

SHORT TAKE

Bail plea rejected of man seen in video in 'aggressive posture'

New Delhi: A Delhi court has dismissed the bail application of a man in a northeast Delhi riots case, saying he can be clearly seen in a CCTV footage in an "aggressive posture" with other rioters. Additional sessions judge Amitabh Rawat dismissed the bail plea of Gurmeet Singh and said the accused was "part of the unlawful assembly which, in prosecution of common object, had committed the offence" of rioting and firing, leading to gunshot injuries to some people and police officials. "Regarding the role of the present accused/applicant Gurmeet Singh, he is clearly visible in the CCTV footage in an aggressive posture with other rioters. He is holding wooden 'fatta' (plank) and brick in his hands. Thus, he is actively participating in the riots. Thus, the accused was part of the unlawful assembly which in prosecution of common object had committed the offence of rioting and firing gunshot injuries on the public persons and police officials and thus, every member of unlawful assembly is deemed to be guilty of offence committed by every member of that assembly in prosecution of common object of that assembly," the court said in its order passed on December 18. During the hearing, Singh's counsel claimed he had been falsely implicated in the matter.

— PTI

Illegal online health service: HC seeks response on pleaAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

The Delhi High Court has sought responses from the Centre, Delhi government and others on a plea seeking contempt proceedings over the alleged non-compliance of an earlier order for action against illegal online health service aggregators in Delhi and to regulate online pathological labs. A bench of Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva on Friday issued notice to the Centre through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Delhi government and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and slated the matter for further hearing on January 29, 2021. The court also asked petitioner Dr Rohit Jain, who moved the court through counsel Shashank Deo Sudhi, to file a corrected memo of parties giving correct serial numbers of the respondents. The contempt plea said that the respondents have completely failed to comply with the order of this court by not taking appropriate legal actions against online health aggregators despite its directions for the same. The plea said that the court had on August 6 directed the authorities to initiate action in accordance with the law against any illegal online health service aggregators.

'Impose uniform tax on smokeless tobacco products'AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

In a pre-Budget appeal to the government, Shram, a self-help group with large number of doctors and professionals, appealed to Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan and Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to introduce uniform taxation on smokeless and other non-virginia tobacco products. The group, working in the field of health and education to build awareness campaigns against tobacco and alcohol, proposed regulations which will help reduce health burden of tobacco on youth and vulnerable citizens and can help creating a better health infrastructure Shram also demanded bringing in proper regulation on sale of smokeless other non-virginia tobacco products as this is manufactured by industry which is highly unorganised, evades taxes and forms more than 90 per cent of total tobacco consumption in India. Appealing for introducing a regulatory framework for trading of smokeless tobacco, Dr Mukul Bajpai of Shram said: "Failure to tax smokeless tobacco and its forms uniformly defeats the purpose of the tobacco control programme."

Mayors call off dharna near Kejriwal home after 13 days

*Decision to end hungerstrike came after many women councillors fell sick*AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

The sit-in protest launched by the three mayors and other councillors of the BJP-ruled municipal corporations outside chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence was called off after 13 days on Saturday.

The three mayors and 19 other BJP councillors, who were on an indefinite fast for the last three days, were offered juice by the Union housing and urban affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri, BJP national secretary and the co-incharge of the party's city unit Alka Gurjar and Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash, South Delhi

mayor Anamika, East Delhi mayor Nirmal Jain and others called off the protest. After her health condition deteriorated, Ms Anamika was earlier shifted to Hindu Rao Hospital where she is recuperating.

"These mayors and leaders were not protesting for themselves or the party, they were protesting because dues of ₹13,000 crore have not been paid and the salaries of the sanitation workers and other employees of the municipal corporations are affected," said Mr Puri.

The agitation demanding the ₹13,000 crore dues from the Delhi government will continue in other forms, Mr Puri added and hoped that the

▶ NORTH DELHI mayor Jai Prakash said that the hungerstrike has just ended, the fight is not over yet, we will take this fight further. "This fight is for the 200,000 corporation employees, 50,000 retired employees, 70,000 sanitation staff, doctors and teachers," Mr Prakash added.

chief minister will have a change of heart and will find solutions to the problems being faced by people.

"The decision to call off the dharna came amid deteriorating health condition of the protesters, including many women councillors, protesting in the open during the cold

wave. Three women councillors, including former South Delhi mayor Sunita Kangra, who sat on the fast, were hospitalised on Friday.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash and South Delhi mayor Anamika Mithilesh also fell sick and were recommended hospitalisation on Saturday," said Delhi BJP's spokesperson Virender Babbar.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash said that the hungerstrike has just ended, the fight is not over yet, we will take this fight further.

"This fight is for the 200,000 corporation employees, 50,000 retired employees, 70,000 sanitation staff, doctors and teachers," Mr Prakash added.

3 women among 4 labourers die, 2 injured as factory roof collapses

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

In a tragic incident, four labourers died while two sustained injuries after the roof of a factory collapsed in West Delhi's Khayala on Saturday. The structure, which was being used as a motor winding factory, is located at Vishnu Garden area in Khayala.

The deceased persons were identified as Saina (36), Guddi (45), Twinkle (25) and Ramesh (35) while the injured have been identified as Ravi (20) and Guddu Kumar (18). The factory belongs to Mahendra Pal, a resident of Uttam Nagar.

Accused Mahendra Pal was arrested and a case

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has been registered at Khayala police station.

According to Atul Garg, director of Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call about the incident was received around 10 am following which four fire tenders were rushed to the spot. "Six labourers, including three women, were inside the

factory when the incident took place," said Subodh Kumar, additional deputy commissioner of police, West district.

"They were rescued by a team of officials and were rushed to two nearest hospitals — Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital and Guru Gobind Singh Government Hospital. Four of the six labourers were declared brought dead by doctors, while two others were undergoing treatment," said the additional DCP.

Sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) of Patel Nagar has been informed for further legal proceedings and a legal action is being taken, the police official said.

14 hospitalised after accident on Yamuna expressway

Noida, Dec. 19: Fourteen people were hospitalised with injuries after a dumper truck collided head-on with a Uttar Pradesh Roadways bus on the Yamuna Expressway in Greater Noida, police said on Saturday.

Five of the hospitalised people are in critical condition after the accident that took place on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday in the Dankaur police station area, they said.

"The dumper truck, which is registered in Gautam Buddh Nagar district, was on its way from Noida to Jewar. Apparently, the truck was nearly 13 km away from the Zero Point when it got out of control, crossed over to the other side of the divider and collided with an incoming UP Roadways bus," a police spokesperson said.

"Fourteen people got injured in the collision and have been hospitalised at a private hospital in Greater Noida. Five of them are in critical condition," the official said.

Further proceedings were being carried out, the police said. — PTI

JNU to reopen on Monday for PhD scholars

New Delhi, Dec. 19: The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) will reopen for PhD scholars from Monday in its fourth phase of reopening the campus after being closed for over seven months in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"PHD students from all schools (both day scholars and hostellers), who require to access the laboratory, are allowed to enter the campus from December 21. The students will have to mandatorily self-quarantine themselves for seven days and submit a self-declaration," JNU Registrar Pramod Kumar said.

The university has announced that the central library, all canteens and dhabas will remain closed due to the pandemic.

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

dents.

"The heads of departments may advise individuals to install the Aarogya Setu application on compatible mobile phones and regularly update their health status on the app. This will facilitate timely provision of medical attention to those individuals who are at risk," Kumar added.

Conducting meetings online, opening doors and windows during office hours, avoiding air-conditioning, social gatherings and mandatorily wearing masks are among the guidelines issued by the university. "If any employee or student and their family members are tested positive or under home isolation or under home quarantine, they will inform about the same with supporting documents immediately. If it is found that anyone is violating the above directions and COVID-19 protocols, such violators shall be liable for disciplinary action," Kumar said.

The JNU was physically shut in March in view of the pandemic. The phased reopening of the university campus began on November 2. — PTI

3rd wave of Covid-19 in Delhi now under control: Kejriwal

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said that the third wave of corona in the national capital is under control. He claimed that when New York reached its peak, the patients were lying on the streets and corridors of hospitals.

However, it was not the case in Delhi as 7,000 beds were lying vacant when the highest number of corona cases in a day was reported in the city.

As per the Delhi health department, with 1,139 new cases on Saturday the total number of Covid-19 cases climbed to 6,15,914. With 32 new fatalities, the death toll rose to 10,251. A total of 87,330 tests were carried out which includes 47,460 RT-PCR and 39,870 rapid antigen tests.

According to Mr Kejriwal, in November, the positivity rate in Delhi was 15 per cent and on Saturday it was just 1.3 per cent.

"In November, the number of active cases touched 45,000 but on Saturday Delhi had just 12,000 active cases. Currently, Delhi has a recovery rate of 96.5 per cent. There were 131 deaths on 19 November but it has come down to 37 now," Mr Kejriwal said.

The chief minister said that the Delhi government

National capital records 3.9°C minimum temperature Delhi shivers but farmers steadfast in their protest

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

Braving the harsh cold of Delhi, thousands of farmers protesting against the three recent agri laws remained steadfast in their demands of repealing the legislations as their agitation entered its fourth week.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the national capital recorded its coldest day on Saturday with the minimum temperature dropping to 3.9°Celsius at the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides the representative data for the city.

The mercury dipped to even lower levels in some parts of the city, recording 3.3°Celsius and 3.4°Celsius at Lodhi Road and Aya Nagar respectively.

The agitation has also led to traffic diversions at various border points causing inconvenience to commuters.

Taking to Twitter on Saturday, the Delhi traffic police alerted commuters about the closure of certain roads and suggested them to take alternative routes.

It said the Ghazipur border is closed for traffic coming from Noida and Ghaziabad due to the ongoing protest.

However, those travelling to Delhi can take alternative routes via Anand Vihar, DND, Apsara, and Bhopra borders, it said.

"Tikri, Dhansa borders are closed for any traffic movement. Jhatikara border is open only for two wheelers and pedestrian movement," it said in a tweet.

However, for those travelling to Haryana, the Delhi traffic police said some borders are open—the Jharoda border (only for single carriageway), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusarai, Rajokri NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar, and Dundaheera.

The Chilla border between Noida and Delhi is open for traffic with just one carriageway. However, the other carriageway from Noida to Delhi is closed, according to the traffic police.

"Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari, Sabholi, and Mangesh borders are closed. Please take alternate routes via Lampur, Safiabad, and Singhu school toll tax borders. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba and GTK road," the traffic police said.



A health worker collects a swab sample from a shopper for the Covid-19 testing at a makeshift testing booth in New Delhi on Friday. — AFP

conducted 87,000 Covid-19 tests in the month of November. He said that there was a day when the number of active cases touched 45,000 but now there are just 12,000 active cases.

"On November 19, Delhi had the highest number of deaths due to Covid and the number was 131 but on Saturday the number of deaths was 37. This number will also go down and we are working on it. In Delhi, we gave prime importance to testing to detect Covid-19 patients," he said.

Mr Kejriwal claimed that some people advised to manipulate the Covid

▶ AS PER the Delhi health department, with 1,139 new cases on Saturday the total number of Covid-19 cases climbed to 6,15,914. With 32 new fatalities, the death toll rose to 10,251.

testing numbers.

"Some people advised the government to fraudulently improve the Covid-19 testing figures, but the Delhi government issued strict orders. All the tests are genuine," he added.

Mr Kejriwal pointed out that some days ago Delhi witnessed the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic. "The first wave of this

pandemic came to Delhi in the month of June when the number of cases started increasing and the number of deaths also increased. In the month of August and September, the national capital witnessed the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Delhi witnessed the third wave of Covid pandemic in the month of October.

"On one hand, the pollution level of Delhi was increasing due to stubble burning at the neighbouring states and on the other hand the number of Covid-19 cases was also increasing," said the chief minister.

5,000kg drugs seized, 844 arrested till November end this year: Police

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

The Delhi Police recovered over 5,000 kilogram of drugs and arrested 844 persons till November 2020, officials said on Saturday. The data shared by the Delhi Police has record since January 1, 2020 till November 31, 2020. Police have registered 695 cases and recovered 5,271.548 kg drugs.

According to the data, police have recovered 23,904 kg charas, 29,184 kg opium, 4,205.392 kg ganja,

84,932 kg heroin, 699.538 kg poppy head and 1.035 kg cocaine.

The other drugs — 219,743 kg tremadol, 12,500 tablets alprazolam, 0.325 kg methaqualone, 500 tablets buprenorphine, 7.495 kg amphetamine — have also been recovered during 2020, police said.

According to police, Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava said, "The Delhi Police is taking many steps. We need to spread awareness so that no one would get in this.

