charges: 100% exemption
- Electricity Duty, Land Tax, Mandi Fee: 100% exemption (for 7 years)
- Investment Subsidy on State Tax due and deposited : General - 75%; Thrust Sectors - upto 100% (for 7 years)
- Employment Subsidy: General - 50%; Thrust sectors - upto 75% (Based on reimbursement of EPF & ESI) (for 7 years)
- Customized package of incentives
- Additional benefits for Backward and Most Backward areas
- Interest Subsidy or Capital Subsidy for Thrust Sectors

FROM PAGE ONE

More Punjab farmers to head for Delhi

"This committee will organise activities to mobilise people to go to Delhi as well as to strengthen the ongoing *morchas* in Punjab," he said.

Mr. Singh said the BKU(U) would stand firm for the complete repeal of the farm laws, besides government procurement of all crops in all the States at Minimum Support Price as a legal right.

Sarvan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the Punjab unit of the KMSC said thousands of farmers associated with the outfit had already reached the Singh-Kundli border in the

past few days and several more will be joining the *morcha* in the next week. "On December 25, we are planning to send at least over a thousand tractor-trolleys from Gurdaspur district alone to Delhi," he said.

"The government has been playing dirty games to weaken our agitation but we will not let it happen. Farmers from Punjab will continue to strong until the government accedes to our demands. We will not settle on anything less than the repealing of the three farm laws," Mr. Sarvan told *The Hindu*.

Benefits of new reforms reaching farmers: PM

It was imperative for businesses to devote more energy to bridging the rural-urban divide and support women, youth and smaller enterprises, he said.

"Keeping the country's needs in mind, work on the formulation of new laws is continuing ceaselessly. The benefits of the farm reforms that were implemented six months ago, have also begun reaching the farmers... If our farm sector gets access to better promotion, infrastructure and markets, then our entire rural economy can reach the peak," he stated.

"India is also capable of fulfilling its own needs and help the world. From farmer to pharma, India has demonstrated this. Now in vaccines also, India will not only fulfil its own needs but

also deliver on the hopes of several countries in the world," he asserted.

"Industry can help multiply the efforts of the government over the past six years to reduce the rural and urban divide. ASSOCHAM members can help give our villages' produce a global platform. To ensure that the farmers in villages can reach global markets digitally, we are working on providing broadband connectivity to every village," he said.

Mr. Modi referred to rural opportunities like organic farming and herbal products that could be promoted by industry bodies around the world. The Central government, State governments and farmer organisations should work together, he urged.

Mass defection to BJP at Amit Shah's rally

Did you defect from the Congress and found the Trinamool Congress?"

Addressing the rally, Mr. Adhikari said he was joining the BJP not to give directions to State BJP leaders, but to work as an ordinary worker carrying flags, and painting graffiti if required. There cannot be development in the State as long as the same party does not head the government at the State and the Centre, he said. Both Mr. Shah and Mr. Adhikari targeted Ms. Banerjee's nephew and MP Abhishek Banerjee.

Revamp on hold amid calls for Rahul's return

He, however, informed the leaders that the process of holding organisational elections, including to the post of the party president, is currently under way.

Party veterans like Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath raised issues about the old guard versus young turks in the party.

Mr. Gandhi responded by stating that he valued their contributions and acknowledged that many of them had worked with his father. He, however, is said to have stressed on the need to make space for younger leaders and the need to bridge the communication gap, said a source.

This was the first time Ms. Gandhi met senior leaders, including those from G-23, in person since the pandemic restrictions kicked in.

In August, the G-23 leaders had written a letter to Ms. Gandhi arguing for "collective leadership," organisational revamp, internal elections, decentralised decision-making process and the need for an "active and full-time leadership". Though none referred to the letter, the dissenters reiterated that elected and representative bodies were key to the party's revival.

From G-23 letter writers,

Mr. Azad, Deputy Leader Anand Sharma, former Chief Ministers of Haryana and Maharashtra Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Prithviraj Chavan respectively, former Union Ministers Manish Tewari and Shashi Tharoor, and Rajya Sabha member Vivek Tankha attended.

Former Union Ministers A.K. Antony, P. Chidambaram, Ambika Soni; Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot; former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath; general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Ajay Maken, Pawan Kumar Bansal, Harish Rawat and Bhakta Charan Das were also present.

Two key general secretaries - K.C. Venugopal, in-charge of organisation, and Randeep Surjewala, communications chief, considered close to Mr. Gandhi - were not part of the meeting.

Discussions were held on a positive note at the meeting where leaders talked about how to strengthen the party at all levels, Mr. Bansal said.

A party leader said that while dissenters didn't have any objection to Mr. Gandhi's leadership, leaders like Ms. Soni, Mr. Maken, Mr. Rawat, Mr. Antony, Mr. Gehlot urged the former party chief to take over the reins of the party again.

From G-23 letter writers,

'Standoff amid pandemic exposed China'

We don't want conflict but will not tolerate any harm to country's self-respect, says Defence Minister

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

The military standoff with India along the LAC amid the COVID-19 pandemic showed China's poor intentions, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday.

Mr. Singh, who presided over the Combined Graduation Parade held at Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, around 45 km from Hyderabad, said India believed in solutions for any issue peacefully and through talks.

"We don't want conflict but peace. However, we will not tolerate any harm to the country's self-respect. We are well equipped to give them a befitting reply," the Minister said, addressing the newly-commissioned Flying Officers of the Indian Air Force.

"This is the new India; we are no longer weak. We are



Tough stance: Rajnath Singh at the Air Force Academy in Dundigal on Saturday. ■ RAMAKRISHNA G.

capable of answering any transgression, aggression and unilateral action at the border, though the main aim remains dialogue over conflict," he said, adding that India has found the support of many countries.

Mr. Singh said both India

and China were engaged in bilateral and diplomatic talks to solve the issue, adding, "Let me repeat, we don't want conflict but peace. We are prepared to face any situation."

Referring to the air strikes at Balakot, Mr. Singh said such episodes showed the valour of the Indian Air Force in effectively dealing with terrorism. "The Indian

western sector, our neighbour Pakistan is still fighting proxy wars through terrorism despite losing four wars against us."

Attacking Pakistan for its "nefarious acts" at the border despite losing four wars, the Minister said, "In the

Air Force has a glorious history. It has always displayed gallantry. From the Annexation of Goa in 1961 to the Battle of Longewala in 1971 and to the recent Balakot air strikes, all these episodes will be considered as golden chapters in our country's history," he said.

Armed forces were not only dealing with terrorism within the country but even taking action beyond the borders, which showed India's firm intentions against terrorism, Mr. Singh said.

He felicitated the security forces and said they alertly countered these attempts. He told the young officers that they were fortunate to be sentries of one's country. "I believe all of you will do justice to your duty," Mr. Singh said, asking them to prepare for both cyber and air space strikes. The war is much beyond traditional borders, he added.

IN BRIEF



IUML will sideline weak Congress in UDF: CM

Thiruvananthapuram Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday said a weakened Congress was fated to become a subaltern part of the United Democratic Front (UDF). In a Facebook post, Mr. Vijayan said the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) had pursued dominance in the UDF at the cost of an enfeebled Congress.

'Don't proceed with unit till solution is reached'

VIJAYAWADA Andhra Pradesh Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy has advised the management of Divi's Pharmaceuticals not to proceed with the establishment of its manufacturing unit in Tondangi mandal in East Godavari before an amicable settlement is reached on the issues raised by the villagers.

Farmer trampled to death by elephant

HASSAN A 35-year-old farmer was trampled to death by an elephant in a maize field near the Doddabetta forest area in Alur taluk in Hassan, Karnataka, on Saturday morning. This is the first death in an elephant attack in Alur taluk since January 2018.

Eight Kerala films in IFFI Indian panorama

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Eight films from Kerala have been chosen for the Indian panorama section at the 51st edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) to be held in Goa in January next year. The four Malayalam feature films to be selected are *Trance*, *Kettiyolana Ente Malakha*, *Thahira*, *Safe*, and *Kappela* and Sanskrit language film *Namo*. The non-feature films are *Oru Paathira Swapnam Pole* and *100 years of Chrysostom - A biographical film*.

TDP chief's comments in video clip kick up a row

Naidu asking partymen to file cases against police unfortunate'

STAFF REPORTER
GUNTUR



N. Chandrababu Naidu

A video clip of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national president N. Chandrababu Naidu purportedly asking his partymen to file cases against policemen has gone viral online, sparking protests from police officers' associations.

In a statement on Saturday, A.P. Police Officers' Association State president J. Srinivasa Rao said, "It is unfortunate that a senior politician has been instigating his followers and cadres to adopt deceitful practices and methods for some months now."

The video clip shows Mr.

by the Police Department for rendering service to the people, more so for the common man and vulnerable sections of society," said a senior police officer.

The association also said that the A.P. police had won an unprecedented 108 national awards for the use of technology and for bringing in innovation, transformation and change towards a more transparent, accountable and efficient delivery of police services during the last one year.

"The police have played a crucial role in the criminal justice system," the association said.

The video clip shows Mr.

Kerala's virus cases on the rise again

State could be entering a new phase of the epidemic, says Health Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



New wave: People waiting to vote in the local body elections in Palakkad on December 10. ■ K.K. MUSTFAH

cal body elections, how far the graph would rise was something that remained to be seen.

The impact of the relaxations during the poll campaign is beginning to surface as cases have already begun to rise in many districts, Ms. Shylaja said.

Death toll

On Saturday, the State's cumulative toll rose to 2,786 with the addition of 29 more deaths.

Alappuzha and Palakkad accounted for six deaths each.

Official figures put the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients in various ICUs in the State at 820, with 233 requiring ventilator support.

The Health Minister said the next two weeks would be crucial as the State's COVID-19 disease curve, which had been on a plateau since the last week of October, was expected to rise again.

She said while this rise or surge in cases was anticipated immediately after the lo-

cal body elections, how far the graph would rise was something that remained to be seen.

The impact of the relaxations during the poll campaign is beginning to surface as cases have already begun to rise in many districts, Ms. Shylaja said.

Death toll

On Saturday, the State's cumulative toll rose to 2,786 with the addition of 29 more deaths.

Alappuzha and Palakkad accounted for six deaths each.

Official figures put the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients in various ICUs in the State at 820, with 233 requiring ventilator support.

The Health Minister said the next two weeks would be crucial as the State's COVID-19 disease curve, which had been on a plateau since the last week of October, was expected to rise again.

She said while this rise or surge in cases was anticipated immediately after the lo-

cal body elections, how far the graph would rise was something that remained to be seen.

The impact of the relaxations during the poll campaign is beginning to surface as cases have already begun to rise in many districts, Ms. Shylaja said.

Death toll

On Saturday, the State's cumulative toll rose to 2,786 with the addition of 29 more deaths.

Alappuzha and Palakkad accounted for six deaths each.

Official figures put the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients in various ICUs in the State at 820, with 233 requiring ventilator support.

The Health Minister said the next two weeks would be crucial as the State's COVID-19 disease curve, which had been on a plateau since the last week of October, was expected to rise again.

She said while this rise or surge in cases was anticipated immediately after the lo-

cal body elections, how far the graph would rise was something that remained to be seen.

The impact of the relaxations during the poll campaign is beginning to surface as cases have already begun to rise in many districts, Ms. Shylaja said.

Death toll

On Saturday, the State's cumulative toll rose to 2,786 with the addition of 29 more deaths.

Alappuzha and Palakkad accounted for six deaths each.

Official figures put the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients in various ICUs in the State at 820, with 233 requiring ventilator support.

The Health Minister said the next two weeks would be crucial as the State's COVID-19 disease curve, which had been on a plateau since the last week of October, was expected to rise again.

She said while this rise or surge in cases was anticipated immediately after the lo-

cal body elections, how far the graph would rise was something that remained to be seen.

The impact of the relaxations during the poll campaign is beginning to surface as cases have already begun to rise in many districts, Ms. Shylaja said.

Death toll

On Saturday, the State's cumulative toll rose to 2,786 with the addition of 29 more deaths.

Alappuzha and Palakkad accounted for six deaths each.

Official figures put the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients in various ICUs in the State at 820, with 233 requiring ventilator support.

The Health Minister said the next two weeks would be crucial as the State's COVID-19 disease curve, which had been on a plateau since the last week of October, was expected to rise again.

She said while this rise or surge in cases was anticipated immediately after the lo-

cal body elections, how far the graph would rise was something that remained to be seen.

The impact of the relaxations during the poll campaign is beginning to surface as cases have already begun to rise in many districts, Ms. Shylaja said.

Death toll

On Saturday, the State's cumulative toll rose to 2,786 with the addition of 29 more deaths.

