





## SHORT TAKES

**40-year-old 'suspected' thief killed, 2 arrested**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Two men were arrested for allegedly killing a 40-year-old person whom they suspected a thief in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar area, police said on Tuesday. The accused have been identified as Manjeet (26), a resident of Sonia Vihar, and Parveen Kumar (26), a resident of Khajuri Khas, they said. On Saturday at 7.42 am, information was received that one injured person in unconscious state was lying in field near Bedi Gas Agency, Milan Garden, Sonia Vihar, police said. Police rushed to the spot and shifted him to JPC Hospital where he was declared brought dead. There were multiple abrasion and deep bone head injury on the body, a senior police officer said. During investigation, deceased was identified as Sunil Verma (40), a resident of Loni, Gaziabad. Police checked the CCTV footages and found one Scorpio car near the spot. The occupants were doing some suspicious activities. Later, the vehicle number was identified which was being used by Manjit. "Raids were conducted at various places and both the accused persons were arrested from near Shiv Mandir, Sabhapur village," Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Ved Prakash Surya said. Investigation revealed that on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, Nitin, a resident of Biharipur, and Manjeet were having liquor in the car at Milan Garden, G-Block Sonia Vihar, which is adjacent to dairy farm of Nitin. Around 11 pm, they suspected one person roaming around the dairy and they took him as a thief. They made him to sit in their car and thrashed him badly with fists and blows, the officer said. The deceased was also intoxicated and had a scuffle with them. Meanwhile, Parveen joined them. They all beat him mercilessly with foot, punches and sticks and later threw him near Bedi Gas Agency in open plot, police

**NDMC approves Khan Market redevelopment plan**

**New Delhi:** The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Tuesday approved the proposal for redevelopment of the Khan Market Community Centre. In a council meeting chaired by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the council considered over 30 proposals placed before it. "The Council has approved the proposal for going ahead with redevelopment of Khan Market Community Centre (KMCC). The council has also approved for revision of period of renewal of Health License to five years from three years at present. This is in order to achieve ease of doing business for all trades and mentioned under Section-327 to 331 of NDMC Act-1994," an official statement said. "A proposal was approved for payment of an amount of ₹200 to the students of Class 10 and 12 of NDMC and Navyug schools towards data package cost through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for attending online teaching learning activities till the schools are closed," it added. The council has approved sending a proposal to the Ministry of Home Affairs for considering regularization of 63 contractual doctors by amending the existing Recruitment Rules of the respective cadre of doctors. "A proposal was approved. The revision of remuneration of salary and allowances to contractual doctors in NDMC as per 7th CPC pay scales. The council has approved the proposal for construction of 160 Type-III Flats at Sector-VI, Pushp Vihar, Saket, New Delhi (composite work)," it said. Among other proposals approved by the Council include establishing additional 33KV substation at AIIMS, construction of 33/11KV below ground electric sub station at Church Road, implementation of smart grid infrastructure including enhancement of existing network in NDMC power distribution area, construction of Jai Prakash Naryan Library at Mandir Marg and upgradation of Laxmibai Nagar Barat Ghar with modern trends and comfort level. — PTI

# Delhi ready for mutant Covid from UK: Kejriwal

703 cases, 28 fatalities in last 24 hours, total caseload 6,24,118

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Tuesday, reassured the city's residents by asserting that the national capital is prepared to deal with the new mutant strain of the novel coronavirus.

"Delhi has witnessed three waves of coronavirus and the third wave was an intense one when cases went up to 8,500 (fresh cases reported daily) but we managed to



Delhi has witnessed three waves of coronavirus and the third wave was an intense one but we managed to control it. We are fully prepared to deal with it," Mr Kejriwal told

— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM

reporters in response to a question on the preparedness for the new strain of Covid-19 that first emerged in the UK a few days ago.

With 703 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, the total caseload in the national capital climbed to 6,24,118. With 28 new fatalities, the death toll rose to 10,502. While the positivity rate stands at 0.83 per cent, the death rate stands at 3.06 per cent.

The national capital had

recorded 564 fresh coronavirus cases, the lowest in seven months (on May 26, 412 fresh cases were reported), and 21 more fatalities due to the disease on Monday even as the positivity rate stood at 0.98 per cent.

The city's caseload mounted to 6,23,415 and the death toll due to the coronavirus infection rose to 10,474, the authorities said adding that over 57,463 Covid-19 tests were conducted on Sunday.

## ■ Fake call centre busted in Mehrauli 4 women among 11 held for running job racket

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Eleven people, including four women, have been arrested for allegedly running a fake call centre in south Delhi's Mehrauli area, police said on Tuesday.

They said information was received regarding a fake call centre where the accused persons lured victims on the pretext of giving them jobs in reputed companies like Ultratech, Vistara Airlines and Indigo Airlines and charged ₹2,200 per candidate as registration fee.

"Police raided the premises where five men and four women were found using laptops and mobile phones and were calling the victims," deputy commissioner of police (south) Atul

Kumar Thakur said.

During initial enquiry, it was found that they used to make calls and lure people on the pretext of providing jobs in different companies. After receiving the registration amount, they dispatched fake interview letters and appointment letters and later collected additional amounts, the DCP said.

On checking their records, it was found that before dispatching a fake appointment letter they collected around ₹10,000 to ₹40,000 depending on the candidate's budget, police said.

A case under relevant sections of the statute was registered and accused Vikas Yadav (25), Krishna (28), Najakat Ali (30), Roop Basant (22), Avinash (24) and four women were apprehend-

ed from the spot, Thakur said.

During investigation, it was revealed that the call centre was being run by three more accused Arjun Singh (28), Aashish (32) and Rahul. Searches were made to nab all three, police said.

The trio was stated to be in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. A team was sent to Gwalior and later Agra, but the accused persons could not be arrested.

On Monday, they were traced to Delhi where Aashish and Arjun Singh were arrested while the third accused Rahul was absconding, police said, adding that further investigation was in progress.

Five laptops, five mobile phones and eight SIM cards were recovered from their possession, police added.

## Youth held under anti-conversion law

**Noida, Dec. 29:** A youth who was in an interfaith relationship with a girl has been arrested in Greater Noida under the Uttar Pradesh's new anti-conversion law, police said on Tuesday, the second such case to be lodged in Gautam Buddh Nagar district.

The man, around 20, had got into a relationship with the girl, but allegedly did not reveal his real name and religion to her, according to Greater Noida Additional Deputy

Commissioner of Police Vishal Pandey.

"An FIR was lodged at the Dadri police station, after which the accused was arrested," Pandey told PTI. "His real name is Shahrukh, but he had concealed his name and religion from the girl."

The officer declined further details, citing privacy of the girl.

The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance nullifies marriages if they are carried

out for the sole purpose of religious conversion and provides for a jail term of up to 10 years for violators.

In Gautam Buddh Nagar, the first case under the new law, which was enacted on November 27, was lodged on December 19 at Surajpur police station in Greater Noida.

Three women, including a South Korean national, and a man were arrested for allegedly luring local people into converting their religion. — PTI

## Censor Board says no to movie in Malayalam on JNU agitation

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec. 29:** Malayalam film "Varthamanam," set against the backdrop of the students' protest held in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi early this year, has been denied permission for screening by the Censor Board of Film Certification's (CBFC) regional office here.

Directed by noted filmmaker Sidhartha Siva with award winning actress Parvathy Thiruvothu in the lead role, the movie revolves around the journey of a Kerala woman who goes to the JNU campus from her home state for her research studies.

Aryadan Shoukath, the film's producer-script-writer, said the CBFC officials here did not point out any reason for denying the certification.

He also said the movie would be submitted to the revising committee of the Censor Board in Mumbai for certification this week itself.

"The CBFC officials here just informed us that the film has to be submitted to the revising committee. We still do not know why the movie is denied the certification," Mr Shoukath, also a Congress leader, told a news agency.

The award winning script-writer said he had carried out several months of research and studies before penning the script and spent several days in Delhi to get first-hand experience of the culture and lifestyle

■ **ARYADAN SHOUKATH,** the film's producer-script-writer, said the CBFC officials did not point out any reason for denying the certification. He also said the movie would be submitted to the revising committee of the Censor Board in Mumbai for certification this week.

in JNU campus.

"We cannot send the movie for any award this time if we do not get the Censor Board clearance before December 31," he said.

Mr Shoukath suspects that the nod for screening was denied on political grounds citing a recent tweet of a Censor Board member, who is also the state vice president of the SC Morcha of BJP.

"Adv. V. Sandeep Kumar, a Censor Board member, recently tweeted that the permission was denied as Aryadan Shoukath was its script-writer and producer. Nowadays, the Censor Board has several political appointees who have no basic knowledge of cinema," he said.

Mr Shoukath also uploaded on his Facebook page the screenshot of the controversial tweet of the regional Censor Board member.

In his tweet, which was found removed later, Sandeep Kumar had said that he, as a member of the board, was opposed to giving nod to the movie. "As a member of the Censor Board, I saw the movie Varthamanam.

The theme was the persecution of Muslims and Dalits in the JNU agitation. I opposed it because Aryadan Shoukath was its script-writer and producer. Of course, the theme of the film was anti-national," the tweet said.

Violence broke out at the JNU campus early in January this year as masked men armed with sticks and rods attacked students and teachers protesting the fee hike and damaged property on the campus, prompting the administration to call the police which conducted a flag march.

Coming down heavily on him, Mr Shoukath, in his FB post, sought to know how a movie would become anti-national if it speaks about the students' agitation in Delhi campus or the democratic movements in the country.

"We are still living in India which is a democratic, secular, and socialist country. Is it based on the clan and race of the script-writer that a film is given a nod for screening? The undeclared emergency situation in the cultural sector cannot be accepted," the script-writer's FB post said.

Film sources here told a news agency that when two Censor Board members, who are from the film industry, strongly supported the movie and wanted to give it a nod for screening, two others, who are political nominees, objected to it.

— PTI



A physically challenged farmer takes part in a demonstration against the Central government's agricultural reforms while blocking a highway at the Delhi-Haryana border in Singhu on Tuesday.

— AFP

## Court sets aside 7-day jail term to ex-AAP MLA

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

A Delhi court has set aside an order awarding a seven-day jail term to former Aam Aadmi Party MLA Manoj Kumar for allegedly assaulting a woman in 2014.

Special Judge Geetanjali Goel, on December 22, set aside an order of a magisterial court while deciding an appeal filed by the lawmaker against the judgement.

The present appeal is allowed and the judgement dated August 13, 2019, by which appellant Manoj Kumar was convicted for the offence under Section 352 of the IPC, and the order on sentence dated August 17, 2019, are set aside.

The appellant is acquitted for the offence under Section 352 (punishment for assault or criminal force otherwise than on grave provocation) of the

IPC, the judge said.

According to the prosecution, the woman had gone to the lawmaker seeking redressal of water logging related problems. The convict, however, asked her not to disturb him and pushed the woman inappropriately.

The magisterial court had awarded punishment to Mr Kumar, saying the lawmaker was "a public servant and therefore it was his duty to behave fairly and courteously to those who approach him with their problems."

At the request of Mr Kumar, that he wished to file an appeal against his conviction, the court had granted him bail.

While convicting Mr Kumar for assault, the magisterial court had, however, acquitted him of the charge of 354 (assaulting a woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the IPC.

## Free WiFi to be set up at Singhu for farmers: AAP

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Free WiFi hotspots will be set up at Singhu border for the protesting farmers, AAP leader Raghav Chadha said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, he said the decision has been taken by "farmers' 'sevadar Arvind Kejriwal'."

"We want the farmers to stay in touch with their family. We have identified a few spots to install the WiFi hotspots. This is an initiative of Arvind Kejriwal and the party," Chadha said.

He said more such hotspots will be installed if there is more demand.

Farmers from various parts of the country have been camping at different border points of Delhi for over a month now to demand repeal of the three agri laws, which were voted through in Parliament in September amid strong protests by opposition parties.