The person who is taking drug should get himself treated. The source of supply also should be destroyed."

In 2019, police 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 morphine, 10,513 kg methaqualone, 1,480 kg ketamine, 100 injection ketajet etc were also recovered in 2019, police added.

'Around 30K bookings for high security registration plates received daily'

4-month waiting period for HSRP

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Vehicle owners making booking for the mandatory high security registration plates (HSRP) and colour-coded stickers for their vehicles are being given a waiting period of up to four months even as the transport department is carrying out a drive to encourage compliance.

According to officials, around 30,000 bookings for HSRP are received daily whereas only 10,000 such registration plates are affixed in a day.

"I booked my HSRP online recently and the scheduled waiting period is till March next year," said Rahul Raj, a vehicle

owner from Northeast Delhi.

The company, contracted for the work, is expanding its booking facilities as well as affixation capacities at doorstep as demand is rising on a day-to-day basis, said a spokesperson of HSRP supplier Rosmerta Safety Systems.

"Once a vehicle owner makes a booking the slip that is generated is valid for a period of 15 days from the date of appointment. The enforcement agency will not challan the vehicle if the booking slip is presented," he said.

There were also complaints that owners of older vehicles were unable

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to book HSRP online as details of those vehicles were not updated on the latest NIC database, Vahan 4.

"Owners of such vehicles require to go to the website and get their data updated on Vahan 4," said the Rosmerta spokesperson.

The transport department is continuing with a limited pre-enforcement drive for encouraging vehicle owners to fix colour stickers and HSRP, said special commissioner (Operations) of the transport department K.K. Dahiya.

"It's being done in selective areas of Delhi. The objective is still to sensitise vehicle owners to get HSRP and colour-coded stickers at the earliest," he said.

The campaign is targeted for four-wheelers only, Mr Dahiya said and added that the thrust was to sensitise vehicle owners.

— PTI



Delhi Pradesh Mahila Congress activists protest against continuous price hike of LPG and other essential commodities near Palika Bazar in New Delhi on Saturday. — G.N. JHA

SHORT TAKES

POLICE TO PROBE AKHTAR'S PLAINT AGAINST KANGANA

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, DEC. 19

The Mumbai police will now probe a defamation complaint filed by Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar against actor Kangana Ranaut following the orders of the Andheri court. The Juhu police has been asked to probe into the complaint pertaining to the remarks of coterie in the film industry naming Mr Akhtar.

The lyricist had sought action against Ranaut after she allegedly made statements on national television and in social media in connection with the coterie operating in the film industry. The complaint stated that Ms Ranaut had mentioned Mr Akhtar when speaking about coterie and that she had also claimed that the lyricist had threatened her to not speak about her alleged relationship with actor Hrithik Roshan.

The plea before Andheri metropolitan court sought for criminal case under relevant sections against Ms Ranaut. The magistrate court on Saturday ordered the Juhu police to investigate the matter and submit their report on January 16.

PRAGYA SKIPS MALEGAON BLAST CASE TRIAL AGAIN

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, DEC. 19

BJP's Bhopal MP Pragya Singh Thakur, accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, has again given a skip to a hearing before a special NIA court. This is the second consecutive time this month she has missed the court hearing, which invoked a discontent from the court.

According to Ms Thakur's lawyer, she was admitted to a hospital in Delhi on Friday, due to which she could not attend the hearing. Of all the seven accused, five remained present in the court, whereas Ms Thakur and another accused Sudhakar Chaturvedi did not appear in court, the later citing personal reasons. Expressing displeasure on this, judge P. R. Sitre directed all the seven accused to appear before it on January 4.

"Ms Thakur has been undergoing treatment at AIIMS Delhi since April. She had gone there for a check-up and had to be admitted there on Friday on the advice of doctors following her medical reports," her lawyer J.P. Mishra said.

HONDA STOPS PRODUCTION AT GREATER NOIDA

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) has decided to pull the plug on production at its Greater Noida plant in Uttar Pradesh, sources said on Saturday.

The automaker, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japanese Honda Motor Co, had set up the Greater Noida plant in 1997.

Industry sources said the plant would, however, continue to house the company's corporate head office, spare parts division and research and development (R&D) centre among other functions.

The company declined to comment on the matter. The automaker would now rely only on its Tapukara facility in Rajasthan to roll out its entire product range in the country, sources added.

HCIL had earlier this year initiated a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) for its manufacturing line associates at the plant to increase productivity and efficiency.

Govt must protect vaccine makers: Poonawalla

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Manufacturers need to have protection against all lawsuits for their vaccines especially during a pandemic, Serum Institute of India (SII) Chief Executive Officer Adar Poonawalla has said.

He also said that the vaccine makers are going to propose this to the government, while speaking at a virtual panel on the challenges of developing a Covid-19 vaccine at the CarnegieIndia's Global Technology Summit on Friday.

"We need to have the government indemnify manufacturers, especially vaccine manufacturers, against all lawsuits. In fact, COVAX and other countries have already started talking about

that," Poonawalla said.

It is because when frivolous claims come up, and something is blown out of proportion in the media, skepticism sets in that definitely something can happen due to the vaccine and to dispel that, the government needs to step in to spread the right information, he added.

"The government can act, the US, for example, has in fact invoked a law, to say that during a pandemic, and this is especially important only during a pandemic, to indemnify vaccine manufacturers against lawsuits for severe adverse effects or any other frivolous claims which may come about, because that adds to the fear and also will bankrupt vaccine manufacturer

India to inoculate 30 crore, says Health min

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan on Saturday chaired a meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19 to discuss vaccination development, and its roll out process. Apart from catering to its own huge population, India has got requests from about 12 countries for its vaccines as and when they are ready.

With all focus now on vaccination, the govern-

ment is working out a strategy for its roll out from January 2021. "India's Covid-19 Pandemic Growth has dropped to 2 per cent and Case Fatality Rate is amongst lowest in the world at 1.45 per cent. India's Recovery Rate has peaked to 95.46% while the strategy of testing 1 million samples has decreased the Cumulative Positivity Rate to 6.25%," said Dr Harsh Vardhan.

Among the latest to have caught the Covid-19 infection is the chief of Indian Council of Medical Research

Dr Balram Bhargava who was admitted in Delhi's AIIMS trauma centre.

Observing the fact that despite festivals in the month of October November, no new surge of cases were observed in this period due to comprehensive testing, tracking and treatment policy implemented on the ground, the Union Health Minister reiterated his concern and appeal to diligently maintain Covid-19 appropriate behaviour even at a time when the country is at the cusp of

authorising the first set of vaccines. He also expressed the need for an expeditious vaccination drive to cover all the target populations estimated to be around 30 crores.

Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member NITI Aayog apprised the GoM on three critical aspects of vaccination — the process of pre-clinical and clinical trial of all vaccines, the details of the six vaccine candidates undergoing trial in India (in terms of composition, manufacturers and technical partners).

are going to propose, he added. Last month, Serum had

rejected charges that a 40-year-old man who took part in the 'Covishield' vaccine trial in Chennai had levelled against the company, alleging serious side effects, including a virtual neurological breakdown and impairment of cognitive functions.

He had also sought ₹5 crore compensation in a legal notice to Serum and others, besides seeking a halt on the trial.

Refuting the charges, Serum had said, "It is evident that the intention behind spreading of such malicious information is an oblique pecuniary motive. The Serum Institute of India, will seek damages in excess of ₹100 crore for the same and will defend such malicious claims". — PTI

RSS ideologue Vaidya, 97, dies after brief illness

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, DEC. 19

Veteran Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue Madhav Govind Vaidya (97) passed away in Nagpur on Saturday after a brief illness. He was the first official spokesperson of the organisation.

Mr Vaidya was undergoing treatment for illness at a private hospital in Nagpur, where he breathed his last at 3.35 pm. The final rites will be held at Ambazari Ghat on Sunday.

The veteran RSS leader was the father of RSS Sah-Sarkaryawah (joint general secretary) Manmohan Vaidya, who tweeted, "Shri MG Vaidya, my father breathed his last today at 3.35 pm at Nagpur after completing 97 years of active, meaningful and inspiring life. He was a veteran journalist, a Hindutva 'Bhashyakar' and active Sangh (RSS) Swayamsevak for 9 decades."

Born in Taroda village in Wardha district, Mr Vaidya joined the RSS from his college days. He became a member of the RSS in 1943 while at the Morris College in Nagpur. When the RSS was banned after the assassination of Mahatma

Gandhi, he did the organisational work by going underground.

A renowned Sanskrit scholar, Mr Vaidya was also a former editor of pro-RSS Marathi daily 'Tarun Bharat'. During his eight-decade old association with the RSS, he saw several ups and downs in the organisation's history before seeing its political wing BJP becoming a dominant force in Indian politics. Apart from being the face of the organisation as Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh (chief spokesperson) for several years, he was also the Akhil Bhartiya Boudhik Pramukh (Intellectual head) of the RSS. He was a nominated member of the Maharashtra Vidhan Parishad from 1978 to 1984.

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Shri MG Vaidya Ji was a distinguished writer and journalist. He contributed extensively to the RSS for decades. He also worked to strengthen the BJP. Saddened by his demise. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti."

BJP logs landslide win in Tiwa Autonomous Council

Guwahati, Dec. 19: The ruling BJP registered a landslide victory in Tiwa Autonomous Council winning 33 of 36 seats, the Assam State Election Commission (ASEC) said on Saturday.

BJP's ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) won two seats, while the opposition Congress was decimated with just one seat in its kitty, ASEC said in its results update.

The ruling party defeated the Congress in most of the seats it won and humbled a few independent contestants in some places, according to the counting updates.

BJP's Moniram Patar from Gobha constituency has won uncontested, it said.

A total of 124 candidates were in the fray and over

71 per cent of the 3,08,409 voters exercised their franchise on December 17 in 36 constituencies spread across Nagaon, Morigaon, Hojai and Kamrup metropolitan districts.

The saffron party has performed impressively in the back-to-back elections in Bodoland Territorial Council and Tiwa Autonomous Council, just months ahead of the state polls due early next year.

In the recently concluded elections of the 40-member Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), the BJP formed the board in alliance with two other local parties.

The incumbent Bodoland People's Front (BPF) became the single largest party with 17 seats. — PTI

Adhikari joins BJP, hails Amit Shah, reveals their past link

Lashes out at Mamata, her nephew for branding him a 'traitor'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, DEC. 19

Joining the BJP on Saturday in his home turf, Shubhendu Adhikari described Union home minister Amit Shah as his "Dada" and "Aan Baan Shan" of the country before raising a slogan "Tolabaj Bhaipo Hatao (Remove Extortionist Nephew)" in an oblique reference to Diamond Harbour Trinamul Congress MP and chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

"The Union home minister, who has accepted me as a primary member of the world's biggest party: BJP that believes in pluralism, is my elder brother, my Dada and Aan Baan Shan of our nation. He fulfilled all the promises, he made earlier, within eight months of winning the Lok Sabha Election in 2019 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership," Mr Adhikari told a grand rally in Midnapore.

Revealing his long connection with Mr Shah for the first time, he said, "My relation with him has been since when he was the BJP all India general secretary in charge of East Uttar Pradesh. He led the party's victory in Lok Sabha polls in 2014 and steered the saffron storm in UP. I met him in a small room in the party's old office at Ashoka Road. The present UP health minister Siddharth Nath Singh had arranged the meeting. But he never asked me to join the BJP."

Mr Adhikari claimed, "When I was infected by Covid-19, none from the party, I then belonged to, inquired about me. But Mr Shah did twice. I offer my Namam to him."

Lashing out at Ms Banerjee and her nephew for branding him as a "traitor," he alleged, "They (TMC) are claiming of my betrayal to mother. Mother is who gives birth to a child. My mother is Gayatri Adhikari. There is another: Bharatmata as my motherland. None else. Yesterday an old TMC friend sent me a video showing my slogan 'BJP Hatao, Bharat Banchao' before the Lok



Union Home Minister Amit Shah being garlanded by party leaders during an election rally ahead of West Bengal Assembly polls 2021, in West Midnapore district, on Saturday.

