

on Sunday



Anil Vij tests positive for COVID-19 after getting Covaxin trial shot
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PM to lay foundation stone for new Parliament on Dec. 10
Page 8



Trump regime told to restore 'Dreamer' immigration scheme
Page 9



India looks to take unassailable lead in T20I series
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NEARBY



Unsafe injections caused HIV surge in Unnao: ICMR

NEW DELHI
"Unsafe injection exposure during treatment and receipt of intramuscular injection in the last five years were independently associated with HIV sero-reactive (presence of antibodies) status," noted ICMR as the reason for the surge of HIV in Unnao, U.P., in 2017-18.
NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

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CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

'BJP conspiring to topple govt.'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR
Barely four months after the Congress regime won a confidence vote on the floor of the Rajasthan Assembly, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday accused the BJP of making renewed attempts to topple his government. He charged Home Minister Amit Shah with holding "secret meetings" with Congress MLAs earlier this year.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 8

Spell out decision on repeal of farm laws, protesters tell Centre

Govt. seeks more time; further talks on Dec. 9

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

After four hours of discussion with Central Ministers on the 10th day of their ongoing protests on the borders of Delhi, farmer leaders ran out of patience. Refusing to speak any further, they went on a 25-minute "maun vat" or silent protest.

Holding up impromptu placards with a short scribbled message, "Yes or No?", they demanded that the government declare whether it was willing to repeal the three contentious farm reform laws or not.

Tomar for consultations
According to farmer leaders present at Saturday's meeting at Vigyan Bhavan, following the protest, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar opted to buy more time for a response to their ultimatum, saying further consultations within the government were needed to present a concrete proposal.

The next round of talks has been scheduled for December 9, a day after the proposed Bharat Bandh.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi,



Ground zero: A bird's-eye view of the site of the farmers' protest at Delhi's Singhu border on Saturday, with the highway blocked by tractor trolleys, cars and vans. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

People have right to protest'

"People have a right to demonstrate peacefully and authorities need to let them do so," Stephane Djuric, spokesperson for the Secretary-General of the UN said on Saturday, about the farmers' movement in India. ▶ PAGE 7

Paddy stacked on Odisha roads

Hundreds of farmers left their produce on major roads in Odisha, protesting against "faulty procurement procedures." Farmers said they were facing the possibility of selling paddy at prices lower than in the market. ▶ PAGE 7

Left parties to support bandh

The five Left parties have come together to extend support to the farmers' organisations that have called for a 'Bharat Bandh' on December 8. They have also called upon other political parties to stand with the farmers. ▶ PAGE 7

food provided by the government, preferring to bring in a meal from a local langar.

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MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 5 & 7

India set to be largest buyer of vaccines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India is set to be the largest buyer of COVID-19 vaccines in the world with 1.6 billion doses, according to a global analysis, a number some scientists say could cover 800 million people or 60% of its population, and will be enough to develop 'herd immunity'.

India has agreed to buy 500 million doses of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine candidate, one billion from the U.S. company Novavax and 100 million doses of the Sputnik V candidate from Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute, according to the U.S.-based Duke University Global Health Innovation Center.

The 'Launch and Scale Speedometer' analysis, which is updated every two weeks, shows India has confirmed 1.6 billion doses of three vaccines as of November 30 while the U.S. and the EU have purchased doses of six candidates.

The number of advance market commitments (AMCs) made by countries and multilateral partnerships eager to reserve vaccine supply, even before any candidates are on the market is unprecedented.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Seven held under anti-conversion law

FIR filed in U.P.'s Sitapur district



First arrest: A 21-year-old from Bareilly was the first person to be booked under the new law. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

After arresting a youth in Bareilly and filing cases in Mau and Muzaffarnagar, the Uttar Pradesh police have arrested seven persons in Sitapur district under the newly promulgated ordinance against unlawful conversions.

Center.

The 'Launch and Scale Speedometer' analysis, which is updated every two weeks, shows India has confirmed 1.6 billion doses of three vaccines as of November 30 while the U.S. and the EU have purchased doses of six candidates.

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CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

relevant sections under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, were added to the case, said Mr. Dixit.

Seven of the eight accused have been arrested, said the officer. Sources said they included relatives of the youth. Efforts are on to arrest the youth and bring back the woman, said police. Seven police teams have been formed to search for the two in U.P. and Punjab.

The new Ordinance was also invoked in a case in Mansoorpur in Muzaffarnagar, where two Muslim men were booked for allegedly trying to force a married Hindu woman to convert.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

IS IT OUR FAULT?

The only allegation against Sahara India Pariwar is that our repayments to the esteemed investors are getting delayed. Of course we are also paying the interest of delayed period.

Nobody is writing the reason.

The reason is -

Owing to the embargo imposed for the last 8 years by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, any money generated through selling or mortgaging our assets of the entire group (including Co-operatives) or from joint ventures will be deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account, as per the directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Out of this, we cannot use even a single rupee for organizational work. Not even for repayment to the esteemed investors.

On the other hand, till date, approximately ₹22,500 crore including interest (which will surely come back to us as per Hon'ble Court's order) has been deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account. Whereas, despite giving four rounds of advertisements in 154 newspapers by SEBI in the last 8 years across the country, SEBI has repaid only ₹106.10 crore to the esteemed investors (means only 0.5% payment has been done) and there is no claimant anymore.

Now Sahara should not be required to deposit more money in the Sahara-SEBI account. The embargo on us should be lifted now and the order of verification should come. But all these decisions will be taken by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. On the other hand, due to COVID-19 for the last 10 months, we haven't been able to get a date from the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

We hope that we will soon get a date and everything will be good.

We are working on various sources of money. Everybody's money is totally safe. You are getting the interest of the delayed period.

Do have some patience. We shall all emerge victors by 31st March 2021.

SAHARA INDIA PARIWAR

CHAI02020-12-33COP-AII

+ No church visit on Xmas, Bajrang Dal warns Assam Hindus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI
A unit of the right-wing Bajrang Dal in southern Assam's Barak Valley has threatened Hindus with dire consequences if they visit any church to celebrate Christmas.

Members of the unit also

said they did not care about the criticisms they would face for their vigilanteism during the festival. "Hindus will pay a price for visiting churches on Christmas," Bajrang Dal's Cachar district general secretary Mithu Nath said.

Cachar's Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli said the district has taken note of the diktat issued by the local unit of the Bajrang Dal. "A case has been filed suo motu," she told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Mr. Nath claimed their de-

cision was in response to tribal Christian groups locking temples and Hindu spiritual centres in Meghalaya capital Shillong.

The Khasi Students' Union had allegedly locked the gates of the Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Shillong a few days ago. The centre is a part of the Ramakrishna Mission.

"I know the headlines on December 26 will say Bajrang Dal goons vandalised such and such place or assaulted this or that person. We just don't care," he said.

Convicts to compensate victims of crime in Delhi

Court-appointed group to assess trauma

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Delhi will become the first city in the country where victims of crime, ranging from rape, murder to theft, will be financially compensated by a convict for physical injuries, emotional or psychological trauma and even funeral expenses. The compensation or "restitution" will be paid by the convict and may have a bearing on the final sentencing, if the court and the victim agree.

To determine a just and reasonable amount of restitution, the court shall pay due regard to non-monetary factors such as emotional trauma or harm, nature and severity of physical injury, type and duration of medical intervention required, nature and duration of physical health problems, loss of life, loss of affection and companionship, loss of reputation. The move follows a report filed by amicus curiae G.S. Bajpai, who is also the chairperson, Centre for Criminology and Victimology at the National Law University in Delhi, in association with senior advocate Vikas Pahwa in the Delhi High Court.

Evaluation tool

Based on the report, a tool for the "victim impact report" has been put in place and it will be applicable to all courts in Delhi covering all police stations in Delhi. The court, while deciding

the quantum of compensation, will consider the monetary expenses borne by the victim such as money spent on counselling or psychological therapy, medical treatment, loss of earning, legal expenses, damage or loss to property, loss due to attachment of property for evidentiary purposes, funeral expenses and interest on the total sum incurred.

After a crime has been reported, the investigating officer will have to compulsorily record the "loss or injury to the victim" and "financial capacity of the accused."

A group of legal experts appointed by the Delhi State Legal Services Authority, including senior police officers and social activists appointed by the court where a criminal trial is taking place, will assess the "emotional and mental" trauma faced by the victim of any crime and will prescribe monetary compensation before the jail sentence is announced.

"Minor offences such as petty theft may have emotional impact in the short term while offences such as kidnapping or rape are bound to have long-term consequences," the report said.

Mr. Bajpai told *The Hindu*, "Our criminal justice system is accused-centric and the victim does not have space. This practice will bring the victim to the mainstream."

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Evening Batch
28th Dec, 2020
5.30 PM - 8.30 PM

Morning Batch
18th Feb, 2021
8.30 AM - 11.30 AM

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Delhi's air quality 'severe', likely to improve today

Effect of stubble burning dips to 1%

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Noida was in the 'severe' category on Saturday and Gurugram's was in the 'very poor' category, as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

The national capital's air quality is expected to improve on Sunday.

"Air quality is likely to improve only marginally by Sunday within the 'very poor' category owing to slightly better ventilation conditions. The AQI is likely to further improve on December 7 and 8 due to better ventilation. So, further deterioration is not expected for the next three days," said a statement by the government-run monitoring agency SAFAR.

The wind speed remained slow allowing the accumulation of pollutants generated locally, V.K. Soni, head of the IMD's environment

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	404	Gurugram	338
Ghaziabad	434	Faridabad	347
Noida	414	Greater Noida	408
Good	0-50	Satisfactory	51-100
Poor	101-200	Very Poor	201-300
Severe	>400	Severe	301-400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]			

ment research centre said.

"Easterly winds carrying moisture also led to the formation of secondary particulate matter. All these factors together pushed the air quality in the 'severe' zone," he said. However, Mr. Soni said, the air quality is likely to improve to the "poor" category by Monday.

The contribution of stubble burning in neighbouring States to PM2.5, a chief pollutant, level in Delhi was estimated to be only 1% on Saturday. Also, the number of fire count in neighbouring States was only 296, as per SAFAR.

The wind speed remained slow allowing the accumulation of pollutants generated locally, V.K. Soni, head of the IMD's environment

'Fewer patients despite high pollution this year'

Even after deteriorating air quality, city sees no 'substantial rise' in number of people with respiratory issues visiting hospitals

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

indoors more due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Despite many bigger hospitals being turned to COVID-19 facilities this year or other healthcare services being restricted, smaller clinics are also not witnessing the seasonal spike in the number of patients compared to previous years, according to doctors of at least four other smaller clinics.

In the past, more number of patients with respiratory problems visited healthcare facilities during the winter, when the air pollution is high.

However, this year, it has varied as patients are not going to hospitals either due to fear of contracting the virus or of being tested COVID-19 positive if they go to a hospital with respiratory problems, doctors said.

Masks, staying indoors

However, doctors also said that a few people may be actually affected by pollution this year as people are using masks due to the pandemic.

Also, people are staying



Safety first: Girls wearing masks at Connaught Place.

■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

fewer to bigger hospitals. Every year, we see a rise in the number of patients when the pollution is high. But this year we are not seeing a similar rise," N.N. Mathur, director of Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital told *The Hindu*.

He added that people are using masks due to the pandemic which is helping to prevent respiratory problems.

AIIMS doctors said that their pulmonary department OPD services was not running in full capacity as it used to before the pandemic and hence, fewer people are visiting the hospital compared to last year.

Most affected

"Elderly people and children, who are the most affected by pollution, are staying indoors due to COVID-19

restrictions and schools being shut. Hence, they are not exposed to higher pollution levels outside their homes," said Girish Tyagi, secretary of Delhi Medical Council. He too emphasised on the impact of masks.