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## SHORT TAKES

## Bengal assures docs of free Covid-19 jab

**Kolkata:** The West Bengal government has started sending text messages to doctors in state-run hospitals assuring them that they would get the Covid-19 vaccine free of cost once it is available, officials said. A number of medicos, mostly posted in hospitals in districts, have received the message. Doctors associations welcomed the initiative saying that it would boost the morale of those treating coronavirus patients. But private doctors should also get it, they said. "As a Covid warrior, you have been there for the patients, taking care of them. Honouring this contribution, the West Bengal government ensures that the Covid vaccines will reach you on time and free of cost. Wish you and your family well. Stay healthy," the message written in Bengali said. — PTI

## Vardhan named to global vaccine body

**New Delhi:** Union health minister Harsh Vardhan has been nominated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) as a member on its board, according to an official statement on Tuesday. The GAVI Board is responsible for strategic direction and policy-making, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation. Dr Vardhan will be representing the South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO)/Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board. The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar, the Union Health Ministry said in its statement. The Union health minister will be representing India at the board from January 1, 2021, until December 31, 2023, it said. — PTI

## MNS workers held for vandalism

**Pune:** The Pune police on Tuesday arrested eight MNS workers in connection with an attack on a warehouse of e-commerce giant Amazon as part of the party's protest over the issue of use of Marathi on its app and website. A group of eight to ten members of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena barged into the warehouse of Amazon in Kondhwa area on December 25 and damaged window panes. The MNS had demanded that Amazon provide the option of using Marathi on its app and website. "We have arrested eight persons in connection with the incident. All have been remanded in police custody for one day," said an officer from Kondhwa police station. — PTI

## SCHOLARSHIPS TO HELP 4 CRORE SC STUDENTS: GOVT

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

The Narendra Modi government's decision to raise the Centre's share amount in the scholarship for Scheduled Caste category students to 60 per cent, will benefit over four crore students, who otherwise would have to quit schooling after 10th standard due to financial constraint. The Cabinet had last week approved changes in the centrally sponsored post-matric scholarship scheme by approving a total investment of over ₹59,000 crore for the purpose. Scholarship amount will now be directly transferred to the student's bank account. Union minister Thawarchand Gehlot while addressing the media at the BJP headquarters, said the government's recent decision to raise the Centre's share in the scholarship amount to 60 per cent, and hike it progressively to 80 per cent, will result in a total expenditure of over ₹59,048 crore by 2025-26 and ensure monetary assistance to the underprivileged students in time. In the last two years, the Centre had spent only around ₹1,100 crore annually under an earlier formula. The minister said that many states would not pay scholarship on time or use the fund for some other purposes resulting in increasing dropouts from SC students due to lack of scholarship. The minister said from now money will be directly transferred to the student's bank account.

## Food, drug adulteration to attract life sentence in MP

**Bhopal, Dec. 29:** The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday approved an ordinance that has a provision for life sentence for those found guilty of food and drug adulteration in the state, an official said. A separate section has been introduced in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to provide for five years imprisonment and a fine of ₹1 lakh or both for those selling food items beyond their expiry date. The Penal Laws (Madhya Pradesh Amendment) Ordinance, 2020, was cleared at a cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Shrivraj Singh Chouhan, who described adulteration of food items and medicines as a "dreadful crime", said the public relations department official. Earlier, a bill to this effect was cleared by the cabinet but it could not be

▶ **THE PERSON** directly engaged in adulteration and the owner of premises where such activities are taking place will be punished and not the trader selling contaminated items, the chief minister said in a statement

introduced in the assembly as its three-day winter session, scheduled to start from December 28, was postponed due to the Covid-19 situation. In this backdrop, the BJP government took the ordinance route to notify the law aimed at checking adulteration of food and drugs in the state. The law on food adulteration was among 12 ordinances, one of them on religious freedom, which were approved by the cabinet, the official said. They have been sent to the governor for assent.

After the approval of the ordinances, Mr Chouhan, in a statement, said, Adulteration is a dreadful crime. There have been reports of adulteration in food and medicines. Mr Chouhan said the practice of adulteration will not be allowed in Madhya Pradesh at any cost. "There were reports of adulteration even in the plasma used to treat coronavirus patients and in vaccine. Could there be a bigger crime than this?" "For this, an ordinance was approved in the cabinet meeting. Sections 272, 273, 274, 275 and 276 of the IPC (related to public health & safety) have been amended to replace 6 months imprisonment and fine up to ₹1,000 with life imprisonment. Adulterators will now face life imprisonment, the chief minister said. — PTI

## Fresh snowfall reported in hills, Delhi shivers at 3.6°C Cold wave conditions intensify

**New Delhi, Dec. 29:** Cold wave conditions intensified in north India on Tuesday with fresh snowfall reported from hill areas and Delhi recording a minimum temperature of 3.6 degrees Celsius. According to the India meteorological department (IMD), a western disturbance led to "scattered to fairly widespread" snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Cold and dry northerly and northwesterly winds from the western Himalayas have been barrelling through the plains, bringing the minimum temperatures down in north India, the IMD said. Delhi reeled under a cold wave as icy winds sweeping through the city brought the minimum temperature down to 3.6 degrees Celsius. The Safdarjung observatory, which provides rep-



An Air Force soldier draws a smiley on the sweater of another soldier with dew drops after the rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day parade on a cold morning in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

representative data for the city, recorded a minimum temperature of 3.6 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 18.1 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal. The weather stations at Ayanagar and Lodhi Road recorded a low of 2.6 degrees and 2.7 degrees Celsius respectively. In the plains, the IMD

declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius. A severe cold wave is when the minimum is 2 degrees Celsius or less. The IMD said the mercury may drop further by New Year's Eve. Most places in Kashmir recorded moderate snowfall, bringing cheer to

those associated with tourism and trade as they expect business to pick up by New Year's Eve. Officials said snowfall started in Srinagar around 7 am, several hours after it had begun in neighbouring Budgam and Pulwama districts. The ski-resort of Gulmarg recorded seven inches of fresh snowfall, while the Pahalgam resort in the south and the Sonamarg resort in central Kashmir received around three to four inches of snow each, they added. The snowfall ahead of the new year has seen many domestic tourists and locals rushing to Gulmarg and Pahalgam, the officials said. Cold wave conditions intensified in Himachal as minimum temperatures decreased by one to two notches. Keylong, Kalpa, Dalhousie and Kufri shivered at sub-zero temperatures, it added. — PTI

## 'IAF gets back tech, arms edge over Pak'

PAWAN BALI  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Air Chief Marshal R.K.S Bhaduria said on Tuesday that Indian Air Force has got back its weapon and technology edge over Pakistan Air Force. "After Kargil for some time, we had gone into... not after Kargil, much after Kargil. In the last decade we in terms of weapon capability in our air battles, we firstly got into parity and then they had some superior weapons. That has again turned back. We are back into space where we have technological edge, we have weapons edge back and we are far ahead. We are better than Kargil situation when they (Pakistan) couldn't interfere into any of our operations," Air Chief Marshal Bhaduria said in an address to an online interactive session organised by Vivekanand International Foundation. He said that Indian Air Force now enjoys even bigger superiority over Pakistan than during 1971 war. He said that Pakistan can say anything about Balakot. "How can they (Pakistan) agree that they were in a situation that they can't even intercept aircraft that went within their territory and dropped (bomb). You know how much time they have taken to restart that base and build that base back. If it takes two years you can imagine the damage," said Air Force Chief. Air Chief Marshal Bhaduria said Pakistan has become a pawn in the Chinese policy and its military dependence on China would increase further in view of the debt trap due to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.



R.K.S Bhaduria

## 2 expelled Assam MLAs join BJP, call Cong 'directionless' Gujarat MP leaves BJP, to quit LS too

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, DEC. 29

Two Congress legislators — Ajanta Neog and Rajdeep Gowala — and former MLA of the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) Banendra Mushahary here on Tuesday joined the BJP at the saffron party office. Asserting that Ms Neog was considered to be one of the tallest leaders in the Congress party, state finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that her joining the BJP will strengthen the saffron party. While welcoming the two sitting legislators in the party, Mr Sarma said, "Her vast administrative and political experience will definitely strengthen the BJP in Assam. Mr Gowala was the chairman of the public accounts committee and his joining will also strengthen our party." Just before joining the party, four-time legislator Ms Neog — who was the cabinet minister in Tarun Gogoi-led government and Lakhimpur assembly constituency — legislator Rajdeep Gowala had met union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday evening in Guwahati during his three-day visit to Assam and Manipur. Just before their meeting with the union home minister, the Congress party had expelled the duo

**Bharuch, Dec. 29:** Gujarat BJP MP and former Union minister Mansukh Vasava on Tuesday quit the party and said he would also resign from Lok Sabha in the budget session of Parliament. In his resignation letter, Mr Vasava (63) did not specify any reason for quitting the party, but sources said the six-term MP, who is vocal on tribal issues, has been critical of BJP's policies after he was dropped as Union minister in 2016. Mr Vasava in his letter to Gujarat BJP president C.R. Paatil said, "I am resigning so that the image of the party is not damaged because of my mistake. I have been a loyal worker of the party, so please forgive me." The Lok Sabha member, however, did not mention



Mansukh Vasava

which 'mistake' he was referring to. In the letter dated December 28, Mr Vasava said he will resign as Bharuch MP after meeting the Lok Sabha Speaker during the budget session of Parliament. Mr Vasava said he tried his best to be loyal to the party and assimilate its values in life, but is human and prone to mistakes. "I am a human and humans tend to commit mistakes. To ensure that the party does not suffer due to my mistake, I resign from the party, whose forgiveness I seek," Mr Vasava said in the letter to Mr Paatil. — PTI

from the party accusing them of involvement in anti-party activities. Ms Neog, while joining the BJP in presence of state chief Ranjeet Dass, said that the Congress has now become an undisciplined party. "There is a communication gap between the party leader-

ship and the grass-root workers," she said. "There were some ideological differences between me and the Congress. After meeting CM Sarbananda Sonowal, I felt hurt because of the behaviour Congress leaders showed towards me," said Ms Neog.

## Cong kicks off mass outreach drive

## BMC POLLS 2022

▶ **DURING A 100-day** long mass contact programme during the Congress will hold interactions in all the 227 wards of the BMC to know the grievances of citizens. The Congress currently has less than 30 seats in the BMC.

where the Congress will hold interactions in all the 227 wards of the BMC to know the grievances of citizens. "We want to strengthen

the Congress in entire Mumbai and this drive is part of it."

Newly-appointed Mumbai Congress president Bhai Jagtap said, "There were times when the Congress used to win around 70 seats in BMC polls. We want to make the party stronger to win more than that. "The drive will help in reconnecting with Congress sympathisers. It will also help us to convince senior leaders to go solo in BMC polls." The Congress currently has less than 30 seats in the BMC. — PTI

## Man gets double death penalty for rape, murder

**Pudukottai (TN), Dec. 29:** A young man was on Tuesday awarded double death sentence by a court in the district for the rape and murder of a seven-year old Dalit girl last year. Mahila court judge R. Sathya sentenced to death Samuel alias Raja under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and also under Section 302 of the IPC for rape and murder. He was also sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering a dalit girl and seven years imprisonment for kidnapping a child and trying to destroy evidence. The entire trial process was completed in six months, officials said. — PTI

## Man hangs self as 'panchayat' forces him to lick spittle

**Kaimur, Dec. 29:** A young man was found hanging from the ceiling of his home in Bihar hours after being forced to lick his own spittle by a kangaroo court that accused him of harassing a girl he was supposedly in love with, a senior police official said on Tuesday.