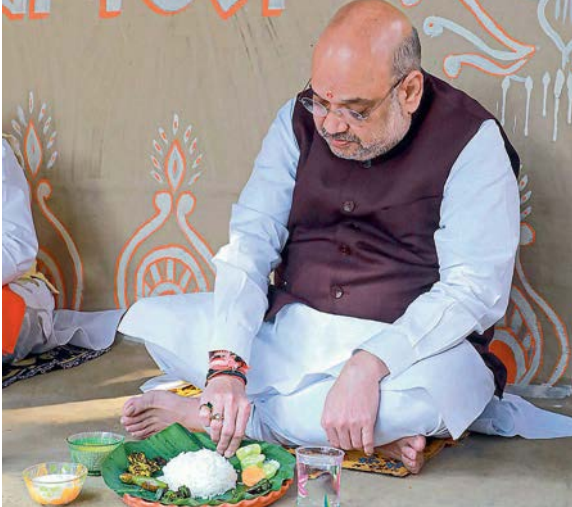
— PTI

Shah has lunch at house of farmer in West Bengal

Midnapore (WB), Dec. 19: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday had lunch at the house of a farmer in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district as part of his exercise to strengthen relations with the agriculturists ahead of the Assembly elections in the state.

Shah's move assumes significance in the wake of the ongoing farmers' protests in Delhi against the three farm laws. Shah, who is on a two-day visit to West Bengal to take stock of the BJP's affairs in the state, arrived here on Saturday and offered puja at a local temple. Then, the union minister went to the residence of Sanatan Singh at Balijhuri and had lunch there, sitting on the floor of the house.

Shah was accompanied by BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya. BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy and state party chief Dilip Ghosh. It was a vegetarian platter of Bengali delicacies, served on a



Union Home Minister Amit Shah having lunch at the house of Jhunu Singh and Sanatan Singh, at Beljuri village in Midnapore, on Saturday.

— PTI

banana leaf by the women family members of Singh. Shah and other guests, who sat on the floor of the verandah of the two-storey house with a tin roof, had 'saak bhaja', 'lou daal', 'shukto' (mixed vegetable which is slightly bitter), 'phulkopi tarkari' (ca-

uliflower curry), 'posto' (potato cooked in poppy seed paste) and 'tok doi'.

Earlier, the union minister and other BJP leaders were greeted by ululating and blowing of conch shells by the women members of the household, including Singh's wife. — PTI

Sabha polls. I replied to him my slogan today here would be "Tolabaj Bhaipo

Hatao' (Remove Extortionist Nephew)." Mr Adhikari also

released his open letter to TMC workers urging them to join BJP.

SALARY | DEFAULT Taiwan firm admits lapses in its wage payment processes in Apple probe

Wistron put on probation, fires India head

New Delhi, Dec. 19: A week after violence broke out at its Narasapura facility in Karnataka, contract manufacturer Wistron on Saturday said it has fired its vice-president who was heading India operations even as iPhone maker Apple placed the Taiwanese firm on probation.

Wistron, which assembles the latest version of the iPhone SE at the violence-hit plant, admitted that there were faults in its wage payment processes. A section of workers at Wistron Corporation's facility in Narasapura Industrial Area in Kolar district near Bengaluru went on ra-

mpage last week over non-payment of their wages.

"We are removing the Vice President who oversees our business in India. We are also enhancing our processes and restructuring our teams to ensure these issues cannot happen again," the Apple's contract manufacturer, Wistron, said in a statement.

While Wistron did not name the executive removed, sources said Vincent Lee has been fired. Wistron said the company has been investigating the matter and has "found that some workers were not paid correctly, or on time". "We deeply regret this and apol-

● COMPANY SAID it has established an employee assistance programme for workers at the facility, and has set up a 24-hour grievance hotline in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and English to ensure all workers can voice any concerns they may have, anonymously.

ogise to all of our workers. This is a new facility and we recognise that we made mistakes as we expanded," Wistron said.

The Taiwanese company noted that some of the

processes put in place to manage labour agencies and payments, need to be strengthened and upgraded and that it is taking "immediate action to correct this, including disciplinary action".

Wistron has increased its headcount from 2,000 in the middle of this year to around 9,000 recently.

"Our top priority is to ensure all workers are fully compensated immediately and we are working hard to achieve that," Wistron said.

The company said it has established an employee assistance programme for workers at the facility, and has set up a 24-hour griev-

ance hotline in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and English to ensure all workers can voice any concerns they may have, anonymously.

Apple, in a separate statement, said it has placed Wistron on probation and that the contract manufacturer will not receive any new business from the US-based company before corrective actions are completed.

Apple is also undertaking a detailed investigation in this matter.

Apple said while these investigations are ongoing, preliminary findings indicate violations of its

Supplier Code of Conduct by failing to implement proper working hour management processes that led to payment delays for some workers in October and November.

"We have placed Wistron on probation and they will not receive any new business from Apple before they complete corrective actions. Apple employees, along with independent auditors, will monitor their progress. Our main objective is to make sure all the workers are treated with dignity and respect, and fully compensated promptly," Apple said. — PTI

SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one lady, (depicted in the photo), Namely: Richa, W/o: Sh. Dharendra Pratap Singh, R/o: H.No. RZ A-3/69, Dabri Palam Road, Durga Park, Delhi, Age: around 23 years, has been missing from LHMC Hospital, New Delhi since 19.11.2020. In this regard a case vide DD No. 88-A, Dated 19.11.2020, has been registered at P.S. Mandir Marg, New Delhi. Her physical description is as under:
Height: 5' Feet, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Oval, Physique/Build: Thin, Hair: Long and black, Eyes: Black & Big, Clothing: Light Red Colour Sweater, Brown Colour Saree and Chappal in feet.
Any person is having any information/clue about this missing lady, may inform SHO, Mandir Marg, New Delhi at E-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in Tele No.: 011-24368638 or 24368641



Richa

S.H.O

P.S. Mandir Marg, New Delhi
Ph.: 011-23364100, 8750870522

DP/175/NDD/2020.

SHORT TAKES

2 students find 6 preliminary asteroid

Pune: Two students from a school in Lohegaon in Pune have discovered six preliminary asteroids in the Kalam Centre Asteroid Search Campaign organised by Kalam Centre and the International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC). In a release issued on Saturday, the Vikhe Patil School said Arya Pulate and Shreya Waghmare discovered the asteroids, adding that all 22 participants in the campaign were selected after a rigorous screening process through a worldwide event organised between November 9 and December 3. They were selected from across the globe and trained to analyze data and spot potential asteroids close to Earth and 27 preliminary asteroid were discovered. "Preliminary discoveries are the first observations of asteroids found in the Main Belt located between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter which need further confirmation to go to provisional status," read the release. — PTI

Haryana minister Vij feeling better

Chandigarh: Haryana home minister Anil Vij, who is undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at the Medanta hospital in Gurugram, is feeling "better" and he "rested well" on Saturday, the hospital said. In a media bulletin, Dr A.K. Dubey, medical superintendent, Medanta hospital, informed that Vij has been talking to the members of the medical team. "Though he is still in the ICU on High Flow Nasal Cannula on oxygen support, doctors are satisfied with his response to the treatment. "His vital parameters are stable and he continues to be monitored round the clock, Dubey said. Vij (67) tested positive for COVID-19 on December 5. Initially, he was admitted to the civil hospital at Ambala and later, shifted to the PGIMS-Rohtak, before being hospitalised at Medanta. — PTI

Remo discharged from hospital

Mumbai: Choreographer-filmmaker Remo D'Souza, who was admitted to Kokilaben Hospital after suffering a heart attack, has been discharged. The 46-year-old ex-judge on reality show *Dance India Dance* was admitted to the ICU on December 11. Taking to Instagram, D'Souza posted a video and revealed that he is back at his home now. "Thank you all for the love, prayers and blessings I am back... thank you @gabrieldd-souzaa @_adonis_ and @edie_rockwood for the beautiful welcome back... and thanks to all my friends," he captioned the post. — PTI

WOMEN BECOME EASY TARGETS IN POLITICS: URMILA

Mumbai: Actor-politician Urmila Matondkar says women are often easily targeted in the world of politics, but it is important for them to stay focused. During a virtual session of "We The Women" with journalist Barkha Dutt on Friday, the Shiv Sena leader said politics has become a "poisonous" field for everybody, including women, but she was aware of it when she decided to join the field. "I knew it will be tough but so was the film career. Here, it has become a poisonous field, it has become horribly vicious for anybody that nothing should surprise you. Women do become easy targets," Matondkar said. She asserted that sexism exists in politics but she has learnt to stay focused on the good work that she intends to do for the people. "One has to look at it from all dimensions, I do understand where they (detractors) were coming from. We had glamour-oriented career along with a lot of substantial roles. "Even then (being in film industry) I didn't agree that if you do certain kind of roles then only you are an actor or glamour queen. All these tags beyond a point shouldn't mean anything so I never let it affect me then and even now," she said. Matondkar said that it was her decision to connect with the people through politics and she never lets negative remarks affect her. — PTI



ED seizes Farooq's ₹11.86cr assets in laundering case

Move is aimed at making me bow...I will not, says former J&K CM

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, DEC. 19

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached former chief minister and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah's six properties worth ₹11.86 crore, including his residential houses in twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu, in connection with a probe into alleged scam in Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA).

Mr Abdullah termed the move as an attempt to "make me now". He, however, pledged, "But I won't...let them do what they want to. I will do



▶ THE ATTACHED properties include three residential houses in twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu, commercial buildings at posh Residency Road area of Srinagar. The lands at four different places in J&K have also been attached.

what I have to do."

The NC said that the ED's attaching its president's properties is "political vendetta, meant to settle political score".

In a joint statement, the party's general secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, MPs Mohammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi and ten other senior functionaries and leaders said "such acts are

nothing but unwarranted and unjustified as there is no evidence worth the name on record to justify the order of attachment of the property".

The ED sources here said that it has received an order from its headquarters in Delhi listing six properties of Mr. Abdullah, including three residential buildings and four plots of land. The

sources added that the properties have been attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The move has been necessitated by the 'laundering of funds' of JKCA under the PMLA, an ED statement confirmed.

It reads, "The attached properties include three residential houses, one at Gupkar Road, Srinagar, one at Tehsil Katipora, Tangmarg, and one at Bhatindi, village Sunjwan, (Jammu), commercial buildings at posh Residency Road area of Srinagar. The lands at four different places in Jammu and Kashmir have also been attached."

BJP leader Singh breaks ranks to back farmers' stir

Chandigarh, Dec. 19:

Former Union minister and senior BJP leader Birender Singh



has extended his support to the ongoing farmers' agitation against the three farm laws passed by the Centre.

Mr Singh is grandson of Sir Chhotu Ram, a prominent politician during the pre-independence era who championed the interest of farmers.

Mr Singh, whose son Brijendra is a sitting BJP MP, said it was his moral responsibility to stand with the farmers who he said are "worried" as they fear the new legislations will have an "impact" on their economic condition.

"Whatever I have achieved in politics, would not have been possible had I not been the grandson of Sir Chhotu Ram," Mr Singh said on Friday.

"Therefore, it is my moral responsibility to stand with the farmers in their fight today and, therefore, I have decided to support this (farmers') fight," said Mr Singh, a prominent Jat leader in Haryana.

Mr Singh added that he along with his supporters will soon observe a symbolic hungerstrike in Haryana's districts bordering Delhi.

Under the banner of Chaudhary Chhotu Ram Vichar Manch, the former Union minister along with his supporters had sat on a protest at Rohtak on Friday.

Farmers from different parts of the country have been camping at various border points of Delhi for three weeks to demand a repeal of the farm laws. — PTI

Agri reforms have started benefiting farmers, says PM

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday hard sold his government's reforms spanning from manufacturing to taxation to labour, saying they have changed the world perception about the country from 'why India' to 'why not India' and went on to quote record foreign investment during the pandemic as a testimony to that.

Speaking at ASSOCHAM's Foundation Week event, Mr Modi also said agriculture reforms brought by his government six months back have started benefiting farmers.

The reforms in the last six years have influenced in changing the sentiment of the industry from "why India" to "why not India" in investing.

"There was a situation in the past when investors would question 'why India' (for investing in the country). With reforms (of past six years) and their effects, its proposition has changed to 'why not India'," he said.

He cited scrapping of 1,500 old and obsolete laws and farming new ones that are in tune with the changing investment order as an example of his government's outlook.

"Earlier investors cited high tax rates to say why India' but today (corporate) tax rates are so competitive that they say 'why not India'," he said.

Previously, a web of regulations and rules were cited by investors to ask why to invest in India but easing compliance burden in the new labour laws have made them say 'why not India,' he said.

Red tape previously made investors say why India' but a red carpet is now making them say why not India,' he said. "From a non-existent



Narendra Modi

RLD MP resigns from 3 parl panels

Jaipur: Rajasthan's Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal resigned from three parliamentary committees in support of farmers' agitation against the Centre's agriculture-related laws.