Alappuzha and Palakkad accounted for six deaths each.

Official figures put the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients in various ICUs in the State at 820, with 233 requiring ventilator support.

The Health Minister said the next two weeks would be crucial as the State's COVID-19 disease curve, which had been on a plateau since the last week of

33 protesting farmers died in 3 weeks: union

'Condolence meets to be held in 1 lakh villages'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) on Saturday claimed that 33 farmers have lost their lives over the past three weeks during the ongoing agitation against the Centre's agriculture marketing laws. Condolence meetings will be held under a joint front of farmer unions at more than one lakh villages on Sunday, the AIKS said.

In a press statement, the AIKS said "Shradhhanjali Diwas" (Homage Day) would be observed across the country on Sunday in response to a call from Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a joint front of farmer unions, to pay tributes to the farmers who died during the agitation since November.



Support pours in: People arriving from Bathinda to join the farmers protest at the Singhu border outside New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ber 26.

"As per records, 33 farmers participating in the struggle died since November 26 due to accidents, illness and hostile weather conditions. The

farmers and all sections of the people will pay homage to them from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on December 20 by organising condolence meetings, human chain and garlanding the

photos of the departed in more than one lakh villages across the country," the press statement said.

In reply to the recent open letter to farmers by Union

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, the All-India Kisan Sangharsh Co-ordination Committee (AIKSCC) on Saturday released a response addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Tomar, saying the attack launched by them against the demands of the farmers and their movement over the past two days showed they did not sympathise with the farmers and had no intention to resolve their problems. The letter also put forth a point-by-point rebuttal of various claims made by Mr. Tomar in his letter.

Responding to Mr. Modi's comments on ASSOCHAM foundation day that farmers had started reaping benefits of agricultural reforms, farmer leaders accused him of repeating "untruths" and questioned his intentions for raising the issue at an association of industries.

Bharatiya Kisan Union

president Rakesh Tikait said Mr. Modi speaking about the benefits to farmers from the platform of an industry body created doubts. "If farmers are benefited, he should talk to farmers. But he is talking to businessmen about it."

AIKS general-secretary Hannan Mollah said farmer leaders had countered Mr. Modi on his claims at a function in Madhya Pradesh, but he was repeating the "same untruth repeatedly". On the Supreme Court's proposal for the formation of a committee, he said setting up of committees did not help and is an old tactic of governments to delay things.

In a related development, former Union Minister and BJP leader Birender Singh in Haryana came out in support of the farmers and held a sit-in at Jhajjar on Friday. He said the sit-in was held under the aegis of "Chhotu Ram Vichar Manch".



Helping brethren: People queuing up for turbans at a kiosk on the Singhu border on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Turbans to tents, help pours in from villages

Kiosk for headgear draws huge crowds

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI

As the farmers' agitation against the three controversial agriculture laws gains momentum, reinforcements such as blankets, tents and medicines are being sent to the Singhu border from the villages of Punjab and Haryana.

sands of people who are coming here every day to join the protest, we thought of setting up this kiosk."

"Whoever wants a turban will get one here, irrespective of whether the person is a Sikh. We do not ask for anybody's religion. All are welcome," said Mr. Singh.

On a daily basis

Around 400 metres of cloth was being procured from the village on a daily basis, volunteers at the kiosk said.

"It takes around 8-10 hours to reach the border from our village. So every day, one batch is sent from there so that it reaches by the next morning. On the first day, we started at around 11 a.m. and more than 250 people turned up. On Saturday, we started at 10 a.m. and by afternoon 400 people had visited us,"

Those at the kiosk maintained that the facility would continue till the time the agitation lasted and farmers' demands are met by the government.

One of the latest additions at the border is a kiosk to distribute free turbans.

Close to where a stage has been erected for speakers, people were seen queuing up in large numbers at the kiosk installed on Friday by the Miri Piri Welfare Society from Firozpur district in Punjab.

In the first two days of its operations, the kiosk had distributed hundreds of turbans, volunteers said.

Mr. Beniwal said in his resignation.

He further said, "As the issues remained unheard and due to the farmers' agitation, I am tendering my resignation from the committees."

Mr. Beniwal was a member of parliamentary committees on industries; petroleum and natural gas; and petitions.

At a press conference earlier in the day in Jaipur, Mr. Beniwal also announced a farmers' march to Delhi on December 26 to express solidarity with the stir.

"Considering the thou-

BJP ally sides with farmers, quits 3 govt. panels in protest

Beniwal says the issues he raised were ignored

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

BJP ally and Rajasthan MP Hanuman Beniwal on Saturday resigned from three parliamentary committees in support of the farmers' agitation against the recently cleared farm laws.

Mr. Beniwal contested and won from Nagaur, the lone Lok Sabha seat that the BJP conceded to his party, the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party. In his resignation, Mr. Beniwal said many of the is-

cation for committees in the parliamentary system if action is not taken," Mr. Beniwal said in his resignation.

He further said, "As the issues remained unheard and due to the farmers' agitation, I am tendering my resignation from the committees."

Mr. Beniwal was a member of parliamentary committees on industries; petroleum and natural gas; and petitions.

At a press conference earlier in the day in Jaipur, Mr. Beniwal also announced a farmers' march to Delhi on December 26 to express solidarity with the stir.

"Considering the thou-

First DDC polls in J&K end with 51% polling

It shows people's faith in democracy'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The maiden District Development Council (DDC) polls in J&K concluded peacefully on Saturday and recorded a 51% voter turnout in the final eighth phase. However, the Kashmir valley saw the lowest 29.91% polling.

"J&K recorded 50.98% voting for the eighth phase, with Jammu recording 72.71% voting and Kashmir 29.91%," State Election Commissioner (SEC) K.K. Sharma said.

Official figures suggested that north Kashmir's Kupwara recorded the highest 63.8% voting in the Valley, and 83.58% in Poonch in the Jammu division.

These polls were the first electoral process undertaken since the abrogation of J&K's special status in 2019. The elections reported very

few incidents of militant violence and saw no separatist campaign for a boycott.

"People's participation and peaceful conduct of eight phased elections is explicitly showing that the people of J&K have reaffirmed their faith in democracy and democratic set-up," SEC Sharma said.

The maiden DDC polls saw elections held in 280 DDC constituencies. Moreover, 1,088 vacant panchayat halqas and 12,153 panchayat constituencies also saw by-polls.

Mr. Sharma said an aggregate 40% voter turnout was registered in the Valley during the previous seven phases.

"People's participation is an endorsement of the constitutional change in J&K, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Dr. Darakshan Andraabi said.

During his visit to Kathmandu, Mr. Chauthaiwale met with Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Finance Minister Bishnu Paudel. Follow-

India, Nepal political parties improve ties as leaders meet

Visit by BJP's Vijay Chauthaiwale to Kathmandu significant

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI

The latest visit by the leader of the Foreign Affairs department of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to Nepal is expected to open a new level of interaction among the political parties of Nepal and India, leaders on both sides have remarked. Dr. Vijay Chauthaiwale's visit to Kathmandu earlier this month took place after Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla held a discussion with his counterpart in Nepal on November 26 during a two-day visit, which helped in normalising relationship with Nepal after months of turmoil.

During his visit to Kathmandu, Mr. Chauthaiwale met with Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Finance Minister Bishnu Paudel. Follow-



Vijay Chauthaiwale

ing the meeting held last week, Mr. Chauthaiwale said on social media, "It's a pleasure to be in Kathmandu on the invitation of general secretary of Nepalese political parties, cutting across ideological lines. This was interrupted only in the most recent years because of political obstructions from certain sides," Mr. Raja said, emphasising the need for dialogue between the political parties of India and Nepal.

further because of certain remarks by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Mr. Chauthaiwale's outreach found support from D. Raja of the Communist Party of India, who has been a part of the political dialogue between India and Nepal over the last two decades. "It's a welcome sign. There should not be any bar on the communication among political parties between the two sides. We have always maintained frank discussion with Nepalese political parties, cutting across ideological lines. This was interrupted only in the most recent years because of political obstructions from certain sides," Mr. Raja said, emphasising the need for dialogue between the political parties of India and Nepal.

IN BRIEF



ED attaches assets of Farooq Abdullah

Properties mostly ancestral, says Omar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹11.86 crore of former J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah in a money laundering case linked to the alleged misappropriation of over ₹45 crore from the J&K Cricket Association (JKCA) funds.

The attached properties include three residential houses located on Gupkar Road in Srinagar, Tangmarg, Katipora, and Bhatiandi in Jammu, respectively; and commercial buildings in Srinagar. Land parcels at four different places in J&K have also been attached.

The ED alleged that Dr. Abdullah's residence on Gupkar Road and commercial buildings on Residency Road had been constructed on State land obtained on

lease. The agency also accused him of having grabbed State/forest land in Bhatiandi.

Responding to the development, Dr. Abdullah's son Omar Abdullah on Saturday tweeted: "My father has seen the media reports regarding attachment of his properties in the ongoing investigation into the JKCA matter. Not surprisingly, the media was tipped off regarding the seizure before he had received any official notice or documentation."

Stating that the attached properties were largely ancestral dating from the 1970s, with the most recent one built before 2003, Mr. Omar Abdullah said: "There can be no justification for the seizures because they fail the very basic test of having been acquired as the proceeds of the 'crime' being investigated."

These polls were the first electoral process undertaken since the abrogation of J&K's special status in 2019. The elections reported very

He was the first RSS *pracharpramukh* (spokesperson), a former editor of *Tarun Bharat* said. Vaidya was also a former Akhil Bhartiya Baudhik Pramukh of RSS, he added.

He wrote several books and also a column in *Tarun Bharat* for 25 years.

In January this year, Vaidya triggered a controversy with his demand of dividing Maharashtra into four parts, and came into fire for attack from various quarters over it.

In his condolence message RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat described Vaidya as a multi-faceted personality and an excellent journalist.

"He had a major contribution in shaping the RSS' ideology," tweeted Union minister Nitin Gadkari.

Vaidya, who had recovered from a coronavirus infection, died at a private hospital in Nagpur, his grandson Vishnu Vaidya told the Press Trust of India. The last rites will be held on Sunday.

Vaidya, who became a volunteer of the RSS almost two decades after the organisation was set up, had seen it all during his eight-decade-old association with it – the three bans, isolation, internal conflicts over joining politics, ferment and resur-

gence, changing power equations with the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the latter's storming to power at the Centre in 2014.

A former chief editor of the city-based pro-RSS Marathi daily *Tarun Bharat*, Vaidya became a member of the RSS in 1943 while at the Morris College in Nagpur.

He had an eight-decade-long association with the Sangh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue and the organisation's first spokesperson Madhav Govind Vaidya died here on Saturday after a brief illness, his family said. He was 97.

Vaidya, who had recovered from a coronavirus infection, died at a private hospital in Nagpur, his grandson Vishnu Vaidya told the Press Trust of India. The last rites will be held on Sunday.

Vaidya, who became a volunteer of the RSS almost two decades after the organisation was set up, had seen it all during his eight-decade-old association with it – the three bans, isolation, internal conflicts over joining politics, ferment and resur-

gence, changing power equations with the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the latter's storming to power at the Centre in 2014.

A former chief editor of the city-based pro-RSS Marathi daily *Tarun Bharat*, Vaidya became a member of the RSS in 1943 while at the Morris College in Nagpur.

He had an eight-decade-long association with the Sangh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue and the organisation's first spokesperson Madhav Govind Vaidya died here on Saturday after a brief illness, his family said. He was 97.

Vaidya, who had recovered from a coronavirus infection, died at a private hospital in Nagpur, his grandson Vishnu Vaidya told the Press Trust of India. The last rites will be held on Sunday.

Vaidya, who became a volunteer of the RSS almost two decades after the organisation was set up, had seen it all during his eight-decade-old association with it – the three bans, isolation, internal conflicts over joining politics, ferment and resur-

gence, changing power equations with the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the latter's storming to power at the Centre in 2014.

A former chief editor of the city-based pro-RSS Marathi daily *Tarun Bharat*, Vaidya became a member of the RSS in 1943 while at the Morris College in Nagpur.

He had an eight-decade-long association with the Sangh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue and the organisation's first spokesperson Madhav Govind Vaidya died here on Saturday after a brief illness, his family said. He was 97.

Vaidya, who had recovered from a coronavirus infection, died at a private hospital in Nagpur, his grandson Vishnu Vaidya told the Press Trust of India. The last rites will be held on Sunday.

Vaidya, who became a volunteer of the RSS almost two decades after the organisation was set up, had seen it all during his eight-decade-old association with it – the three bans, isolation, internal conflicts over joining politics, ferment and resur-

gence, changing power equations with the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the latter's storming to power at the Centre in 2014.