The incident took place in Chainpur police station area of this west Bihar district where the body of Shivshankar Gupta (22) was found hanging from the ceiling of his house on Monday night, Dilnawaz Ahmed, Kaimur district superintendent of police, told reporters. According to an FIR lodged by the father of the deceased, trouble began on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday when Gupta went to the house of the girl, who stayed nearby, to get back his mobile phone. The complainant has claimed that the girl had run away with the phone following a tiff with her boyfriend but when Gupta reached her house, her family members pounced on him alleging that he had come to molest her. The matter, which involved families of two different castes, triggered

## BIHAR

▶ **THE BEREAVED** father has named family members of the girl and those who sat in the self-styled 'panchayat', accusing them of abetment to suicide

tension in the area and, subsequently, a "panchayat" sat in judgement, pronounced the boy "guilty" and ordered him to spit on the ground and lick it by way of punishment. Crestfallen by the humiliation that he had to suffer in public, Gupta returned home with his family members, and on Sunday night, bolted the door of his room from inside while going to sleep, the SP said quoting the FIR. He was found hanging from the ceiling next morning by family members who prised open the door when Gupta did not respond to repeated knocks. In the FIR, the bereaved father has named family members of the girl and those who sat in the self-styled "panchayat", accusing them of abetment to suicide. No arrests have been made so far and the matter is under investigation, the SP said. — PTI

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	Thiruvananthapuram Jn.	23:53/23:55	23:48/23:50	
02413 Madgaon - Hazrat Nizamuddin 'Rajdhani' Superfast Special (Bi-Weekly)	Vadodara Jn.	00:01/00:06	23:42/23:52	01.01.2021
	Vadodara Jn.	23:42/00:02	23:42/23:52	
09027 Bandra Terminus - Jammu Tawi Superfast Festival Special (Weekly)	Vadodara Jn.	17:33/17:38	16:44/16:49	with immediate effect
	Anand Jn.	17:12/17:14	17:21/17:22	
	Ahmedabad Jn.	18:30/18:50	18:45/19:05	
	Mahesana Jn.	20:19/20:21	20:41/20:43	

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website [www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in](http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in).

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## IN BRIEF

## 4 ANMs HELD FOR ENTERING TEMPLE WITHOUT PERMIT

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 29

Four Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) workers were on Tuesday caught while entering Jagannath temple at Puri without having valid permits from the appropriate authorities. The four ANM workers were placed under suspension by the chief district medical officer (CDMO) for allegedly entering the temple without any prior permission. They were reportedly deployed at the Singhadwar (Lion's Gate) to conduct thermal screening of the devotees visiting the 12th-century shrine. In view of the risk posed by the Covid-19, the Jagannath temple (also known as Srimandir) which reopened on December 23 after a nine-month hiatus allowed phase-wise entry of public for darshan of Lord Jagannath. Family members of the temple priests and servitors were allowed to have darshan from December 23-25. The residents of Puri Municipality area have been allowed entry to the temple from December 26-31. After a hue and cry, working professionals, as well as tenants in the pilgrim town, were also given an opportunity to visit Srimandir.

## NO APPROVAL GIVEN FOR GANJA CULTIVATION: GOA

**Panaji:** Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said a proposal has been moved before the state government to allow cultivation of marijuana, but no approval has been granted in the matter. His statement came a day after Goa Forward Party (GFP) president Vijai Sardesai claimed there was a proposal to cultivate marijuana (ganja or grass) in the state for medicinal purposes. Talking to reporters here, Sawant said a file on marijuana cultivation in the state has been moved before the government, but it has not been approved. "There is a proposal, but that does not mean we have given approval. It is for the government to take a decision. That way, there are many things which are proposed to the government, but are never approved," he said. Sardesai, a former Goa deputy chief minister, on Monday asked how the government will ensure that cultivation of marijuana will be limited to medical purposes. — PTI

## Farmers take hard line on talks agenda

■ **Continued from Page 1** committee as suggested by the Supreme Court. Mr Shah, Mr Tomar, defence minister Rajnath Singh and top officials have also been engaged in backroom channel talks with socio-political groups and Sikh community leaders to find a "middle path" to put an end to the ongoing agitation. While the Centre has also been blaming the Opposition parties for "misleading" the farmers on the new laws, Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, who is at the forefront of the protests at Delhi border, said, "If the Opposition were strong, there would have been no need for farmers to launch the agitation?"

## Didi responds to Shah's rally

■ **Continued from Page 1** state to terrorise locals, all of you should put up a united fight against them." Branding Visvabharati vice-chancellor Bidyut Chakra-barty as a "BJP man", the CM claimed that he is planning to destroy the rich heritage of the hallowed institution by "importing divisive and communal politics inside its campus". "Those who do not respect Mahatma Gandhi and other icons of the country are now talking of building 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal). Rabindranath Tagore has created 'Sonar Bangla' several decades ago, all we need to do is to protect the place from the communal onslaught of the BJP," Ms Banerjee said during her address, following a four-kilometre roadshow. — PTI

## Control room set up to watch NY celebrations

Centre to coordinate with states to ensure norms are followed

AGECORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Following the sharp increase in Corona cases during the Diwali festival, home ministry is clearly not taking any chances for the New Year celebrations. The Ministry has set up a centralised control room to co-ordinate with major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore among others to ensure that all safety and health protocols are strictly followed. Earlier on Monday, home ministry had extended the earlier issued Covid-19 containment guidelines till January 31. Home ministry officials admitted that during the Diwali celebrations it was observed that people had become careless and it did not follow the health protocols which led to a sharp increase in number of cases particularly in big cities. Centre now clearly wants to avoid a repeat of the same and is thus closely co-ordinating with all metro cities and states to ensure all necessary "safety and health protocols are in place."

"We have learnt from the experience of the Diwali festival season when people had become extremely careless which led to a sharp increase in Coronavirus cases. Now we have asked states and those cities which record high footfall during New



A medic demonstrates administration of Covaxin, an Indian government-backed experimental Covid-19 vaccine, to a health worker during its trials, at the Urban Primary Health Centre at Tezpur in Sonitpur district of Assam on Tuesday.

Year's to strictly follow all health and Covid protocols," a senior home ministry official said. Earlier in its advisory issued to states on late Monday evening, the ministry had said that, "while there has been a continuous decline in active cases in India, there is a need for surveillance, containment and caution due to a surge globally and the emergence of a new variant of the virus in the UK". The ministry also asked the states and union territories to keep a strict vigil to prevent any rise in cases during the New Year celebrations and the winter season. It also asked the states and UTs to actively support central authorities in the preparations for an expected vaccination drive.

## MUMBAI AIRPORT INTRODUCES EXPRESS TESTING

**Mumbai, Dec. 29:** The city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Tuesday said it has introduced a new 24X7 Covid-19 testing facility, which gives test results in flat 13 minutes at a cost of ₹4,500.

Since its launch on December 15, CSMIA has witnessed an average of 30-35 such tests per day, CSMIA said in a release.

A total of 400 express tests have been carried out at the airport till December 28, which include passengers who had connecting flights to destinations outside Maharashtra, it said.

In compliance with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) standards, CSMIA is the first airport to adopt the express test method by Abbott 'ID Now, which is aimed at providing arriving passengers with quick and accurate diagnosis, CSMIA said in the release. The round-the-clock testing facility option is available for all international arriving passengers at the airport at a cost of ₹4,500, CSMIA said.

— PTI

## JAWANS HURT IN SEPARATE J&amp;K CLASHES DIE

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, DEC. 29

Two security forces officials injured in separate militancy-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir last week succumbed to their injuries on Tuesday.

The officials said that Army's Havildar Anil Kumar Tomar who was critically injured during a 20-hour long gunfight with militants in Kanigam village of southern Shopian on Saturday lost his battle with life in a military hospital here.

Separately, an ASI of the CRPF identified as Netrapal Singh who was injured in a grenade attack by militants in central Ganderbal district on December 24 died in Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences on Tuesday.

## Karnataka House dy chair kills himself

■ **Continued from Page 1** his wife, and wrote down details about his property and gave other financial details, advising his family members to complete the new house which was under construction. At the end, he also mentioned that the recent incident in the Legislative Council had hurt him. This last sentence has created a political controversy, with the BJP and JD(S) leaders taking an indirect swipe at the Congress. Shivamogga

MP B.Y. Raghavendra was first to comment, saying he was hurt by the way he was treated in the Legislative Council on December 15. Even former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda said he had advised Dharmu Gowda not to sit on the Chair on December 15.

Meanwhile, Karnataka home minister Basavaraj Bommai said the police had recovered the suicide note and was investigating the death from all possible angles.

## Rajini cancels political plans after 'God's warning'

■ **Continued from Page 1** coronavirus infection, even though vaccines might be available soon, if he, who had been on immunosuppressants, took ill, it would put those accompanying him in his political journey into trouble, both economically and emotionally, he said.

"If I enter politics just because people would talk ill of me for going back on my promise, I would be making a scapegoat of the fellow travellers reposeing faith in me," he said. He sought forgiveness

from members of Rajini Makkal Mandram and his fans, who have been expecting him to launch his political party, for dis-appointing them.

"For the last three years, members of the Mandram have been following my instructions sincerely. Even during the corona lockdown, you went ahead to help people in need, following all safety precautions. Your good deeds will definitely come back to you and your family," he said. He added that the Mandram would continue to function as it has been.

## Scholarship, wedding grant for transgenders in Kerala

■ **UNDER THE** scheme, ₹1,000 per month would be given to each third gender student studying in Class 7 to Class 10 for a period of 10 months

transgender community into the mainstream of society," the minister said in a statement.

Under the scheme, ₹1,000 per month would be given to each third gender student studying in Class 7 to Class 10 for a period of 10 months. The scholarship would be ₹1,500 per month for transgender students studying in higher secondary and ₹2,000 per month for those pursuing diploma, degree, professional and post-graduate courses for a 10 months, the minister explained.

As an educationally backward group, there was need for giving more care and consideration for

transgender community members, the minister said detailing the circumstances that prompted the government to launch such a scheme.

Besides this, a recent survey had found that 58 per cent of transgender students drop out of educational institutions in the state without being able to complete even basic education, the minister added.

The social justice department also decided to extend ₹30,000 financial aid for trans couples who enter into wedlock legally, in the current financial year also.

"A total of ₹3 lakh has been sanctioned for the same. Through this, ₹30,000 each can be given to 10 trans couples," she said, adding that the scheme was aimed at helping trans people build up a social life through marriages. — PTI

## Won't raise white flag, give up fight: Mufti

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, DEC. 29

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, said on Tuesday that she won't raise a white flag but continue to fight against "injustice" meted out to the people of the erstwhile state and BJP's "gunda raj" over the country.

While speaking at a function held here to felicitate the PDP's newly elected District Development Councils (DDCs) members, she said that their "resounding success" has come as a shock to those who had sought to write political obituaries of the

party. "In their arrogance they thought by not allowing me to campaign, intimidating us and arresting our leaders, the PDP will not perform.

"Ours is not just a party but a movement which will never compromise on its ideals and core political philosophy of dialogue and reconciliation," she said.

Emphasising that for the restoration of lasting peace in J&K dialogue was pivotal, she said, "We will not allow Kashmir to be a battle ground but work relentlessly so that J&K acts as a bridge of peace between India and Pakistan".

She renewed her and the party's "pledge" to fight

## 6 UK returnees test +ve for new strain of virus

■ **Continued from Page 1** Minister of state for civil aviation Hardeep Singh Puri indicated this on Tuesday, saying: "I foresee a short extension on this temporary suspension. I do not see the extension to be long or indefinite." The government has announced a temporary suspension of all flights from the UK from the midnight of December 23 till December 31, 2020, along with mandatory RT-PCR tests of all UK returnee

air passengers for Covid-19. India's daily new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday were less than 17,000 after six months, and the daily deaths also fell below 300, for the first time in six months. The daily new cases were 16,922 on June 25 and they were 16,432 on Tuesday, while 252 deaths were reported in the past 24 hours.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said, meanwhile, that the rising Covid-19 cases in the UK



Farmers shout slogans during their protest against the new farm laws at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

## Govt bulldozed farm laws, says NCP chief

## Agriculture can't be run sitting in Delhi: Pawar

JATIN TAKKAR and PRASHANT RANGNEKAR  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

NCP supremo Sharad Pawar on Tuesday accused the Centre of bulldozing three new farm laws without consulting states and asserted that agriculture cannot be run "sitting in Delhi" as it involves farmers toiling in distant villages.