Mr Beniwal, a convener of the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party and the BJP's ally at the Centre, submitted his resignation to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. "I had raised various people-centric issues with the committees I was part of in Parliament. It is sad that action has not been taken on the issues. There is no justification for committees in the parliamentary system if action is not taken," Mr Beniwal said in a statement. — PTI

culture for innovation to a new ecosystem promoting and nurturing startups has given the world confidence to say "why not India".

"Earlier there was so much government interference that investors said why India'. Today the faith reposed by the government in the private sector and encouragement of foreign investors have made the same people say 'why not India,' he said. He stated that new India is pushing towards AatmaNirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). — PTI

Ex-minister, several MLAs likely to join BJP in Assam

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, DEC. 19

In what is going to be a major setback for the Opposition Congress in Assam, a number of sitting legislators, including one of the senior-most Congress leader and former minister Ajanta Neog, are set to desert the party to join ruling BJP before the forthcoming assembly polls in 2021.

The speculation started after a closed-door meeting of Ms Neog with Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday at his residence where finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was also present.

Informing that speculation was rife about Ms Neog joining the BJP in presence of Union home minister Amit Shah who is scheduled to visit the state

▶ SPECULATION STARTED after a closed-door meeting of Ms Neog with Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday at his residence where finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was also present

on December 26, a BJP leader, however, claimed that date of joining may differ as Ms Neog wanted to join the party on some auspicious day in 2021.

Asserting that several Congress legislators, mostly from Upper Assam, have expressed their willingness to join BJP, a senior BJP leader said, "I can confirm that Congress MLA from Golaghat Ajanta Neog will join our party soon. In addition, some other Congress legislators are also in touch with us and

have shown interest in joining our party."

BJP sources claimed, "In addition, Congress MLA from Sarupathar constituency Roselina Tirkey, Lakhipur MLA Rajdeep Goala (who was expelled from the Congress in October) and some other sitting legislators of the principal Opposition party are also in touch with us."

Assam BJP spokesperson Rupam Goswami, however, refused either to confirm or deny the speculations. He said, "I can only say that many people now want to join the BJP because they have confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Shah, our president J.P. Nadda, chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and our state unit chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass."

Almost all hotels, guesthouses and cottages have already sold out in Gulmarg Xmas, snow carnival may breathe life into Kashmir's tourism

YUSUF JAMEEL
GULMARG, DEC. 19

Gulmarg, the cup-shaped valley in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 2,650 metres (8,694 ft) and about 56 km from Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar, is readying to receive both domestic and foreign tourists in large numbers on the eve of New Year. Almost all the hotels, guesthouses and cottages have already sold out, as per tourism officials, many guests would be checking in around Christmas to enjoy snow games and other winter sports besides cultural shows being organised here by the stakeholders. The J&K government is

planning to hold a Snow Carnival at Gulmarg which would include a series of activities like skiing, ice hockey, snow sculpting, snowmobile rally, snow rugby and night skiing. The activity at a place which is rated as Asia's seventh best ski destination and is known as the 'heartland of winter sports in India' may breathe life into Kashmir's inert tourism trade, said a tourism official.

Tourism, which has traditionally been a key sector of J&K's economy accounting for 6.98 per cent of the erstwhile state's GDP, was hit hard by twin-lockdowns, the first following the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state in August last year and the



A view of Hemis National Park, famous for snow leopards, in the backdrop of snow-covered mountain ranges in Leh on Saturday.

second one necessitated by Covid-19.

The tourism officials said that they, apart from trying to attract domestic

travellers through various means, have launched a drive to revitalise Kashmir and rebrand it as a global destination for

'high-spending' tourist in the hope it will help boost tourism receipts which is critically important for the Valley's troubled tourism sector with the inflow coming down to zero levels after the August 5, 2019 move.

Commissioner secretary, tourism and culture, Sarmad Hafeez, claimed that Gulmarg is a coronavirus free place. Baseer Ahmed Khan, advisor to J&K's lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha added, "However, all adequate measures are being put in place to avoid the spread of any disease here. These would include regular Covid-testing of tourists at the Srinagar Airport, Qazigund (the gateway to the Valley from the south)

and Tangmarg (a town which serves as the base camp for Gulmarg)."

The tourism officials said that different programmes will be organised here during the next few weeks including the celebration of White Christmas, Snow Carnival, Sufi programmes, Junior Ski championship, national and International snow sports events and mountaineering activities.

Mr Sarmad said that traditional cuisine, crafts and culture have been intrinsic components of J&K's tourism and that the concerned department has decided to showcase these optimally in the coming events being held at various places.

Over 50% turnout in final phase of DDC polls in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, DEC. 19

The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir heaved a sigh of relief rather are happy over the eight-phased polling for the Union Territory's first-ever District Development Council (DDC) elections passing off peacefully.

Even as the vast majority of Kashmir Valley's southern districts stayed away from the democratic exercise, the official statistics suggest that an overall sixty per cent voting has been recorded in these elections. This, as per the officials, is "more than satisfactory". On the other hand, the BJP has termed the voter response as an "endorsement" of the abrogation of Article 370.

Polling in the eighth and final phase was held on Saturday during which 50.98 per cent votes were cast across 28 constituencies, including 15 in Jammu region and remaining 13 in Kashmir Valley.

State election commissioner K.K. Sharma said

that polling was peaceful at all 1,703 polling stations. He said Jammu region recorded an average voter turnout of 72.71 per cent with frontier Poonch district reporting the highest percentage of 83.58 followed by Reasi district with 81.92 and Rajouri with 77.31 per cent.

The Kashmir Valley, however, recorded just 29.91 per cent average voter turnout with Kupwara district highest 63.80 per cent followed by Bandipora with 56.56 per cent and Baramulla district 44.60 per cent. Once again, the majority of voters in south Kashmir districts chose to stay away from the exercise. "The polling percentage recorded in Budgam was 35.12 per cent, Anantnag 8.66 per cent, Kulgam 11.20 per cent, Pulwama 8.50 per cent and Shopian 8.58 per cent," he said.

A report from Poonch said that, at least, five persons were injured in a clash between supporters of two contesting candidates at a polling station in Salwah area of Mendhar.

Didi will be 'isolated'

■ Continued from Page 1 remains only on your nephew and when to make him the CM."

Reiterating that the BJP's target was to win over 200 Assembly seats out of the state's 294 next year, he also attacked the TMC for its workers' violent attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy by stone-pelting. "Didi, do you think this would leave us scared? Already, 300 workers of our party lost their lives. The more you attack us, our resistance will only grow."

Attacking "narrow political regionalism" in an apparent dig at Ms Banerjee, Mr Shah earlier said: "Those who play the narrow politics of regionalism... I tell them Khudiram Bose belongs to India as much as to Bengal. Our freedom fighters never thought of such narrow politics of regionalism. All should rise above the narrow politics of regionalism."

'Rebel' MLA back

■ Continued from Page 1 hurting her. I will personally apologise to her by offering my pranam. It was my misunderstanding and fault which have been sorted out. I have forgotten everything now. When I respect Didi, all others in her party must be respected also."

Mr Biswas said: "A family can have problems over which brothers do not leave their mother... Mr Tiwari, however, as a soldier of Ms Banerjee, will continue to fight against the BJP."

'Summer of 36' blow to Kohli's men

■ Continued from Page 1

stump. Up against such a planned assault, the worst of Indian batting erupted in indistinct footwork, hesitancy and bats presented to the ball held in hard hands and the outside edge drawn like moths to the flame.

Even skipper Virat Kohli, who compiled that flawless innings of 74 — the highest in the match on a pitch that was nowhere near Adelaide Oval standards and far from ideal for a Test match played with the pink ball that does a lot more when new than its red cousin — in the first innings managed just one boundary before being taken low in the slips cordon, as indistinct a stroke as that of any others in the top order.

The last time a similar situation occurred may have been when Team India seemed to be on the cusp of making history,

but flopping, was in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1997 when 120 was the fourth innings target. The West Indian attack was charged up that final morning, bowling the wicket-to-wicket line with an iron discipline and close catchers doing the rest. Young Sachin Tendulkar was the skipper then and a deeply disappointed man after India were bowled out for 81.

The best laid plans of men and mice can often go awry. But this seems to happen to Team India more often. A handy first innings lead and a bowling attack manned by such splen-

did men as Jasprit Bumrah and Ravi Ashwin had too small a bank of runs to defend even on such a pitch offering plenty of assistance. And Mohammed Shami, the third prong of the seam trio, had to retire hurt after ducking, swaying and

swishing at the ball like a man in a trance.

The Indian approach to bowling on this pitch was in sharp contrast to what the Australians did in keeping the ball up to the bat. The number of times Burns pulled Bumrah amply illustrated how the Indians were pitching it that much shorter. Bumrah had bowled so much better in the first innings to exploit the variable bounce.

The shabby ways of Team India were exemplified in the finish too with a dropped catch going over the line for six. The embarrassment was complete. This team didn't have the mental toughness needed to win a Test match in what is the hardest country in the world to beat the home team in. Kohli's men flattered to deceive and they will be without their leader in the rest of the series.

Congress plans 'chintan shivir'

■ Continued from Page 1

centred mainly on strengthening the party. He said the process for holding organisational polls, including to the party president's post and the Congress Working Committee, has already been set in motion and the central election authority was working on it. "There is already an election process in motion. There is an agenda before the party. The CEA is

working on it," he said. Mr Bansal said Mrs Sonia Gandhi told the leaders that all of them are a "very big family" and they should strive to strengthen the party.

Sources say that at the meeting some leaders like Ambika Soni and A.K. Antony said Rahul Gandhi should take over as party chief, to which Mr Gandhi said that he wants to strengthen the party first "or

as all of you desire". The G23 attendees included Ghulam Nabi Azad, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Anand Sharma, Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari, Prithviraj Chavan and Vivek Tankha. In addition, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi, Kamal Nath, Ambika Soni, A.K. Antony, Ashok Gehlot and Pawan Kumar Bansal were also present.

THE ASIAN AGE

20 DECEMBER 2020



Geeta Chandran

Off the beaten track

Of dancers, artists and the new normal

While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been food for analysis across all sectors of the economy, one glaring omission is the artist! What has the lockdown and the slowdown done to all of us and our work? This is a silence that is deafening in our public discourse.

As a performing artist, I of course — like all others in my fraternity — lost out on all my scheduled performances and stage shows, both group and solo, and all the travels associated with that. This had two impacts — first, of course, was the loss of income; but also then, my creative graph was ruptured since my interaction with musicians was forced into a hiatus. However, this seemed inconsequential when one realised what was happening to the wider artists' community at various levels. We are a large sector, very unorganised, scattered and diverse. From folk performers to dancers who are part of group shows, to classical artists — just the "dance" category within the performing arts group is incredibly large. The folk performers who largely depended on weddings and tourist groups were suddenly completely out of their jobs and many had to seek to alternate ways to survive. Nobody in the media or in the government is even talking about this sector, and that is appalling.

SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING

There were silver linings, of course. In the performing arts' community, we saw that there was lot of sharing that hadn't happened before. Artists were talking about their lives, the way they learnt their art forms, the way they practised, and the problems that they had had and continue to face at various points in their career. One also saw a lot of discussion and engagement on various subjects relating to the arts, that was a welcome development. Of course, these were the first few months when one could engage with a lot of things happening online. But with the passing of time these, too, have given way to the predictable; and too much of the good thing is now leading to "art reflux".

As far as performances online go, it has been a mixed bag. Everybody seems to be performing, and that may be a good thing in terms of short-term self-gratification. But sharing everything for free, and placing valuable professional skills acquired over a period of time in the public domain without any thought of monetising them, has become an extremely worrying trend. Economic models of sharing work have not been deliberated upon, and hence there is a danger of the arts being further marginalised.

Let's face it: Even before the pandemic, artists were not really in a great place in terms of economic viability. Buying a ticket to watch a show was getting more and more difficult. Now with so much happening for free at the click of a button, one worries even more about how artists will manage to survive in the future. Would people ever again buy tickets at all to watch performances?

I agree that artists are anxious and worried about their uncertain future and hence want to be a part of the social media, lest they be left out of some imaginary race. We are all in an introspective mode. But this mood cannot last for too long. We realise that as well.

Artists need to perform, and they need to be watched. Their self-esteem and self-confidence takes a huge beating if performances do not happen. The government hasn't spoken a word about artists and their concerns. Even existing skeletal schemes for artists are not being honoured. The sector as a whole has taken a huge beating, even though everybody acknowledges the fact that during the lockdown all the arts — dance, music, theatre and the visual arts — have kept the morale of everybody high and helped them to stay sane.