A former chief editor of the city-based pro-RSS Marathi daily *Tarun Bharat*, Vaidya became a member of the RSS in 1943 while at the Morris College in Nagpur.

He had an eight-decade-long association with the Sangh

Amit Shah hits back at 'outsider' jibe

In a retort to Trinamool, he says people have to rise above petty politics

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday took a swipe at the Trinamool Congress' "outsider" jibe at the BJP, saying freedom fighter Khudiram Bose belonged as much to India as he belonged to Bengal.

"Those who indulge in petty politics in Bengal, I have come to tell them that Khudiram belongs as much to India as he belongs to Bengal," said Mr. Shah, who visited the village of the freedom fighter in Paschim Medinipur district.

Remembering martyrs

The Minister, who is on a two-day visit to the State, noted that December 19 was the day of martyrdom of Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan and Thakur Roshan Singh. "Pt. Ramprasad Bismil was as much a person from U.P. as he was from Bengal. Those who had sacrificed their lives in the freedom struggle would have never have imagined such petty politics. One has to rise above such petty politics," he observed.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Shah visited the house where Swami Vivekananda was born in north Kolkata. The ideals of Vivekananda were very relevant in the present times than in the times he lived, he said.

Mr. Shah had lunch at a farmer's home in Paschim Medinipur district. He was

accompanied by State BJP president Dilip Ghosh and the party's vice-president Mukul Roy.

"Had delicious food for lunch at Shri Jhunu Singh ji's and Shri Sanatan Singh ji's home in Belijuri village, Midnapore (West Bengal). Grateful to the entire family for such warmth, affection and love," Mr. Shah tweeted, thanking the family for the meal.

In his earlier visit to the State last month, he had lunch with a Matua and a tribal family.

Mr. Shah will visit Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, the university set up by Rabindranath Tagore, on Sunday.

Later in the day, speaking at a public rally in Midnapore where he joined the BJP, Suvendu Adhikari targeted the Trinamool Congress for its "outsider" (bahirgata) remarks directed at the BJP leadership.

Bengal is inclusive'

"In Bengal, they are calling Amit Shah an outsider, Kailash Vijayvargiya an outsider, Amit Malviya an outsider. As I had said before, we are first Indians and then Bengalis. I will not allow inclusiveness of Bengal to be destroyed," he stated.

Ordinary people built the Trinamool Congress brick by brick selflessly, but the party is now filled with individuals who do not bother about anyone but themselves, he claimed.

"He [Mr. Adhikari] says he didn't get enough respect in the Trinamool Congress. He



Rural connect: Union Home Minister Amit Shah having lunch at the house of farmers Jhunu Singh and Sanatan Singh at Belijuri village in Midnapore on Saturday. ■ PTI

Trinamool Congress MP labels Suvendu Adhikari a traitor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

Within hours of Suvendu Adhikari joining the BJP, the Trinamool Congress came out all guns blazing, targeting the former party heavyweight calling him a traitor and someone who was eyeing the chair of the Chief Minister. Senior Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha member Kalyan Banerjee



Kalyan Banerjee

had three Ministries. He was the observer of four to five districts. What more did he want? The CM's chair? That such a traitor can come up from the holy land of Medinipur is unthinkable for the people of Bengal," Mr. Ba-

nerjee said at a press conference at the Trinamool headquarters.

He dared Mr. Adhikari to contest from Nandigram in 2021. "Don't change your seat from Nandigram. In the election, we will teach you a lesson... in the 2021 elections, there will be a storm which will be only Mamata Banerjee," he added.

Referring to Mr. Adhikari's attack on the Chief Minister's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, Mr. Kalyan Banerjee said, "You are a coward, that is why you did not have the guts to call him by his name."

He also expressed the need for an expeditious vaccination drive to cover all the target populations, estimated to be around 30 crore.

Briefing the GoM on requests for vaccines received by the Ministry of External Affairs from 12 other countries, Vinod K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog provided a detailed presentation on critical aspects of vaccination.

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said, "People in States/UTs with a vibrant public healthcare system are tracked and encouraged to be tested by grassroots health workers, which inhibits the progress of COVID in the patient to an advanced stage, which allows these States to keep their fatality rate at minimum."

Put Council governance on hold, says HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has asked the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) to put its governance on hold three days after a three-party alliance forged by the Bharatiya Janata Party had taken charge.

The order by the single-judge Bench of Justice Suman Shyam was based on a petition by leaders of the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), which had emerged as the single largest party in the BTC elections held on December 7 and December 10. BPF president Hagrama Mohilary and some of his party colleagues had challenged the constitutional validity of the swearing-in of a few BTC members, including that of Pramod Boru as the council's Chief Executive Member.

Alleging violation of Election Rules, 2004, the petitioners said the Governor should have invited the BPF to prove majority as it had won 17 of the 40 seats.

Moradabad man, brother get bail after two weeks

They were charged under new ordinance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW

A Muslim man from Moradabad who was arrested on December 5 under the new ordinance against unlawful conversions when he had gone to register his marriage to a Hindu woman, was released on bail on Saturday after the police submitted they found no evidence against him.

The man, identified as Rashid, and his brother Salim were released from the district jail after spending almost two weeks behind bars. The brothers had been booked under Sections 3 and 5 of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020.

Mr. Rashid and his wife Pinki had arrived at the marriage registration office in Kanth when they were allegedly handed over to the police by members of a right-wing outfit who opposed their marriage and heckled the woman.

Prison population reduced by 10.42% between April and June'

Report says efforts to decongest jails should continue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

A report released on Saturday by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) said the population in Indian prisons reduced by 10.42% from April to June due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report urged the State governments and prison authorities to continue the measures to decongest prisons. The report, titled 'Responding to the Pandemic: Prisons and Overcrowding', said that after high-powered committees were formed on the orders of the Supreme Court to reduce overcrowding, the occupancy in prisons of 22 States and Union Territories reduced from 107.8% on December 31, 2019 to 103.1% on April 1, 2020 and then to 93.3% on June 30.

"However, a closer look at the prison-wise occupancy showed that 27% of the pri-



Walking free: Undertrial prisoners being released from the Yerwada Jail in Pune soon after the lockdown. ■ FILE PHOTO

sions in 19 States/UTs continued to be overcrowded," a CHRI statement said.

Speaking during the virtual launch of the report, retired Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B. Lokur said:

"We talk about bail not jail, but the issue of prison overcrowding can be addressed at a much earlier stage... It is where the role of the investigating officer, the prosecution, the judge and the legal aid lawyer become very important."

Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Justice S. Muralidhar spoke about need for "constant upgradation and maintenance" of the technological interventions introduced during the pandemic, including the videocalling facilities for prisoners.

Prisoners may not be able to speak frankly with lawyers and privacy for the video calls must be preserved, perhaps using glass enclosures, Justice Muralidhar suggested.

Bombay HC quashes abetment to suicide case

'Future of students will be destroyed'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court recently quashed an FIR against three students charged with abetting the suicide of a colleague.

"They are young and their future will be destroyed if they are asked to face trial for this charge," it said.

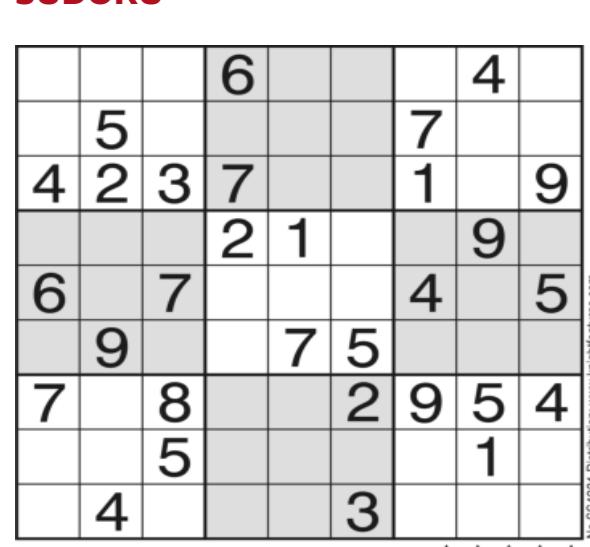
A Division Bench of Justices T.V. Nalawade and M.G. Sewlal was hearing an application filed by three students – Sayeeshdarshan Kanal, 21; Sanket Adlak, 22, and Piyush Dawkar.

The complaint filed by Sushil Khawase had alleged that his daughter, a final year B.E Computer student, hanged herself on May 24, 2019 and that the three accused were responsible for the suicide of the deceased.

"The applicants are young and their future will be destroyed if they are asked to face trial for the offence of abetting the suicide of the deceased."

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

PM Modi's AMU outreach sparks debate on campus

Some feel he could use the opportunity to work on his credibility among minorities

ANUJ KUMAR GHAZIABAD

News of Prime Minister Narendra Modi accepting the invitation of the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University to be the chief guest at its centenary celebration on December 22 has sparked debate on the campus.

While the university administration is busy projecting the virtual address as a historic event, there is a section of students and teachers that is looking into the deeper meanings of the PM's outreach to the centre of Muslim intelligentsia which has often been described as a hub of anti-national activities by his party's members, including the local Member of Parliament.

With no election round the corner, some feel the Prime Minister could use the opportunity to repair his perceived reputation as a statesman as his credibility as a protector of minorities is allegedly un-

der a cloud on the global stage. A senior professor, requesting anonymity, reminded that the virtual visit was happening at a time when not only Muslims, even Sikhs are feeling alienated after the government's position on farmers' protest. "What he says would be closely watched globally. He might use the platform to engage with the Muslim world," he said.

Sir Syed's example
There are some who are invoking university founder Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to remind how he engaged with the British government even when it was against Muslims. "We must try to tell the government that we are followers of Sir Syed and will cooperate with the government but not with any party's ideology," said Razaullah Khan, retired professor and former president of AMU Teachers' Association.

Then there are those who feel the government

might be thinking of projecting VC Tariq Mansoor, who is said to be close to some RSS leaders, as the new face of Muslims.

Ansab Aamir, a student of Engineering faculty, who actively participated in the anti-CAA protests in 2019, said the participation of the Prime Minister in the centenary celebrations needs to be celebrated but the person holding the position was not somebody who could be praised unani-

mously. "He is the same person against whom a large number of the students of AMU were protesting against last year. He is the same person who is pushing laws that are detrimental to the identity of Muslims. And this institution is the beacon of that very identity."

Talha Mannan, a student of Education department, said as AMU was a space for debate and discussion, the session should have been

opened to students. "The students are concerned about the events that have unfolded in the last six years, especially with regard to the AMU as it faced unprecedented State oppression in December 2019. They would like to pose some questions to the PM because he remained largely silent on last year's protests against the CAA. There is an atmosphere of insecurity among students and if he doesn't address that, then

who else will?" he said. A group of teachers has issued a release asking the AMU fraternity to rise above politics to make the centenary celebration a success. Sources in the administration feel that the PM might offer something big for the education of Muslim women. "A proposal regarding establishment of a centre for professional studies for women is pending in the Education Ministry," said an official.

AMUTA seeks more funds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GHAZIABAD

On Saturday evening, the AMU Teachers' Association issued a letter to the PM after an Executive Council meeting wherein it welcomed him and hoped that "his honorary presence would help in the quantum jump in the overall autonomy and development of the institution".

AMUTA requested the PM



The Aligarh Muslim University campus. ■ FILE PHOTO

to increase the funding of AMU by 20-25% of the sanctioned grant, establish centres of military, space and marine science and develop Aligarh into a smart city. "AMUTA has high hopes from the Prime Minister as this will augment the development of the institution, and in turn in the nation-building," said Prof. Najmul Islam, Honorary Secretary, AMUTA.

AN-ND-E

Biden transition team slams Pentagon

It warns of risks to national security after claiming that briefings were stopped abruptly

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden warned on Friday of risks to national security after it said the Pentagon suddenly halted briefings for the transition team.

Johannes Abraham, executive director for the Biden transition team, said he was "concerned to learn this week about an abrupt halt in the already limited cooperation there".

President Donald Trump, who is refusing to acknowledge his election loss to Mr. Biden, until recently held back from allowing government agencies to cooperate with Mr. Biden's team, as is the custom.

On Friday, Mr. Trump's acting Defense Secretary, Chris Miller, said in a statement that the two sides had a



Top choice: A file photo of Joe Biden introducing his nominee for Defense Secretary, Army Gen. Lloyd Austin (retd.). ■ AFP

"mutually agreed upon holiday pause" on briefings with military officials. Mr. Abraham said this was not true.