According to the World Health Organization, the combined effects of ambient (outdoor) and household air pollution cause about seven million premature deaths worldwide every year. This is largely due to increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer and acute respiratory infections.

Long-term exposure to outdoor and household air pollution contributed to over 1.67 million annual deaths from stroke, heart attack, and other diseases in India in 2019, according to the State of Global Air 2020 by the U.S.-based Health Effects Institute. Overall, air pollution is now the largest risk factor

for death among all health risks, as per report.

Sanjay Dhar, who runs a clinic in B.K. Dutt Colony, said, "When people are facing respiratory problems, many of them are scared that they might test COVID-19 positive and are trying to stay home. Others are scared of contracting it from a medical facility. Masks and indoor stays may also be helping to keep other respiratory ailments at bay."

Undertake study

Shikha Yaduvanshi, who works at a New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC)-run clinic, also had a similar view,

but said that some of her regular patients are contacting her over phone to get medicines, instead of coming to the clinic.

Most of the doctors said that the government should undertake a study to find out whether people are actually less affected due to air pollution this year.

Tribunal pulls up NHAI over green cover

Highways authority submits concessionaires are responsible for upkeep

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was pulled up by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) over inadequate steps to maintain green cover along highways to mitigate vehicular pollution.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted the NHAI's stand that the roads were constructed by concessionaires and it was their responsibility to comply with law.

"If the NHAI in the course of its

activities hires its agents, the liability of the principal does not end. The criminal as well as civil liability of NHAI and its highest officers under the environmental law to be prosecuted and to be required to pay compensation continues. Such inalienable duty cannot be abandoned on the specious plea that a contractor is being hired," the Bench said. It also said: "Moreover, being public authorities, taking such plea shows lack of responsibility or lack of knowledge of law. Indifference to issues of environment

affecting public health by a public authority can hardly be appreciated." It also observed that compliance is expected from state public works departments and other authorities concerned.

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by NGO Society for Protection of Culture, Heritage, Environment, Traditions and Promotion of National Awareness, that sought execution of an earlier order pertaining to maintenance of green cover along highways.

Double whammy



Dogs bark at a motorist as heavy fog engulfs the Capital resulting in poor visibility. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Off line tenders form PWD-6 & 8 are hereby invited for the following works and contractors/Firms of appropriate class enlisted with H.P. I& PH department will eligible for participating in the tender on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, so as to reach in this office on or before **09.12.2020 up to 03.00 PM** and same will be **opened on the same day at 3.30 PM** in presence of intending Contractor/firm or their authorized representative who may wish to be present at the time of opening of the tender. The tender documents can be had from this office on or before **09.12.2020 up to 12.00 Noon** Conditional /telegraphically tender will not be entertained. The earnest money will be received at the time of application in the shape of NSC/ Time deposit (FDR) duly pledged in the name of Executive Engineer, Phina Singh medium irrigation Project Division, Sadwan in Tehsil Nurpur Distt., Kangra H.P. The cost of tender form shall also be deposited at the time of application in shape of cash or demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Phina Singh medium irrigation Project Division, Sadwan, If the tender cost or earnest money is not deposited at the time of application, failing which the tender shall not be opened & liable to be rejected. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject the tender without assigning any reasons, if, happens to be holiday on the date of opening of tender, then the tender shall be opened on the next working day. The notice inviting tender is issued with ref. to CPWD manual under Section 17.5 being emergent works.

Sr. No.	Description	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Cost of Form	Time allowed
1.	C/O PSMP in Tehsil Nurpur Distt. Kangra (H.P) SH:- C/O Wire crate embankment to protect the Link Canal from RD 55.00 to 86.25-31.25 mtrs. 2" layer & 3" layer)	485640/-	9713/-	250/-	Three Months
2.	C/O PSMP in Tehsil Nurpur Distt. Kangra (H.P) (SH:- Repair & maintenance of entrance gate & C/O RCC Ramp path from approach road of JSV Office cum residential building to Garage of Type 4 qtr. & cleaning of blocked sewerage line of 2 Nos. type 3 qtr. At Nurpur & C/O retaining wall to protect the Ramp path from approach road of JSV office cum Residential colony at Nurpur)	474665/-	9493/-	250/-	Three Months
3.	C/OPSMIP in Tehsil Bhatiyat Distt. Chamba (H.P) (SH:- C/O Retaining wall to protection of Agriculture land due to excavation & construction of Link Canal at RD 866.00 to 876.00-10.00 mtrs.)	191205/-	3824/-	250/-	Three Months

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. The work shall be executed as per CPWD Specifications as per direction of secretary (IPH) to Govt. of HP vide letter No IPH-B-(A)9-1/2010-11 Shimla Dated 03.10.2019.
2. The quantity can be increase/decreased as per site conditions & Prior approval of Engineer-in-charge be taken before execution.
3. Nothing shall be paid for the rejected work and material.
4. Income Tax, GST, Labour cess and security shall be deducted from each R/Bill of the contractor as per rules.
5. Crushed stone Aggregate of river borne material free from silt/foreign be used as per IS 383.
6. Work shall be executed as per drawings /design by IPH(PSMP)Engineer-in-charge /competent
7. The Tenders received without earnest money, copy of registration and GST Clearance/Income Tax will be rejected.
8. The cement will be issued @344/- per bags & steel 5650/- per ton from Divisional store at Madanpur.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
PSMP Division,
Sadwan

HP / 4739/20-21 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-Procurement Notice
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer, Una Division HPPWD Una H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the online bids on item rate, in electronic tendering system, in 2 Cover System for the under mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors/ Firms registered with HPPWD Department.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost	EMD	Time Limit	Cost of Tender	Eligible class of contractor
1.	Improvement and Widening of Badher, Sasan, Udaipur and Lamlehra Pekhabela Road from km. 0/0 to 6/540 (SH:- Formation Cutting 57mtr. Widie including Retaining wall, Breast wall and Toe wall, Cross drainage work and Cement Concrete Pavement providing and laying GSB, WMM and 20mm thick premix carpet with seal coat U and V-shape drain, C/O Parapet and kilometre stone and sign board in km. 0/0 to 6/540)	4,56,03,068/-	4,99,000/-	Eighteen Months	5,000/-	Class-A

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: **21.12.2020**.
3. Cost of Bid Form:- As per detail in column No. 6 in form of demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Una Division HPPWD, Una payable at Una.
4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website <http://hpbtenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register on the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: <http://hpbtenders.gov.in>. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.
5. Key Dates:-

1. Date of Online Publication	21.12.2020 (10.00 HRS)
2. Document Download Start and End Date	21.12.2020 (10.30 HRS upto 28.12.2020 (09.00 HRS)
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date	21.12.2020 (10.30 HRS upto 28.12.2020 (09.00 HRS)
4. Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document	28.12.2020 upto 10.30 HRS
5. Date of Technical Bid opening, Evaluation of Technical Bid followed by Opening of Financial Bid.	28.12.2020 (11.00 HRS).

6. **TENDER DETAILS:**
The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Cover:
a. Cover 1: shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Documents/Eligibility Information."
b. Cover2: shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid", where contractor will Quote his offer for each item.
7. Submission of Original Documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security/ Earnest Money (EMD) duly pledged in favour of undersigned and other Technical Documents in Executive Engineer, Una Division, HPPWD, Una H.P. as specified in Key dates Sr. 4 on Tender Opening Date, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.
8. **BID OPENING DETAILS:** The bids shall be opened on **28.12.2020 at 11.00 HRS** in the office of Executive Engineer, Una Division, HP; PWD, Una by the authorised officer. In their interest the tenderer is advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. The date for opening of financial bids will be intimated separately after evaluation of technical bids.
9. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 120 days after the deadline date for bid submission.
10. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure or its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Una Division, HP: PWD, Una.
On behalf of Governor of H.P.

HP / 4767/20-21

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
S & T Branch OPEN TENDER

Invitation of E-tender on behalf of the President of India acting through Sr. Divisional Engineer Signal & Telecom (Co-ordination), West Central Railway, Jabalpur for the following work:- NIT No.: JBP-N-SIG-TENDER-2020-28. Name of work with location: Upgrading data logger networking system. Approx. cost of the work: ₹ 2,30,91,508.36. Cost of Tender form: 00. Address of the office of Railway: Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) Office, 1st Floor, DRM Building, Jabalpur. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,65,500/- Completion Period: 6 months. Date & Time for Closing & Opening of tender: Closing at 15.00 Hrs. on 30.12.2020 & Opening after 15.00 Hrs. The complete information of the above 'e-tender' is available on website <https://tenders.gov.in> and also placed on notice board of the Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) Office, West Central Railway, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tender.

DRM (S&T), W.C.Rly., Jabalpur.
रेल यात्रा के दौरान सिक्योरिटी बुक 138 पर
एवं सुरक्षा बुक 182 पर संपर्क करें।

(Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir)
Office of the Executive Engineer (Distribution)
Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCL) Electric Division Kathua
Power Development Department
Email:xenmekathua123@gmail.com
Notice inviting e-Tenders
e-NIT No. KED/29 of 2020 Dated 01.12.2020

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, the Executive Engineer (Distribution), JPDCL, Electric Division, Kathua, hereinafter referred as 'Employer' invites online e-bids from reputed Companies or Class 'A' registered Electrical contractors for Improvement of HT/LT Network of the Villages Sadrota, Banjal Batwala and Gudlu Falai by way of replacement of Wooden / Rotten / Damaged Poles, Insertion of Poles in Longer Spans and replacement of Wornout / Stranded / Barbed wire Conductor on Turnkey Basis under the Jurisdiction of Electric Sub Division Ramotkot of O&M Division, Kathua(JPDCL)

S. No.	Cost of Tender Document (in Rs.)	Earnest Money / Security Deposit (in Rs.)	Date and time of Downloading of Bidding Documents	Last date and time of e-Bid Submission	Date and time of opening of e-Bids
1	2000/-	119000/-	02.12.2020 (10:00 A.M.)	11.12.2020 (02:00 P.M.)	12.12.2020 (12:00 PM)

The Tender document consisting of terms and conditions, Bill of quantities and other details can be downloaded from the <http://jktdtenders.gov.in>.

Executive Engineer
JPDCL, O & M Division Kathua

DIP/J-2894-p

Poor AQI due to issues ignored by CM: Cong.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress leader Haroon Yusuf on Saturday claimed the city's air quality

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, DEC. 06	
RISE 07:01	SET 17:25
RISE 22:51	SET 11:47
MONDAY, DEC. 07	
RISE 07:01	SET 17:25
RISE 23:53	SET 12:26
TUESDAY, DEC. 08	
RISE 07:02	SET 17:25
RISE 00:00	SET 13:03

Delhi records over 3,000 new cases with 77 deaths

Over 80,000 tests conducted for second consecutive day

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Capital witnessed 3,419 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 5,89,544, stated a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday.

The death toll has reached 9,574 with 77 more fatalities reported in a single day. Of the total cases, 5,53,292 people have recovered and there are now 26,678 active cases.

A total of 81,473 tests were done in the past 24 hours. It is the second day in a row when over 80,000 tests have been conducted. The positivity rate on Saturday was 4.2%, less than the average daily positivity in November, which was 11.65%. The overall positivity till now was 8.84%, as per the bulletin.

Out of the total 18,843 beds available for COVID-19 treatment, 65.7% were vacant, as per the bulletin. Around 70.2% of ICU beds



Health workers collect swab samples for COVID-19 testing at Anand Vihar ISBT in Delhi. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

with ventilators were occupied by Saturday night and 52.4% of the ICU beds without ventilators were full.

In November, there were days when over 50% of beds were occupied and about 90% of ICU beds with ventilators were full.

There are now 6,045 containment zones in the city.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
5,89,544	9,574
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
3,419	77

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Childhood on hold

Children across Delhi are setting aside their schoolbooks and taking up odd jobs to help keep their struggling families afloat



Children waiting to collect food from a school in Old Seemepuri, Delhi. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

which I used to get ₹500-₹700 per week," said Kunal.