In India, the problem is even more daunting as the arts and performers in general are not an organised sector. The diversity in art forms and the geography of this country has not helped in creating a roster — be it folk or classical. Hence organising the artists' community and helping them has become a huge challenge. A *nadaswaram* player who earned his bread and butter by playing in temples during festivals or played at weddings is today at his tether's end, with both tourism and temple gatherings in moratorium. How does, for example, can one reach support and help to artists located in a remote village in Tamil Nadu?

Could this time be used by all of us to put our heads together and think of ways to reimagine culture for the "new normal" times to come? And what about our future? What happens when things open up once again? What place will the arts then have in our lives? Will the economy be resilient enough to support the arts? And will audiences return to auditoriums to watch live performances? We need to start thinking of the role of artists in our society, what they mean to us and what we must do for them. But (alas!) will it happen?

Delhi-based classical dancer **Geeta Chandran** is a force multiplier in the world of the arts, and is the founder-president of Natya Vriksha

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com, Else, send to Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110002.

Subhani



Is farm bills' real aim to cover fiscal deficit?



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

With the farmers' agitation now entering the 25th day jamming the borders of the national capital the time has come to ask a fundamental question. Are the farm bills aimed at addressing a problem that the government is even terrified of acknowledging?

The NDA/BJP government inherited a robust economy from its predecessor the United Progressive alliance despite protestations to the contrary. Between 2004 and 2014 the India economy grew at 7.8 per cent year on year for 10 long years with 2004-05 as the GDP base year. At the revised base year 2011-12 the growth figure is 8.13 per cent. Despite strong global headwinds in the form of the economic meltdown of 2008 and the Eurozone crisis of 2011 this robust rate of economic growth not only increased the size of the economy, created jobs and employment opportunities but, most importantly, it helped create a robust social security infrastructure in the form of Right to Information, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment programme (MNREGA), Right to free and compulsory education Education (RTE) and the National Food Security Act, to name but a few of the initiatives in this direction. As many as 27.1 crore people were lifted out of poverty between 2004 and 2014. The flipside of this high growth paradigm was high inflation but then again there is no free lunch in life. On balance, ordinary people benefited as growth with equity brought all around prosperity.

The NDA/BJP government could not sustain this growth trajectory and then on the 8th of November 2016 it inflicted a grievous blow on the body economic. It demonetised 500 and 1,000 rupee notes thereby sucking liquidity out of the economy. In its overzealousness to reform it overlooked a basic fact that India was a 2.6 trillion dollar formal economy riding on an almost similar sized non-formal economy and all cash is not black money. This was followed by a badly implemented Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime that further sucked the remaining liquidity out of the economy.

Even before Covid-19 knocked the bottom out of India's economic paradigm the Indian economy was in serious trouble. In H-1 (April-September) of 2019-20, the total flow of funds from banks and non-banks that include public issues, commercial papers (CPs), external commercial borrowings (ECBs) and foreign direct investments (FDIs) crashed by 87.63 per cent to ₹90,995 crores. It was ₹7.36 lakh crore for the corresponding period of 2018-19 as per to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) monetary policy report.

On the 23rd of March, 2020, the day before the country went into the harshest lockdown on planet earth, Parliament passed the Union Budget of 2020-21 of ₹30.42 lakh crores. The projected revenue receipts were 22.45 lakh crores leaving a fiscal deficit of 7.96 lakh crores. With the Indian economy now officially in recession and expected to contract by over 10 per cent the country is up the proverbial creek without a paddle, with all budgetary projections up in the air.

What does this economic havoc have to do with farm bills? Quite a lot, in fact. For it has everything to do with the food subsidy component of the Union Budget.

The Food Corporation of India is the state instrumentality that oversees the purchase and supply of food grains. Founded in 1965 under the Food Corporations Act it is

mandated to procure food grains at Minimum Support prices (MSP) stow them, create buffer stocks including a strategic reserve of food grains in addition to disseminating them through the Public Distribution System (PDS) to identified beneficiaries.

The Union government determines the MSP for purchasing food grains as well as their distribution price also called issue price. This is the rate at which food grains are supplied to the states. Variance in these two rates along with supply costs are recompensed by the government to FCI in the form of food subsidy. The FCI, therefore, is totally reliant on the central government and does not have any other sources of revenue.

Prior to 2014 the Union government used to try and fund the entire food subsidy as a line item in the Union Budget. In other words the money for this activity was appropriated directly from the Union budget. Even then the FCI used to borrow some amount of money from banks backed by a sovereign guarantee or even get a ways and means advance from the Union government. However, these repayments were manageable. When the UPA demitted office FCI had a debt of 91,409 crores.

In 2016-17, realising that the economy was in trouble primarily because of demonetisation and mismanagement from 2014-16 and to window dress its budgetary deficit, the government moved a substantial component of the food subsidy off budget and compelled FCI to borrow from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). It is entirely another matter that lending to government organisations like FCI was not the initial mandate of NSSF.

First, it would bring the food subsidy deficits under control and since the government would not procure it also then would not have to distribute food grains thereby ending its obligation under the NFSA

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

REWIND TO 1974

Virat Kohli's XI has put up a shameful batting performance on Day 3 of the Adelaide Test. After taking a lead of 62 runs by the end of Day 2 of the pink-ball Test, it looked as if the Indian team would be on their way to post a solid total on the board for Australia to chase. But pacers Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins changed the script as they picked eight wickets in the first session of play to leave India reeling at 36/9. The last batsman, Mohammed Shami, retired hurt without scoring. It all harked back to 1974's 'summer of 42' when the legendary spinner, Bishen Singh Bedi's Indian team went 42 all out in the second Test against England at Lord's cricket ground.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

NEW CONFIDENT LEFT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Kerala: Big triumph for LDF, Cong rudderless" (Dec. 19). Kerala ruling LDF's resounding victory in local body polls reflected the people's approval of the achievements of the government, especially welfare schemes and grassroots interventions, including housing for the poor. The Congress, sadly, continues to deteriorate and its cadre is not committed. By 2024, it looks like the party will be decimated. The BJP needs to work hard to make the state elections a two-cornered fight.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

CRIMINAL WASTE

THERE WERE ABOUT 1.8 million homeless individuals in India as of 2019 who lived mainly on the streets of cities, under bridges, on highways or in any place they could access, many of them forced to maintain a nomadic lifestyle. They often face severe weather conditions. The pandemic has hugely increased their numbers. India's rank in this year's Global Hunger Index is 94 among 107 countries and it has performed worse than Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. Compare this with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream project, the redevelopment of Central Vista, which will consume over ₹20,000 crores. It is a totally unwanted project and spending even a single rupee on it is criminal wastage of public resource.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

CLINGY CONGRESS

THIS IS WITH reference to your report on the friction between DMK and ruling Congress in neighbouring Puducherry which appears to be threatening their bonhomie within the alliance in Tamil Nadu. It is no surprise that after seeing the setback of RJD in Bihar, mainly due to its alliance with the Congress Party, the DMK is already weary of its partner. At the same time their tie is a difficult knot to untangle easily. Definitely, the DMK chief is in a ticklish position and is trying different ways and means to distance itself from the Congress, which is just clinching to DMK like the Vedalam of Vikramadithya.

N. Mahadevan
Chennai

SHORT TAKES

SOMALIA SUICIDE BOMBING KILLS 15, MISSES PM

Mogadishu, Dec. 19: A suicide bomber attacked a stadium in Somalia's central city of Galkayo Friday, killing 15 people shortly before the arrival of the country's new prime minister, according to police.

Ali Hassan, a police officer in Galkayo, said others were injured in the blast, which occurred at the entrance to the sports stadium. Some high-ranking members of the Somali army were among those killed in the explosion, according to local reports.

The bombing has been claimed by Somalia's al-Shabab jihadist rebels, according to the group's Andalus radio station.

Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who took office in September, was visiting the city as part of a tour of the central state of Galmudug.

RAPE CHARGE ON EPSTEIN-LINKED MODELLING AGENT

Paris, Dec. 19: A modeling agent associated with disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein has been charged in France with sexual harassment and the rape of minors over 15 years old.

Jean-Luc Brunel was arrested as part of an ongoing investigation on Wednesday at Charles de Gaulle airport as he was preparing to take a flight to Senegal.

The Paris prosecutor announced in a statement Saturday that the charges were handed out Friday by a magistrate at the end of Brunel's custody period. It said Brunel was not handed any human trafficking charges, which was one of the main lines of inquiry.

The magistrate decided that there was not currently enough evidence to rule on that count, but he was not acquitted and could be charged in the future if anything new emerges. Brunel was remanded in custody.

'LAST ATTEMPT' TO GET BREXIT TRADE DEAL: EU

Brussels, Dec. 19: The European Union and the United Kingdom are heading into the weekend on a "last attempt" to clinch a post-Brexit trade deal, with EU fishing rights in British waters the most notable remaining obstacle to avoid a chaotic and costly changeover in the new year.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Friday that the only way to get a deal is for the 27-nation bloc to compromise since "the UK has done a lot to try and help, and we hope that our EU friends will see sense and come to the table with something themselves." "That's really where we are," Johnson said, adding "no sensible government" could agree to the EU demands as they stand.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier told the EU parliament both sides were in the "home straight of the negotiations", which have already come a long way in nine months of talks but are still short of a final compromise. Barnier called it "a very serious and sombre situation".

IMRAN: PAK ARMY WORKS UNDER ME

Islamabad, Dec. 19: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has asserted that the Army is a state institution which works under him, amidst Opposition's allegations of the powerful military establishment's interference in the country's politics and elections.

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), a 11-party opposition alliance, has been holding massive rallies since its inception in September to seek Khan's ouster and press the military to stop interfering in politics. The PDM has been accusing the Pakistan Army of installing "puppet" Prime Minister Khan through a manipulated election in 2018.

The Army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 70 plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy. However, the military has denied meddling in the country's politics. Khan also denies that the army helped him win the election in 2018.

According to the 'Lahore Declaration' signed by the Opposition parties on Monday, the military establishment had stolen the people's mandate in the 2018 election.

As new Covid strain spreads faster, UK discusses action

New higher set of curbs, govt to cut back relaxation rules over Christmas

London, Dec. 19: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson discussed with his senior ministers on Saturday what urgent action to take after it was confirmed that a new strain of the Covid-19 virus could spread more quickly and lead to a surge in cases.

The BBC reported that London and southeast England would be placed in a new higher tier of restrictions and the government would cut back on a planned relaxation of the rules over Christmas, but gave no further details.

Johnson will hold a news conference at about 1600 GMT during which he will discuss what his plans are in light of a rise in infections across London and southeast England linked to a new, more transmissible variant of the virus.

England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said that while there was no current evidence the variant of the novel Coronavirus caused a higher mortality rate or impacted vaccines, urgent work was underway to confirm this.

"We have alerted the World Health Organisation and are continuing to analyse the available data to improve our understanding," Whitty said in a statement.

Britain reported 28,507 new Covid-19 cases on Friday and 489 deaths, with the reproduction "R" number estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.2, meaning the number of cases is rapidly increasing. Johnson said on Friday he hoped England would not need a third lockdown after Christmas and has so far resisted calls to change plans to ease restrictions for five days over the festive period, allowing three separate households to meet indoors.

UK to bring in new higher tier of Covid restrictions for London, southeast England - BBC. Much of the country, including London, is currently in the highest of a three-tier system of restrictions to curb the pandemic's spread. The *Daily Telegraph* newspaper said ministers could now announce curbs on travel between southeast England, including the capital, and the rest of the country.

The BBC said these areas would now be placed in a new "Tier 4", with a tightening of rules for Christmas.

"Failing to act decisively now, will mean further suffering," Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust and a member of the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, said on Twitter. "It has been apparent for some days that the virus is again out of control in parts of the country," said Jonathan Ashworth, Labour's health spokesman. — Reuters

Meanwhile, at least nine Coronavirus patients died on Saturday after an oxygen tank explosion triggered a fire at a hospital in southeastern Turkey.

The blaze in an intensive care ward of the hospital in Gaziantep broke out when a tank on an artificial respirator exploded. "We are saddened by this tragedy," Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said before a planned visit to the hospital. — AFP



Protesters march up Whitehall after gathering in Parliament Square at an anti-lockdown demonstration, "Unite in the Fight" in central London on Saturday. British PM Boris Johnson resisted calls to tighten Covid restrictions over Christmas, as London faced stricter measures and concern grew about rising case numbers. The government has been under mounting pressure to toughen proposals allowing up to three households to meet indoors during the festive window from December 23, as European neighbours curb their easing plans amid surging infections. — AFP



BIDENS TO GET 1ST VACCINE DOSE TOMORROW

Washington, Dec. 19: President-elect Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, will be getting their first dose of the Coronavirus vaccine on Monday.