"There was no mutually agreed upon holiday break," he told reporters, warning that "a failure to work to-

gether could have consequences well beyond" Mr. Biden's inauguration in January.

The latest stumble in what is traditionally a carefully choreographed handover of power between outgoing

Trump plays down Russia role

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Saturday downplayed a massive cyberattack on U.S. agencies, declaring it "under control" and undercutting the assessment by his own administration that Russia was to blame.

Mr. Trump tweeted that "Russia Russia Russia is the priority chant when anything happens" and suggested that China may be

involved. "There could also have been a hit on our ridiculous voting machines during the election, which is now obvious that I won big, making it an even more corrupted embarrassment for the USA," he added, in his latest baseless allegation of mass fraud in the vote.

Mr. Trump's response came a day after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the attack was "pretty clearly" Russia's work.

...and incoming U.S. adminis-

trations comes as Washington reels from a massive, possibly Russian state cyber-attack. "There's no time to spare," Mr. Abraham said.

Mr. Abraham said the at-

tack was of "great concern" and that under Mr. Biden cyberattacks will meet a response inflicting "substantial cost". According to Mr. Abraham, the team has "hope and expectation" that the Pentagon briefings will re-commence "immediately".

U.S. planning to close its last two consulates in Russia

'It will ensure safe, secure operation of diplomatic mission'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump's outgoing administration is planning to close the two remaining U.S. consulates in Russia, the State Department confirmed on Saturday, as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office amid high tensions with Moscow.

The U.S. will close its consulate in the far eastern city of Vladivostok and suspend operations at its post in Yekaterinburg, a Department spokesperson said. The decision followed consultation with Ambassador John Sullivan and was part of "efforts

to ensure the safe and secure operation of the U.S. diplomatic mission in the Russian Federation", the spokesperson said.

CNN reported that a State Department letter to Congress this month said the move was a response to "ongoing staffing challenges for the U.S. Mission in Russia in the wake of the 2017 Russian-imposed personnel cap on the U.S. Mission".

Ten diplomats assigned to the consulates will reportedly be relocated to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, while 33 local staff will lose their jobs. The Department said

the "resulting realignment of personnel at U.S. Embassy Moscow will allow us to advance our foreign policy interests in Russia in the most effective and safe manner possible".

"No action related to the Russian consulates in the U.S. is planned," the spokesperson added.

The closures would leave the Embassy as the last U.S. diplomatic mission in Russia. Moscow ordered the closure of the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg in March 2018 during a diplomatic spat sparked by the poisoning of Sergei Skripal on British soil.

Vedant Patel named in Biden's WH press team

He will be Assistant Press Secretary

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden announced additional members of the White House communications and press team on Friday, including India-born Vedant Patel, who was appointed to the role of Assistant Press Secretary.

Mr. Patel was a key member of the Biden-Harris campaign and is currently a senior spokesperson for the presidential Inaugural Committee. Prior to this, he was on the Biden team during the Democratic primaries, leading communications for Nevada and other Western States. He has also worked

as Communications Director for Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal.

Mr. Patel was born in India and raised in California, as per a bio released by the transition team. He will work on the team of White House Press Secretary designate Jen Psaki.

Vedant Patel

as Communications Director for Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal.

Mr. Patel was born in India and raised in California, as per a bio released by the transition team. He will work on the team of White House Press Secretary designate Jen Psaki.

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

General Zhang has no prior experience in the Western Theatre, Tibet or Xinjiang, having spent much of his career in the north-eastern Shenyang Military Region (now under the Northern Theatre Command) and since 2017 as the Commander of the Central Theatre Command, which is responsible for the security of the capital, Beijing.

General Zhang replaces the influential General Zhao Zongqi, who turned 65 this

Apple puts Wistron on notice after factory riot

U.S. firm says it won't give Taiwanese contract manufacturer new business till it resolves workers' issues at plant

REUTERS
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Apple Inc. has placed Wistron Corp. on probation, saying on Saturday it would not award the Taiwanese contract manufacturer new business until it addressed the way workers were treated at its plant in Karnataka.

Early findings of an Apple audit in the wake of violence at the Wistron plant showed violations of its 'Supplier Code of Conduct', the Cupertino, California-based company said in a statement.

Contract workers, angry over unpaid wages, destroyed property, gear and iPhones on Dec. 12, causing millions of dollars in losses to Wistron and forcing it to shut the plant.

Apple said Wistron had failed to implement proper working hour management processes, which "led to pay-

ment delays for some workers in October and November".

Wistron removes VP
In a statement, Wistron on Saturday acknowledged mistakes at the new facility in Karnataka's Narasapura, adding that a company investigation had found "some workers were not paid correctly, or on time."

Expressing regret and apologising to all its workers, the Taiwanese firm said it was taking immediate corrective action including "removing the Vice President who oversees our business in India."

Apple said it will continue to monitor Wistron's progress on corrective action.

"Our main objective is to make sure all the workers are treated with dignity and respect, and fully compensated



Growth pangs: Wistron could not cope with the rapid scaling up of manpower and breached laws, officials found. • AFP

promptly," Apple said, adding that it continued to investigate issues at the plant, which is located some 50 km outside of Bengaluru and assembles one iPhone model.

Wistron said it had set up a 24-hour multilingual grievance hotline to ensure all

workers could voice concerns anonymously.

"Apple has sent a strong message to its suppliers, telling them unequivocally that they need to adhere to its standards," Neil Shah of tech researcher Counterpoint said. "In the long-run it

should make suppliers more cautious and likely create fewer such public-relations headaches for Apple.

Manufacturing setback

The Apple probation will hurt Wistron's manufacturing push in India where it had committed to invest some ₹13 billion over the next five years as part of India's production-linked incentive plan for smartphone manufacturing.

Wistron had plans to make another iPhone model at the Narasapura plant and was planning to hire up to 20,000 workers in a year's time, a source told Reuters previously.

But it could not cope with the rapid scaling up of manpower and breached several laws, Karnataka officials found after an inspection following the violence.

The number of workers rose to 10,500 from the permitted 5,000 in a short span of time, the Karnataka factories department said in a report, seen by Reuters.

"The HR department has not been adequately set up with personnel of sound knowledge of labour laws," the factories department concluded.

The Wistron probation will likely also dent Apple's plans to scale up in India, a market it has bet on to expand its manufacturing base beyond China.

Apple began the assembly of its first iPhone model in India via Wistron in 2017. It has now ramped up assembly operations, with Foxconn in southern India and another top supplier Pegatron set to begin local operations.

(With inputs by Sharath S Srivatsa)



Sultam meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

He recommended introducing a "Double Tax Deduction Scheme" which could allow exporters to deduct against their taxable income.

"A ceiling of \$5,00,000 may be put under the scheme so that the investment and tax deduction are limited," he said in a statement.

Gold discounts seen for first time in six weeks

Demand slows on price rebound

REUTERS
BENGALURU/MUMBAI

Physical gold in India was sold at a discount for the first time in six weeks as a rebound in local prices to a one-month peak squeezed demand, while purchases slowed in other Asian hubs ahead of the year-end holidays.

India's local gold futures jumped to ₹50,642 per 10 gm on Thursday, the highest level since November 18. "Demand is very subdued. Retail buyers are postponing purchases because of a price rise," said Ashok Jain, proprietor of Mumbai-based gold wholesaler Chenaji Narsinghji. Dealers were offering a discount of up to ₹1



an ounce over official domestic prices this week, inclusive of a 10% import tax and 3% sales tax, down from last week's premium of \$2.5.

In China, discounts of \$16-\$20 an ounce were being offered compared with last week's range of \$19-\$24, while gold was being sold at a premium of about \$0.50 in Hong Kong.

IndiGrid to buy FRV Solar units for ₹660 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Infrastructure investment trust IndiGrid said it has inked an agreement to acquire 100% stake in two projects of FRV Solar Holdings for ₹660 crore.

The completion of acquisition would depend upon receipt of relevant approvals, IndiGrid said.

"India Grid Trust (IndiGrid) has signed a securities purchase agreement on December 18 for acquisition of 100% in FRV Andhra Pradesh Solar Farm-I Private Ltd & FRV India Solar Park II - Private Ltd from FRV Solar Holdings XI BV," it said. The enterprise value of the deal is ₹660 crore, IndiGrid added.

U.S. blacklists dozens of Chinese companies

'China using civilian tech in defence'

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

The U.S. added dozens of Chinese firms, including the country's top chipmaker SMIC and Chinese drone manufacturer SZ DJI Technology Co. Ltd., to a trade blacklist on Friday as U.S. President Donald Trump's administration ratchets up tensions with China in his final weeks in office.

Reuters first reported the addition of SMIC and other companies earlier on Friday. The move is seen as the latest in Republican President Trump's efforts to burnish his tough-on-China image as part of a lengthy fight between Washington and Beijing over trade and numer-



Donald Trump

ous economic issues. The U.S. Commerce Department said the action against SMIC stems from Beijing's efforts to harness civilian technologies for military purposes and evidence of activities between SMIC and Chinese military industrial firms.

Cotton textile exports likely to reach last year's level

Hopes of 8-10% growth in coming months lend confidence



ber period declined 12.7%. Mr. Rajagopal attributed this to the slump in exports in April and May this year.

Cotton home-made textiles and yarn were doing well, he said.

A. Sakthivel, chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council, said garment exports in September and October were good and in November, it was almost equal to the level seen in the year earlier period.

"We are getting orders and hope for growth in exports in the coming months. The orders are good for medical textiles and from the regular markets."

IDBI Bank raises ₹1,435 crore

Lender had eyed ₹2,000 cr. via QIP; PNB saw similar trend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



IDBI Bank has raised ₹1,435 crore through an issue of equity shares to 44 qualified institutional investors, according to a regulatory filing. The bank had targeted raising ₹2,000 crore (base size ₹1,000 crore with a green-shoe option of ₹1,000 crore) through the QIP issue at a floor price of ₹40.63 apiece.

The QIP committee of the board of directors at its meeting held on December 19 approved the issue and allotment of 3,71,808,177 equity shares to 44 eligible qualified institutional buyers at the issue price of ₹38.60 per share, IDBI Bank said in the

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December 15 and closed on December 18.

Among the investors who were allotted more than 5% of shares in the QIP issue were Punjab National Bank (20.9% subscription); Bank

of Baroda (13.9%); State Bank of India (13.9%); Indian Bank (6.97%); Canara Bank (6.97%) and Societe Generale-ODI (5.66%).

As with IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) too was unable to raise the targeted amount from its qualified institutional placement which closed on Friday.

PNB, which had planned to raise up to ₹7,000 crore through the QIP route, had said on Friday it had approved the issue of 106,70,52,910 equity shares at a discount of 4.95% from the floor price aggregating to ₹3,788 crore to be allotted to eligible qualified institutional buyers. PNB's QIP had opened on Tuesday.

filing. The shares were issued at a discount of 5% to the floor price of ₹40.63 apiece, it said.

The QIP issue had opened on December

SNAPSHOTS



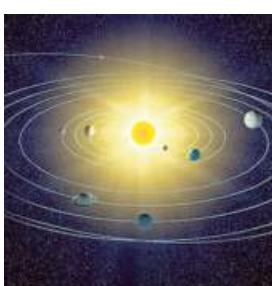
Kangaroo talk

Kangaroos can learn to communicate with humans just like how dogs do, said a new study published in *Biology Letters*. The studied marsupials intently gazed at researchers or alternately looked at them and the container when they were unable to open a box with food.



Ugly orchid

Gastrodia agnicellus, a newly discovered orchid has been named "the ugliest orchid in the world." Found in a forest in Madagascar, it feeds on fungi, and has no leaves. Though it was assessed as a threatened species, it has some protection now as it lives inside a protected national park.



Super highway

Researchers have discovered a superhighway network that can help travel through the Solar System at extremely fast speed. The paper published in *Science Advances* notes that such a route can help comets and asteroids to travel from Jupiter to Neptune's distance in under a decade.



Bioplastic bacteria

A bacterium called *Zobellella denitrificans* ZD1, has now been reported to aid in the production of bioplastics. They feed on sludge, wastewater and produce polyhydroxybutyrate. The researchers say that this can help reduce the burden on landfills.

Ethical challenges of vaccinating people with comorbidities

Each comorbidity increases vulnerability, but in case of vaccine shortage, multimorbidity should be given first preference

R PRASAD

The operational guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination issued recently by the union health ministry has once again identified the four high-risk groups – healthcare workers, frontline workers, persons over 50 years of age, and persons younger than 50 years with comorbidities – that would receive COVID vaccine on priority.