But the job did not last long. "Two weeks after I started working, the employer asked me to not come any more as the previous employee had come back. So, now I do not have anything to do again. A few days ago, I joined a wedding band and played the dhol. I managed to earn ₹300 per hour from it. Now, I just have to do whatever comes my way."

I had no option'

For Saahil Mathur, 17, taking care of his family of five has meant opting out of his studies for the time being.

"My grandmother used to work as a domestic help, but she has been out of work since the lockdown as nobody is willing to call her back. I had to step in as I have a younger sister. I took up odd jobs such as cleaning basements and parking lots for

the time being.

"For the last one month I have been working as a helper in a ration shop for which I get paid ₹5,000. My parents lost their jobs during the lockdown, so, I had to put my studies on hold and take up a job. I had no op-

sad he has been "somehow managing" to take online classes.

"Attending classes has become difficult as we have only one phone at home and usually I have to use it on an alternate basis with my brother to ensure both of us attend at least some of our classes," said Yash, an EWS quota student of a private school in south Delhi.

"Attending music classes and other activity sessions have also posed a problem as I do not have the instruments. I want to become an engineer as I like tinkering with gadgets but sometimes I do not have the required material. I am hoping for school to reopen soon," he said.

Delhi Weather max min

Delhi City 28 11

Safdarjung 28 11

Palam 25 14

Delhi Palam Today 28°C A cool morning with mist/smog and sunny sky. Pollution level may remain severe.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 27°C Mist and haze during morning. A comfortable day with mainly clear sky. Pollution level may improve.

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THE HINDU

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Man held for stabbing three men to death

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

A 22-year-old man has been arrested by the Gurugram police for allegedly stabbing three people to death on consecutive days last month during robbery attempts. His victims include a security guard and an office boy, while the third victim remains unidentified.

The accused, Mohammad Razi, hails from Bihar. He was arrested by a joint team of Palam Vihar and Sector 40 Crime Units at IFFCO Chowk on Thursday after getting a tip-off.

The accused had been without a job for almost a month, the police said, adding that he would strike up a conversation with a stranger before inviting him for drinks, and then stabbed him.

He had earlier worked as a housekeeping employee at a guest house in Delhi.

Razi stabbed a young man, yet to be identified, near Maharana Pratap Swaran Jayanti Park in Sector 29 on the intervening night of November 23 and 24, followed by the murder of Akhilesh, a security guard, in Sector 40 the next night.

He then stabbed Rakesh Kumar, 26, and severed his head and dumped the body in Sector 47 on the intervening night of November 25 and 26.

Rakesh was identified with a Aadhar card found on his body and the investigation into the case led to the arrest. The police scrutinised more than 250 closed-circuit television footage during the investigation of the case.

Rakesh worked at Deep Plaza and had come to the city from Uttar Pradesh.

Razi purportedly told the police that he would stab the victim to death and decamped with their phone and cash.

BJP demands action against 'tainted AAP members'

'CBI has lodged cases against Health Minister'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after suspending one of its sitting councillors post his arrest by the CBI for allegedly accepting a bribe, the Delhi BJP on Saturday demanded action against "tainted" leaders in AAP.

Delhi BJP media in-charge Naiveen Kumar demanded action against AAP leader Santosh Singh, who was arrested for alleged extortion. "When will CM Arvind Kejriwal take action against corrupt leaders in AAP? The CBI has

registered corruption cases against Health Minister Satyendra Jain, who is considered extremely close to Mr. Kejriwal but the latter made him a Minister and made sure that his corruption cases are not to be opened," he alleged.

Santosh Singh, a senior leader from Sangam Vihar Assembly Constituency was arrested in connection with the kidnapping of a businessman and extortion. But Mr. Kejriwal has given Mr. Singh primary membership," Mr. Kumar added.

G.B. PANT NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HIMALAYAN ENVIRONMENT (NIHE)
Kosi-Katarmal, Almora - 263643, Uttarakhand

TENDER NOTICE No. GBPMIHE/In House Project-04/ Water Purification system/IDB/2020-21/12 3350

Please refer to Institute Tender notice No. GBPNIHE/In House Project-04/ water Purification system/IDB/2020-21/12 published in "The Hindu" (Delhi edition) dated 26.09.2020 for supply of Water Purification System on (buy back system) under In House Project-04. The last date of receiving of Tender for equipment is hereby extended up to 08.12.2020 at 3:00 p.m.

The documents shall be submitted online at website <https://moefcc.euniwizarden.com>. The full details of equipment and documents are available in the Institute Website <http://gbpihed.gov.in>.

Administrative Officer
Email: ao@gbpihed.nic.in

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THE HINDU

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- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

छोड़ो अपने सारे काम। पहले चलो करें मतदान।

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION HARYANA

3 नगर निगमों, 1 नगर परिषद् और 3 नगर पालिकाओं के आम चुनाव दिनांक 27.12.2020

चुनाव में NOTA भी लागू

चुनाव ई.वी.एम. द्वारा होगा

चुनाव पर्यवेक्षक निगरानी करेंगे

चुनाव के पड़ाव

- नामांकन पत्र दाखिल करने की तारीख 11.12.2020 शुक्रवार से 16.12.2020 तुधवारा (सिवाय 13.12.2020) समय प्रातः 11:00 बजे से सायं 3:00 बजे तक
- नामांकन पत्रों की पड़ताल 17.12.2020 प्रातः 11:30 बजे
- नामांकन पत्र वापिस लेने की तारीख 18.12.2020 प्रातः 11:00 बजे से सायं 3:00 बजे तक
- चुनाव की तारीख 27.12.2020 (रविवार) एवं मतदान का समय प्रातः 8:00 बजे से सायं 5:30 बजे तक
- वोटों की गिनती 30.12.2020 को सुबह 8:00 बजे से एवं परिणाम की घोषणा वोटों की गिनती सम्पन्न होने के तुरन्त बाद

आम चुनाव

नगर निगम : अम्बाला, पंचकूला व सोनीपत
नगर परिषद् : रेवाड़ी
नगर पालिका : सांपला, धारहरेडा व उकलाला

हैल्पलाइन नं 0172 - 2584810

कृपया नामांकन पत्र प्रस्तुत करते समय अपने चेहरे पर मास्क अवश्य लगाएं और सामाजिक दूरी अपनाएं।

राज्य निर्वाचन आयोग, हरियाणा

EASTERN RAILWAY TO RUN MORE SPECIAL TRAINS

Eastern Railway will run some fully reserved special trains as per following timings, stoppages and composition :-

02337/02338 Howrah-Bolpur-Howrah Special (Daily)

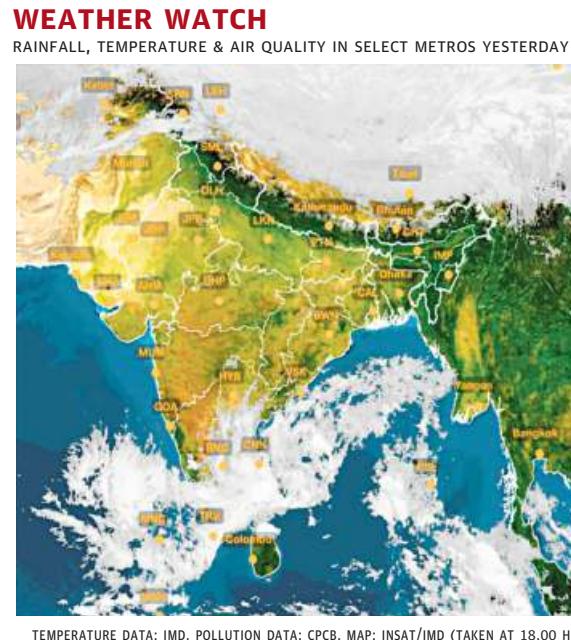
02337		Station	02338	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	
-	10.10	Howrah	15.45	-
12.25	-	Bolpur Shantiniketan	-	13.10

The above train will also stop at Barddhaman and Guskara stations enroute. Frequency/Date of run : From Howrah & Bolpur Shantiniketan – Daily from 10.12.2020 till further advice. Category: Mail/Express (Superfast).

02341/02342 Howrah-Asansol-Howrah Special (Daily)

02341		Station	02342	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	
-	18.20	Howrah	08.45	-
21.30	-	Asansol	-	05.30

The above train will also stop at Barddhaman, Panagarh, Durgapur, Andal and Raniganj stations enroute. Frequency/Date of run : From Howrah – Daily from 09.12.2020 till further advice and From Asansol – Daily from



Rajasthan unveils amnesty schemes for mandi traders

Exemption on mandi duty, interest waiver on penalties

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Amid the farmers' protest against the Centre's agriculture sector laws, the Congress government in Rajasthan on Saturday brought two amnesty schemes providing relief to the Krishi Upaj Mandi traders and agro-processing units. The schemes provide exemption and interest waiver on mandi duty and other penalties.

The interest waiver scheme has been implemented in the Krishi Upaj Mandis for 75% rebate on the interest payable in respect of mandi fee, allocation fee and other dues in order to facilitate early disposal of cases.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had earlier approved a proposal to waive mandi and farmers' welfare cess for the purchase of pulses



Ashok Gehlot. ■ FILE PHOTO

and oilseeds at the minimum support prices in the kharif season during 2020-21.

Fruit, vegetable traders

The amnesty schemes are set to provide relief to the traders of fruits and vegetables and agricultural produce markets as well as the owners of farm processing units.

According to the official

sources here, 75% exemption will be given on the deposit of the entire principal balance as on September 30, 2019, along with 25% of the interest due by December 31, 2020.

For the agro-processing units, the outstanding mandi duty on sugar and agricultural commodities imported from outside the State between April 27, 2005, and December 31, 2019, will be waived to the extent of 75%, while 100% exemption will be provided on the interest and penalty.

The official sources said that the owners of agro-processing units would be required to attach the copies of bills and other documents of imported agricultural commodities to their applications for exemption.

The scheme can be availed till March 31, 2021.

A field day for Rakesh Tikait

BKU spokesperson is among leaders negotiating with the govt.

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Rakesh Tikait saunters beneath the Delhi-Meerut flyover on NH 9 like he is strolling in his fields in Sisau-lli village in Muzaffarnagar. The national spokesperson of Bhartiya Kisan Union is one of the many farmer leaders participating in the ongoing negotiations with the government. He is the younger son of Mahendra Singh Tikait, who once made the BKU the voice of farmers in north India. Today, it has been fragmented into 50 odd factions with the Tikait group holding on to its influence on farmers in west U.P.

For the slow mobilisation in western U.P. in comparison to Haryana and Punjab, Mr. Tikait says, "In Haryana and Punjab, farmers are comparatively freer during this period. Also, the lack of rail transport has resulted in slow mobilisation."



Rakesh Tikait (on tractor) at the Delhi-Ghaziabad border. ■

ior BJP leader Rajnath Singh.

When one asks whether he was disappointed that Mr. Singh was missing from the government panel, Mr. Tikait nods.

'Long struggle'

"It's the government's decision. He might join at a later stage. *Abhi to lamha chalega* (It will go on for a long time)," he predicts. He quickly clarifies that the BKU was not speaking for the government. "It seems the government is paving the way for agro-industries and is

looking at farmers as labour. We are staring at the privatisation of agriculture," he says. "The government is trampling on what is essentially a State subject. When we talk of writing minimum support price in the law, we are told MSP is a separate issue."

The slow mobilisation in western U.P. in comparison to Haryana and Punjab, Mr. Tikait says, "In Haryana and Punjab, farmers are comparatively freer during this period. Also, the lack of rail transport has resulted in slow mobilisation."