As farmers' protest on Delhi borders against these laws has entered its second month and five rounds of talks so far have failed to resolve the crisis, Mr Pawar also raised questions about the composition of the three-member ministerial group negotiating with the unions, saying the ruling party should have put forward leaders with "in-depth" understanding of agriculture and farmers' issues.

In an interview with PTI, the former Union minister said the government needs to take the protests seriously and it was "unfair" on the part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to blame opposition parties for the agitation by farmers.

He said Opposition parties will take a call on their future course of action on Wednesday if the government fails to resolve farmers' issue in the next scheduled meeting with representatives of 40 protesting unions.

On Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar's claim that Mr Pawar as the then agriculture minister during the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government also wanted farm reforms but failed to do so due to political pressure, the NCP leader said he certainly wanted to bring some reforms in the sector but "not in the way" BJP government has done, and they were different from the current ones.

Mr Pawar said he consulted all state governments before initiating the reforms and didn't move forward until all



Farmers prepare green colour Jalebis, symbolising green revolution at the Singhu border on Tuesday.

— PTI

## Farmers choose unique protests

**New Delhi, Dec. 29:** Serving 'green jalebis' to taking out a 'baraaf' (wedding procession), farmers protesting at Singhu border here are using innovative ways to communicate their grievances and demands to the central government.

A group of farmers from Mohali in Punjab have been serving special green jalebis (sweet), saying it symbolised the colour of their crops and the prosperity associated with it.

"We have been distributing green jalebis from the last few days. Nearly five quintals of the sweet are distributed everyday," Jasvir Chand, a protesting farmer, said.

"The green colour of the sweet symbolises Green Revolution as well as peace and tranquillity," Chand's companion Baldev Singh (65) said at the

protest site. "We have been peacefully protesting against the three new farm laws of the central government for over a month. Although the government has not accepted our demand, we are determined to continue the protest peacefully," he said.

Notably, many curious people queued up to taste the 'green jalebi' which is usually available in golden colour. Meanwhile, some youths from Karnal in Haryana took out a marriage procession at the protest venue to draw attention towards their agitation.

"We thought a marriage procession will be an interesting way to communicate to the people and the government our demands and issues with the farm laws," said 22-year-old Jagdip Singh from Dabri village in Karnal. — PTI

their reservations were resolved.

"I and Manmohan Singh also wanted to bring some reforms in the agriculture sector but not in the same way as the current dispen-

sation did. That time the agriculture ministry held long deliberations on the proposed reforms with agriculture ministers of all states and experts of the sector," he said. — PTI



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti addresses her supporters during a function organised to felicitate newly elected DDC councilors, sarpanchs and panchs, at party HQ in Srinagar on Tuesday.

— PTI

for the rights and dignity of the people of J&K and asserted, "No amount of coercion can force the peo-

ple into submission. We will fight for our rights. We are not the ones who will raise white flags

despite fatal blows being dealt to our identity, economy and livelihoods".

She claimed that her refusal to endorse BJP's plan of not handing over the bodies of the slain militants to their families for performing their last rights, massive police crackdown on the Jamaat-e-Islami and similar disagreements became reasons for the fall of the PDP-BJP government led by her in June 2018.

However, justifying the PDP's decision to cobble up alliance with the BJP in 2015, she asserted that her father Mufti Muhammad Sayeed did it only to "cage a jin" in a bottle so that Article 370 was not touched.



## THE ASIAN AGE

30 DECEMBER 2020

### New strain demands a relook at measures

Reports of six returnees from United Kingdom testing positive for the new coronavirus strain are reason enough for the government and the people to be alert again against the threat of the pandemic Covid-19 marking another deadly wave across the nation. Experts are of the opinion that the new strain spreads at a faster pace than the original variant, and hence the government must put in place stringent measures to stop its spread.

The government has already decided that the guidelines for surveillance, which were to be effective till December 31, will continue to be in force till January 31. This is welcome, but it must consider if this is enough. Schools and colleges across the country, as well as entertainment centres, are in the process of opening, though under strict controls. Mass transport systems, such as railways are also easing the controls, albeit slowly. The government must examine the option of pressing the pause button on the “unlock” process in view of the discovery of the new strain, taking, of course, the nation’s economic interests, also into account. It must ensure that there is an aggressive contact tracing, isolation and treatment for all the affected in all the cases, unlike the way the country handled it when the virus arrived first time earlier this year. It must also consider relaunching the mass awareness programme it kicked off ahead of the festival season as the new strain could find the New Year festivities a perfect medium through which to afflict more people.

**The government must examine the option of pressing the pause button on the ‘unlock’ process in view of the discovery of the new strain, taking, of course, the nation’s economic interests, also into account**

and the government has put in place a proper policy and mechanism to inoculate all the susceptible groups of people. It is reassuring that the government is now rolling out a dry run for the vaccination drive. But the real issue will be the availability of the vaccine in the required quantity in time, meeting the logistical challenges such as cold chain and the financial wherewithal to carry out the operation.

Vaccination is going to be a massive process given that the government is considering vaccinating about 30 crores of the population. There are reports that a sizeable section of the global population is resisting the idea. That must be true for India, too, and it will necessitate another major public awareness campaign. There are already exaggerated reports about the after-effects of the vaccination flying thick and fast in mainstream, alternate and social media. The government must take early steps to ensure that such propagandists face the legal music. All its actions must be guided by the fact that the virus has not gone away and that it is making an attempt to make a virulent return. A stitch in time can save nine, so goes the saying.

### Just not cricket

Naming a cricket stadium after a politician-administrator is not new to India. But to have his statue erected as well as to name the historic Feroz Shah Kotla after him appears a bit of a stretch even if the personality honoured thus was Arun Jaitley, who was a leading BJP figure in his lifetime. In a country known to relish the celebration of death and birth anniversaries, it may have been par for the course to perpetuate the memory of a leader. In this case, encomiums for a departed soul comes at the cost of the traditions of the great game of cricket, which has principally recognised sporting talent on the field.

Sports lovers grow up worshipping their heroes and, as they age they learn to respect athletes for their skills and for sweat and blood they shed to perform in a competitive environment. The administrator is a different breed. In India, most of them are attracted to the so-called honorary posts in sports admin because of perquisites and privileges. Furthermore, cricket is not only a social entree but also a key to the powerful inhabiting spaces in the corridors of politics and bureaucracy.

Politicians have been drawn to Indian cricket admin like moths to a flame. Many made sport their fiefdom, ruling like martinets while basking in reflected glory as champions have to interact with them. This is one reason why Bishan Bedi, a cricketer famous for calling a spade a shovel, found his hackles rising with the decision to erect a 800-kg statue for Jaitley who made himself a fixture at the Delhi & Districts Cricket Association.

An incensed Bedi has threatened to sue if his name is not removed from the stand honouring him and fetting his achievements in the game as a bowler of spin in a seductive arc with a graceful action that was poetry in motion. Jaitley, for all his intellectual attainments as a forceful lawyer with a gifted gab and the country’s finance minister, had no claim to mastery of an art form. So why should his name adorn a sporting arena?

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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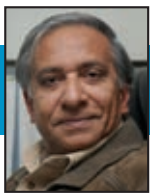
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Subhani

## After DDC: Will Centre further alienate J&K?



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

Propaganda apart, the result of the recent District Development Council elections in Jammu and Kashmir cannot have pleased the Narendra Modi government. This was the first proper test of popular endorsement in J&K after the willful destruction by the Centre of the erstwhile state’s constitutional autonomy in August 2019, imbuing the elections with more than ordinary significance.

While the Hindutva party won three stray seats (with no linking thread, or political meaning) in the Kashmir Valley, it lost quite heavily even in Hindu-dominant parts of the Jammu division. In these, the Valley-centric parties picked up seats.

Indeed, the BJP fared a lot worse here than it had in the Assembly election of 2014, which is a kind of comment on its all-round militaristic control of J&K since it scuttled its coalition government with Mehbooba Mufti’s People’s Democratic Party in 2018, possibly with the ulterior motive of playing games to install a Hindu chief minister, if feasible, for the first time in Muslim-majority J&K, or at least a BJP CM by roping in a Muslim.

Since the end of the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh — a Hindu ruler of mostly Muslim subjects — after he signed the Instrument of Accession in October 1947, the Hindu Right has been at odds with all CMs of Kashmir on account of their religion. There was a sense of loss of a “Hindu kingdom” in their narrative.

Breaking up the erstwhile state and making it a Union territory under “Hindu nationalist” control from the Centre might produce a

sense of catharsis. But that’s as far as it goes. Much sought success in the BJP’s bid to seek to stamp its political authority in J&K through the DDC polls failed to materialise. How the Modi government negotiates the terrain here on will therefore be keenly watched. Hindu nationalists are dealing with Muslim citizens in a sensitive region.

The BJP’s outsize celebration of the three Valley seats appears misplaced and pointless in the circumstances. Its chief purpose would appear to be to shore up the morale of the faithful when the picture is one of setback. Although the BJP government held a tight grip over Kashmir from the Centre, the electoral submission of Kashmir has not come to pass.

Obstacles were placed in the way of campaigning of the Kashmir parties. Kashmir’s best-known leaders were maligned as corrupt and their properties sought to be confiscated. Their key cadres were detained. To prevent voting in South Kashmir, cordon and search operations were mounted on polling day in certain constituencies to assist candidates of the BJP or the Apni Party — the quiescent party. The BJP’s opponents were detained yet again before the counting of ballots and after the counting. Does this look like democracy to anyone except the Prime Minister? And yet, it was BJP’s opponents who made themselves heard through the ballot box.

Even in the Hindu-majority area of Jammu, the saffron party could win only about half the seats, facing defeat in the constituencies of some of its key leaders. A below par showing in the Jammu division should be a matter of strategic

concern for the saffron party.

At first glance it suggests that the Hindu populace is no longer gung-ho about the abrogation of Article 370, as appeared to be the case initially. As in some other hill states and remote regions, in J&K too special constitutional protection was given to land rights and government employment for the local population. That has now gone in J&K and the Jammu Hindu is as aggrieved as the Kashmir valley Muslim (or the Pandit).

The story was the reverse in the Valley. The BJP’s bête noire, the People’s Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of regional parties — National Conference, PDP, People’s Conference and some smaller parties, although traditional rivals, have banded together. Their larger aim is to work for the restoration of J&K’s autonomy. They practically swept the polls in the Valley and made inroads in Jammu.

The formation of the PAGD is the result of a lesson learned. The mainline parties of Kashmir had boycotted the panchayat election two years ago to protest against the Centre’s overbearing attitude after it had imposed Governor’s Rule. The result was that the BJP’s candidates or Independents backed by it won everywhere since there was no contest — in some places by as few as six votes. The Narendra Modi government’s publicised aim was to put the mainstream parties out of business, accusing their leaders of corruption and dynastic rule, and to grow a fresh crop

**The method honed in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and the Northeast could well make an entry in J&K. But the more New Delhi alienates Kashmir, the harder it would be to deal with the Pakistan-China axis.**

of politicians in the Valley.

To prevent a repeat of the farce of the panchayat polls, the mainstream parties came together as the PAGD. They decided to contest the DDC polls as well as to prevent a division of the anti-BJP vote. But more, it is the people of Kashmir, including those who have no love lost for the mainstream parties, who expressed their determination to keep the BJP and its proxies out of the reckoning.

The reason was straightforward. The saffron party’s government in New Delhi had snatched away Kashmir’s even largely technical autonomy, with which was linked its people’s identity and sense of dignity. The Centre was also impervious to Kashmir’s every need as a society. The Narendra Modi government had reversed the approach of late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee for whom showing respect to Kashmir’s sentiments was bound with India’s strategic imperatives.