According to Dr. Giridhara Babu, Epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India, Bengaluru, two studies have found varying degrees of comorbidities in COVID-19 patients. While only 14% of 522 patients from a Jaipur hospital had comorbidities, it was 85% in the case of patients in Tamil Nadu. Diabetes (62%), hypertension (49%) and coronary artery disease (17.5%) were the most prevalent comorbidities in Tamil Nadu, whereas hypertension (42.5%), diabetes (39.7%), past history of tuberculosis (20.5%), COPD/Asthma (16.4%), coronary heart disease and chronic kidney disease (13.7%) were common in Jaipur patients.

Which comorbidities?

Considering a range of comorbidities that increases the risk of disease severity, people with which comorbidity should be given more priority for vaccination? "The evidence available is insufficient to indicate the degree of severity amongst the comorbidities.

The priority of vaccination [based on comorbidities] depends on various factors," says Dr. Babu in an



Priority for males? Males are at higher risk, but prioritising males with comorbidities over females will result in worsening gender inequities. • AFP

email. "As per the evidence elsewhere, diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease and chronic kidney disease increase the risk of COVID-19."

Virologist Dr. Shahid Jameel, Director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University says in an email: "My pick would be hypertension, diabetes and COPD. Even though COPD comes lower in the risk score, it also compromises lung function as in severe COVID, and that would be a double whammy."

But considering that Indians often have many risk

factors, should people with two or more comorbidities be prioritised over those with just one comorbidity?

Multiple comorbidities

"Each comorbidity increases vulnerability. However, in case of shortage of vaccines, multimorbidity should be given first preference," Dr. Babu says.

Dr. Jameel too agrees that people with multiple comorbidities are at greater risk and hence should be prioritised over those with a single comorbidity. "My guess is that having more than one comorbidity would be more

than the sum of parts in terms of risk," says Dr. Jameel.

In general, elderly people with multimorbidity, elderly with any comorbidity, elderly, young with multimorbidity, and young with any comorbidity seems to be a sensible order of priority, Dr. Babu says.

Database problems

Dr. Samiran Panda of ICMR says that people below 50 years who have been newly diagnosed with comorbidities should not be counted as high-risk for vaccination on priority. Even the union go-

vernment's guidance to States is to use the existing database of comorbidities to vaccinate people. Since the database is not comprehensive, relying solely on that can be problematic.

DURATION OF CHRONIC DISEASE

Duration of chronic disease would certainly have an impact on physiology, and therefore those with longer duration of the conditions would be more at risk, says Dr. Jameel.

But Dr. Babu says that there is no evidence to suggest that the duration of underlying disease increases the risk of COVID-19 disease. "There should not be any bias in prioritising individuals concerning the duration of underlying disease conditions," Dr. Babu says.

Health inequality

Also, poor people and those living in rural areas very often are unaware of their disease status. Any policy that excludes people with newly diagnosed disease will inevitably affect the poor.

"I suspect that only a few people qualify for consideration based on documentation of their comorbidities. This will unduly favour the rich and educated who keep documentation and thereby further exacerbate health inequity," stresses Dr. Babu.

"Comprehensive efforts should be done to test the blood glucose levels and

blood pressure to make a new diagnosis and vaccinate them."

Besides the poor and people in rural areas, Dr. Jameel rightly points out that millions of middle-class Indians are unaware of their underlying chronic conditions. "This poses a challenge, but would hopefully also catalyse fresh efforts to develop the right health databases," he says.

In addition to using the NCD database, States should allow people with comorbidities to self-report and also conduct a quick survey to screen, enrol and schedule the vulnerable for vaccination in the entire country, says Dr. Babu.

Males over females?

Another ethical challenge revolves around gender. Males have been found to be at a greater risk of progressing to severe disease and even dying compared with females. Should males with comorbidities then be prioritised over females with comorbidities?

"Will that further exacerbate the underlying gender-based inequities?"

"Risk of severe disease and death is higher in males than in females, particularly in older age groups. However, prioritising males with comorbidities over females will result in inducing and worsening inequities," says Dr. Babu.

First potential radio signal from exoplanet

If confirmed, this detection provides a novel way to examine alien worlds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

An international team of scientists has collected the first possible radio signal from a planet beyond our solar system, emanating from an exoplanet system about 51 light-years away.

To prevent its illegal trade,

Dr. Chahuhuan says, "Implementation and enforcement of sustainable collection protocols and quotas are needed. Designation of areas of natural habitat to local communities for management of harvest is the best option to control its illegal trade.

Further, the implantation of FairWild Standard (a set of ecological and fair trade guidelines) can help traders,

and concerned agencies in

the sustainable harvest and

trade of the species."

He adds that educational

efforts including elevation of

public awareness surround-

ing the threats to the species,

and dissemination of best

practices for harvest are also

needed.

nomy & Astrophysics found that only the Tau Bootes exoplanet system exhibited a significant radio signature.

"We present one of the first hints of detecting an exoplanet in the radio realm," said Cornell postdoctoral researcher Jake D. Turner.

New window on exoplanets

"The signal is from the Tau Bootes system, which contains a binary star system and an exoplanet. We make the case for an emission by the planet itself," adds Dr. Turner.

If confirmed through follow-up observations, the researchers said, this radio detection opens up a new window on exoplanets and provides a novel way to examine alien worlds that are tens of light-years away.



Medicinal herb: *Trillium gowanianum* is often called Nagchatri in local areas | File • ELIZABETH BYERS

ed from India. Since then its price has increased and sold at \$50-315 per kilogram.

To prevent its illegal trade, Dr. Chahuhuan says, "Implementation and enforcement of sustainable collection protocols and quotas are needed. Designation of areas of natural habitat to local communities for management of harvest is the best option to control its illegal trade.

Further, the implantation of FairWild Standard (a set of ecological and fair trade guidelines) can help traders, and concerned agencies in the sustainable harvest and trade of the species."

He adds that educational

efforts including elevation of

public awareness surround-

ing the threats to the species,

and dissemination of best

practices for harvest are also

needed.



Question Corner

Why do leaves die off in autumn?

You might have seen pictures of leaves in cold countries turning yellow and red before falling. This usually marks the beginning of autumn.

Known as leaf senescence, this process prepares the trees for the coming winter.

As a result of global warming, European trees were found to start this senescence about two weeks earlier. In a study published last month in the journal *Science*,

researchers have now demonstrated that trees have a self-regulating mechanism that limits the photosynthesis period or the productive period.

This increased photosynthesis in spring and summer could be leading to earlier senescence.

The analyses suggested that seasonal photosynthesis, autumn temperatures, and day length were the key factors for these extinctions and more studies are needed."

He adds that one has to keep in mind that not all species are represented in the fossils and there are still missing links and biological dead ends.

the Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), Switzerland explained that several other factors, such as atmospheric CO₂ concentrations, summer temperatures, light levels, and precipitation also appear to influence senescence, but only indirectly through affecting photosynthesis. The team arrived at the conclusion by studying six European deciduous tree



species over the last six decades. They found a strong effect of photosynthesis on senescence. In years with increased photosynthesis in spring and summer, leaf senescence began earlier, with each 10% increase in photosynthetic activity advancing leaf senescence by eight days.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Why elephants and tigers did not go extinct in India

Co-evolution or the fact that native animals learn to adapt to a new predator played an important role

ASWATHI PACHA

Over the last 100,000 years, several land-dwelling mammals including big carnivores have gone extinct across the globe. North America lost its saber-toothed cat, North American lion, scimitar-tooth cat, American cheetah, and the only big cats left now are the Puma and the Jaguar. But most of the megafauna of South Asia and Africa were resilient to the arrival of modern humans and the region still has large land mammals such as elephants, tigers, and rhinos. A team led by Advait Jukar from Yale University set out to investigate why these big mammals are still seen in India when they disappeared from the Americas.

Co-evolution

A paper published last month notes that co-evolution - the fact that native animals learn to adapt to a new predator played an important role.

"If humans were hunting, these animals evolved techniques to avoid people. For example, if we like to hunt on the plains, maybe these animals lived in the forests. It's basically an evolutionary rat race where one species

humans probably were the last nail in the coffin for these animals. Had we not shown up, they would have probably been fine

ADVAIT M. JUKAR
Yale University



Tough mammals: Most of the megafauna of South Asia and Africa were resilient to the arrival of modern humans. Image shows fossils of the extinct mammals of India • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cially populations of animals that don't reproduce quickly. Elephants have a two-year pregnancy and it takes about six years between calving events. Hippos, when they're stressed out, don't breed well," explains Dr. Jukar. "But based on the fossil record, we know that these animals have survived multiple periods of similar environmental change in the past. They only go extinct when people show up. So people probably were the last nail in the coffin for these

animals. Had we not shown up, they would have probably been fine."

Local extinction

India was also home to ostriches (*Struthio camelus*) and Dr. Jukar notes that humans may have been the reason for their local extinction. "We have ostriches in cave art and we have a lot of evidence of people using ostrich eggshells for ornamentation by making beads. Humans probably used eggs for food. And obviously, if

you start eating up their offspring, the populations are going to crash."

Dr. Jukar adds that humans may be driving the extinction of the mammals that fought and survived. "So most of the animals which survived, had a fairly large geographic range. But today, these animals are being restricted to small pockets and in fragmented populations, a lot of interbreeding happens making the populations weaker. And with increased human pressure, it's just a



B. VELANKANNI RAJ

IITs and reservation

What has the committee set up by the Education Ministry to look at implementing reservation suggested?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

The story so far: The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have a large number of faculty vacancies, as the student intake capacity was raised by over 50% during 2008-10 after reservation for Other Backward Classes students was introduced, and more IITs were opened during 2008-17. Currently, there are 23 IITs, and reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) has been added. Since the ratio of students to teachers has come under strain, and the high bar for entry of teachers, starting with a doctoral degree, has shrunk the pool of eligible aspirants from reserved categories, the Education Ministry formed a committee to look at implementing the reservation system effectively.

Who is responsible for recruitment?

Student admissions and teachers' appointments are covered by the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006, and the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019. Beneficiaries belong to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and EWS. The Ministry Committee headed by the Director of IIT Delhi, V. Ramgopal Rao, met twice in the current year, and came up with two options.

According to the first, the government could in effect sidestep the faculty reservation question by including IITs in the schedule to the 2019 law, providing them exemption as in the case of some national institutions of importance. The second option provides for de-reservation of positions if no suitable candidates are found in the year of recruitment. The recommendations have evoked a strong reaction, as they are seen as negating the objective of affirmative action through reservation.

Why is it difficult to find candidates in reserved categories?

The Committee said in its report that the IITs, set up as institutions of national importance under a special law to contribute to national and even global development, had to pursue high quality teaching and research. Aspirants must therefore possess a PhD degree, as well as a superior academic record and "high research accomplishments" for teaching.

The student to faculty ratio was earlier estimated at about 6:1, which facilitated closer monitoring. This faculty ratio later fell to 12:1, and appears to be under further strain

credentials to higher tier positions without constraints of post limits. Yet, with more students enrolling, the opening of new IITs, and introduction of the EWS quota, the selection committees have been unable to find enough candidates to fill teaching positions.

About a decade ago, the student to faculty ratio was estimated at about 6:1, which facilitated closer monitoring and pursuit of projects that make IIT courses unique. This faculty ratio later fell to 12:1, and appears to be under further strain. The Education Ministry's Committee has pointed out that the optimal is a ratio of 10:1, on the basis of which faculty numbers have been set.

The reality is that not enough candidates belonging to the reserved categories are going into research in engineering and technology. Even among those who do, only a small group opt for a teaching career. This has sharply reduced the available pool from which the IITs can recruit teachers while adhering to reservation norms.

What remedy is the Committee looking at? The Committee came up with two options: to include the IITs in the schedule to the 2019 law on teachers' recruitment, which would exempt these institutes from reservation, just as it does in other institutions of excellence. As a second option, the panel suggested that faculty at the level of Assistant Professor Grade I and II be given reservation, including for EWS, and the vacancies considered for the institution as a whole, and not for each department. Where suitable candidates from the reserved category are unavailable, the posts should be de-reserved in the next year, with approval from the Board of Governors. Also, Associate Professor and Professor posts should be exempted from reservation.

To provide for a talent pool from among the reserved sections, the Ramgopal Rao panel has suggested the launch of two-year research assistantships fully funded by the Centre, with an option for the candidates to take up PhD studies that meet the rigorous standards of the IITs.

What is the government's position?