Campaigning for BTC polls' first phase ends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

Campaigning for the first phase of Bodoland Territorial Council election to 21 seats on December 7 ended on Saturday evening. All major political parties in Assam participated in the campaign to woo voters in the 40 constituencies of the council spread across Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri districts.

Itanagar civic body

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has won more than 1,075 panchayat and a couple of municipal council seats uncontested ahead of the local body polls in Arunachal Pradesh. The elections are scheduled on December 22.

BJP wins over 1,075 panchayat seats unopposed in Arunachal

The elections are scheduled to be held on December 22

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Meghalaya government has transferred ₹100 crore to Central Pollution Control Board for restoration of environment damaged by unregulated rat-hole coal mining in April 2014.

The NGT has been advising the State government on the utilisation of the MERPF.

A government spokesperson said the State government has so far sanctioned three projects for restoration of environment. One of these is being implemented by the Central Institute of Mine and Fuel Research for treating acidic water. The MERPF will also be utilised in tree plantation and closure of abandoned mines.

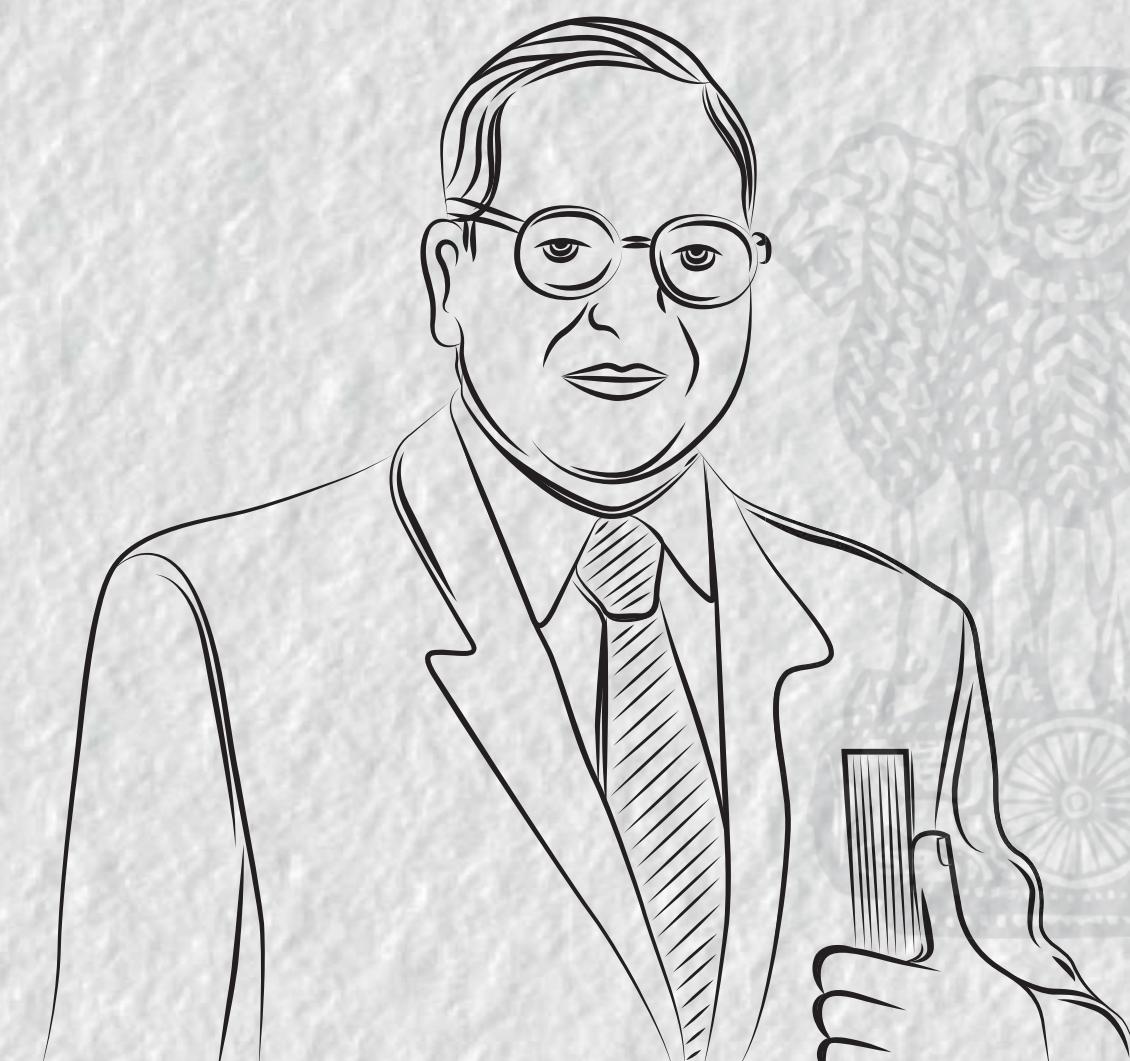
two municipal council seats unopposed.

According to a party statement, 11 ZPMs were elected unopposed from Upper Subansiri district, seven from Kra Daadi, six each from Lower Subansiri, Kamle and Kurung Kumey, and five each from West Kameng, East Kameng, Upper Siang and Changlang districts.

Four BJP candidates were elected uncontested as ZPMs from Dibang Valley district, three each from Tawang, West Siang and Lower Dibang Valley, and one each from Papum Pare, Lepa Rada, Anjaw, Namsai, Tirap and Longding districts.

दिल्ली सरकार
आप की सरकार

बाबा साहेब
महापरिनिर्वाण
दिवस



भारतीय संविधान के महान वास्तुकार एवं निर्माता,
बाबा साहेब डॉ. भीमराव अम्बेडकर जी
के महापरिनिर्वाण दिवस पर कोटि कोटि नमन्

- अरविंद केजरीवाल, मुख्यमंत्री, दिल्ली



FROM PAGE ONE

Farmers set ultimatum for repeal of farm laws

Saturday's meeting was the fifth round between the government and farm unions since the agitation began in Punjab over two months ago after the contentious laws were passed by Parliament. Meanwhile, large groups of farmers from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and representatives from other States joined the tens of thousands of farmers from Punjab in the protest on the borders of the national capital.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Mr. Tomar said he had assured farmers that procurement at minimum support prices would continue and State-run mandis would be strengthened, contrary to their fears. "The government is willing to listen to all the concerns of farmers regarding these laws and make needed changes to reassure them," he said. "We wanted the farmer leaders to give some concrete suggestions regarding their concerns, but we could not get that," he said, adding that suggestions are awaited.

Seven arrested under anti-conversion law in UP.

Sections 504 (criminal intimidation), 506 and 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code were also invoked, said police.

A case was also registered under Sections 3 and 5 of the ordinance in Mai district in Purvanchal. A prominent gold trader, in a complaint lodged at the Chiraiyakot Police Station, has accused a local man of allegedly abducting his daughter on the eve of her wedding.

A 21-year-old man in Bareilly, Uwaish Ahmed, had become the first person to be booked under the new

"The government kept asking us for specific suggestions on which clauses we want to add, what we want to remove. We made it clear that we are not here to discuss any amendments. Our demand has remained the same from the very beginning; we want a full repeal [of the laws]," said Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch representative Kavitha Kuruganti.

Some delegates got so fed up with the government's stand that they threatened a walk-out, but then decided on the silent protest. "We just refused to talk and sat there in silence for about 25 minutes. So then they stepped out for their own consultations, and we got the idea of writing 'Yes or No' on our file covers and held it up," recounted Kranikant Kisan Union president Darshan Pal. Although the Centre was willing to meet again on December 7, farmer-leaders suggested December 9. This will allow farmers to put on a show of strength through a Bharat Bandh on December 8.

It appeals against HC decision to dismiss pleas to transfer trial

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Kerala has moved the Supreme Court against a State High Court decision to dismiss pleas made by both the State and the victim to transfer the trial of a sexual abuse and abduction case against Malayalam actor Dileep and some others.

The State government, represented by advocate G. Prakash, said the trial so far had been marred by incidents of bias towards the prosecution and harassment of the victim.

"During the trial, while the examination of PW1/victim was going on in-camera, the fifth accused took pictures inside the court hall using his mobile phone. Also, the photographs of the car in which the victim has been travelling to the court were taken," the State government emphasised.

The trial judge failed to stop the defence from continuously questioning the victim about the details of

who performed the "marriage" of the minors in the classroom.

The teen "bride" and the "bridegroom", studying at the Intermediate level are classmates, said Andhra Pradesh Mahila Commission Chairperson Vasireddy Padma.

The Commission would provide shelter to the minor girl, she said.

The teenager, about 17 years old, brought a "mangalsutra" along with him and tied it to the girl in the classroom. Later, he applied vermillion (sindoor) to the girl and the couple took photographs.

Another minor girl reportedly made a video of what happened and shared the footage with her friends.

After coming to know of the incident, the management of the junior college removed the names of the students from the rolls and gave them transfer certificates.

"The girl's parents refused to allow her to return home. She was shifted to a One Stop Centre for counselling. Mahila Commission members spoke to the boy's parents also and counselled them," Ms. Padma said on Saturday.

Case filed
Meanwhile, the Rajamahendravaram Two Town police

registered a case and took up investigation.

"We will record the statements of the two minors, their family members and the college management. The police will explain the consequences of child marriage to everyone concerned," said a police officer.

"The marriage of minors in a classroom highlights the poor knowledge of law among students. The Mahila Commission is conducting awareness programmes in colleges and universities against child marriages, and on the POCSO Act and the Right to Education Act," said Mahila Commission Director R. Suez.



Not legal: The minor boy tying the 'mangalsutra' in a classroom in Rajamahendravaram. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Teens marry in classroom, officials say it's illegal

A.P. women's panel to provide shelter to minor girl; police register case after video of wedding appears on social media

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA



ANDHRA PRADESH

A "child marriage" performed in a classroom of a junior college in Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh has come to light, and the police have registered a case under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

The event came to light after a video of the ceremony was widely shared on social media groups.

Officials said the marriage was null and void, and the boy and girl involved were counselled.

Police were investigating

Kerala approaches SC in actor Dileep case**Farm laws: State may move SC**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Dileep

Kerala is likely to move the Supreme Court against the contentious farm laws passed by the Centre in September. Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar has submitted a file to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's office urging the State government to approach

the Supreme Court against the laws at the earliest.

A final decision on the matter is expected shortly. The State Agriculture Department has sought urgent intervention by the Kerala government for moving the Supreme Court on the basis of legal advice received from the Law Department.

the sexual assault even as they questioned her moral character, the appeal said.

At one point, the State said, the trial judge, for no apparent reason, got agitated and made unnecessary remarks against the Special Public Prosecutor and the investigating agency and went to the extent of stating that what was going on is not prosecution but prostitution".

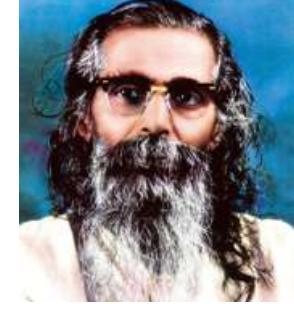
The State urged the Supreme Court to immediately stay the trial proceedings before the Special Court in Ernakulam. It asked the court to stay HC's dismissal of transfer pleas as well.

The police version is that the actress was held captive and assaulted by some of the accused while on her way to Kochi. They had also taken a video of the incident.

The allegation is that accused Dileep masterminded the conspiracy.

Row over naming of RGCB unit after RSS icon

Cong., CPI(M) oppose govt's decision



M.S. Golwalkar

jayan pointed out that the RGCB was a premier institution above political divides. The State government had handed it over to the Centre to develop into a facility that met international standards.

Mr. Vijayan said the Kerala government believed the campus is best named after some eminent Indian scientist of international repute.

Shashi Tharoor, Congress MP, in a Facebook post, asked the Centre whether it should "memorialise a bigoted Hitler-admirer who in a 1966 speech to Vishwa Hindu Parishad asserted the supremacy of religion over science?"