In the DDC election it might have served the BJP’s cause best if the Hurriyat Conference (which doesn’t take part in elections) had given a boycott call, as it usually does. Then the BJP would have had a field day. But the Hurriyat did not oblige. The militants too stayed quiet. All of Kashmir appeared determined to show that it was not pleased with what had happened on August 5 last year.

However, the Centre can take revenge if better sense does not prevail. Fifty Independent candidates have been elected to the DDCs. Through the misuse of the official machinery, an effort could be mounted to ensure their defection, a process that has already begun in Shopian district with the defection of a National Conference member. The method honed in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and the Northeast could well make an entry in J&K. But the more that New Delhi alienates Kashmir, the harder it would be to deal with the Pakistan-China axis.

#### LETTERS

##### FAKE CREDIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said that the government plans to run Metro trains in more than 25 cities by the year 2025. He also tried to appropriate credit for the Kolkata Metro, the first in the country, on behalf of BJP/NDA by saying it became functional only thanks to the efforts of former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee. That is utterly false, leaving one to wonder if it was said in ignorance or deliberate deceit in a conscious bid to spin votes.

**Abdussalam  
Mumbai**

##### A BETTER CAPTAIN?

A RESURGENT Team India displayed resilience and grace, outdoing Australia in all departments of the game and winning the second Test Down Under emphatically, with eight wickets in hand. Thanks to the composed captaincy of talented batter Ajinkya Rahane, who hit a century, plus the winning stroke, while successfully helping bowlers Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah contain the Aussies, that India could salvage some respect and inject competition back into the series which now stands levelled at 1-1. Is Rahane a better captain than Virat Kohli?

**M. Pradyu  
Kannur, Kerala**

##### SCHOOLING DILEMMA

THE CURTAINS drawn over physical classrooms post the onset of the pandemic will once again be raised with the department of primary and secondary education in Karnataka confirming that students in standards 10 and 12 will attend school from January 1. The authorities had announced the reopening of schools earlier. Still, they were in a dilemma on whether the reopening should be as per schedule because of the emergence of a new coronavirus strain. Though the state government is sparing no effort to put in place monitoring mechanisms and screen all passengers arriving from the UK, the physical distancing norms mean that it will be a tall order for schools to accommodate students in the already-cramped classrooms.

**N.J. Ravi Chander  
Bengaluru**

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Raj Mohan Tella



### In 2020, did smart words keep you company?

Words have an awesome power. We all know that words can help us express our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, likes and dislikes. Words also help us describe situations — how about *slightly touchy* or *demographically explosive*? Arm them and you can spread both positive or negative energy — *You mean the world to me; I hate you*. The same word can take on a completely different meaning given the context. Some examples are “fire”, “sound”, “kill it”. What do you think this sentence means? *“Dude, Raja killed the biryani!”* A favourite word grouping of millennials, but if you are unaware, to “kill” actually means “to do something exceedingly well”. Words have many ways of actually reflecting our current preoccupations and trends. I believe that words are also lessons about humankind.

So what have we learnt about ourselves from words in 2020? “*Lockdown*” is the Collins Dictionary’s word of the year. For

Merriam Webster it is “*pandemic*”. The lexicographers at Oxford University Press could not find a winner for 2020. A report explained, “*Given the phenomenal breadth of language change and development in 2020, Oxford Languages concluded that this is a year which cannot be neatly accommodated in one single word.*” Some of the words they found ubiquitous were “bushfire”, “impeachment”, “acquittal”, “coronavirus”, “Covid-19”, “lockdown”, “social distancing” and “reopening”.

So we were largely a worried, panic-stricken lot. Coping with the virus and our lives. Searching for light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a vaccine!

But if you were a brand or a business that was interacting on a daily basis with audiences, would you not worry about the words that are getting associated with your activities and presence? Especially during the pandemic where the messaging load and anxieties are already high. The difference

between being noticed, staying relevant and getting lost was a matter of choice. So if food brands did not talk about safety, hygiene and the extra care in the manufacturing process and the supply chain, they have lost an opportunity. If a bank hasn’t emotionally packaged its digital banking services, then it, too, was on the wrong side. Another example is salon care where proximity is a given and the tensions of touch are high. So we had F&B brands talking about that *taste you could trust and serving happiness with extra care*. A salon chain stated its range of safety measures and its “*Touchology*” principle that would be at play when customers walked in with prior appointments.

Words, narratives and the meanings associated with them — all are important to brand messaging. Words to describe your brand. Words that express the sense of loyalty and belonging. The key for a business is how well the audience is grasping the intent of the brand.

Because beyond semantics lie emotions, feelings and attitudes. You ought to possess a way of keeping track of the words and the associated sentiment around them. Certainly, you could take the aid of search words and keywords to reflect your brand and business but these have the limitation of not bringing out the concepts associated with the words. To me, it makes business sense to chart out a plan of getting the most appropriate and relevant set of words associated with your business and brand narratives.

Three quick examples here: 1. For a producer of organic brown rice, the words that need to get linked up as concepts could be *has all parts of the grain, healthy nutrients, keeps you fuelled and fit*. 2. For a cloud migration company, the words could be *technology that grows with your business, pay as you use, unifying the data, securing the cloud with automated cloud anti-virus checks* and more. 3. For a chocolate company the words

could be *happy moments and memories*.

So, if you would like to build relevant narratives here’s a short framework: first thoroughly understand the needs of your audience; then brainstorm for the word concepts associated with them; don’t try to create big words, keep them simple and sometimes an uncommon combination works well too (examples: “*mobilise your data*” or the famous “*I love you Rasna*”); lastly test the word concepts out.

Remember, getting to the right words is a creative process and not a mechanical one. You need to connect with the audience. With your words. And don’t forget what Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said, “*The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them.*” This applies to words, too...

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## SHORT TAKES

EU DEMANDS  
CHINA RELEASE  
ZHANG ZHAN

**Brussels, Dec. 29:** The European Union on Tuesday demanded that China release citizen journalist Zhang Zhan and several other jailed reporters, lawyers and human rights champions.

The EU statement was issued just ahead of Brussels signing a major investment pact with Beijing, despite concerns about China's labour and civil rights record.

Zhang was jailed on Monday for four years over allegations of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" during her coverage of the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in epicentre Wuhan, her lawyer said.

"Prior to her detention, Ms Zhang Zhan had been reporting about the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan," EU foreign policy spokesman Peter Stano said in a statement.

EXPLOSIVE  
KILLED 3 FRENCH  
ARMY IN MALI

**Paris, Dec. 29:** The French presidency said three soldiers were killed in Mali when an improvised explosive device hit their armoured vehicle.

The soldiers were participating in a military operation in the Hombori area of Mali's central Mopti province, part of a larger mission aiming at fighting Islamist extremists in Africa's Sahel region, the French presidency said in a statement on Monday.

Defense Minister Florence Parly said the soldiers were working "in an area where terrorist groups are attacking civilians and threatening the regional stability".

Parly said they were involved in a mission aiming at helping Mali to gradually be able to ensure its own security.

The defense minister did not provide further details.

France has more than 5,000 troops deployed in West Africa to help fight extremist groups as part of Operation Barkhane.

GAZA MILITANTS  
FIRE ROCKETS  
OUT TO SEA

**Gaza City, Dec. 29:** Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired a salvo of rockets into the Mediterranean Sea on Tuesday as part of a self-styled military drill aimed at preparing for a possible war with Israel.

The Islamic militant group Hamas has ruled Gaza since seizing power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007. It has fought three wars and numerous smaller skirmishes with Israel since then. A fragile, informal truce has mostly held in recent years, with only occasional exchanges of fire.

Authorities in Gaza restricted movement along the main coastal road and barred fishing for the duration of the exercises, which were to continue for a period of 24 hours and included the use of aerial drones. The drill was held by the Joint Command Room, which brings together a dozen militant factions but is dominated by Hamas.

A masked spokesman for the militants said the "defensive maneuvers" also demonstrated their rejection of the "agreements of shame," referring to the recent U.S. brokered normalization accords between Israel and a number of Arab states.

FRENCH FASHION  
DESIGNER PIERRE  
CARDIN DIES AT 98

**PARIS, Dec. 29:** French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, hailed for his visionary creations but also for bringing stylish clothes to the masses, died Tuesday aged 98, his family told *AFP*.

Cardin, who was born to a low-income family in northern Italy but became a France-based fashion superstar, died in a hospital in Neuilly in the west of Paris, his family said.

"It is a day of great sadness for all our family. Pierre Cardin is no more," the statement said.

It said after a lifetime spanning a century he had left France and the world a "great unique artistic heritage" and not only in fashion.

Born into poverty in 1922 near Venice in northern Italy, his family emigrated to France when he was a small child.

"Italian by birth, Pierre Cardin never forgot his origins while bringing unconditional love to France," said his family.

## VP- elect takes the jab



Registered nurse Patricia Cummings administers the Covid-19 vaccine to Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris December 29, 2020 at the United Medical Center in Washington, DC.

— *AFP*

More people hospitalised in UK  
than peak of first virus outbreak

**London, Dec. 29:** Official figures show more people are currently hospitalised with Covid in England than at the first peak of the outbreak in the spring.

There were 20,426 patients in hospitals as of Monday morning — the last day for which figures are available — compared to the previous high of 18,974 on April 12.

However, case figures do not include Scotland and Northern Ireland, which did not report over the Christmas period.

"Many of us have lost family, friends, colleagues and — at a time of year when we would normally be celebrating — a lot of people are understandably feeling anxious, frustrated and tired," said NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens.

"And now again we are back in the eye of the storm with a second wave of coronavirus sweeping Europe and, indeed, this country."

Health trusts have been told to begin planning for the use of Nightingale field hospitals, the temporary facilities created during the first wave that have largely gone unused.

London and southeast England are currently bearing the brunt of the outbreak, with paramedics in the capital saying they are receiving up

WHO: Be ready for  
worse pandemics

**Johannesburg, Dec. 29:** The Coronavirus has devastated lives and economies across the globe, but the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that worse pandemics could like ahead, urging the world to get serious about preparedness.

"This is a wakeup call," WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told reporters at a briefing marking a year since the UN agency first learned of the new virus spreading in China.

"This pandemic... has spread around the world extremely quickly and it has affected every corner of this planet, but this is not necessarily the big one," Ryan added.

"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in the future." While huge scientific progress was made to study the virus and develop vaccines at record speed, WHO senior adviser Bruce Aylward cautioned that the world was far from ready for the next pandemic.

"We are into the second and third waves of this virus and we are still not prepared to deal with and manage those," he said.

"While we are better prepared... we are not fully prepared for this one, let alone the next one." — 'Good riddance, 2020!'

Meanwhile, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa banned alcohol sales and made masks mandatory in public from Tuesday after a surge in Coronavirus cases.

— *AFP*

to 8,000 emergency calls each day.

London Ambulance Service said Boxing Day — December 26 — was one of its "busiest ever days".

A further 357 people testing positive for the virus were announced on

Monday to have died, bringing the UK total to 71,109, the second worst toll in Europe.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been under fire for his government's handling of the pandemic.

— *AFP*

Pak fights for Basmati in  
EU without locus standi

**Islamabad, Dec. 29:** While Pakistan is fighting a case in the European Union against the Indian move to get Basmati rice registered as its product, the commodity is still not registered as a local product in the country, according to a media report.

Laws require that before applying for registration of any product in the international market it has to be protected under the geographical indication

(GI) laws of that country.

The *Dawn* reported that there are no rules of the Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection) Act, 2020 enacted in March this year and as a result, Basmati is not yet a protected product in Pakistan.

A rice exporter told the *Dawn* that exporters, particularly the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, had been urging the government since early 2000

TOURISM REOPENS  
IN SRI LANKA  
AFTER 9 MONTHS

**Colombo, Dec. 29:** Sri Lanka has reopened to tourists after more than nine months.

The Indian Ocean island nation closed to tourists in March, amid the first wave of the coronavirus. Authorities also closed the two main international airports. The government says a pilot program to attract tourists is now being implemented. The first tourists arrived on a special flight from Ukraine on Monday. The 186 tourists are expected to stay in Sri Lanka for 10 days.