The report of the Committee, which was obtained under the Right to Information Act by an interested citizen, is "under examination" by the government, according to the Ministry of Education. Although it aims at addressing a critical gap, the recommendation to do away with reservation is at odds with the stated position of the Central government. In November last year, the Education Ministry put out a notification that central educational institutions (CEIs), which would include the IITs and the Indian Institutes of Management, should ensure that faculty positions, including senior posts, fully met the norms of reservation. The Ministry now has a reiteration of the idea of treating an IIT as a single unit for the purpose of drawing up a roster of reserved posts, rather than go by individual departments.

Are NRIs likely to get postal voting rights soon?

What is the Election Commission's proposal and how can it be made possible for non-resident Indians?

SRIVINAS RAMANI

The story so far: On November 27, the Election Commission of India (ECI) wrote to the Law Ministry, proposing to extend the facility of postal ballots to (eligible) overseas, non-resident Indians (NRIs) for the Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal in 2021. The ECI proposed amending the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, in order to allow this facility. The postal ballots will be sent to NRIs electronically and they will send these ballots after choosing their candidate via post. This partially electronic facility is now available for service voters (being a member of the armed Forces of the Union; or a member of a force to which provisions of the Army Act, 1950 (46 of 1950), have been made applicable whether with or without modification; a member of an Armed Police Force of a State, and serving outside that State; or a person who is employed under the Government of India, in a post outside India). and is being sought to be extended to overseas NRI voters. The Law Ministry is yet to respond to the proposal.

How can overseas voters currently vote in Indian elections?

Prior to 2010, an Indian citizen who is an eligible voter and was residing abroad for more than six months owing to employment, education or otherwise, would not have been able to vote in elections. This was because the NRI's name was deleted from electoral rolls if he or she stayed outside the country for more than six months at a stretch.

After the passing of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2010, eligible NRIs who had stayed abroad beyond six months have been enabled to vote, but only in person at the polling station where they have been enrolled as an overseas elector.

Just as any resident Indian citizen above the age of 18 years (having attained it on the first day of January of the year of revision of electoral rolls for the State) is eligible to vote in the constituency where she/he is a resident, overseas Indian citizens are also eligible to do so. In the case of overseas voters, their address mentioned in the passport is taken as the place of ordinary residence and chosen as the constituency for the overseas voter to enrol in.

How has the existing facility worked so far?

From merely 11,846 overseas voters who registered in 2014, the number went up to close to a lakh in 2019. But the bulk of these voters (nearly 90%) belonged to just one State – Kerala. Of the 25,606 such voters who actually turned up, 25,534 were from Kerala (mostly from Kozhikode and Malappuram districts).

Clearly, a very low proportion of eligible overseas residents actually registered or turned up to vote. The Representation of the People Act, envisaged voters as only the "ordinary residents" in a constituency (<https://bit.ly/3p7gigl>) who will choose representatives to represent their local interests while mediating on larger issues in the legislature.

Some democracies that already allow absentee voting



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 was amended in 2016 to allow service voters to use the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System. The Election Commission proposes to extend this facility to overseas voters

stipulate that overseas electors are eligible to vote provided they are not abroad for a specified period of time and/or if they mention an "intent to return".

Section 20-IA, Part III of the Representation of the People Act addresses this to some extent by qualifying "a person absenting himself temporarily from his place of ordinary residence shall not by reason thereof cease to have ordinarily resident therein" and in essence provides for NRIs who are temporarily staying abroad to be eligible to vote in their local constituencies.

Yet, the proviso of having to visit the polling booth in person has discouraged eligible voters from exercising their mandate. In the winter session of Parliament in 2017, the government proposed to remove the restriction imposed by Section 20A of the Representation of the People Act, which required them to be physically present to vote in their constituencies. The Bill provided for overseas voters to be able to appoint a proxy to cast their votes on their behalf, subject to conditions laid down in the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961. The Bill was later passed in 2018, but lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.

Now the ECI has approached the government to permit NRIs to vote via postal ballots similar to a system that is already used by service voters (the Electronically

Transmitted Postal Ballot System, or ETPBS).

What is ETPBS and how does it function?

The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 was amended in 2016 to allow service voters to use the ETPBS. Under this system, postal ballots are sent electronically to registered service voters. The service voter can then download the ETPB (along with a declaration form and covers), register their mandate on the ballot and send it to the returning officer of the constituency via ordinary mail. The post will include an attested declaration form (after being signed by the voter in the presence of an appointed senior officer who will attest it). The postal ballot must reach the returning officer by 8 a.m. on the day of the counting of results.

The ECI now proposes to extend this facility to overseas voters as well. For this to commence, the Law Ministry has to amend the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 (just as it was done for service voters). In the case of NRI voters, those seeking to vote through ETPBS will have to inform the returning officer at least five days after notification of the election. The returning officer will then send the ballot electronically via the ETPBS. The NRI voter can then register her/his mandate on the ballot printout and send it back with an attested declaration in a process similar to the service voter. Except in this case, the senior officer would be appointed by the Indian diplomatic or consular representative in the resident country of the NRI. The ECI has not specified whether the voter should send in the ballot through ordinary post to the returning officer or drop it off at the Indian consular office/embassy, which will then send the consolidated envelopes constituency-wise to the returning officers.

Will this facility be available to all overseas voters across countries?

There were news reports that the ECI had indicated to the Ministry of External Affairs that it would want postal voting introduced on a pilot basis in non-Gulf countries. But ECI officials told *The Hindu* that the ECI had asked the Law Ministry to explore the possibility of extending postal ballots to overseas electors and not restrict it to any particular country.

Are postal ballots a viable means of voting?

The ETPBS method allowed for greater turnout among service voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. With increasing mobility of citizens across countries for reasons related to work, the postal ballot method has been recognised by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (an intergovernmental organisation that works to support democratic processes and institutions) as a means to allow overseas voters to exercise their right, subject to certain conditions normally related to the time spent abroad or the work carried out abroad.

Postal ballots were proven to be a secure and easy way of registering the mandate in the presidential elections in the United States recently with many voters preferring to use this method due to the COVID-19 social distancing norms. A postal ballot mechanism that allows for proper authentication of the ballot at designated consular/embassy offices and an effective postal system should ease this process for NRIs, but the rules must be clearly framed for eligibility on the basis of time spent away from the country.

Is the pink ball different from red and white?

What impact does it have on day/night Test matches? Are both batsmen and bowlers satisfied with how it plays out?

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

The story so far: The first Test between Australia and India, which ended much ahead of schedule at Adelaide on Saturday, has put into focus the pink cricket ball used in day/night matches once again. It is only the 15th Test to go pink; but the other 2,381 have all been played with the more traditional red balls. Having made its pink ball debut last November against Bangladesh, this was the second Test for India, while it was the eighth for Australia.

Why are different shades of balls used for different formats of cricket?

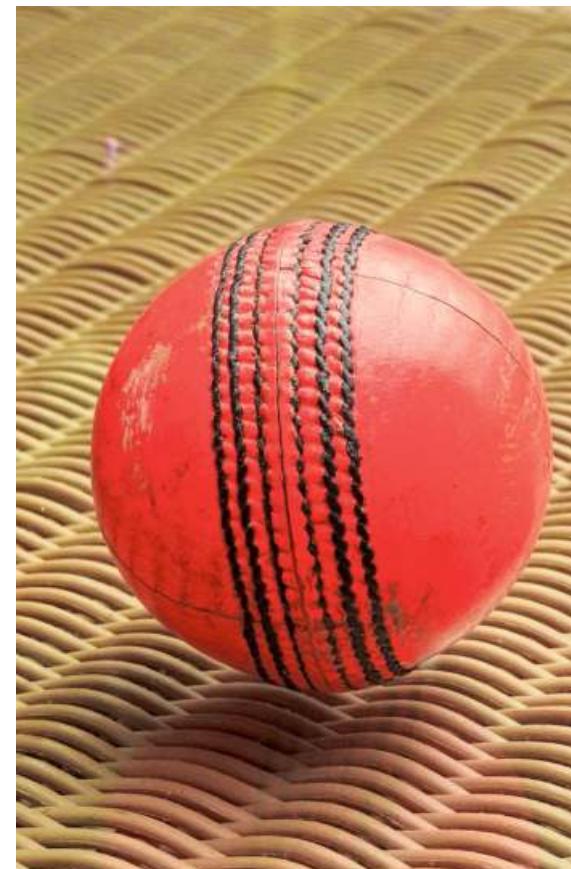
Long-format matches – like Test and First Class – are played with red balls; since the players are required to dress in white, a normal red ball is used. Till the advent of cricket at night in 1978, there was no need to look beyond red when it came to the ball's colour.

The colour of the ball through cricket's history, which dates back to the 16th century, remained red till November 28, 1978. A different colour was needed when a rebel World Series one-day match between Australia and the West Indies was played under the brand new floodlights at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Thus a white ball was chosen, since it would be more visible at night. That required the players to don coloured clothing. Though the experiment proved a smashing success, with close to 50,000 fans turning up for the match and many more watching it live on Channel 9, it would take more than a decade for the coloured clothing and the white ball to gain wider acceptance – the World Cup of 1992, to be precise.

How did the pink ball enter the Test arena?

Though Test matches – they best bring out the aesthetics, techniques and the theatre of cricket – are still considered the purest forms of the game by most players and discerning fans, their popularity has been on the wane, more so in these times of instant gratification provided by the Twenty20 format in tournaments such as the Indian Premier League and the Big Bash League.

Test matches attract big crowds only in England and Australia these days. Besides, Australia's time zone is not ideal for cricket's largest television audience – the subcontinent, where the day would not even have dawned when a Test match gets underway at Melbourne or Sydney. So the cricket administrators in Australia and England began to think seriously about day/night Tests. They were backed by the International Cricket Council, too. The first day/night Test was scheduled to have been played in 2010 between England and Bangladesh at Lord's, cricket's Mecca, but the plan had to be abandoned because two county teams, Durham and Worcestershire, felt their First Class fixture was too important to be held as a trial game for pink-ball cricket. It would take another five years for the pink ball to land at the Test match wicket. That happened at Adelaide, in 2015, with the third and final Test of the series between Australia and New Zealand. But women had played an international game with a pink ball long before men, though – the one-day international between England and Australia at Wormsley



From the batsman's point of view, the pink ball is probably the most difficult to handle, especially during twilight.

Pace bowlers, however, relish the pink ball, especially when the lights are switched on

in 2009.

Do the conditions have an impact on pink, red and white balls?

Unlike most sports, the conditions – the ground or the weather – play a crucial role in cricket. For instance, the ball tends to swing more in overcast conditions (though science has been able to explain the aerodynamic mechanisms of swing and reverse-swing, atmospheric conditions enabling swing have not been clearly explained). Even balls manufactured by different companies behave differently. White and pink balls are believed to swing more than the red one.

From the batsman's point of view, the pink ball is probably the most difficult to handle, especially during twilight. Pace bowlers, however, relish the pink ball, especially when the lights are switched on as the shine lasts longer because of the lacquer.

While only one pink or red ball is used to bowl from both ends in a match, two white balls have been used in

one-dayers since 2012 (the white ball becomes difficult to see once it gets dirty).

Do the pink, white or red balls have other differences besides colour?

According to the Marylebone Cricket Club, guardians of the laws of cricket, any international and First Class ball has to weigh between 156 grams and 162 grams. There is no difference in weight in either red, white or pink ball. But the colour of the seam varies: white seam for the red ball, dark green for the white ball and black for pink.

Is there a difference between the Kookaburra, SG and Dukes pink balls in the way they are stitched and behave?

Dukes and SG are hand-stitched in all six rows of the seam. Only two rows of a Kookaburra ball are hand-stitched, while the four outer rows are machine-stitched. The Dukes and SG balls tend to swing more than Kookaburra.

Why is there a demand by some players to replace the red ball with the pink one in all Tests?

Australian spin legend Shane Warne claims that the red ball does nothing for the bowler, and that the pink ball is more visible and looks better on television. It remains to be seen how much support it receives.



BHARATIYA KISAN UNIONS

At the forefront of the farmers' agitation

Over 30 groups have come together to launch months-long protests against the agriculture laws that have spread from Punjab and Haryana to the borders of the national capital

VIKAS VASUDEVA

For almost three weeks, farmers have been protesting on the outskirts of Delhi, demanding the government withdraw the farm laws. The agitation has gained momentum with more and more farmers joining in despite the government's call to end the protests.

While several farmers' unions from different parts of the country have joined the agitation, it is mainly spearheaded by organisations from Punjab and Haryana.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan), one of the largest farmer unions in Punjab, has been at its forefront. The BKU (Ugrahan), along with the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) and 30-odd other farmer unions, has been holding the protests under the banner of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee.