India set to be largest buyer of vaccines: study

High-income countries currently hold a confirmed 3.8 billion doses, upper middle-income countries hold 829 million doses, and lower middle-income countries hold more than 1.7 billion doses, according to the report.

According to the analysis, India is the top COVID-19 vaccine buyer followed by the European Union, which has confirmed 1.58 billion doses, and the U.S., the worst affected country so far, that has managed to purchase just over a billion doses.

As countries strategise to secure more shots to protect their populations against the novel coronavirus infection, Duke University has released a new global assessment of purchasing agreements for COVID-19

vaccines, even before any candidates are in the market.

Countries with manufacturing capacity, such as India and Brazil, have been successful in negotiating large AMCs with leading vaccine candidates as part of the manufacturing agreements, the Duke researchers noted in their analysis. "The data is based on what is in the public domain and after speaking to government officials, especially in India," explained noted virologist Shahid Jameel.

In November, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said 400-500 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines were estimated to be made available for 250 to 300 million (25 crore to 30 crore) people in India by July-August 2021.

The police registered leaders across the city to prevent the gatherings. Narayana Gowda, president of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, and other members of the organisation were detained at Maurya Circle while they were heading towards the Chief Minister's residence.

Karnataka bandh: police detain Vatal

2 incidents of stone throwing at buses in Bengaluru; poor response in districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU/HUBBALLI

The Karnataka police detained over a hundred protesters from Kannada organisations who started gathering at Town Hall by Saturday around 10 a.m. to protest against the formation of the Maratha Development Corporation.

The police also detained leaders across the city to prevent the gatherings. Narayana Gowda, president of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, and other members of the organisation were detained at Maurya Circle while they were heading towards the Chief Minister's residence.

Vatal Nagaraj, president of the Kannada Chaluvalli Vatal Paksha, was also detained at Town Hall.

Mr. Nagaraj accused Chief



In full force: A large number of police deployed during bandh in Bengaluru on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Minister B.S. Yediyurappa of being anti-Kannada for pelting the protest and claimed the police had detained 30,000 protesters across the State.

Kannada organisations had planned to march to the Chief Minister's residence,

being staged across the city. BMTC buses and autos were functioning as usual, though a section of taxi drivers on aggregator apps are supporting the bandh.

Stones thrown at buses
Two incidents of miscreants pelting buses with stones were reported in K.R. Puram and Chandrapura. Many shops at Gandhinagar and Chickpet area remained shut to support the bandh.

However, normal life remained unaffected in other parts of the city. The Karnataka Bandh received a lukewarm response in a majority of the districts, even in the the Bombay Karnataka region, and normal life went on as usual amid the protests.

POCSO case against Kannur Child Welfare Committee chief

17-year-old alleges sexual assault during counselling

STAFF REPORTER
KANNUR

the girl and had only sat down with women counsellors and talked to her about what had happened.

proposes solutions. According to the police, the girl was taken to the office of the committee at Eranholi, Thalassery, for counselling on October 21. She told the magistrate that Mr. Joseph had behaved with her when she appeared for counselling. During the course of the counselling, the girl complained, he used sexually explicit and derogatory language. The girl came for counselling in connection with a POCSO case registered with the Kannur Kudiyamala police station limits.

When contacted, Mr. Joseph said he had not abused

the girl and had only sat down with women counsellors and talked to her about what had happened. "I had asked if there was any sexual intercourse to know what had happened and if there was a deliberate effort to implicate him in the [earlier] case," he said.

Such complaints would affect the working of the Child Welfare Committee itself, he observed. According to the Thalassery police, they have sought information from the Kudiyamala police station where the case was registered and would take a statement from the chairman of the Child Welfare Committee.

IN BRIEF

No entry to Nalambalam in Guruvayur temple

THIRISSUR The Guruvayur Devaswom Committee on Saturday took a decision not to allow devotees to the Nalambalam area of the Sreekrishna temple till further notice in the wake of ongoing spurt in COVID-19 case. Devotees will be allowed to have darshan from the kodimaram (flag mast) at the East Nada. Only 2,000 passes will be issued a day through a virtual queue for darshan. Existing facilities for weddings and offerings will continue.

Two persons detained in Mangaluru graffiti case

MANGALURU The Mangaluru Police on Saturday announced that they had detained two persons on the charge of writing objectionable graffiti at two places in Mangaluru recently. Police identified them as Mohammed Sharik, 22, resident of Tirthahalli, and Maaz Munir Ahmed alias Maaz alias Munir, 21, native of Tirthahalli. "We will formalise their arrest and seek their custody for further probe," the police said.

Roshan Baig granted bail in IMA scam case

BENGALURU Two weeks after his arrest, former Minister R. Roshan Baig, an accused in the I Monetary Advisory (IMA) investment scam, was granted conditional bail by a special court on Saturday. The court directed him to cooperate with the investigation and report to the CBI headquarters on the second and fourth Monday of every month. The CBI had arrested Mr. Baig on November 22.



Back to basics: Farmers taking a break for lunch during their protest on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border. • R.V. MOORTHY

'Youngsters are watching us'

There is a surge in attention paid to agriculture and related issues, say protesters

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

Wit and candour were in good supply at the farmers' protest on Saturday as it entered the tenth day on the border between Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

"Every morning, when I come to the protest site after taking a bath in the nearby gurdwara, I see policemen looking fresh in their uniforms. I request them to give me a few blows so that the agitation gets wings as it did in Haryana, but somehow the administration in Ghaziabad is refusing to give us the *prasad*," chuckles Sukhraj Singh, 62, who has come from a village in Hapur district in Uttar Pradesh. This is his sixth day at the protest site and he hasn't lost his sense of humour.

There are many layers to the farmers' stir. When it started, it was led by the

Bhartiya Kisan Union's (BKV) Tikait faction, which decided to stay under the Delhi-Meerut flyover, making it easier for the police in Delhi and in Uttar Pradesh.

However, when the Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan (RKMS) and Kisan Sabha joined them, some of the farmers shifted base to the flyover, blocking one of the lanes of the highway that brings traffic from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi.

Gurshanjeet Singh of RKMS says they were all together in the protest but it was also a fact that those sitting beneath were playing a "friendly game" till they arrived. "We came here because the government was not listening to us as long as we were in Burari. They listen to those who block roads. Now, no farmer leader can cheat his followers because youngsters are watch-

ing and everything is on social media," adds Mr. Gurshanjeet, in what sounds like a dig at the BKU leadership.

Gained resolve
One thing that this protest has done, he says, is evoking the interest of youngsters towards farming and its issues. "Now I can rest assured that my land would be tilled by my sons and grandsons. This government has given us the *nischay* (purpose) to hold on till our demands are met," he says.

Some have described it as the protest of big farmers. Dara Singh from Bazpur in Uddham Singh Nagar chips in, "Four workers and their families depend on me. If I don't get the payment of sugarcane on time, how will I feed them?" he asks.

The protest, he says, has given the women at home the excuse to shoo away

creditors and escape embarrassment. "They would say, 'Sardarji is in Delhi!'" says the 70-year-old, ready for a long haul.

Meanwhile, the Ghaziabad administration is trying hard to ensure the situation doesn't go out of its hands. It is pushing the farmers to shift a little further into Delhi territory but as of now, the farmers are not in a mood to listen. Additional District Magistrate (City) Shaileendra Kumar Singh, who is leading the negotiations, could be heard reciting couplets and praising the Sikh courage and the Jat wit in solving problems. On Friday evening, he successfully persuaded the group to not put a tent on the flyover for sleeping at night. "Don't put any temporary or permanent structure on the highway. It will compel us to take action," he said.

"The State government

Minister who took trial vaccine tests positive

Anil Viji had taken first dose of Covaxin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A little over two weeks after the Haryana Home Minister Anil Viji participated in the Phase 3 trial of Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin, he tweeted on Saturday morning that he has tested positive for the virus.

Responding to the social media post, the Union Health Ministry said: "Antibodies against the infection build up in a human being only after a specific number of days pass after the second dose of the vaccine is taken, since this is a two-dose vaccine. The Minister in question has taken only one dose of the vaccine."

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech said the clinical trials of Covaxin are based on a two-dose schedule, given 28 days apart. The drug maker said the vaccine efficacy will be determined 14



Anil Viji

Active caseload lowest in 136 days: Health Ministry

'It has dropped below 4.1 lakh'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's active caseload of COVID-19 has dropped below 4.10 lakh (4,09,689) on Saturday and this is the lowest after 136 days. The active cases were 4,11,133 on July 22, said data released by the Health Ministry.

"The present active case-load consists of 4.26% of the positive cases. The new recoveries have led to a net decline of 6,393 in the active cases," it said.

India also reported 512 case fatalities in the past 24 hours with 10 States/UTs accounting for 78.32% of them. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (127) followed by Delhi (73) and West Bengal (52) daily deaths, respectively.

The Ministry said the daily new recoveries have been more than the daily cases registered from the last

eight days. "The number of daily new cases in the last 24 hours is 36,652 while 42,533 cases recovered and discharged in the last 24 hours. The rising recoveries have also improved the recovery rate to 94.28%. The recovered cases stand at 9,058,822. The gap between recovered cases and active cases is nearing 86.50 lakh and presently stands at 8,649,133."

New cases
It said 76.90% of the new cases are from 10 States and UTs - Kerala reported the highest daily new cases at 5,718 followed by Maharashtra (5,229) and Delhi (4,067). Also 78.06% of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in 10 States/UTs with Maharashtra reporting the maximum number of single day recoveries - 6,776.

MPs raise concerns over exemptions in privacy Bill

'Special consideration shouldn't be given to govt. agencies'

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Ten members of the 30-member joint parliamentary committee on the Data Protection Bill, 2019, have moved amendments against the provision in the legislation giving power to the Central government to exempt any agency of the government from application of the Act. The members have said this clause makes the entire Act infructuous.

The Bill seeks to provide protection of personal data of individuals and was introduced in December last year in Lok Sabha. It was referred to the joint parliament, headed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, in February this year.

Congress MPs Jairam Ramesh, Manish Tewari, and Gaurav Gogoi, Trinamool

Congress MPs Derek O'Brien and Mahua Moitra, along with Biju Janta Dal MP Bharati Mahtab and Amar Patnaik, BSP MP Ritesh Pandey, Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Eknath Shinde and BJP MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar have moved amendments to this contentious Clause 35 of the legislation. *The Hindu* has accessed a copy of the amendments moved by the committee members.

Invoking "sovereignty and integrity of India", "public order", "friendly relations with foreign states" and "security of the state", the legislation gives powers to the Central government to suspend all or any of the provisions of this Act for government agencies.

Five of the MPs - Jairam Ramesh Derek O'Brien, Ma-

hua Moitra, Ritesh Pandey and Amar Patnaik - want the Act to be suitably amended, vesting the power in Parliament instead of the Central government to approve any such exemption. Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi and Manish Tewari want judicial approval for it.

While moving the amendment, Mr. Ramesh argued, "The powers given to the Central government for exemptions are all-encompassing so as to make the legislation virtually infructuous."

Mr. Tewari while moving his amendment to this clause, submitted that since privacy has been held to be a fundamental right, it, therefore, is subject to the rigors of Article 21 of the Constitution of India and an exception cannot be made for the government.

People have the right to demonstrate peacefully: U.N.

36 British MPs write to U.K. Foreign Secretary on protests

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

"People have a right to demonstrate peacefully and authorities need to let them do so," Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the Secretary-General of the United Nations said on Saturday, on being asked about the farmers' movement in India.

The comment is the latest addition to a show of support for farmers. The remark comes a day after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) described Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's support to the protest as "unacceptable interference".

The comment from the United Nations came even as 36 British Members of Parliament sent a joint letter



Stephane Dujarric
to U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, calling upon him to bring up the concerns of British citizens over the protests in Punjab and in the outskirts of Delhi.