Under the pilot program, which will run to Jan. 24, 2,580 tourists are expected to arrive in Sri Lanka, mostly from CIS countries.

Covid-19 has dealt a severe blow to tourism, a vital economic sector for Sri Lanka, accounting for about 5% of its GDP and employing 250,000 people directly and up to 2 million indirectly.

Previously, the government announced that the country would reopen to tourists on Aug. 1, but the date was pushed back after new clusters of Covid patients emerged.

— *AP*

Biden sees risk in  
transition stalling

## Trump's Pentagon appointees giving hard time

**Wilmington, Dec. 29:** President-elect Joe Biden said that Donald Trump's appointees at the Pentagon were stalling on the transition and warned that the US faces security risks as a result.

After he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were briefed by their transition teams on national security, Biden said that political appointees at the Pentagon as well as the Office of Management and Budget had put up "roadblocks." "Right now, we just aren't getting all the information that we need from the outgoing administration in key national security area(s)," Biden said after the briefing.

"It is nothing short, in my view, of irresponsibility," Biden said he was seeking a "clear picture" from the outgoing administration on the force posture of US troops around the world.

"We need full visibility into the budget planning underway at the Defense Department and other agencies in order to avoid any window of confusion or catch-up that our adversaries may try to exploit," Biden said.

Trump has refused to concede the November 3 election, which Biden won by some seven million votes and by 306-232 in the state-by-state Electoral College. The president has made unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud.

The Trump administration has drawn concern

Mike Pence sued to  
overturn Biden win

**Washington, Dec. 29:** Several Republicans have sued US Vice-President Mike Pence in an improbable bid to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory, according to media reports.

The last-ditch legal effort, filed on Sunday, came from Representative Louie Gohmert, an eight-term congressman from Texas, along with 11 Arizona residents who had been nominated by that state's Republican Party to serve as electors, *The Hill* reported.

It comes over a week before Pence is scheduled to preside over a joint session of Congress where the Electoral College votes for Biden and President Donald Trump will be tallied.

Electors have already cast their votes two weeks earlier. Biden received 306 electoral votes, 6 more than he needed to win while Trump

received 232.

The lawsuit focuses on Pence's role in the January 6 meeting of Congress to count states' electoral votes and finalise Biden's victory over President Trump.

The lawsuit challenges the 1877 Electoral Count Act, which dictates the vice president's role in announcing the results as a ceremonial one, *The Dallas Morning News* reported. The Republican lawsuit, which was filed against Pence in his official capacity as vice president, asks a federal judge in Texas to strike down the law as unconstitutional. The Republican plaintiffs go further: They ask the court to grant Pence the authority on January 6 to effectively overturn Trump's defeat in key battleground states.

Election law experts have dismissed the lawsuit's prospects for success.

— *PTI*

by shaking up the leadership of the Pentagon since the election including firing defence secretary Mark Esper, who had distanced himself from the president's use of force against unarmed anti-racism demonstrators earlier this year.

Trump's new acting defence secretary, Chris Miller, has said that the outgoing administration had agreed with Biden's people to pause briefings for the holiday season, an assertion that the incoming team called untrue.

— *AFP*

1,804 ROHINGYA  
RELOCATED TO  
ISOLATED ISLAND

**Bangladesh, Dec. 29:** Seven Bangladesh navy ships carrying more than 1,800 Rohingya refugees have arrived at an isolated island where they will be relocated despite concerns among human rights groups about their safety.

They reached Bhashan Char island, 21 miles (34 kilometers) from the mainland, after a four-hour naval journey from the port city of Chittagong, government official Mohammed Khurshed Alam Khan said.

He said authorities at the island received 433 men, 523 women and 848 children. Authorities insist all were willing to be relocated and no pressure was placed on them. But several human rights and activist groups say some were forced to go.

It was the second group of Rohingya refugees transferred from crowded, squalid camps in Cox's Bazar district to the island. Authorities sent a first group of 1,642 on Dec. 4 despite calls for a halt by human rights groups. Rear Admiral Md Mozammel Haque, commander of the local navy, said the number of refugees willing to join the second phase of relocation "exceeded their expectations."

He said the authorities were initially expecting to relocate around 1,200 refugees, but 1,804 chose to go.

— *AP*

Kin of Hong Kongers  
told accused had  
'pleaded guilty'

**Hong Kong, Dec. 29:** Relatives of the 10 Hong Kongers accused of fleeing the city by speedboat during a government crackdown on dissent say they've been informed that the group pleaded guilty and that the verdicts will be delivered by a court in mainland China on Wednesday.

The families were informed by court-appointed lawyers on Tuesday, according to the 12 Hongkongers Concern Group, which is assisting the families of the detainees.

The 10 defendants all faced charges of illegally crossing the border, while two of them faced additional charges of organizing the attempt, according to an indictment issued in the southern city of Shenzhen. The trials began on Monday afternoon, according to a statement issued by the Shenzhen Yantian District court.

Separate hearings were expected for two minors who were also aboard the boat that was apparently heading for Taiwan when it was stopped by the Chinese coast guard on Aug. 23.

The defendants are believed to have feared they would be prosecuted for their past activities in support of Hong Kong's democratic opposition.

Hong Kong media reports said at least one may have had a warrant out for his arrest under a tough new national security law imposed on the semi-autonomous territory by Beijing in June. Relatives of the defendants say that they have been prevented from hiring their own lawyers and that the accusations are

TEEN JAILED FOR  
INSULTING  
CHINESE FLAG

**Hong Kong, Dec. 29:** A Hong Kong teenager was ordered to spend to four months in prison on Tuesday for insulting China's national flag and unlawful assembly as Beijing increasingly targets prominent activists from the financial hub.

Tony Chung, a 19-year-old who led a now-disbanded pro-democracy group, was convicted earlier this month for throwing the Chinese flag to the ground during scuffles outside Hong Kong's legislature in May 2019.

While serving his sentence, Chung will be waiting for trial over a charge of "secession", which could land him life imprisonment according to the draconian national security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong on 30 June.

— *AFP*

politically motivated.

The defendants can be sentenced to up to a year in prison for crossing the border and seven years for organizing the trip.

They were picked up after entering mainland Chinese waters for crossing the maritime border without permission. While Hong Kong is part of China, travelers must still pass through immigration when going to and from the mainland. The defendants apparently needed to pass through Chinese waters to get to open seas.

— *AP*

TOP TURKISH COURT RULES JAILING  
OF RIGHTS DEFENDER KAVALA LEGAL

**ISTANBUL, Dec. 29:** Turkey's Constitutional Court on Tuesday rejected rights defender Osman Kavala's appeal for an immediate release pending trial, narrowly ruling that his detention immediately after acquittal was lawful.

A respected figure in international circles, Kavala, 63, has been in prison for over three years despite being acquitted in February in connection with 2013 anti-

government protests. He was immediately rearrested and jailed on fresh charges of espionage and involvement in a failed 2016 coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The next hearing is scheduled for Feb. 5.

The official Anadolu news agency said the Constitutional Court ruled by an 8-7 margin that Kavala's ongoing detention did not violate his rights to liberty and security.

— *AFP*

## OBESITY | FIGHT Unhealthy promotions to no longer feature at checkouts, store entrances

## UK to ban 'Buy 1, get 1' on fatty foods

**London, Dec. 29:** The UK government has set out plans to ban unhealthy promotions on food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar from April 2022 as part of a wider anti-obesity drive.

The new rules, confirmed on Monday, will prohibit retailers from offering multibuy promotions such as buy one get one free or 3 for 2 offers on these products.

Unhealthy promotions will also no longer be featured in key locations, such as at checkouts, store entrances, aisle ends and

their online equivalents.

We know families want to be presented with healthier choices. This is why we are restricting promotions and introducing a range of measures to make sure the healthy choice is the easy choice, said UK Public Health Minister Jo Churchill.

Creating an environment which helps everyone eat healthier foods more regularly is crucial to improving the health of the nation, she said.

The Department of Health and Social Care

(DHSC) said that promotions often appear to help shoppers save money.

However, data shows that these deals actually increase purchases of promoted products by almost 20 per cent. They encourage people to buy more than they need or intend to buy in the first place. Free refills of sugary soft drinks will also be prohibited in the eating-out sector.

In the New Year, Public Health England's Better Health Campaign will also run new adverts on TV and online to inspire and

support people to maintain a healthy weight, the DHSC said.

It warns that obesity is one of the biggest health crises the country faces; almost two thirds (63 per cent) of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity and one in three children leave primary school overweight or obese.

Obesity-related illnesses cost the National Health Service (NHS) 6 billion pounds a year.

The government says its planned changes will make supermarkets and

other retailers place healthy choices for everyone and support people to lead healthier lives.

The location of products within stores can lead to "pester power" from children and can also significantly affect people's purchases.

For example, end-of-aisle displays have been shown to increase soft drink sales by over 50 per cent.

The latest announcement forms a key part of the UK government's strategy to tackle obesity and "get the nation fit and healthy".

— *AFP*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,973.54	1.14
Nifty 50	13,749.25	1.09
S&P 500*	3,703.06	0.35
Dollar (₹)	73.42	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.92	0.70
Euro (₹)	89.95	0.08
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,985.28	0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	51.29	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.929	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.926	0.00

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Steel makers demand ban on iron ore exports

A steel producers' body has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, explaining that the metal price hike was due to surging raw material costs, and demanded a ban on iron ore export for six months, an official said on Tuesday. Hot-rolled coil prices have increased by 46 per cent to Rs 52,000 per tonne in November as compared to Rs 37,400 per tonne in July this year, industry sources said.

ICICI Bank buys 9.09% stake in edtech firm



ICICI Bank on Tuesday said it will acquire 9.09 per cent stake in educational technology platform Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd for cash consideration of Rs 4.5 crore. "ICICI Bank has entered into an agreement... in relation to an investment in Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd (MESPL)," ICICI Bank said. MESPL offers an online school management platform.

Godrej Consumer forays into home cleaning products

Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPCL) on Tuesday said it has forayed into home cleaning products, a segment which is witnessing fast growth after the pandemic. The Godrej group firm would provide surface cleaning and disinfecting solution under its newly-launched brand Godrej ProClean, the company said. The home cleaning products segment is estimated to have Rs 2,600-crore market.

Dhanlaxmi Bank plans to appoint Shivan JK as MD

Debt-ridden Dhanlaxmi Bank has proposed Shivan J.K. as its new managing director and chief executive officer and has sought shareholders' approval for the same. Shivan retired as chief general manager of State Bank of India and handled various roles, including forex operations. It has sought the approval from its shareholders to authorise the board to appoint Shivan as MD and CEO of the bank.

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Auto parts biz revenue to grow 16% in FY22

Mumbai, Dec. 29: Ratings agency ICRA on Tuesday said that it has revised its outlook on the auto component industry from negative to stable, on the back of demand revival across original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), replacements and exports.

ICRA expects the domestic auto component industry's revenue to grow 16-18 per cent in the financial year starting April 2021, supported by factors such as increasing content per vehicle, low base effect, and higher realisations.

Long-term demand drivers include increased focus on localised supply chains by Indian OEMs. Diversification of supply chain risk by global OEMs is also expected to lead to increased sourcing from India in the coming years, ICRA said in a statement. OEMs, which account for over 56 per cent of the auto component demand, have recorded a sharp increase in demand since September across all segments, barring the medium and heavy commercial vehicle industry, it added.

Volumes of the automotive industry will take 2-3 years to revert to the pre-Covid-19 highs. Schemes such as production-linked incentives could encourage OEMs and large auto component vendors to advance their investment plans, targeted at exports.