That's according to Biden's incoming press secretary, Jen Psaki. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, will receive their doses the week after next.

The announcement was made Friday, hours after Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi became the highest-ranking government officials to receive their first doses of a vaccine. Psaki told reporters that Biden would be receiving the shot in public, as Pence did Friday. — AP

WHO: Expert team off to China in Jan.

Geneva, Dec. 19: The head of emergencies at the World Health Organisation says a team of international experts looking into the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic will travel to China the first week of January.

Dr Michael Ryan says there will be quarantine arrangements for the team, which will visit the suspected site of the outbreak in the city of Wuhan. "The purpose of the mission is to go to the original point at which

human cases were detected and that we fully expect to do that," he said. He says the team of international experts will work "with our Chinese colleagues," and he adds they "will not be ... supervised by Chinese officials."

Ryan says the world should celebrate the arrival of vaccines, but the "next three to six months are going to be tough." He seemed to allude the Americas, which is home to roughly three-fourths of the global cases. — AP

China 'obstructing' WHO probe: US

Washington, Dec. 19: Urging the international community to demand transparency from China about the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, the US has accused Beijing of "obstructing" a WHO probe into the origin of the deadly virus in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and "peddling" questionable vaccines one year after the disease

broke out. "Even today, nearly a year after the world first learned of the outbreak, the Chinese Communist Party is still spreading disinformation regarding the virus and obstructing a World Health Organisation (WHO) investigation into its origin and spread," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday. — PTI

Nod to Moderna vaccine in US, 2nd shot in arsenal

Washington, Dec. 19: The US added a second Covid-19 vaccine to its arsenal on Friday, boosting efforts to beat back an outbreak so dire that the nation is regularly recording more than 3,000 deaths a day. The much-needed doses are set to arrive on Monday after the Food and Drug Administration authorised an emergency rollout of the vaccine developed by Moderna Inc. and the National Institutes of Health. The move marks the world's first authorisation for Moderna's shots.

The vaccine is very similar to one from Pfizer Inc. and Germany's BioNTech that's now being dispensed to millions of health

care workers and nursing home residents as the biggest vaccination drive in US history starts to ramp up.

The two work "better than we almost dared to hope," NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins said. "Science is working here, science has done something amazing." Early results of large, still unfinished studies show both vaccines appear safe and strongly protective although Moderna's is easier to handle since it doesn't need to be stored at ultra-frozen temperatures.

A second vaccine represents a ray of hope amid despair as the virus continues to spread unabated

even before holiday gatherings that are certain to further fuel the outbreak.

The scourge has claimed more than 3.12,000 US lives and killed 1.7 million people worldwide. New cases in the US are running at over 2,16,000 per day on average. Deaths per day have hit all-time highs, eclipsing 3,600 on Wednesday. California has emerged as a lethal hot spot, with hospitals running out of intensive care beds and ambulances lining up outside emergency rooms in scenes reminiscent of the calamity around New York City last spring. California on Friday reported over 41,000 new cases and 300 more deaths. — AP

China to 1st inoculate frontline workers

Beijing, Dec. 19: China will begin its Covid-19 inoculation programme by first vaccinating some key priority groups, including those involved in medical treatment and disease control, within the winter-spring period, before starting a mass roll out, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Saturday. The vaccination programme will also cover those who plan to work or study in counties and regions

with medium or high risks of exposure to the virus, Cui Gang, an official with NHC's disease control department, told reporters. This will help relieve the pressure on China in preventing and controlling imported Covid-19 cases, and lower the risks of domestic outbreaks of the epidemic, the official said.

In a two-step vaccination drive, the vaccines will be first given to the priority

groups, including those engaged in handling imported cold-chain products, and people working in sectors such as port inspection and quarantine, aviation, public transport, fresh market, medical treatment and disease control, said Cui.

There is no word yet on the mass roll out of the vaccine programme and no announcement has been made about the government approval of various va-

cines under trial. China has roped in more than a dozen countries, including Brazil, to conduct the final phase trials of its Covid-19 vaccines. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain have approved a vaccine developed by Chinese state-owned Sinopharm.

Chinese officials say the Coronavirus has been largely controlled in the country and herd immunity can be built with gradual roll out of the vaccination

programme covering most of its population. The health officials said over a million people had been given vaccines under emergency use. The officials, who took part in Saturday's press briefing, said no major side effects were reported during the trials. China has been focusing on developing five types of vaccines. In total, 11 vaccine candidates are at different stages of testing at home and abroad. — PTI

Russians hack into networks, cause alarm

Hack against US is 'grave risk': Cybersecurity agency

Washington, Dec. 19: Federal authorities have expressed increased alarm about an intrusion into US and other computer systems around the globe that officials suspect was carried out by Russian hackers.

The nation's cybersecurity agency on Thursday warned of a grave risk to government and private networks.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said in its most detailed comments yet that the intrusion had compromised federal agencies as well as critical infrastructure in a sophisticated attack that was hard to detect and will be difficult to undo.

CISA did not say which agencies or infrastructure had been breached or what information taken in an attack that it previously said appeared to have begun in March. The Department of Energy acknowledged in a separate statement that it was among those that had been hacked.

This threat actor has demonstrated sophistication and complex trade-craft in these intrusions, the agency said in its unusual alert. CISA expects that removing the threat actor from compromised environments will be highly complex and challenging.

The hack, if authorities can indeed prove it was carried out by a nation such as Russia as experts believe, creates a fresh foreign policy problem for President Donald Trump in his final days in office.

Trump, whose administration has been criticised for eliminating a White House cybersecurity advisor and downplay-

ing Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, has made no public statements about the breach.

President-elect Joe Biden said he would make cybersecurity a top priority of his administration, but that stronger defences are not enough. We need to disrupt and deter our adversaries from undertaking significant cyberattacks in the first place, he said. We will do that by, among other things, imposing substantial costs on those responsible for such malicious attacks, including in coordination with our allies and partners.

The cybersecurity agency previously said the perpetrators had used network management software from Texas-based SolarWinds to infiltrate computer networks. Its new alert said the attackers may have used other methods, as well.

Amid reports that the Treasury and Commerce departments were breached, CISA directed all civilian agencies of the federal government to remove SolarWinds from their servers. — AP

CYBERATTACK ON US: POMPEO BLAMES RUSSIA

Washington, Dec. 19: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says Russia was "pretty clearly" behind the gravest cyberattack against the United States on record, the first administration official to publicly tie the Kremlin to the widespread intrusion at a time when President Donald Trump has kept silent on the failure to protect government and private-sector computer networks.

It's not clear exactly what the hackers were seeking, but experts say it could include nuclear secrets, blueprints for advanced weaponry, Covid-19 vaccine-related research and information for dossiers on key government and industry leaders. "We're still unpacking precisely what it is, and I'm sure some of it will remain classified," Pompeo said in an interview late Friday with radio talk show host Mark Levin.

"But suffice it to say there was a significant effort to use a piece of third-party software to essentially embed code inside of US government systems and it now appears systems of private companies and companies and governments across the world as well. This was a very significant effort, and I think it's the case that now we can say pretty clearly that it was the Russians that engaged in this activity." — AP

Rana extradition case to continue till Apr. 22: Judge

Washington, Dec. 19: The case of extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, to India will continue till April 22, a federal US judge has determined.

Rana, 59, has been declared a fugitive by India, where he is facing multiple criminal charges for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed. He was rearrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India.

"The Extradition Hearing in this case is continued to April 22, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.," Magistrate Judge Jacqueline Chooljian, the US District Court of Los Angeles, said in his order dated December 17. Rana is a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, the Pakistani-American LeT terrorist who was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. Headley, 60, was made an approver in the case, and is currently serving a 35-year prison term in the US for his role in the attack.

Judge Chooljian said Rana will file opposition to the request for extradition by not later than

February 1. The US government, which is supporting the extradition of Rana to India, has time till March 22 to file its reply motion.

Both the parties have agreed that their motion either in support or opposition to the extradition request by India would not be of more than 50 pages. The judge on December 10 had denied Rana his bail application asserting that he is a flight risk.

Judge Chooljian, in his order on December 10, said that Rana "presented a robust bail package" and offered conditions that significantly mitigate the risk of flight. But the "Court cannot find that he has negated the risk of flight" and as such granted the request of the US government to the continued detention of Rana.

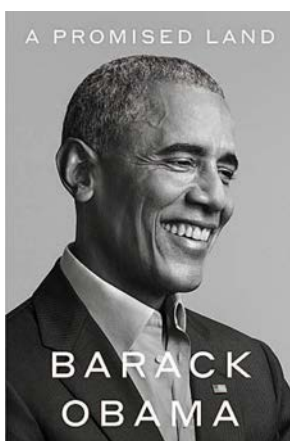
Meanwhile, the US government in the court has supported India's request that the documents submitted by it in support of extradition of Rana be not made public. The extradition documents presented by India apparently include information about Rana's involvement in the Mumbai terrorist attack that would be shared with him. — PTI

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

- A PROMISED LAND**
Barack Obama
Penguin Viking, ₹1,999
- JUGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**
Vinay Sitapati
Penguin Viking, ₹799
- THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph, ₹799
- REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- THE COMMONWEALTH OF CRICKET**
Ramachandra Guha
4th Estate, ₹699
- THE INDIA WAY**
S. Jaishankar
HarperCollins ₹699
- JINNAH: HIS SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ROLE IN HISTORY**
Ishfaq Ahmed
Penguin ₹999
- TILL WE WIN**
Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, Dr Gagandeep Kang, Dr Randeep Guleria
Penguin Viking ₹299

- MY OWN WORDS**
Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Simon & Schuster, ₹599
- THE BOOK OF INDIAN ESSAYS: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF ENGLISH PROSE**
Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (Editor)
Black Kite Press, ₹699



FICTION

- SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**
Marieke Lucas Rijneveld,
Faber & Faber, ₹499
- HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell,
Tinder Press, ₹699
- HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- DAYLIGHT**
David Baldacci,
Pan Macmillan, ₹650
- THE HEART ASKS PLEASURE FIRST**
Karuna Ezara Parikh,
Picador, ₹699
- WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**
Shauna Singh Baldwin
Tara- India Research Press, ₹599
- VANISHING HALF**
Brit Bennett
Dialogue Books, ₹799
- THE ARCHER**
Paulo Coelho,
Penguin Viking, ₹250
- A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham,
Hodder & Stoughton ₹699



Bahrisons, New Delhi

A top cop's gripping diary



Anand K. Sahay

review

Retired senior officials in India have been, on the whole, shy to write about what they saw and did in their work lives. There is always the difficulty about how much to reveal. Social, political, national sensitivities live long and do not necessarily fade away when an officer retires. Then there is the Official Secrets Act. Writing must be careful in the extreme if it's not going to be all puff. So, most don't bother. It is too much trouble even if they could summon the energy once they've been there, done that.

Amod Kanth, among the most remarkable Indian Police Service (IPS) officers of his generation, appears to be a clear exception to the rule. In fact, he has written this book in part to inform the public. He believes, he says, that people ought to know.

This is healthy acknowledgment that in a democracy the apparatus of the state is run in

the name of the people, based on tax money they provide, and the burdens they must bear when governance goes haywire, as is frequently the case in this country. In fact, this volume is sub-titled "Police Diaries Book 1". So, there is more to follow. In the main, the observations below derive from that expectation.

The heart of the book is gripping. This is not on account of any juicy, lazy gossip about key people but because the book reveals what dedicated police work can do — and no less what it takes to make police work dedicated. This is especially the case in the backdrop of shortage of resources and manpower, to say nothing of political interference. These are a given in the Indian situation.

Kanth was the young officer who, first as Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Central District in the Union Territory of Delhi and subsequently as Deputy Commissioner, Crime and Railways, in the national capi-

tal, overcame these handicaps and led the police with courage and distinction. He had his share of luck. He had some great bosses, such as M.B. Kaushal, Vijay Karan and Ved Marwah, whose personality and guidance are unstintingly acknowledged in these pages along with the shining qualities of some individuals who reported to the protagonist in this chronicle.

"May you live in interesting times", is said to be a Chinese curse. The decade of the early 1980s to the early 1990s was just that sort of a time in India, especially in the national capi-

tal and the north of the country. The story began with the Khalistan movement in Punjab. This book deals with its blowback which burnt Delhi, leading to one crime wave after another at the vortex of which was the author of the present volume as a young police officer — armed with common sense, integrity and a sense of duty.