In a two page letter, Tanmajeet Dhesi, Member of Parliament for Slough, expressed concern about the well-being of the protesting farmers and said, "These

new laws (in India) present the Punjabis with a huge problem, with some describing it as a 'death warrant'."

The comments from the U.K. and the United Nations have added to the arguments from Canada.

Meanwhile, protests were held in multiple locations across Canada, where a large number of Indo-Canadians participated in drives in demonstrations, many of which culminated in Indian diplomatic missions. The diplomatic spat between Canada and India was visible as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar cancelled his participation in the December 7 meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic, which is to be led by Canada.

Left parties to back farmers' stir on Dec. 8

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The five Left parties have come together to back the farmers' organisations that have called for a Bharat Bandh on December 8. They have also called upon other political parties to come forward.

"The Left parties condemn the RSS/BJP's malicious campaign, on preposterous charges, against the struggle of our *annadwas* [food providers] to safeguard Indian agriculture and the country's food security," said a statement signed by CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury; CPI general secretary D. Raja, CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, AIFB general secretary Debabrata Biswas and RSP general secretary Manoj Bhattacharya.

ume of procurement by sitting in the capital Bhubaneswar. Now, farmers don't know how to dispose of the excess produce," Mr. Pradhan pointed out.

Meanwhile, Ranendra Pratap Swain, Minister, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare and Cooperation, said vested interests were instigating farmers.

"Paddy procurement is going on smoothly. As of today, 4,68,110 metric tonnes of paddy have been procured in the current kharif procurement season. But farmers have produced around 27-28 quintals of paddy per acre this year," said Ashok Pradhan, the convenor of WOFOCC.

Bumper production
"Taking huge risks during the pandemic, farmers have come up with bumper paddy production. The government determined the vol-

Odisha farmers park paddy on roads

'We don't know how to dispose of excess produce'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Hundreds of farmers on Saturday stacked their paddy on major roads in different western Odisha districts, protesting against "faulty procurement procedures".

Under the banner of the Western Odisha Farmer Organisations Coordination Committee (WOFOCC), farmers blocked the road at Sindarpur in Sambalpur district with trucks and tractor-loads of paddy.

"The State government

announced it would procure only 19 quintals of paddy per acre of irrigated land and 13 quintals from one acre of non-irrigated land in the current procurement season. But farmers have produced around 27-28 quintals of paddy per acre this year," said

Ashok Pradhan, the convenor of WOFOCC.
Grain blockade: Trucks with loads of paddy parked at Sambalpur in Odisha on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT AGENCY FOR ENTERPRISE BUSINESS PLAN FINANCING UNDER TAMIL NADU RURAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT
The Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project (TNTRP) invites "Expression of Interest" from the eligible registered consultancy agencies to submit their interest for providing consulting services for World Bank funded TNTRP Project for TECHNICAL SUPPORT AGENCY FOR ENTERPRISE BUSINESS PLAN FINANCING. Interested agencies may submit their "EXPRESSION OF INTEREST" in a sealed envelope clearly superscribed as Expression of Interest for "TECHNICAL SUPPORT AGENCY FOR ENTERPRISE BUSINESS PLAN FINANCING" latest by 5 pm on 30/12/2020. This selection will be done on Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) of the World Bank. The agencies may obtain further information and procedures for submitting the "Expression of Interest" from the official website of TNTRP i.e. www.tntrp.org Chief Executive Officer, TNTRP

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e-TENDER NOTICE Dt. 02-12-2020
e-Tenders are invited through MSTC from reputed, experienced & registered agencies who are dealing with FMCG products for Appointment of (1)C & F Agency for sale of GCC branded products in the States of Karnataka, Tamilnadu & Telangana (2) Super Distributor in each District of AP and separately for Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Guntur, Vijayawada & Tirupati cities (3) Sale of GCC Products through e-commerce agency (4) Agency for Institutional sale of GCC Branded Products. The interested agencies have to upload Technical & Financial Bids in prescribed formats through www.mstccommerce.com. For details please visit GCC website www.apgirijan.com. The last date for uploading the Technical Bid by agencies is up to 5.00 P.M on 28.12.2020. Sd/- VC & Managing Director

PB.No.6515, COBANK TOWERS, VIKAS BHAVAN, P.O., PALAYAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM., PIN - 695033
E-TENDER NOTICE
The Kerala State Co-operative Bank invites competitive quotations on E-tender mode from reputed Printers for printing & supply of 1,30,000 of diaries (1,05,000 Ordinary & 25,000 Executive Diary) of the Bank for the year 2021. E-tender documents contains specification, terms and conditions etc. can be obtained from e-tenders website of Kerala State Govt. (www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) Details are available in the Bank's website : www.keralacobank.com. The last date for submission of E-tenders are on or before 21-12-2020 at 10.00 am Thiruvananthapuram, 01-12-2020
(Sd/-) Chief Executive Officer

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL S.M.S. MEDICAL COLLEGE & CONTROLLER OF THE ATTACHED HOSPITALS, JAIPUR
No/F/MC/Store/2020-21/27081-84 Dated: 27/11/2020
Notice Inviting Bid
Bid for Supply and Installation of Various Items/Equipments for various Departments at SMS Medical College, Jaipur, are invited from interested bidders upto 24/12/2020 at 01:00 PM. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <https://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in>) of the state; and SMS Medical College, Jaipur department website.
UBN. SMS2021HLB00389 To SMS2021SSRC00418 DIPR/C/9389 PRINCIPAL & CONTROLLER

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
Inviting proposals from various national level creative agencies in providing social media and related services to Information Public Relations Dept., Govt.of Kerala.
For details visit: etenders.kerala.gov.in, prd.kerala.gov.in
Last date for submitting proposals: 28-12-2020, 3.00PM
Director
05-12-2020 Information Public Relations Dept.

Government of Karnataka Department of Tourism Office of Assistant Director, Department of Tourism, Koppal
Expression of Interest
The Department of Tourism, Koppal, Government Of Karnataka, invites investors with experience in establishing Ropeway, Proposed to be established at Anjanadari Hill, Gangavathi Taluk, of Koppal District in Karnataka. Application Start Date: 26.11.2020 and Ending Date: 31.12.2020 @ 17.00 For the more information of EOI document & other details visit www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in and contact Office of the Assistant Director Department Of Tourism, 2nd Floor, DC Office Complex, Hospt Road, Koppal-583231 telephone Number: 08539-225566
Sd/- Assistant Director Department Of Tourism Koppal District, Koppa.
DIPR/Koppal/260/MCA/2019-20

Karnataka Road Development Corporation Limited
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)
No.8, "Samparka Soudha", Dr. Rajkumar Road,
Rajajinagar 1st Block, Bengaluru-560 010. Telefax : 080-22024000
email : cekrdcl@gmail.com Website: <http://www.krdcl.in>
Date: 05.12.2020

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(on e-procurement basis)

I) Karnataka Road Development Corporation Limited [KRDCL] invites proposals from reputed Consultants for providing "Independent Engineer Services during Operation and Maintenance Period" for the following work:

Package No.	Name of Work	Period of Services
IE-WCP-2	Independent Engineer Services during Operation and Maintenance Period for Bidar-Ekhelli-Chincholi DBFOMT (Hybrid Annuity) contract.	3 years

II) Selection will be based on Quality & Cost Based Selection Procedure (QCBS).

III) Interested applicants may access bidding documents from e-Procurement portal www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in

IV) Pre-proposal meeting will be held on 22.12.2020 at 11.00 Hours.

V) The last date for submission of Technical & Financial proposals is 12.01.2021 up to 17.30 Hours.

VI) Opening of Technical Bid is on 13.01.2021 at 11.00 Hours.

VII) The Technical proposal, EMD and financial proposal shall be submitted in e-format as per the instructions

Four decades after strike by Phoolan, missing case diary delays wait for justice

For the relatives of those killed in Behmai in 1981, closure remains elusive

OMAR RASHID
KANPUR DEHAT

Weakened by age and illness, Rajaram Singh, 72, rests on a cot in his verandah, solemnly visualising the massacre he bore witness to in his village Behmai in Uttar Pradesh almost four decades ago. His younger brother Banwari Singh and six other relatives were among those killed when a gang of dacoits allegedly led by Phoolan Devi massacred 20 villagers on February 14, 1981. The bloody scenes were famously replayed in the 1994 film *Bandit Queen*.

Phoolan allegedly committed the massacre to avenge her rape and humiliation in Behmai by Lala Ram and Sri Ram – brothers and rival Thakur gang lead-

ers – who had also shot dead her paramour and caste-fellow Vikram Mallah. The two brothers, like other dacoits, would often frequent Behmai. Before shooting dead the villagers, Phoolan's gang had sought information about the two Thakurs.

Long battle

For the survivors and the kin of the massacre victims, including Mr. Rajaram, the main plaintiff and witness in the case, justice and closure remain elusive to this day as the legal battle carries on in a local court here.

In January this year, hope was ignited when a special court (dacoity) fixed a date for pronouncing the verdict in the case. However, it was



Years of waiting: Rajaram Singh and Akbar Singh, seated, in Behmai village of Uttar Pradesh. ■ OMAR RASHID

deferred multiple times on grounds that the original case diary was curiously found missing from the court records. Then struck COVID-19. The court instituted a probe, the outcome for which is still pending, to the chagrin of those in Behmai, a dusty village of 500-odd voters nestled in the ravines

of the Yamuna valley, 100 km from Kanpur.

Mr. Rajaram smells mischief. "If the files were missing then why did they record everyone's statements and fix the date [for verdict]?" he asked.

The victims were all men, aged 16-55 – 17 of them Thakurs. Two Dalit labourers

from Rajpur and a Muslim from Sikandra, who were in the village on that day, were also killed, while six to seven others were injured.

On the fateful day, Mr. Rajaram was returning from the fields when he noticed dacoits dressed in police fatigues storm the village. Hiding in the nearby bushes, he became a witness to the horror. "She [Phoolan] shouted 'Jai Kali mai ki' (hail mother Kali) and the *badmaash* (scoundrel) started firing. They must have been 40-45 dacoits," recalls Mr. Rajaram. As a young man, he says he contemplated revenge but found it futile. "My soul flares up when I remember the killings. But we are so helpless," he said.

Behmai served as a haven for dacoits during those years owing to its rugged, undulated and treacherous ravines and dense over-

growth. Today, the ravines leading to the village have been cropped to accommodate widening pucca roads and the banks of the Yamuna are dotted with machines drilling for sand. A police outpost and a "martyr memorial" listing the names of the "unarmed, innocent and noble" persons killed by dacoits at 4 p.m. on February 14, 1981 are the only reminders of that era.

Charges framed in 2012

The legal battle has crawled over the years. The charges against the five surviving accused dacoits were framed only in 2012. The initial FIR was against four dacoits, including Phoolan and Mustaqim, and 36 unnamed others. Three others, including Maan Singh, Phoolan's close aide, are still absconding. The prosecution had in 2012 submitted that Maan Singh

was running a restaurant in Chaura but never appeared before court. Most of the other accused have either died or were shot dead subsequently by police or rivals.

Fifteen witnesses were examined in court, government counsel Raju Porwal said.

SPECIAL

Phoolan had herself surrendered and after spending 11 years in Madhya Pradesh jails, she was released in 1994 after the Mulayam Singh Yadav government in U.P. withdrew the cases against her. She was then elected as MP twice.

But a local court set aside the government's decision which was also upheld by the Allahabad High Court.

Before Phoolan could surrender before the trial court to avail relief as per the Su-

preme Court's directions, she was gunned down in 2001 outside her official residence in Delhi.

Mr. Porwal says once inquiry into the missing case diary is over, the arguments of all the sides would have to be heard again before the final judgment. "Nothing vanishes. It may have got misplaced," he said.