It said the M&HCV demand has also bottomed out and increased in the December quarter of the current financial year. Thriving demand from the rural markets across the country has supported demand for two-wheelers and tractors, the rating agency added. ICRA has a stable credit outlook on the tractors, two-wheelers and passenger vehicle industries, it said. — PTI

Airbags may become a must for front seats

Centre proposes to implement new policy from April 1, 2021

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, DEC. 29

In a bid to increase safety in cars, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on Tuesday proposed to make airbags for front passengers mandatory in Asia's third biggest car market. The move is aimed at improving passenger safety in case of accidents.

According to a draft notification prepared by the Transport Ministry, the Centre plans to implement this safety norm for all new models of cars which are manufactured from April 1, 2021, onwards.

And, for already existing units, the date for complying with the new rule is proposed to be June 1, 2021.

In this regard, the



Centre has invited stakeholders to comment on its proposed new rule in the next one month.

Earlier, the Centre had made having an airbag mandatory for the driver's seat in all cars. This had come into effect on July 1, 2019.

"Vehicles manufactured on and after 1st Day of April 2021, in the case of new models, and 1st

day of June 2021, in the case of existing models, shall be fitted with airbags for the person occupying the front seat, other than the driver. The requirement for such airbags shall be as per AIS 145...under the Bureau of Indian Standards act, 2016," the draft notification issued by the Transport Ministry stated.

For now, only the driver's seat airbag is mandatory for all cars.

However, this leaves the passenger in the front seat completely vulnerable to severe injury or even death in case of accidents as the passengers in the front seat are not protected by the airbag.

Low-cost inclusions such as speed alert, reverse parking sensors and seat-belt reminders are some of the standard features in most cars but life-saving airbags are still not mandatory in India. The government has invited the concerned stakeholders to give suggestions on the matter in the next one month. Airbags for drivers were made mandatory by the Union government from July 2019.

Two-wheeler, car sales to see double-digit growth in Dec.

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, DEC. 29

Wholesale growth would be in double digits for tractors, two-wheelers and passenger vehicles in December 2020, the latest research note from Emkay Global Financial Services said on Tuesday. "In two-wheelers and passenger vehicles, there is favorable base effect due to BS4 inventory de-stocking last year," Raghunandhan NL, auto analyst at Emkay Global Financial Services, said. He pointed out that the channel checks in the

● The passenger vehicle industry volumes are likely to grow by 12 per cent compared to last year. Retail sales in December are likely to be notably higher than wholesales.

market indicated retails were better year-on-year in tractors, while it is lower in passenger vehicles and two-wheelers.

The tractor wholesales should be robust due to healthy retails and channel filling, Raghuna-

ndhan said, adding that dealer checks indicated an increase in inventory levels by up to one week.

He said Escorts domestic volumes should grow 21 per cent while M&M, the market leader, should see 19 per cent growth.

Raghunandhan said the domestic two-wheeler volumes should grow year-on-year in the country, pointing out that TVS by 21 per cent, Royal Enfield by 16 per cent, Bajaj Auto by 13 per cent and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter by 10 per cent.

The dealer inventory levels stood at 4-6 weeks

for mass-market OEMs, while it stood at below 1 week for Royal Enfield motorcycles.

He said the passenger vehicle industry volumes are likely to grow by 12 per cent compared to last year. Domestic volumes should grow 60 per cent for Tata Motors, India's biggest automaker by revenues, 7 per cent for Maruti Suzuki and 6 per cent for Mahindra and Mahindra, retail vehicle specialist. Retail sales in December are likely to be notably higher than wholesales due to inventory clearing.

Fall in ATMs stopped in 2020: RBI

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, DEC. 29

The deceleration in the total number of ATMs (on-site and off-site) operated by banks has reversed during the year 2020, aided by all categories of banks, except public sector and foreign banks, according to an RBI report.

In a report titled *Trend and progress of banking in India* released on Tuesday, the RBI said the total number of ATMs increased to 2.34 lakh during 2020 compared to 2.21 lakh ATMs in 2019, a rise of six per cent.

Interestingly, small finance banks (SFBs) operated more than twice the number of ATMs operated by foreign banks as at end-March 2020, despite their smaller balance sheet size, said the RBI. Ten scheduled SFBs operated 1,926 ATMs compared to 903 ATMs by foreign banks. The number of ATMs with public sector banks fell to 1.34 lakh in the country compared to 1.36 lakh last year.

On the other hand, private sector banks increased their share by operating 73,052 ATMs compared to 63,340 ATMs in the previous year.

The high growth of white label ATMs (WLAs) for the second consecutive year was fuelled by regulatory support such as permission to source cash directly from the Reserve Bank and permission to offer non-bank services.

More than 82 per cent of the WLAs are located in rural and semi-urban areas with high unmet demand for ATMs.

Data available for 2020-21 so far indicate that the growth in WLAs continued as the rural economy was not as severely impacted as the urban areas due to the lockdown associated with Covid-19 pandemic.

GDP can be rebuilt in 3 ways, says ex-gov

Hyderabad, Dec. 29:

Though Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown left a trail of economic devastation on most countries, India can potentially build upon three positive aspects — push in the rural economy, stronger federalism and a huge consumption base, former RBI Governor Duvvuri Subbarao Rao has said.

In his foreword on a Telugu book titled *Maandhyam Mungita Desam* (Nation in Recession) authored by Tummala Kishore, the former RBI governor said the challenge for the government in the months and years ahead is clear: to put the economy back on a healthy growth trajectory and ensure that growth is inclusive, with lower income households too enjoying the benefits of rapid growth.

"The expanded MNREGA provided a lifeline when most needed, and the frontloaded transfer payments to women, pensioners and farmers have put money in the hands of households and have helped revive demand. The



brisk procurement by Food Corporation of India has buttressed farmers' incomes while it helped the government extend the food security programme until end November," he said.

Subbarao said the second positive aspect he sees is India's federalism, which, "warts and all", has withstood the test of vigorous democracy.

He said the third positivity is the country's huge consumption base with 1.35 billion people and a per capita income of just over \$2,000. "In a setting like this, any increase in income of the bottom half will quickly turn into consumption, which in turn will spur production," he explained. — PTI

Gold gives 2nd highest return in 10 yrs

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 29

Gold prices have provided 27 per cent returns in 2020 — the highest since 2011. With economic uncertainties and lower interest rates prevailing, the gold prices are expected to move past ₹60,000 during the first half of next year.

Moving up from ₹39,280 per 10 gm in the Indian market at the beginning of the year, gold prices have almost ended the year around ₹50,000, providing handsome returns of 27 per cent. This is the high-

est return the yellow metal has provided after 2011 when it had appreciated 31 per cent.

In the international market, gold moved up 19 per cent from \$1,574 per ounce at the beginning of the year to \$1,878. In between gold prices had made fresh highs by moving past \$2,000 per ounce in August. Silver provided spectacular returns of 45 per cent in the domestic market as well as the international market.

Lower interest rates across economies, bond-buying programmes and



dollar weakness supported gold prices throughout the year. In addition, Covid-19 fears and the impact it had on the economies further accelerated gold's bull-run.

"Equity markets were overbought and the valua-

tions remained high. This also favoured gold's movement," said Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities.

Investors flocking towards safe havens saw gold ETF inflows touching record high in 2020.

In the Indian market too, gold ETF AUMs saw fresh highs and sovereign gold bond purchases went up much higher than the previous years.

However, expectations about the release of a vaccine and stronger dollar in the second half of the year kept gold prices under control.

BDB revokes ban on lab-grown trading

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 29

In a move that will streamline lab-grown diamond processing in the country and help it grow as a separate segment, Bharat Diamond Bourse has revoked an earlier ban on its trading.

By revoking the ban, Bharat Diamond Bourse has accepted the expansion of lab-grown processing happening in India. BDB had passed a resolu-

tion to ban the trading of lab-grown diamonds in 2015.

Increasing processing activity, De Beers launching its Lightbox jewellery brand of lab-grown, detection becoming cheaper and quicker, advent of blockchain technology for tracing diamonds through the pipeline and greater consumer acceptance are some of the reasons that led to the decision.

"Five years back, machines to detect lab-

grown diamonds from natural diamonds were not readily available and were expensive. But now we have advanced machines available at reasonable rates. Further, enough awareness has been created around the world and across the full pipeline and the demand for lab-grown also has immensely increased across the globe," said Vipul Shah, the vice-chairman of GJEPC.

Import of rough lab-

grown diamonds as well as exports of polished ones have been significantly growing in the recent past.

The pandemic has further increased demand for lab-grown compared to mine diamonds in the United States and the European countries.

Between April and November, the exports have grown 61 per cent to ₹1,943 crore and import of rough diamonds were up 55 per cent.

China aims to sell vaccines for influence, but people refuse to trust Sinovac

PANDEMIC | DIPLOMACY

China struggles to get world to trust its vaccines

Hong Kong/Karachi, Dec. 29:

Of all the developing countries testing China's Covid-19 vaccines, few are friendlier to Beijing than Pakistan. In the years leading up to the pandemic, China financed nearly \$70 billion across the South Asian nation.

Yet interviews with people in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city — as well as in other developing nations from Indonesia to Brazil, together with surveys and official comments — show that China has failed to assure the millions of peo-

ple who may have to rely on its vaccines.

"I won't take it," said Farman Ali Shah, a motorcycle driver in Karachi for local ride-hailing app Bykea, as local shops closed early ahead of an 8 p.m. virus-induced curfew. "I don't trust it."

That mistrust, and the reliance of dozens of poorer nations on China to inoculate their populations could set the stage for a major global political headache if citizens offered the Chinese vaccine feel they are being



given an inferior product.

China's vaccines were meant to score a clear diplomatic win for Beijing, shoring up ties

with dozens of poorer nations amid an anticipated shortage of Western-developed shots. But there has been little information about how the Chinese versions have fared in final-stage clinical trials, with just the United Arab Emirates and China itself endorsing the vaccines for emergency use so far.

That uncertainty presents another roadblock in China's efforts to extend its political influence across Asia, Africa and South America.

Bolstered by its virus

success, Beijing sparred with the US, UK and Australia over everything from the origins of the virus to crackdowns in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. The pain of the pandemic also hardened the stance of the US and China in wider economic disputes, including American efforts to stop countries from adopting the technology of China's Huawei Technologies Co.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in a tweet on Monday that Chinese-made vac-

cines may be the "only choice" for governments that haven't secured supplies since "wealthy countries" had booked three quarters of the estimated 12 billion vaccines set for production next year.

If Chinese vaccines aren't available, developing nations will turn to other suppliers "and China will lose leverage," Huang said. "We're not just talking about the economic loss — diplomatic and strategic gains will also be undermined."

— Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Former NZ Test player Reid dead

**Wellington:** John F. Reid, who scored six centuries in 19 Tests for New Zealand including 108 in a famous win over Australia, has died. He was 64.

His death after a long illness was confirmed on Tuesday by New Zealand Cricket. Reid's century against Australia at Brisbane's Gabba ground in November, 1985 was instrumental in New Zealand's win by an innings of 41 runs.

He shared a then-record 225-run partnership with Martin Crowe (188) for the third wicket which helped New Zealand to 553-7 in their only innings.

Richard Hadlee took 9-52 in Australia's first innings and 6-71 in the second to secure the win. Reid was an elegant left-hander known for his skill against spin bowling and the Brisbane innings, on a fast, bouncy pitch, proved his ability against pace.

— AP



John Reid

## Sydney confirmed as third Test host

**Sydney:** Cricket Australia on Tuesday decided to retain Sydney as the venue for the third Test against India, ending speculation that the game could move to Melbourne because of stringent Covid-19 border restrictions that would have affected the players' movement for the fourth match in Brisbane.

The third Test is to be held from January 7. The series is currently locked 1-1 after India won the second Test in Melbourne, which was placed on standby in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney's northern beaches before Christmas.

"Despite the many challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, I am delighted to say Cricket Australia remains on track to deliver the men's international series as scheduled," Cricket Australia's Interim CEO Nick Hockley was quoted as saying by 'cricket.com.au'.