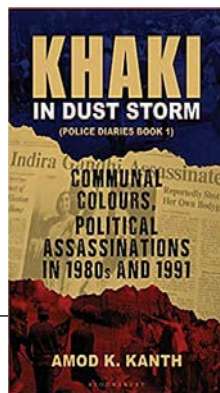
When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her police bodyguards in 1984, medieval era-style mayhem broke out in the nation's capital, as this reviewer was witness. Anti-Sikh riots broke out. Thousands were killed. In certain cases, young Sikhs sought to take revenge and this took the form of terrorist actions. Delhi Police was found unequal to the task. It was overwhelmed by the enormity of the tide. It lacked resources, didn't have specialised training, and there weren't enough police. And — it is important to say this — large sections of the police force had turned communal and callous. Thus, in many cases, the victims just burned.

But, in Kanth's neutral telling, in the Central district where he was in charge, the situation was somehow managed better — with boldness and dedication. The way it is told, it is an absorbing story. After the riots came the retribution in the form of terrorism, and

Kanth was the leader for all of Delhi in these investigations and operations, not just for a part of the great and growing city which is medieval and modern in parts all of the time, and for that reason poses special challenges to the administrator and the cop.

High profile assassinations were par for the course in that Delhi, and spraying of bullets by car-borne terrorists killing innocent civilians was something that was known to happen. In the centre of that story stood the author of this book. He has won a gallantry award on the recommendation of the Army (which motivated parties tried to traduce but the judiciary upheld it), and earned kudos. Later, while doing a stint in CBI, he was the head of the investigation in the Special Investigation Team created to crack the mysteries in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. The mission was accomplished in record time.

Some of these tales, based purely on what's presented here, can make a motion picture. But being a special kind of cop is part of Kanth. He has also done pioneering work in the field of child rights for as long as he has done policing. May be, that is another volume. Tidier editing and differently constructed editorial design and conception could have helped sharpen the focus.



KHAKI IN DUST STORM
By AMOD K. KANTH
Bloomsbury ₹799

HOW CULTURE FILLIP CAN FAST-FORWARD PANDEMIC RECOVERY

Jaya Bhattacharji Rose
essay

The creative economy refers to a range of economic activities where value is derived from the generation or exploitation of knowledge and is copyright relevant, such as music, writing, art, fashion, design, and media. Also, a wider range of production activities including goods and services that rely on innovation, research and development such as film, museums, galleries and photography, reside in its ambit.

Unesco survey "Cultural Times" (2015), the first global map of the cultural and creative industries, acknowledges the societal value of arts and culture. It assesses the contribution of cultural and creative industries to economic growth. It estimates that they generate US\$250 billion in revenue a year, creating 29.5 million jobs worldwide.

On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the Covid-19 pandemic; drastically impacting national economies. Essential industries were permitted to function but other sectors suffered terribly. Many governments did not offer any support, and certainly not for the creative industries. But there were some exceptions.

In June 2020, under a programme called New Start for Culture, Germany earmarked Euro 1bn for arts. Indeed, in November 2020, under Germany's infec-

tion protection law, culture got a new legal status. It is now no longer classified as entertainment. Hence, cancelling arts events in the pandemic might become difficult in this country.

On March 19, 2020, France, too, did something similar. It modified the rules of the country's specific unemployment scheme for artists and technicians. It announced that artists and authors could benefit with a lump sum from a solidarity fund.

Meanwhile, Italy set aside Euro 130 million for authors and audio-visual content creators.

On December 11, 2020, the United Kingdom's Arts Council announced that the Culture Recovery Fund has marked its £1 billion milestone, with £654 million being invested in arts and cultural organisations, as part of its £1.57 billion support package.

On November 30, Germany approved a culture budget of Euro 2.1 billion (\$2.5 billion), nearly at par with the European Union's budget for culture at 2.8 billion euros, albeit to be distributed over the next seven years.

Over in the United States, of the US \$2 trillion coronavirus stimulus bill announced by its government, approximately \$75 million was for the National Endowment for the Arts.

While in South Africa, where seven per cent of the workforce is employed in this sector, 45 per cent informally, the direct contribution to the country's GDP of which is 1.6 per cent, the National Arts Council committed its support to the artists by continuing to pay them during the pandemic.

In May 2020, Jacinda Ardern, the newly returning Prime Minister of New Zealand, announced a \$175 million pack-

Art and literature can generate critical insights that policy makers need to factor for bringing about a sustainable recovery of the economy

age for "decimated arts" — a "resilience grant". The creative sector contributes nearly \$11 billion a year to NZ's GDP and employs 90,000 people. The New Zealand Libraries Partnership Programme with a funding package of \$58.8 million will support librarians and library services and assist them to support community recovery. Ardern said, "A healthy cultural sector has many positive flow-on effects for other important parts of our economy, such as technical production, hospitality, venues and domestic tourism."

According to World Bank (August 2020 report), in 2013, creative industries around the world generated revenues of over \$2 billion and employed 29 million people. The market for creative goods is estimated to be \$508 billion as of 2015. In 2015, developing economies exported more than 250 billion creative products including design goods, fashion, and films. Top exporters included China, Turkey, India, Mexico, El Salvador and Pakistan. In the United States, the non-profit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion of economic activity in 2015, supporting 4.6 million jobs, while receiving only \$5 billion in arts allocations by the public sector. A phenomenal return on investment at 3,326 per cent!

According to Megha Patnaik's report titled "Measuring India's Creative Economy", May 2020, however, approxi-

mately 1.1 million workers are employed in this sector, contributing 0.58 per cent of the GDP (2016-17). This is less than the international average as measured by WIPO where the mean contribution is 5.48 per cent. But again, in India, this can be partially attributed to the lack of comprehensive data. Patnaik states that with the right growth impetus through policy and markets, the creative economy can create a large share of jobs.

Sanjoy Roy, co-founder, Jaipur Literature Festival, confirms this by estimating that during the six days of the event there are more than 500,000 footfalls and 110,000 unique visitors.

In fact, culture can accelerate socio-economic recovery from the pandemic, as outlined by World Bank and Unesco in its report, "Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery" (2018). The framework, entitled "Cure", offers principles and strategies to apply in city reconstruction and rehabilitation in post-crisis situations.

There are four prominent ways in which culture positively impacts community resilience — by building social cohesion, fostering social and psychological well-being, offering critical tools for expression and community engagement, and finding authentic narratives, perspectives and experiences. These are critical insights that policymakers need to recognise for promoting sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic's effects with full ownership from communities. Investing in creative industries and developing cultural capital is worth exploring for the Indian government.

Jaya Bhattacharji Rose is an international publishing consultant

The importance of being earnest in a villainish and banal world



Kushalrani Gulab

review

It was at about page 243 of this 264-page book that I actually fell off my chair; I was laughing so hard. Laughing not at poor Ruby, the protagonist of Moni Mohsin's novel *The Impeccable Integrity of Ruby R.*, whose whole concept of her own existence had just been upended, but at myself.

Because I had read this book so earnestly right from the start, mentally noting a Modi here, a Trump there, possibly even a Putin lurking in a sentence or two. I had muttered darkly to myself throughout about messiah-type politicians, the trolls who worship them and the apparently global inability to think. I had begged Ruby again and again to use her head and open her eyes and see what was happening in front of her. But it was only when I got to page 243 that I understood that I had been reading this book all wrong.

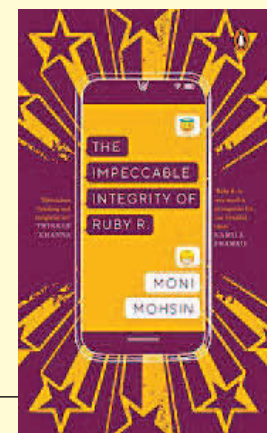
I could easily tell you what happened on page 243 to bring me to this revelation; it certainly would not be a spoiler because there are zero points of surprise in this book. Ruby Rauf, a hard-working and ambitious young woman, is focussed on her studies with the aim of working for a bank and returning to the upper middle class lifestyle she and her mother had lost when her banker father died, when she listens to a brand new politician speak and falls for his sincerity.

The brand new politician, Saif, a former film-star, says what every politician says, but with such charm and conviction that Ruby genuinely believes he will change the country. So when her mother, who works as a visiting tutor, is humiliated by a drug baron with such strong political connections that he is untouchable, Ruby abandons her education and ambition and joins Integrity, Saif's political party, as its social media head.

At no point in the book is Mohsin subtle about Ruby's inevitable fall from her great height at Integrity. Nothing is hidden from the reader or even Ruby herself: Saif's sliminess and sexually predatory behaviour, Integrity's complete lack of honour, Ruby's increasing belief that the end so justifies the means that even her closest friend can become social media prey — everything is made as clear as crystal. In fact, the author's total openness in the telling of this story almost makes it dull: you know right at the start that Ruby's life will be a trainwreck and sure enough, it is.

But then page 243 arrives. And you understand the importance of the book. *The Impeccable Integrity of Ruby R.* is not a political novel. It's a novel set in politics, but it's about Ruby and no one else. It is, in fact, a coming of age novel about a young woman, her insecurities and dreams and what her first decisions as an adult make of her. It is also about its readers, like me: how we lose ourselves in the ephemera of politics; how we must come of age ourselves. In one word, it's brilliant.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a sanyasi by the sea



THE IMPECCABLE INTEGRITY OF RUBY R.

By MONI MOHSIN
Penguin Viking ₹499

Barack Obama was decidedly a man of action as well as words

Sam Leith

review

Well, it's quite the title, isn't it? It tends to invite comparisons. The first one that occurred to me, though, was that the original Promised Land guy managed to get all the important stuff down on two stone tablets. His would-be successor doesn't have quite that gift for compression. As he semi-apologises in the opening pages, this memoir was originally envisioned as a 500-pager. *A Promised Land* is just north of 700 pages, and there's another volume to come.

That speaks of a certain self-regard. Then again, Barack Obama has a good bit to be self-regarding about. He overcame a modest background, a Muslim-sounding middle name and the melanin thing to win the presidency, in large part thanks to an unsurpassed gift for oratory. He helped avert a global depression after the 2008 crash. He passed the Affordable Care Act in the teeth of a ferociously obstructionist GOP. He kept a lid on

the Iranian nuclear programme, just about negotiated the Arab spring with honour intact, saw off Colonel Gaddafi — and it was on his watch that they got Osama Bin Laden, a thrilling account of which closes the book. He managed to win the Nobel Peace Prize ("what for?" he was self-aware enough to wonder) even as he sent tens of thousands more troops to Afghanistan and waged unceasing drone war in the sovereign territories of other nations. What's more he has a good singing voice, a nifty jump shot and a smart, smoking hot wife — he notes, approvingly, the "cult of Michelle's arms" taking hold of the media.

Whether or not you rate his achievements as highly as he does, to keep company with his elegant prose, complex conscience and unmistakable intelligence is a cool drink of water after four years of the other guy. Did he *bring about* the other guy? That's something Obama frets about — and though in these pages Trump is a minor comic character, the book describes with dismay the truth-indifferent, competence-optional rise of what was to metastasise into Trumpism. *A Promised Land* is long, in part, because it wants to do two things: to serve the historical

record (which means huge passages about the minutiae of passing legislation, complete with hat-tips to obscure staffers and bush-league congressmen); and to offer for the ordinary reader a sense of what it's like, in human terms, to be the 44th President of the United States of America. Plus, it needs to do a lot of the former to explain to his critics on the right why he's not a Marxist revolutionary, and to his critics on the left, whose disapproval stings him more, why he was not able to right the wrongs of the world in one go. Doing that — in an age of 280-character position statements — means a patient attention to detail.

But, as I say, there's a lot of it: he takes two and a half pages to describe his daily commute down the White House's West Colonnade; complete with picturesque old Black groundsman (sign of the times: he capitalises Black, as he did not in his first book) who, it occurs to the President, are in a way just like him: "guardians... the quiet priests of a good and solemn order." There is a good bit of what in the past would have been called "pi-jaw"; and a lot, too, of what these days gets called "humblebrag". He does like to namecheck the predecessors he admires, and com-

Obama's cool conscientious pragmatism, rather than his optimism, is the takeaway from his memoir

pare his travails with theirs — Lincoln, JFK, FDR, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel and Gandhi are among those who get an outing.

Also, schmaltz. Obama salts his narrative with passages of novelistic colour and implausibly verbatim dialogue. One of

his tics is to describe himself, at one resonant moment or another, contemplating the scene and having a Deep Thought or a Meaningful Memory.

"As Michelle and I leaned out to wave, the night air brisk on our cheeks, the crowd cheering wildly, I couldn't help but think about the daily fighting that continued to consume Iraq and Afghanistan and all the cruelty and suffering and injustice that my administration had barely even begun to deal with."