Even though justice may have been excruciatingly delayed, a conviction for the surviving accused would still bring a semblance of closure for many like Akbar Singh. He had gone to sell wood on that day and was lucky to escape the bullets, unlike his kin. "In some years, they will all die. But even if these four are hanged, our hearts will find some solace," he said.

On Friday, the court listed the next hearing for December 24.

IN BRIEF



Petrol at 2-year high of ₹83 a litre; diesel at ₹73

NEW DELHI

Petrol price on Saturday breached ₹83 a litre in Delhi for the first time in over two years after a rally in international oil prices. Petrol price was raised by 27 paise a litre and diesel by 25 paise. The price of petrol in Delhi rose to ₹83.13 a litre and diesel to ₹73.32. The Congress sought a rollback in fuel prices. PTI

Red alert at all Rajasthan reserves, sanctuaries

JAIPUR

The Rajasthan Forest department on Saturday sounded a red alert at all reserves, sanctuaries and parks in the State as incidents of hunting, poaching and animal traps have come to the fore. The order comes against the backdrop of a camera trap footage showing a Ranthambore tiger, T-108, with a wire snare around its neck. PTI

Rajasthan CM accuses BJP of conspiring to topple govt.

BJP resorts to unethical acts, it is blinded by greed for power'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

Barely four months after the Congress regime won a confidence vote on the floor of the Rajasthan Assembly, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday accused the BJP of making renewed attempts to topple his government. Mr. Gehlot charged Home Minister Amit Shah with holding "secret meetings" with Congress MLAs earlier this year.

"Our MLAs told me after meeting with Amit Shah and [Petroleum Minister] Dharmendra Pradhan that they were ashamed to see Mr. Shah as the Home Minister. There was a time when Sardar [Vallabhbhai] Patel was the Home Minister, and now it is him," Mr. Gehlot said, while virtually inaugurating the Congress party's office at Sheogarh in Sirohi district.

Mr. Gehlot said BJP leaders were giving assurances to



Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot

Congress MLAs that they had "pulled down five different governments and this [Rajasthan] would be the sixth". "The BJP resorts to unethical acts because it is blinded by the greed for power," he remarked.

Reacting to Mr. Gehlot's charge, BJP State president Satish Poonia said the Chief Minister had depicted his "maansik vichalan" (mental deviation) because of his failure to provide good gover-

nance" during the last two years. Mr. Poonia took strong exception to the reference made to Mr. Shah and said the allegations made without any evidence had violated political ethics.

The Gehlot government was on the brink of collapse in July after a rebel group of 19 MLAs, led by the then Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, had threatened to pull support. Mr. Gehlot had held the BJP responsible for the episode and accused the party of attempting to destabilise his government.

The month-long uncertainty ended on August 14, when the government won the vote of confidence in a special session of the Assembly. The dissident MLAs returned to the party fold following the top leadership's promise to appoint a committee to hear and address their grievances.

Addressing the media at his residence here, Mr. Birla said the project would be initiated with a *bhoomi puja* by the Prime Minister. He said the floor leaders of all political parties would be invited, and depending on COVID-19 protocols, some of the invitees would attend virtually. The event would be telecast live as well, he said.

He said the long-pending demand of MPs for a new and modern building and offices for all MPs had been addressed. The MPs' offices, of 40 sq m each, would be built in place of the Shram Shakti

Parliament project set for launch

PM will lay foundation stone on Dec. 10, floor leaders of all parties invited: Speaker

NISTULA HEBBAR
DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would on December 10 lay the foundation stone for the new Parliament building, which would be a symbol of "atmanirbhar Bharat" and a "temple of democracy" for Independent India.

Addressing the media at his residence here, Mr. Birla said the project would be initiated with a *bhoomi puja* by the Prime Minister. He said the floor leaders of all political parties would be invited, and depending on COVID-19 protocols, some of the invitees would attend virtually. The event would be telecast live as well, he said.

He said the long-pending demand of MPs for a new and modern building and offices for all MPs had been addressed. The MPs' offices, of 40 sq m each, would be built in place of the Shram Shakti



More room: The new building can accommodate up to 1,224 MPs during joint sessions. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bhawan by 2024 and would be connected to Parliament via an underground pathway, Mr. Birla said.

22-month plan
The new building would be built adjacent to the existing building in over 22 months.

He said it was a matter of pride that artisans and sculptors from across the country would contribute to the new building, showcasing diversity and making it a symbol of "Atmanirbhar

Bharat". The existing building would be preserved for future generations, he said.

The building would have modern equipment, would be earthquake-safe and accommodate up to 1,224 MPs during joint sessions in the Lok Sabha chamber.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha chambers themselves would accommodate 888 and 384 MPs respectively.

The building, to be constructed by Tata Projects

Ltd. at ₹971 crore, would have a built-up area of 64,500 sq m over four floors.

According to government sources, the existing Parliament building, constructed by the British in the 1920s, was designed for the Imperial Legislative Council and not for a bicameral Parliament. The building has been modified over the years, including in 1956 when two floors were added.

While the number of Lok Sabha seats has remained 545 based on delimitation carried out on the basis of the 1971 Census, it is likely to increase after 2026 as the number of seats has been frozen till then.

The sources said the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha halls were packed and would not be able to accommodate additional members when the number of seats goes up.

The new Lok Sabha chamber would be three times the size of the current one, they said.

Railways ban recruitment of 'Bungalow Peons'

Facility withdrawn amidst resistance from officers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The Indian Railways has banned the recruitment of Telephone Attendant cum Dak Khalsi (TADK), better known as 'Bungalow Peons'. Curtains were drawn on the age-old tradition of allowing senior Railways officers to nominate a person to be appointed as peons to work in their residences or camp of-

fices. Despite stiff resistance from Railways Officers' Associations from across the country, the Ministry of Railways went ahead with its plan to end the practice, and also directed General Managers of Zonal Railways and other establishments to review existing posts, sources in the Southern Railway said on Thursday.

In an order issued on December 1, 2020, the Ministry of Railways said the engagement of "fresh face substitute as TADKs" would be discontinued with effect from

August 6, 2020. Existing posts and incumbent TADKs would continue and all issues relating to their service conditions shall be governed by the existing policy.

Earlier, when the Railways announced a review of the policy on TADKs, officers' associations wrote to the Chairman, Railway Board, against the move.

About 4,200 TADKs are

working at the residences of Railways officers as on September. Bungalow Peons are handpicked by Railways officers. They are categorised

under Group-D and paid Level-1 pay matrix of the 7th Pay Commission, with starting pay of ₹18,000 plus allowances as admissible.

Charges of ill-treatment
Though the Bungalow Peons are to be engaged in attending phone calls and recording movement of files at the residence of Railways officers, there were allegations of them being ill-treated or abused. In some cases that were reported, Zonal Railways were told to investigate. The move to do away with

the concept of Bungalow Peons evoked stiff resistance from the officers. The Federation of Railway Officers Association, in a representation, said it led to a sense of "anguish and apprehension amongst railway officers' fraternity". Stating that a similar selection procedure existed in several judicial and civil administrations, the association said "a TADK selected through the officer concerned imparted a sense of safety, confidence, trust and privacy for the families of the officers".

The BJP leader has been found to have been "very actively involved primarily as a conspirator" in the killing of Biswas in February 2019, they said.

When contacted, Mr. Roy rubbished the charges and said that he had "never believed in violence in politics". "I challenge Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is also the police minister to say it in public that I have such kind of taste. I was never involved in such things when I was with her party and not now when I am a member of another political party. I have total faith in the judiciary of our country," Mr. Roy said.

Speaking about the study, the corresponding author, Samiran Panda, Director, ICMR National AIDS Research Institute, Pune said, "The study has been critical to understanding the outbreak and the challenges associated with unsafe injection practices. A comprehensive approach should be adopted with interventions like increasing access to auto-disabled syringes and needles, empowering local communities and implementing effective specific ICTCs in the district."

Speaking about the study, the corresponding author, Samiran Panda, Director, ICMR National AIDS Research Institute, Pune said, "The study has been critical to understanding the outbreak and the challenges associated with unsafe injection practices. A comprehensive approach should be adopted with interventions like increasing access to auto-disabled syringes and needles, empowering local communities and implementing effective specific ICTCs in the district."

Apart from more regulations,

the study called for use of auto-disabled syringes.

or skin piercing was not related to the surge in the cases," said ICMR in its release.

It added that the study was done on individuals who were detected HIV sero-reactive during November 2017-April 2018 from three locations, namely Premganj, Karimuddinpur and Chakmeapur in the Bangarmau block of Unnao district.

The study participants

were interviewed based on

various risk practices and in-

Roy named conspirator in TMC leader's murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

BJP leader Mukul Roy has been named a "conspirator" in the second supplementary chargesheet filed by West Bengal CID in a court at Ranaghat in Nadia district on Saturday in the murder of Trinamool Congress MLA Satyajit Biswas, sources in the agency said.

The BJPs national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya termed the CID's action against Mr. Roy as the "conspiracy of the Chief Minister". "Mamata Banerjee's conspiracy continues.

The false murder chargesheet against Mukul Roy shows how she is trying to suppress the Opposition. When Mamata Banerjee herself is a guest for a few days she should think what is going to happen after this," Mr. Vijayvargiya said.

Biswas was shot dead during a Saraswati Puja event in February 2019.

Biswas was shot dead during a Saraswati Puja event in February 2019.

States with stressed groundwater top in cereal trade: study

'39% of groundwater being used up'



Wheat and rice dominate the cereal production in the country. ■ PTI

Judge orders U.S. government to reinstate DACA programme

Over 3 lakh new applicants could now be eligible for protection from deportation

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

A U.S. judge ordered the Trump administration on Friday to fully reinstate a programme that protects from deportation immigrants who came to the country illegally as children.

The administration must allow newly eligible immigrants to apply to the so-called DACA programme, Judge Nicholas Garaufis of the U.S. District Court in Brooklyn wrote.

Over the summer, the administration had issued a memo limiting the programme to those who were already enrolled.

Former President Barack Obama instituted DACA by executive order in 2012 to help some of the more than 10 million people estimated to be living in America without documentation.

DACA protected an estimated 7,00,000 people known as Dreamers, offering protection at renewable two-year periods, including auth-



A sign of relief: A file photo of people rallying in support of the Supreme Court's ruling in favour of DACA in June. ■AP

orization to work.

It applied to people who were brought into the United States illegally as children and then grew up here. For many it is the only country they have ever known.

DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

As part of his crackdown on all kinds of immigration, Mr. Trump moved to end the programme in 2017, calling it unconstitutional.

The case ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court, which

said in June that the Trump administration had not followed proper administrative procedures to end the policy.

But in response, the Department of Homeland Security reinstated it only partially. It limited DACA to those already enrolled, rather than allow new applicants as well. And it cut the length of DACA permit renewals to one year, rather than the two years the programme had allowed.

On Friday, Judge Garaufis

said Homeland Security must announce the full reinstatement of DACA on its website by Monday.

More than 3,00,000 new applicants could now be eligible for DACA, the Center for American Progress think tank said.

"This is a really big day for DACA recipients and immigrant young people," said Karen Tumlin, director of the Justice Action Center, who litigated the class-action case.

Immigration is a hot button issue in the US, and Congress over the years has failed repeatedly to pass reform legislation dealing with the millions of people living in the country without authorization.

Prospects for Dreamers to live and work in the US permanently, rather than just with renewable permits, remain unclear.

President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to restore DACA when he takes office in January.

U.S. ends exchange programmes with China

State Dept. calls the Chinese-funded programmes 'soft power propaganda tools'

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

The U.S. State Department said on Friday it has ended five cultural exchange programs with China, calling them "soft power propaganda tools."