The BKU (Ugrahan), led by former soldier Joginder Singh Ugrahan, has a significant hold among farmers in the Malwa region, also known as "the cotton belt" of

Punjab. The union, founded in 2002, has been on the street protesting against the government's agriculture policies ever since the farm ordinances were promulgated in June. In September, the Centre passed three farm Bills in Parliament, replacing the ordinances, which, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have empowered the farmers. But the BKU (Ugrahan) and the other protesting unions have rejected the government's claims, terming the Bills "anti-farmer" and demanding their withdrawal.

In August, the BKU (Ugrahan) launched a five-day campaign in about 600 villages in Punjab to "inform" the public about the "ill-effects" of the farm ordinances. Led by Mr. Ugrahan and Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan, a former teacher who took an early retirement from his job to take up the cause of farmers, the union vowed that it would not allow leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and others who supported the ordinances to enter any village in the State. The protests quickly gained momentum in the State, which is called the "bread basket of India". Agriculture is the main lever of Punjab's economy, which produces 17.4% of India's wheat and 11.32% of its rice.

Sit-ins

In September, the BKU (Ugrahan) stepped up the protests. They staged a sit-in outside Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's Patiala residence as well as Shiromani Akali Dal patron and former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal's house in his ancestral village Badal. It also launched a 'rail roko' agitation, disrupting

train services in the State. The protesters started shaking up Punjab politics even before they launched the 'Dilli Chalo' campaign. In September, immediately after Parliament passed the three Bills by voice vote, Har-simrat Kaur Badal, Parkash Singh Badal's daughter in

Farmers' unions in Punjab started the agitation when the ordinances were promulgated by staging sit-ins in front of government offices and launching 'rail roko' campaigns

law, resigned from the BJP-led government as the Food Processing Industries Minister. Within weeks, Sukhbir Singh Badal, Harsimrat Kaur's husband and the president of the Shiromani Akali Dal, announced that the party was ending its decades-long alliance with the BJP over the farm laws. The Congress-led government of

Punjab also voiced its strong opposition to the laws.

With the support of almost all non-BJP political factions in Punjab, the farmers took the protest to the borders of Delhi. Mr. Ugrahan has been camping at Delhi's Tikri border with thousands of his followers since later November. The BKU (Ugrahan) was at the centre of a controversy after its members demanded the release of jailed activists Umar Khaliid, Sharjeel Imam and others on December 10, the Human Rights Day. The government immediately seized on the incident and said the "so-called" farmers agitation has "almost got infiltrated by leftist and Maoist elements". The BKU (Ugrahan), however, remained unapologetic. "We did nothing wrong. We had just organised an event demanding their (jailed activists) release on Human Rights Day on Thursday," Sukhdev Singh, Punjab general secretary of the union, said on Monday. But other unions were not of the same opinion. They distanced themselves from these demands of the BKU (Ugrahan) and asked the outfit to stay focussed on the collective protest's demands.

Another union at the forefront is the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC), which has a substantial following among marginal and small farmers and agriculture labourers in the Majha and Doaba regions of Punjab. Like the BKU (Ugrahan), the KMSC had also started its agitation in June, by staging sit-ins outside collectorates in several districts against the farm ordinances. On September 7, members of the KMSC started a campaign to "court arrest" and on September 24, it kicked-off a 'rail roko' agitation. While most other unions lifted their blockade on train services on November 24, the KMSC continued their protests, especially in Amritsar's Jandiala. Led by its president Satnam Singh Pannu and general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher, the KMSC has got the key points of the three farm laws translated into Punjabi and distributed over 1,00,000 copies among the farmers and workers.

Its leaders have repeatedly said they would not accept

anything other than the withdrawal of the three farm laws by the government to stop their protests.

More factions

There are more BKU factions in the agitation. The BKU (Ekta-Dakaunda), led by Buta Singh Burj and Jagmohan Singh, has been working on issues surrounding the rising agrarian crises, and has demanded a farm loan waiver. Protest leaders admit that Jagmohan Singh, who had worked in the cooperative department of the Punjab government, had played a key role in bringing over 30 organisations under one roof in the protest against the farm laws. The BKU (Rajewal), led by Balbir Singh who formed his union in the 1990s, is another group in the fold.

In Focus

■ The BKU (Ugrahan), one of the largest farmer unions in Punjab, has been on the front line of the agitation since June when the government promulgated the farm ordinances

■ The unions have translated the key points of the farm laws into Punjabi and distributed them among farmers, challenging the government's narrative about the laws

■ Besides BKU (Ugrahan), other BKU factions, such as BKU (Tikai) from U.P. and BKU (Chaduni) from Haryana, have also joined the agitation

Despite many rounds of talks, neither the unions nor the government has shown any willingness to compromise. The farmers have stuck to their demand for repealing the laws, while the government has maintained that the laws are good for both farmers and the economy. Meanwhile, the protests are set to intensify with more farmers getting ready to travel to the borders of Delhi.

S-400

The long Russian arms in the skies

The missile defence system is one of the most advanced in the world

DINAKAR PERI

On December 14, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Turkey, a NATO ally, over its procurement of the S-400 Triumf long-range air defence system from Russia. Announcing a series of measures under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation, Christopher Ford, also cautioned other countries: "We hope that other countries around the world will also take note that the U.S. will fully implement CAATSA Section 231 sanctions and that they should avoid further acquisitions of Russian equipment." In October 2018, India had signed a \$5.43 billion deal with Russia for five S-400 regiments.

S-400 (NATO name SA-21 Growler) is considered one of the world's most advanced air defence systems that can simultaneously track and neutralise a range of incoming objects spanning aircraft, missiles and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) over very long ranges. It is especially suited to take down strategic aerial platforms like bombers, mid-air refuellers, reconnaissance aircraft and Advanced Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS). Given their capabilities, the S-400 has emerged as one of the most controversial arms exports of Russia and a major point of contention bet-



ween Washington and Moscow.

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) missile defence project, development of the S-400 began in 1993 and eventually the testing of the system started in 1999. Designed by Almaz-Antey Central Design Bureau, the S-400 is a successor to the S-300 system and entered operational service in 2007. In 2015, it was deployed in Syria by Russia to protect its military assets and has also been deployed in Crimea.

Fully mobile

The S-400 is fully mobile and each system has a 3D phased array acquisition radar, which can track around 300 targets up to 600 km, a command-and-control centre, automatic tracking and targeting systems, launchers and support vehicles. Each system has four different types of missiles for up to 40 km, 120 km, 250

km and a maximum range of 400 km and up to 30 km altitude. The different ranges and varying altitudes create a layered air defence net. An S-400 battalion has eight missile launchers, typically with four missiles each.

India is also acquiring several high-end military platforms from the U.S., which includes P-81 maritime reconnaissance aircraft, AH-64E Apache attack helicopters and CH-47(I) Chinook heavy lift helicopters, and recently leased two MQ-9B Predator high altitude long endurance drones. In addition, negotiations are in an advanced stage for procurement of the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System. While Trump administration has not invoked CAATSA sanctions so far, it is not clear if the U.S. would continue to do so. The issue would come up before the incoming Joe Biden administration most likely when India starts taking the deliveries next year.

their bases.

For the IAF, the high-end technology S-400 would give a fillip and make up for its falling fighter aircraft squadrons in the medium term. Former Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa had on several occasions termed the S-400 air defence systems and Rafale fighter jets "game changers" for the IAF.

Globally, there has been a growing interest for the S-400 with several countries expressing interest in the system. In addition to Turkey, in July 2018, China became the first export customer to receive the S-400 and got sanctioned by the U.S. under CAATSA. India, in addition to S-400, has signed several other major defence deals with Russia.

India is also acquiring several high-end military platforms from the U.S., which includes P-81 maritime reconnaissance aircraft, AH-64E Apache attack helicopters and CH-47(I) Chinook heavy lift helicopters, and recently leased two MQ-9B Predator high altitude long endurance drones. In addition, negotiations are in an advanced stage for procurement of the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System. While Trump administration has not invoked CAATSA sanctions so far, it is not clear if the U.S. would continue to do so. The issue would come up before the incoming Joe Biden administration most likely when India starts taking the deliveries next year.

Shekau's claim came a few months after over 200 girls were abducted from a school in the town of Chibok in Borno by Boko Haram. The Chibok abductions—most of the girls are still missing—triggered a global campaign against the jihadists. Muhammadu Buhari, a former military dictator, contested the 2015 presidential election, promising to defeat Boko Haram and restore security in the northeast. Mr. Buhari won and in his first term, he set up a regional coalition to fight the terrorists. The campaign was effective. Within a year, the Nigerian troops liberated most of the towns and villages Boko Haram had controlled and pushed the jihadists back to the Sambisa forest and the Manda mountains.

But the offensive did not defeat Boko Haram, who regrouped in the forest and

started a relentless terror campaign in recent years. When Boko Haram claimed the abductions of hundreds of school boys in Katsina State in the northwest on December 11, many were surprised as the region was well outside the group's area of operations. The government claimed that local "bandits" were behind the abductions. But Boko Haram had released a video showing the boys in distress, before most of them were released on Friday after talks between the authorities and the kidnappers. The jihadists said they carried out the operation as the school was providing "un-Islamic teachings". One of the boys released told the media that they were captured by "the men of Shekau".

The attack on schools and children is nothing new for the group. Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf, a popular cleric based in Maiduguri in Borno, was a vocal opponent of Nigeria's school system, which he called the "western education" system. In 2002, he set up a religious complex, including an Islamic school and a mosque, in Maiduguri, which attracted hundreds of young students from across the country. But Boko Haram, whose official Arabic name was 'Jama'atul Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), was more than a group of preachers. The locals called them Boko Haram (which in the Hausa language means 'Western education is forbidden') because of their hardline opposition to the school system.

Recruiting centre
Yusuf wanted to "purify" the practice of Islam and create an Islamic State. The religious complex he founded became a recruiting centre. In 2009, he started an insurgency from Maiduguri. The Nigerian troops

responded with heavy force. They captured the group's headquarters, killed hundreds of its supporters and militants, including Yusuf. They claimed that Boko Haram was finished. They were wrong.

The group regrouped under Shekau. In 2015, it changed its name to the Islamic State's West Africa Province. Even after the Islamic State core was defeated in Iraq and Syria and its leader, Baghda, was killed, Boko Haram continued to remain a potent terrorist machinery. After retreating to the forest in 2016 in the wake of the government offensive, the jihadists started attacking security forces and civilians in 2018. The last two years have been deadlier for Nigeria's security forces than any other period in the decade-long conflict, according to the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations. Between June and November, more than 200 people have been murdered or kidnapped in and around Maiduguri.

The kidnappings in Katsina, Mr. Buhari's home state, were particularly embarrassing for the President who had come to power on promises of ending jihadist insurgency. Five years into his rule, Boko Haram is still standing strong, expanding its reach from Nigeria to Niger and Cameroon. And if they were actually behind the Katsina kidnappings, it suggests that they are now expanding their operations across Nigeria.

BOKO HARAM

The 'Islamic State' in Africa

Jihadists pose daunting security challenges, despite recent military setbacks

STANLY JOHNY

We are in an Islamic State, declared Abubakar Shekau in a 52-minute video, shot somewhere in northeastern Nigeria, in August 2014. The leader of Boko Haram, the Sunni jihadist group that had captured swathes of territories in the Borno and Yobe States, also said, 'We have nothing to do with Nigeria.' He later declared allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-declared 'Caliph' of the Islamic State terror organisation, who was killed by American forces in 2019.

Shekau's claim came a few months after over 200 girls were abducted from a school in the town of Chibok in Borno by Boko Haram. The Chibok abductions—most of the girls are still missing—triggered a global campaign against the jihadists. Muhammadu Buhari, a former military dictator, contested the 2015 presidential election, promising to defeat Boko Haram and restore security in the northeast. Mr. Buhari won and in his first term, he set up a regional coalition to fight the terrorists. The campaign was effective. Within a year, the Nigerian troops liberated most of the towns and villages Boko Haram had controlled and pushed the jihadists back to the Sambisa forest and the Manda mountains.

But the offensive did not defeat Boko Haram, who regrouped in the forest and

started a relentless terror campaign in recent years. When Boko Haram claimed the abductions of hundreds of school boys in Katsina State in the northwest on December 11, many were surprised as the region was well outside the group's area of operations. The government claimed that local "bandits" were behind the abductions. But Boko Haram had released a video showing the boys in distress, before most of them were released on Friday after talks between the authorities and the kidnappers. The jihadists said they carried out the operation as the school was providing "un-Islamic teachings". One of the boys released told the media that they were captured by "the men of Shekau".