— AP

## S. Africa hammer injury-hit Lanka

**Centurion, South Africa:** South Africa wrapped up victory by an innings and 45 runs shortly after lunch on the fourth day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park in Centurion on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka, needing 225 runs to avoid an innings defeat, were bowled out for 180.

Kusal Perera hit a spirited 64 off 87 balls for the tourists and debutant Wanindu Hasaranga slammed 59 off 53 balls, taking advantage as South Africa seemingly tried to lift their over-rate by rushing through six overs of slow bowling after lunch. Sri Lanka resumed at 65 for two on Tuesday. — AFP

**Brief scores: Sri Lanka 396 and 180** (K. Perera 64, W. Hasaranga 59 L. Ngidi 2-38) vs South Africa 621.

## Australia fined 40% of match fee

**Melbourne:** The Australian cricket team was fined 40 per cent of their match fee and penalised four ICC World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow over-rate against India in the second Test, which concluded here on Tuesday. ICC match referee David Boon imposed the sanction after Tim Paine's side was ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration during the second Test, which the hosts lost by eight wickets.

— AP

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Hobart Hurricanes vs Brisbane Heat from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Indian Super League:** Hyderabad vs Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**English Premier League:** Tottenham Hotspur vs Fulham from 11.30 pm; Newcastle United vs Liverpool from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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## IT'S A KNOCKOUT!

## India floor Aussies on Day Four of Boxing Day Test

**Melbourne, Dec. 29:** Hungry for redemption, India recorded a win for the ages under an inspirational Ajinkya Rahane, beating Australia by eight wickets in the second Test to level the four-match series 1-1 here on Tuesday. The target of 70 was never a big one but for a team that was bowled out for its all-time lowest score of 36 only 10 days back, one can't fault them if that played at the back of their minds.

Shubman Gill (35 not out) and skipper Rahane (27 not out) knocked off the runs in 15.5 overs to complete the victory.

This was after the quartet comprising Jasprit Bumrah (2/54 in 27 overs), debutant Mohammed Siraj (3/37 in 21.3 overs), Ravichandran Ashwin (2/71 in 37.1 overs) and Ravindra Jadeja (2/28 in 14 overs) showed maniacal consistency over a period of 100 overs on the flattest of decks, where their go-to weapon.

"The talk was all about showing attitude, intent and character. One hour took the game away from us in Adelaide, but we still have a lot to learn," Rahane said in the post-match presentation.

Indian teams, since the turn of the new millennium, have had some memorable overseas victories but when the backdrop and context of this Test at the iconic MCG is recorded for posterity, Rahane and his magnificent bowling unit will find more than an honourable mention in the pages of history.

"Really proud of all the players, credit to our debutants Gill and Siraj. The way they showed character was amazing," Rahane said.

Australia captain Tim Paine had nothing to offer as an explanation for why his side could not capitalise on the big absences.

— PTI



Captain Ajinkya Rahane (right) bumps fists with Australia's Tim Paine at the end of the second Test at the MCG in Melbourne. — AP

## SCORECARD

## Australia 1st Innings 195

## India 1st Innings 326

**Australia 2nd Innings (overnight 133 for 6):** Matthew Wade lbw b Ravindra Jadeja 40, Joe Burns c Pant b Umesh 4, Marnus Labuschagne c Rahane b Ashwin 28, Steven Smith b Bumrah 8, Travis Head c Mayank Agarwal b Siraj 17, Cameron Green c Jadeja b Siraj 45, Tim Paine c Pant b Ravindra Jadeja 1, Pat Cummins c Agarwal b Bumrah 22, Mitchell Starc not out 14, Nathan Lyon c Pant b Siraj 3, Josh Hazlewood b Ashwin 10. Extras (lb-5, nb-3) 8. **Total (all out in 103.1 overs) 200.**

**FoW:** 1-4, 2-42, 3-71, 4-98, 5-98, 6-99, 7-156,

8-177, 9-185.

**Bowling:** Jasprit Bumrah 27-6-54-2, Umesh Yadav 3.3-0-5-1, Mohammed Siraj 21.3-4-37-3, Ravichandran Ashwin 37.1-6-71-2, Ravindra Jadeja 14-5-28-2.

**India 2nd Innings:** Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Starc 5, Shubman Gill (not out) 35, Cheteshwar Pujara c Green b Cummins 3, Ajinkya Rahane (not out) 27. **Total (For 2 wks, in 15.5 overs) 70.**

**FoW:** 1-16, 2-19.

**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 4-0-20-1, Pat Cummins 5-0-22-1, Josh Hazlewood 3-1-14-0, Nathan Lyon 2.5-0-5-0, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-9-0.

## PRAISE APLENTY

**To win a Test match without Virat, Rohit, Ishant & Shami is a terrific achievement. Loved the resilience and character shown by the team to put behind the loss in the 1st Test and level the series. Brilliant win. Well done TEAM INDIA.**

— **SACHIN TENDULKAR**  
India great

**What a win this is, absolutely amazing effort by the whole team. Couldn't be happier for the boys and specially Jinks who led the team to victory amazingly. Onwards and upwards from here.**

— **VIRAT KOHLI**  
India captain

**Hats off to Indian cricket team, what a fantastic game after playing poor cricket in Adelaide, you made us proud. Ajinkya Rahane, you and your team, proud of you, you didn't have your captain but you showed the way... carry on doing that, well done.**

— **KAPIL DEV**  
Ex-India captain

**Stunning response from India after the 1st Test, Australia's top order have been horribly exposed, some tough decisions required.**

— **TOM MOODY**  
Former Australia player

## Cricket fraternity hail Rahane &amp; Co

**New Delhi, Dec. 29:** The Indian cricket fraternity on Tuesday hailed the national team for the "resilience and character" it showed to redeem itself after the Adelaide debacle to win the second Test in Melbourne.

India, led by Ajinkya Rahane, levelled the four-match Test series 1-1 after defeating Australia by eight wickets in the second match at the MCG. Rahane led from the front with a match-winning 112 in India's first innings.

Star batsman Rohit Sharma, who will join the side in Melbourne on Wednesday after completing his mandatory quarantine, praised the team for showing composure in difficult times.

"Fantastic win for the Team India at the MCG. Character and composure shown throughout the game was excellent to watch @bcci," Rohit tweeted.

However, former India captain Bishan Singh Bedi had a word of caution for the 'Men in Blue' and advised them to stay calm.

"(The) 36 all out was terribly 'freakish' but an 8wkt

win is not ... I hope Indns can forget both ... one as a nightmare & the other as nothing to float on cloud nine ... still 2 more Tests to go..& plenty of work to do..stay calm Fellas as yur Capt @ajinkyarahane88 & 'think' how to outwit OZL," tweeted Bedi.

Former India batsman V.V.S. Laxman singled out debutants Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj for special praise.

"Lot of positives from this win. Rahane led the side brilliantly, bowlers were relentless but the biggest positive is the performance of two debutants. Both of them were confident and not over-awed by the big occasion. Strength of Indian cricket is their strong bench strength," he tweeted.

Former India opener Virender Sehwag also took to Twitter to praise the performance of Rahane and his team.

"A really special win at the MCG. Great Determination and great character. Rahane led from the front, the bowlers were terrific and Gill is chill," tweeted Sehwag.

— PTI



Mohammed Siraj (second from left) is congratulated by teammates after dismissing Nathan Lyon on the fourth day of the second Test at the MCG on Tuesday. — AP

## Newbies Gill, Siraj impress Ajinkya

**● Shubman Gill scored 45 and 35 not out in the match while Mohammed Siraj returned with five wickets, including three in Australia's second innings.**

**Melbourne, Dec. 29:** India skipper Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday singled out the debutant duo of Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj while commending the tremendous character shown by his side to turn it around in the second Test here for a series-levelling triumph.

Gill scored 45 and 35 not out in the game here while Siraj returned with five wickets, including three in Australia's second innings. "I am really proud of all the players. I want to give credit to the debutants Siraj and Gill, the character they showed after the Adelaide loss was great to see," Rahane said after the match.

"Character was important for us, especially after losing Umesh in the second innings," he added, referring to the mid-match injury suffered by pacer Umesh Yadav.

Rahane said it is never easy for debutants to be consistently disciplined in their game but Gill and Siraj showed how it is done.

"Shubman, we all know his First-class career and in this game, he has shown the intent to play shots at this level, has shown composure.

"Siraj has shown that he can bowl with discipline. It's really difficult for debutants to bowl with disci-

pline but that's where I think the First-class experience comes in handy," he said.

Asked what the team discussed before the match, Rahane said, "The talk was all about showing the attitude and intent on the field. As I said, character. Adelaide was about one hour that took the game away from us. Lots to learn for even now."

Rahane also acknowledged his own role as a leader, citing the five-bowler plan that yielded result.

"That worked well for us nicely. We were thinking of having an all-rounder and (Ravindra) Jadeja has been brilliant for us."

He also talked about the arrival of swashbuckling regular opener Rohit Sharma for the third Test beginning January 7.

"We're excited about Rohit coming back. Spoke to him yesterday, he's waiting to join the team," he said.

— PTI



Ravichandran Ashwin (right) celebrates after bowling out Josh Hazlewood during the fourth day of the second Test at the MCG in Melbourne on Tuesday. — AP

## Ashwin says Rahane brought calmness in dressing room

**Melbourne, Dec. 29:** Ajinkya Rahane brought calmness in the dressing room in the absence of regular captain Virat Kohli, spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said on Tuesday after India recorded an epic series-levelling win in the second Test, here.

Shot out for a record low score of 36 in their second innings in the last pink-ball Test at Adelaide, India came into the blockbuster MCG Test with Kohli who is on paternity leave.

But the team under Rahane showed resilience to bounce back, effecting an extraordinary turnaround to level the four-match series 1-1.

"Getting bowled out for 36 was never going to be easy. We are quite a proud cricketing country and losing Virat was a bit of a setback," the star-off-spinner told 7 cricket.

"...but we stuck on really well. Jinks' calmness in the dressing room really provided us that stability to go out there

and express ourselves in this game."

Down 0-1, India received further setback after fiery pacer Mohammed Shami was ruled out because of a fracture to his bowling arm.

But Rahane's bold captaincy stood out from day one itself when he pressed in Ashwin in the 11th over with the ball still new, possibly to use the off-spinner's psychological upper hand over the Aussies batters in the pink ball Test.

— PTI

## MELBOURNE, INDIA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL VENUE AWAY FROM HOME

■ With fourth victory in 14 Tests at Melbourne Cricket Ground. It became India's most successful venue away from home.

■ Previously they had won three Tests each at Queens Park Oval (Trinidad), Sabina Park (Jamaica) and at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo. No other team apart from England has won more than three matches at the MCG.

■ It was only third instance of teams coming back from 0-1

down to win the second Test in Australia in the last 50 years. The West Indies came back from 0-1 to win at the WACA, Perth in 1975-76. After that, it was New Zealand in 2011 in Hobart.

■ The last team that won back-to-back Tests at the MCG were Pakistan in 1979 and 1981, and before that India in 1977 and 1980.

■ No Australian batsmen scored fifty in this match. It is first time in 32 years when no Australian

batsman scored a fifty in a Test match at home. Incidentally, that was also at the MCG against the West Indies.

■ In the last thirty years, away from home, this has happened to Australia only three times.

■ Mohammed Siraj took 5/77 runs in the match. It was second best match figures for overseas debutants in Australia.

■ Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga (6/92) is the only bowler to have taken more than Siraj's five wick-

ets in such a scenario. Only four Indian pacers have taken more wickets on debut away from home than Siraj.

■ Marcus Harris' 70 in Sydney last year was the highest score for an Australian batsman in last six Test matches between India and Australia in Australia. Since the start of 2016 there have been just two batsmen who have scored Test centuries for Australia against India — Steven Smith (three) and Glenn Maxwell (one). — S. PERVEZ KAISER



Indian coach Ravi Shastri (left) shakes hands with Australian coach Justin Langer at the end of the second Test at the MCG in Melbourne on Tuesday. — AFP