Visiting the pyramids in Egypt really sets him off. He contemplates an old graffiti of a jug-eared figure who looks a bit like him: "All of it was forgotten now, none of it mattered, the pharaoh, the slave, and the vandal all long turned to dust." He also, in more prosaic moments, has the Alan Partridge quality of liking to end sections by quoting his own witticisms and the approving reactions to same ("We both got a good laugh out of that").

But under all that hopey changey stuff, and where the long sections about wrangling policy through Congress really come into their own, is a superbly engaging study in realpolitik. He was famous for his windy rhetoric; but to get

anything done in office required a steely political operator. Obama, the centrist dad's centrist dad, is again and again confronted by the hard arithmetic of the caucus at home, and of tangled interests abroad. He really shows you how the sausage is made — and his cool, conscientious, covering-all-the-angles pragmatism, more than his optimism, is the real fascination in this book.

He delivers crisp little put-downs, too. Nicolas Sarkozy is a "bantam cock" whose conversation "swooped from flattery to bluster to genuine insight, never straying far from his primary barely disguised interest, which was to be at the centre of the action and take credit for whatever it was that might be worth taking credit for." Putin leads a Russia that "resembled a criminal syndicate as much as a traditional government".

And the man himself? He likes vodka neat, has a weakness for nicotine, loves to play basketball, golf and spades. He's uxorious, devoted to his kids, introspective and self-questioning. He doodles in meetings. He psyches himself up for rallies by listening to Jay-Z and Eminem. And as a young man he read Marx, Marcuse, Fanon and Foucault — but (he makes clear so as not

to give Jordan Peterson fans an embolism) mainly to impress girls.

And, wow, what a weird world the President lives in: empty motorways wherever you go, "armed SWAT teams" filling every staircase, rooftops cluttered up with "Secret Service countersniper teams, clad in black". If you take off for the loo, hulking men in black suits will mutter "Renegade to Secondary Hold" into their cufflinks. Every day starts with a briefing dossier that Michelle calls the "Death, Destruction" and "Horrible Things Book".

It's plain that Michelle doesn't like any of it all that much. When Barack was originally thinking about running for president, he told her: "You get the final say." Michelle lifted her eyebrows as if to suggest she didn't believe me. "If that's really true, then the answer is no," she said. "I don't want you to run for president, at least not now." Three pages later, he's running for president anyway. "If one of the qualifications of running for the most powerful office in the world was megalomania," he writes, "it appeared I was passing the test."

By arrangement with the Spectator



A PROMISED LAND
By BARACK OBAMA
Penguin Random House, ₹1,999

SHORT TAKES

Panghal clinches gold at World Cup

New Delhi: World silver-medalist Amit Panghal (52kg) notched up a gold medal without having to fight his final bout, while veteran Satish Kumar (+91kg) settled for silver after an injury prevented him from competing in his summit clash at the Cologne World Cup in Germany on Saturday. Panghal was given a walkover by Germany's Argishti Terteryan.

Satish, who made the final after beating France's Djamil Dini Moindze in the semifinal on Friday night, had to withdraw against Germany's Nelvie Tiafack owing to an injury. Also making the final were Sakshi and Manisha in the women's 57kg category. Asian Games bronze winner Pooja Rai, Mohammed Hussamuddin and Gaurav Solanki settled for bronze medals. — PTI

Chennaiyin snap winless streak

Goa: Chennaiyin FC finally managed to register a win after five games, with 2-1 victory over FC Goa in the Indian Super League here on Saturday.

In a game that saw 39 shots at goal, Rahim Ali (53') scored the match-winner after Jorge Ortiz (9') cancelled out Rafael Crivellaro's (5') olympic-goal opener. It was an easy win for the visitors who should have finished with a bigger goal margin, had it not for their poor finishing. Brandon Fernandes returned to the side as Goa coach Juan Ferrando named three changes to the line-up that lost against ATK Mohun Bagan with Aiban Dohling and George Ortiz being the other two. Following their 0-0 draw against NorthEast United, coach Csaba Laszlo preferred to start with influential midfielder Anirudh Thapa and Rafael Crivellaro.

Real Kashmir lift maiden IFA Shield

Kolkata: Real Kashmir FC clinched their maiden major trophy by lifting the IFA Shield after beating George Telegraph 2-1 in the summit clash here on Saturday, though the 127-year-old tournament was held without some of the country's top sides. This year, four I-League teams and eight Calcutta Premier League sides took part. Besides RKFC, Mohammedan Sporting, Gokulam Kerala and Indian Arrows were the other I-League sides. Fresh from a hat-trick against Mohammedan Sporting in the semifinals, Nigerian forward Lukman Adefemi broke the deadlock (38th minute) from a penalty but the Georgians restored parity in the second half with a terrific solo run by substitute Gautam Das (50th). But 10 minutes later, skipper Mason Robertson snatched the lead for the Snow Leopards with a towering header. — PTI

Newbies star in Honda Talent Cup

Chennai: As the penultimate day of the finale round of the MMSC FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2020 came to a close on Saturday, younger riders shined through on track with their power packed performances. The IDEMITSU Honda India Talent Cup 2020 focuses on providing accelerated racing platform to groom young potential riders of today in their journey to become India's star riders of tomorrow. The highlight of 2020 have been the 10 young guns in the NSF 250R Honda India Talent cup — the first ever racing platform in the history of Indian motorsports where the next gen riders ride on the Moto3 race machine platform — NSF250R. Feeding into this as first step is the CBR 150R category of IDEMITSU Honda India Talent Cup with 13 riders, including the youngest of only 12 years of age.

Live on TV

English Premier League: Brighton vs Sheffield from 5.30 pm; Tottenham vs Leicester from 7.45 pm; Manchester United vs Leeds United from 10 pm

Indian Super League: Hyderabad vs Mumbai from 4.50 pm; Kerala Blasters vs East Bengal from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301. Editor — T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

NEW LOW

India slump to their lowest score as Australia clinch first Test

Adelaide, Dec. 19: The Indian cricket team under Virat Kohli faced their worst hour of embarrassment while collapsing to their lowest Test score of 36 as a rampaging Australia cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket victory inside two and half days in the opening Day/Night Test here on Saturday.

There were no demons in the pitch but Josh Hazlewood (5-3-8-5) and Patrick Cummins (10.2-4-21-4) displayed fast bowling of highest quality to dismantle the visitors.

The sequence of 4, 9, 2, 0, 4, 0, 8, 4, 0, 4, and 1 on the scorecard will rankle the fans but more so this team, for a very long time. "Very hard to put those feelings into words. We had a lead of 60-odd coming and just collapsed," said Kohli, who would be heading home on paterni-

INDIA'S LOWEST TOTALS IN TESTS

Score	Overs	Opponents	Venue	Season
36	21.2	Australia	Adelaide	2020-21
42	17	England	Lord's	1974
58	21.3(x8)	Australia	Brisbane	1947-48
58	21.4	England	Manchester	1952
66	34.1	South Africa	Durban	1996-97

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

ty leave now.

India's earlier lowest score was 42 at the Lord's in 1974 against England, known in Indian cricket parlance as the "Summer of 42".

Saturday's total was also the lowest score in the brief history of D/N Tests and the joint fifth lowest overall.

The easy target of 90 runs was achieved by the home side in only 21 overs without much fuss.

They only lost Matthew Wade (33) and Marnus

Labuschagne (6) in pursuit of the easy goal and in the process, opener Joe Burns (51) got a confidence-boosting half century.

The home team collected 30 World Test Championship points from the win, while its skipper Tim Paine was adjudged player of the match for his gritty first innings knock of 73.

"I said this morning in the media that both these attacks have the ability to take quick wickets. Didn't

SCORECARD

India 1st Innings: 244 all out
Australia 1st Innings: 191 all out
India second Innings (overnight 9/1): Prithvi Shaw b Cummins 4, Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Hazlewood 9, Jasprit Bumrah c and b Cummins 2, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 0, Virat Kohli c Green b Cummins 4, Ajinkya Rahane c Paine b Hazlewood 0, Hanuma Vihari c Paine b Hazlewood 8, Wriddhiman Saha c Labuschagne b Hazlewood 4, Ravichandran Ashwin c Paine b Hazlewood 0, Umesh Yadav not out 4, Mohammed Shami ret'd hurt 1. **Extras 0. Total (for 9 wickets, in 21.2 overs) 36.**
FoW: 7-1, 15-2, 15-3, 15-4, 15-5, 19-6, 26-7, 26-8, 31-9.
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 6-3-7-0, Pat Cummins 10.2-4-21-4, Josh Hazlewood 5-3-8-5.
Australia 2nd Innings: Matthew Wade run out 33, Joe Burns (not out) 51, Marnus Labuschagne c Agarwal b Ashwin 6, Steven Smith (not out) 1. **Total (For 2 wickets, in 21 overs) 93.**
FoW: 7-1, 82-2.
Bowling: Umesh Yadav 8-1-49-0, Jasprit Bumrah 7-1-27-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 6-1-16-1.

expect them to come this quick," said Paine, grinning from ear to ear after the rather remarkable triumph.

India have now lost three successive Tests well inside three days with two being in New Zealand earlier this year.

To make matters worse

for the visitors, star pacer Mohammed Shami's series could well be over due to a wrist injury from a short ball from Pat Cummins, which could potentially be a fracture. Shami could not continue and the Indian innings was terminated at 36/9 in 21.2 overs. — PTI

Our worst batting show, says Kohli

Adelaide, Dec. 19: India captain Virat Kohli can't remember a "worse batting performance" by his team than the lowest ever Test score of 36 against Australia here but at the same time, he has urged people not to "make mountain out of a molehill".

He did speak about batsmen "lacking intent" to take forward the lead and although he didn't take names, Mayank Agarwal's approach (9 off 40 balls) in the morning was hard to explain when the team had a 62-run overnight advantage.

"I don't think we have ever had a worse batting performance than this. So we can only go upwards from here," Kohli said.

The Indian captain desperately tried but looked at pains to defend the indefensible — another inept overseas batting show with six successive scores of less than 250 just this year.

"It's a strange one to be honest in my opinion. The ball didn't do much but we didn't have too much intent of going out there and tak-

ing the game forward.

"Everything happened so quickly that no one could make any sense of it."

Under Kohli, save the 2018 series in Australia, the Indian team has had way too many batting collapses including six on the trot, starting with New Zealand early this year, but strangely the skipper felt there isn't anything alarming about it.

"I don't think it's alarming and we can very well sit here and make a mountain out of a molehill, it's basically looking at things in the right perspective," he reasoned.

In fact, there has been close to 15 innings in SENA countries (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia) where the team has failed but the skipper could remember only six in 8-9 years. "You have just spoken about five or six batting collapses in 8 to 9 years if I am not wrong. There will definitely be collapses again and again and we have to accept our mistakes and what we need to work on." — PTI



The OTP to forget this is 49204084041.
— VIRENDER SEHWAG
 Ex-India opener

Wait what happened? I just went to play 9 holes came back game over. What a spell by The Australians. Pace matters.

— WASIM AKRAM
 Pakistan cricketer

Unreal win by the lads today, bowlers what an effort today!! Simply unbelievable day of cricket. @joeburns441 hits winnings runs so good. So happy for you legend.

— DAVID WARNER
 Australian batsman

With the way India batted & bowled in the 1st innings, they were in the driver's seat, but the Aussies came back really hard this morning. That is the beauty of Test cricket. It's NEVER over till it's over. India was out-classed in the 2nd half. Congratulations to Australia!

— SACHIN TENDULKAR
 India great

GAVASKAR HAILS AUSSIE BOWLERS

Adelaide, Dec. 19: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Saturday sympathised with the Indian team after they slumped to their lowest Test score, saying it would be a bit unfair to be critical given that the Australian pace bowlers were simply "superb".

The trio of Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc produced a sensational performance as the visitors collapsed to their lowest Test score of 36. India's earlier lowest score was 42 against England at the Lord's in 1974 and Gavaskar was a part of that team.

"I mean, any team that is all-out for its lowest Test score since the time it started playing Test cricket, that's never good to see," Gavaskar told "Channel 7".

"But having said that, if any other team had been facing that kind of bowling, they would have also got out, maybe be not all-out for 36, maybe 72 or 80-90 but the way Hazlewood, Cummins bowled and the earlier three-over spell from Starc, they asked a lot of questions.

"So it's not fair to blame the Indian batsmen for the way they got out because it was just simply superb bowling by the Australian bowlers," he added. — PTI

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः । न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः॥

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10:30 AM

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Chief Guest
Sh. Jai Ram Thakur
 Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh

Inauguration of International Gita Seminar

11:00 AM

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Chief Guest
Sh. Jai Ram Thakur
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