The attack on schools and children is nothing new for the group. Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf, a popular cleric based in Maiduguri in Borno, was a vocal opponent of Nigeria's school system, which he called the "western education" system. In 2002, he set up a religious complex, including an Islamic school and a mosque, in Maiduguri, which attracted hundreds of young students from across the country. But Boko Haram, whose official Arabic name was 'Jama'atul Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), was more than a group of preachers. The locals called them Boko Haram (which in the Hausa language means 'Western education is forbidden') because of their hardline opposition to the school system.

Recruiting centre

Yusuf wanted to "purify" the practice of Islam and create an Islamic State. The religious complex he founded became a recruiting centre. In 2009, he started an insurgency from Maiduguri. The Nigerian troops

responded with heavy force. They captured the group's headquarters, killed hundreds of its supporters and militants, including Yusuf. They claimed that Boko Haram was finished. They were wrong.

The group regrouped under Shekau. In 2015, it changed its name to the Islamic State's West Africa Province. Even after the Islamic State core was defeated in Iraq and Syria and its leader, Baghda, was killed, Boko Haram continued to remain a potent terrorist machinery. After retreating to the forest in 2016 in the wake of the government offensive, the jihadists started attacking security forces and civilians in 2018. The last two years have been deadlier for Nigeria's security forces than any other period in the decade-long conflict, according to the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations. Between June and November, more than 200 people have been murdered or kidnapped in and around Maiduguri.

The kidnappings in Katsina, Mr. Buhari's home state, were particularly embarrassing for the President who had come to power on promises of ending jihadist insurgency. Five years into his rule, Boko Haram is still standing strong, expanding its reach from Nigeria to Niger and Cameroon. And if they were actually behind the Katsina kidnappings, it suggests that they are now expanding their operations across Nigeria.

Indian batting plumbs new depths as Aussie pacers wreak havoc

Hazlewood and Cummins condemn the visitors to lowest Test score of 36 and defeat in two-and-a-half days; injured Shami likely to miss rest of the series

INDIA IN AUS

REUTERS
ADELAIDE

Josh Hazlewood took five for eight as Australia romped to an emphatic victory by eight wickets in the first Test at Adelaide Oval on Saturday after skittling India for 36, its lowest innings score in its 88 years of Test cricket.

Hazlewood and Pat Cummins (four for 21) turned a tight Test on its head in a devastating spell of pace bowling to open the third day of the day-night Test, ripping through the much-vaunted Indian batting line-up in less than two hours.

Australia chased down the victory target of 90 for the loss of Matthew Wade (33) and Marnus Labuschagne (6) to take a 1-0 lead in the series with Tests to come in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

"We were expecting a real dogfight right to the end, late day four, maybe day five in this test," said Australia skipper Tim Paine, who was voted man-of-the-match.

"Again, it shows the talent

| INDIA | | AUSTRALIA | | V | | INDIA | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|--------|-------------|
| 1ST INNINGS | 2ND INNINGS | BOWLERS | WKS | RUNS | BATSMEN | OUT | B RUNS | FALL OF WKS |
| 244 | 191 | I STARC | 7 | SHAW | B 2 | 4 | 1 FOR | 7 |
| | | CUMMINS | 2 | BUMRAH | CB 2 | 2 | 2 | 15 |
| | | HAZLEWOOD | 5 | PUJARA | CW 2 | 0 | 3 | 15 |
| | | LYON | 8 | AGARWAL | CW 3 | 9 | 4 | 15 |
| | | GREEN | 1 | RAHANE | CW 3 | 0 | 5 | 15 |
| | | LAB'CHAGNE | 7 | KOHLI | C 5 | 2 | 4 | 19 |
| | | HEAD | 8 | SAHA | C 6 | 3 | 4 | 26 |
| | | SIMITH | 9 | ASHWIN | CW 3 | 0 | 8 | 26 |
| | | WADE | | VIHARI | CW 3 | 7 | 9 | 31 |
| | | BURNS | | | | | OVERS | |
| | | PAIN C | | | | | RQD | 90 |
| | | OXENFORD | | | | | | |
| | | REIFFEL | | | | | | |

The tale of woe! The Adelaide scoreboard that will always haunt aficionados of Indian cricket. ■ AFP

we have with the ball and when our boys execute and there's anything in the wicket, that's what can happen."

The margin of victory will be a hefty blow to India's morale as well as its hopes of repeating a maiden Test series triumph in Australia two years ago.

The tourists had resumed on 9 for one looking to build on the first innings lead of 62

they held overnight after two well-balanced days of the pink ball contest.

Devastating spell

Hazlewood and Cummins ripped up that script in short order with some quite brilliant bowling – in one spell they took four wickets for no runs over 29 balls.

None of India's batsmen,

including the prolific Virat Kohli, managed to get into double figures in the second innings – only the second time that has happened to any team in a Test match.

The innings score was the lowest in 544 Tests going back to 1932 – worse than its previous low of 42 against England at Lords in 1974 – and only two countries have managed fewer runs in the long history of the format.

Mohammed Shami is likely to miss the rest of the Test series after taking a blow to the forearm from a short Cummins delivery which brought an end to India's dismal innings when he retired hurt.

The tourists will already be without Kohli for the rest of the series as the skipper returns home for the birth of his first child.

We lacked intent to take the game forward, says Kohli

The way we batted made the bowlers look more potent'

S. DIPAK RAGAV



Cummins and Hazlewood... too hot to handle. ■ AP

batted made them look more potent than they were," he explained.

Kohli also added that the team should have done a better job on the second day, especially with its catching, as it let Australia, which was on 111 for seven at one stage, off the hook.

"It was very crucial and they can be very costly. It is something we realised in a

harsh way, what the repercussions of not taking those opportunities can and will be in Test cricket.

"It would have been a boosting factor if we had a lead of a few more runs because then you are already over 100. With a decent batting effort, the opposition starts panicking as the target is surely moving up," Kohli added.

Gold for Panghal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Amit Panghal (52kg) claimed gold without having to fight his final bout, while Satish Kumar (+91kg) ended with silver after injury prevented him from competing in his final at the boxing World Cup in Cologne on Saturday. Panghal was given a walkover by Germany's Argishti Teryanyan.

Also making the final were Sakshi and Manisha in the women's 57kg category. The two boxers will take on each other in the title clash.

Real Kashmir triumphs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Real Kashmir FC thwarted local outfit George Telegraph's spirited challenge to record a 2-1 victory and become the first team from Jammu and Kashmir to win the 123-year-old IFA Shield on Saturday.

The result:

Real Kashmir 2 (Lukman 36pen, Robertson 59) bt George Telegraph 1 (Goutam 48).

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

244 in 93.1 overs

AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

191 in 72.1 overs

INDIA – 2nd INNINGS

Prithvi Shaw b Cummins 4 (4b), Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Hazlewood 9 (40b, 1x4), Jasprit Bumrah c & b Cummins 2 (17b), Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 0 (8b), Virat Kohli c Green b Cummins 4 (8b, 1x4), Ajinkya Rahane c Paine b Hazlewood 0 (4b), Hanuma Vihari c Paine b Hazlewood 8 (22b, 1x4), Wriddhiman Saha c Labuschagne b Hazlewood 4 (15b), R. Ashwin c Paine b Hazlewood 0 (1b), Umesh Yadav (not out) 4 (5b, 1x4), Mohammed Shami retd. hurt 1 (4b); Total (in

21.2 overs): 36.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-7 (Shaw, 3.1 overs), 2-15 (Bumrah, 7.6), 3-15 (Pujara, 11.2), 4-15 (Mayank, 12.1), 5-15 (Rahane, 12.5), 6-19 (Kohli, 13.4), 7-26 (Saha, 18.4), 8-26 (Ashwin, 18.5), 9-31 (Vihari, 20.1).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 6-3-72, Cummins 10.2-21-4, Hazlewood 5-3-8-5.

AUSTRALIA – 2ND INNINGS

(Target 90)

Matthew Wade run out 33 (53b,

54x), Joe Burns (not out) 51 (63b, 7x4, 1x6), Marnus Labuschagne c Mayank b Ashwin 6 (10b), Steve Smith (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-1, 1b-2); Total (for the wkt's, in 21 overs): 93.

FALL OF WICKETS

Matthew Wade run out 33 (53b, 54x), Joe Burns (not out) 51 (63b, 7x4, 1x6), Marnus Labuschagne c Mayank b Ashwin 6 (10b), Steve Smith (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-1, 1b-2); Total (for the wkt's, in 21 overs): 93.

1-70 (Wade, 17.2), 2-82 (Labuschagne, 19.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Umesh 8-1-49-0, Bumrah 7-1-27-0, Ashwin 6-1-16-1.

Man-of-the-Match:

Paine.

Australia won by eight wickets and leads four-match series 1-0.

Next Test: December 26 to 30, Melbourne, 5 a.m., IST.

Lowest Test totals

■ 26 NZ vs Eng, Auckland, 1955

■ 30 SA vs Eng, Port Elizabeth, 1896

■ 30 SA vs Eng, Birmingham, 1924

■ 35 SA vs Eng, Cape Town, 1899

■ 36 SA vs Aus, Melbourne, 1932

■ 36 Aus v Eng, Birmingham, 1902

■ 36 India* vs Australia, Adelaide, 2020

■ India's previous lowest was 42 against England at Lord's in 1974

Statosphere

For the first time in 2396 Tests, all 11 batsmen and Extras failed to touch double figures

■ First loss for India after Kohli has won the toss. In his previous 25 Tests after calling right, he had won 21 times and

On this date (December 19) in 2016, India recorded its highest Test score - 759/7 declared against England in Chennai

drawn the other four

■ Australia has now won all its eight D-N Tests

■ 19 Innings taken by Mayank to reach 1000 Test runs, third fastest after Kamli (14) and Pujara (18)

■ *India's previous lowest was 42 against England at Lord's in 1974

Jennifer regains crown

SPORTS REPORTER
CHENNAI

Ann Jennifer (Sparks Racing) regained the girls' title with her fourth consecutive win in the MRF MMSC FMSI Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship (INMRC) on Saturday.

Important results (provisional, six laps unless mentioned, winners only): Pro-Stock 301-400cc (Race 2): Rajini Krishnan (RACR Castrol Power Racing) (11m 46.271s).

Pro-Stock 165cc (Race 2): Jagannath Santrupt (RACR Castrol Power Racing) (13:12.455); Novice (Stock 165cc, Race 2): Ullas Santrupt (RACR Castrol Power Racing) (13:12.455); Race 3: Navneeth Kumar (Rullex Rockers Racing) (13:06.810).

Girls (Stock 165cc, Race 2, 5 laps): 1. Ann Jennifer (Sparks Racing) (10:55.561).

TVS One-Make Championship - Open (RTR 310, Race 2): 2. S. Kishoar (Coimbatore) (11:47.847); Race 3: M. Anup Kumar (Chennai) (11:46.186).

Novice (Stock 200, Race 2): Mohan Babu (Chennai) (13:21.467).

Girls (RTR 200, Race 2, 5 laps): 1. Ann Jennifer (Sparks Racing) (10:55.561).

ATMIRAN BHARAT PLATE (DIV. II), (1,200m), rated 30 to 20, 5-y-o & over: ANAKIN (Srinath) 1, Arrogance (Yash) 2, Omnidom (Darshan) 3 and Stroke Of Genius (P. Dhebe) 4. Link, 1/2 and 2/4-1, Im, 37.3s, 124 (w), 26, 13 and II (p), SHP: 34, TPH: 92, FP: 574, Q: 266, Trinella 1,421 and 152, Exacta: 1,532 and 878, Favourite: Augusta. Owners: Mr. H.K. Lakshman Gowda, Mr. Sharath M. Narayana, Mr. N. Prem Kumar & Mr. Shailendra Singh. Trainer: V. Lokanathan.

In singles, I played a really good match against Siminika, but a couple of errors changed the course of the match. I took the positives and it boosted my confidence," said Ankita, who lost in three sets to Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic.

Ranked 180 in singles, Ankita said she was trying to sharpen her singles game to get into the top-100 and play Grand Slam main draws.

Now, the focus will be on training well, for the Australian Open qualifiers in Dubai, and boarding the flight to Melbourne.

Lagarde takes Bangalore 2000 Guineas

BENGALURU: S. Attaollahi-trained

Lagarde (Suraj up), won the Bangalore 2000 Guineas, the chief

event of the races held here on Saturday (Dec. 19). The winner is owned by Mr. Rama Sesu Eyunni, Mr. P. Prabhakar Reddy & Five Stars Shipping Co. Pvt Ltd rep by Mr. K.N. Dhunjibhoy & Mr. Z.K. Dhunjibhoy.

Riding confidently, Suraj, who kept Lagarde third or fourth till the last 300m, started manoeuvring