The Department said on its website it had "terminated" the Policymakers Educational China Trip Program,

the U.S.-China Friendship Programme, the U.S.-China Leadership Exchange Program, the U.S.-China Transpacific Exchange Program and the Hong Kong Educational and Cultural Programme.

It said that the programmes had been set up under the auspices of the Mutual Educational and Cul-

tural Exchange Act – a 1961 law signed by President John F. Kennedy and aimed at boosting academic and cultural exchanges with foreign countries.

"While other programmes funded under the auspices of the MECEA are mutually beneficial, the five programmes in question are fully funded and operated by

the (Chinese) government as soft power propaganda tools," the statement said.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately return a message seeking comment on the move. Attempts to reach representatives for the programs singled out by the State Department were not immediately successful.

Trump orders U.S. to pull out most troops from Somalia

About 700 troops are engaged in training local forces

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

The Pentagon said on Friday it is pulling most U.S. troops out of Somalia on President Donald Trump's orders, continuing a post-election push by Mr. Trump to shrink U.S. involvement in counterterrorism missions abroad.

The Pentagon said in a statement that "a majority" of U.S. troops in Somalia will be withdrawn in early 2021. There are currently about 700 troops in that Horn of Africa nation, training and advising local forces in an extended fight against the extremist group al-Shabab, an affiliate of al-Qaeda.

Mr. Trump recently ordered troop drawdowns in Afghanistan and Iraq. General Mark Milley, chairman of



A U.S. soldier deployed at an unidentified location in Somalia. ■AP

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had said on Wednesday that the future structure of the U.S. military presence in Somalia was still in debate.

The adjusted U.S. presence, Gen. Milley said, would amount to "a relatively small footprint, relatively low cost in terms of number of personnel and in terms of

money." He provided no specifics but stressed that the U.S. remained concerned about the threat posed by al-Shabab, which he called "an extension of al-Qaida," the extremist group that planned the September 11, 2001, attacks on the U.S.

"They do have some reach and they could if left unattended conduct operations against not only U.S. interests in the region but also against the homeland," he said. "So they require attention." Noting that Somalia remains a dangerous place for Americans, he said that a CIA officer was killed there recently.

The acting secretary of defense, Christopher Miller, made a brief visit to Somalia last week.

Parliaments typically

don't serve out their full terms in the stalwart U.S. army, but this one did.

The vote came after the death of September of Kuwait's ruler, the 91-year-old Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah. Sheikh Nawaaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah, 83, quickly took power without any opposition.

The outgoing Parliament

then approved Sheikh Na-

waf's choice for crown

prince, Sheikh Meshal Al

Ahmad Al Jaber, the 80-

year-old deputy head of Ku-

wait's National Guard.

Moscow starts inoculating vulnerable workers

70 vaccine centres opened in capital

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

Moscow on Saturday began vaccinating workers at high risk of becoming infected with the coronavirus at newly opened clinics across the city.

Health officials said they had opened 70 coronavirus vaccine centres in the Russian capital that would initially offer jabs for health, education and social workers.

"Citizens from the main risk groups who in connection with their professional activities come into contact with a large number of people can get vaccinated," officials said.

Russia was one of the first countries to announce the development of a vaccine, Sputnik V – dubbed after the Soviet-era satellite – in August but before beginning final clinical trials.

It is currently in its third and final stage of clinical trials involving some 40,000 volunteers.

Sputnik V's developers last month said interim results had shown the vaccine was 95% effective and would be cheaper and easier to store than some alternatives.

The jab uses two different human adenovirus vectors and is administered in two doses with a 21-day gap.

The vaccine will be free to all Russian citizens and inoculation will be voluntary.

Health officials on Saturday said that during the initial rollout in Moscow the jab would not be available to workers over 60, those with chronic diseases, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. They did not say when the vaccine would be available to the wider public.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, Project Division,
Dasarahalli Zone, MEI Layout, Bagalagunte,
Hesaraghatta Main Road, Bengaluru-560073

No.: BBMP/DZ/EE/PD/TEND/03/2020-21 Date: 05.12.2020

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Only through E-Procurement Portal) Two Cover System

The Executive Engineer (Project Division, Dasarahalli Zone), BBMP, Bengaluru on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP invites tender from eligible contractors / firms registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / National Highway or any State Government Organizations and license holders from labour department for the construction works and man power supply detailed in the table below.

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-Procurement portal. (2) Last date for tender queries : 15.12.2020 upto 3:00 p.m. (3) Pre bid meeting on 16.12.2020 at 11:00 a.m. at office of the Chief Engineer, Dasarahalli Zone, Hesaraghatta Main Road, Bengaluru-560073. (4) Tender must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 21.12.2020 upto 4:00 p.m. (5) Date of opening of technical bid : 22.12.2020 by 4:30 p.m. (6) Date of opening of financial bid : after approval of Technical bid. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Project Division, Dasarahalli Zone, BBMP

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How Australia-China ties hit a new low

Cracks began to show from 2018, when Canberra blacklisted Huawei and ZTE

ANANTH KRISHNAN

"Repugnant," was how Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison earlier this week described a tweet by Zhao Lijian, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, who shared a doctored image showing an Australian soldier holding a knife to the throat of an Afghan child.

The image, created by a Chinese designer who calls himself a "wolf-warrior artist", was shared on Twitter by Mr. Zhao, one of China's most famous "wolf-warrior" diplomats – the name borrows from an eponymous and widely popular patriotic Chinese action film – who is no stranger to controversy, having angered U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this year by suggesting the U.S. military had brought the coronavirus to Wuhan.



A combination of pictures of Scott Morrison and Xi Jinping.

for the initial handling of the coronavirus outbreak, a move that enraged China and brought an increasingly troubled relationship into open discord.

Trade dispute

Beijing retaliated with a slew of punitive economic measures, banning meat imports from four Australian plants and imposing an 80.5% tariff on barley, a major Australian export, in May.

EXPLAINER

This broadened into a wider trading dispute, with Australia initiating its own anti-dumping investigations into Chinese steel and preventing Chinese company Mengniu Dairy from acquiring Australia-based Lion Dairy & Drinks, which owns some of the country's most well-known brands. China then effectively banned Australian coal imports, leaving ships carrying millions of tonnes of coal stranded at Chinese ports for months awaiting clearance, and in November imposed tariffs of 107.1% to 212.1% on Australian wine labels, which have looked at China as an increasingly important market.

China and Australia being among the 15 countries that signed the landmark Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement in November mattered little to declining ties, which took another turn for the worse that same month after that same month after the statement from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. – dubbed the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance – expressing concern over developments in Hong Kong.

"No matter if they have

five eyes or 10 eyes, if they dare to harm China's sovereignty, security and development interests, they should beware of their eyes being poked and blinded," thundered the same "wolf-warrior" spokesperson, Mr. Zhao.

The statement on Hong Kong – touching the usual Chinese nerve of "internal affairs" – was followed by Mr. Zhao's now infamous tweet and Foreign Ministry statements expressing concern over Australian actions in Afghanistan. Asked if the statements meant a shift in China's stance on "internal affairs" of others, the Foreign Ministry said, "It is no longer a matter of the internal affairs of any country, and it should be strongly condemned by all people with conscience around the whole world."

The Communist Party-run *Global Times* put it in less diplomatic language: "Western people are very unaccustomed to criticism from Chinese people," an editorial said. "The West seems like a tiger that no one dares touch its backside."

Negative views

China, particularly angered by the COVID-19 inquiry call, has said the ball is in Australia's court, while in Australia, negative public opinion about China, amid concerns over its assertiveness and on foreign interference, is growing. A Pew Research Center annual survey in October found negative views on China increased the most last year in Australia, where 81% have unfavourable views, up 24 points from the previous year. All of which has now left both sides scrambling to find a way back from the brink.

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The candidates who are willing to serve in the University for not less than a minimum period of three years alone shall apply.

Cut-off date for all qualification is 30.11.2020 Proof (Photo copies) should be enclosed with the application. Certificates issued after the cut-off date will not be considered.

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OVL strikes oil in Colombia's CPO-5 block

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

ONGC Videsh Ltd., the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), has made a 'significant' oil discovery in an onshore block in Colombia.

OVL struck oil while drilling an appraisal well, 'Indico-2,' in CPO-5 block in Llanos Basin of Colombia, the company said.

OVL is the operator in the block with 70% stake. Geopark Ltd., an independent oil and gas company focused in Latin America, has the remaining 30%.

'Indico-2' encountered a net pay of 147 feet which produced oil at 6,300 barrels per day.

Jharkhand's joining ends GST compensation impasse

All States now part of borrowing plan, to receive portion of GST dues for this year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Jharkhand has accepted the alternative offered by the Centre to meet part of the GST compensation shortfall through a special borrowing window, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday.

With Jharkhand's acquiescence to the Centre's proposed solution, all States and Union Territories have now exercised the option to receive part of their GST implementation dues for this year. The Centre had offered States the option of borrowing ₹1.1 lakh crore out of the estimated ₹2.35 lakh crore shortfall in compensation



Money matters: So far, ₹30,000 crore has been raised in five installments via the special borrowing window. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

dues payable to States for this year. After initially asking States to undertake the borrowings themselves, the Centre had later offered to borrow on States' behalf and lend it onwards. Over the

past two weeks, most of the States that had reservations with the Centre's proposed arrangement, including Kerala, West Bengal and Punjab, had communicated their acceptance of Option-1.

So far, ₹30,000 crore has been raised in five installments through the special borrowing window operationalised late October.

"The next instalment of ₹6,000 crore will be released to the States/UTs on December 7," the Ministry said in a statement. Jharkhand will get ₹1,689 crore to meet the GST shortfall, with permission to borrow an additional ₹1,765 crore. All repayments for these special borrowings will be made from future collections of GST cess, whose validity has been extended beyond the originally envisaged sunset date of June 2022.

The VECV MD was speaking on the sidelines of the

Angola invites India to mine diamonds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Angola has invited Indian companies to invest in diamond mining, the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council said.

Angola is the third-largest producer of diamonds in Africa and has only explored 40% of the diamond-rich territory, but has had difficulty in attracting foreign investment. "Angola is looking at foreign direct investment from Indian companies to realise the country's potential," Pratibha Parkar, Indian Ambassador to Angola, was quoted as saying.

Media & Entertainment set to create up to 3 lakh jobs a year'

Sector stands where tech industry was 20 years ago: Aptech

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

The Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry in India currently stands where the IT sector was two decades ago, said Anil Pant, MD & CEO, Aptech Ltd.

It is on the threshold of explosive growth and is set to offer large-scale employment opportunity, according to him.

The M&E sector is set to grow 20-25% CAGR in the next 10 years, and is expected to create 2.7 lakh to 3 lakh jobs every year, 10 years



Anil Pant
from now, similar to what the tech sector did in its fast-growing years, said Mr. Pant.

Over the last few years, Aptech had seen more than

80,000 media and entertainment vacancies every year and the company had been able to offer only 25,000 candidates.

"There are over 700 recruiters, including blue-chip animation studios, entertainment and graphic design firms, ad agencies, consumer firms, online tutorials and IT firms scrambling for graphic designers, web designers, 2D/3D animators, 3D modelers, VFX experts, compositors, visualisers and pre/post-production executives," he explained.

Digital yuan is one of the world's most advanced 'central bank digital currency' initiatives

China's JD.com accepts digital yuan, in a first

REUTERS
SHANGHAI

Chinese e-commerce company JD.com Inc. said it has become the country's first virtual platform to accept Beijing's homegrown digital currency.

JD Digits, the company's fintech arm, will accept digital yuan as payment for some products on its online mall, as part of an experimental giveaway of digital yuan to citizens of Suzhou according to company's WeChat account.

Digital yuan is one of the world's most advanced 'central bank digital currency' initiatives

Worst over for CVs: Aggarwal

Decline in truck sales volume has stopped, says VECV CEO

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The worst is over for the commercial vehicle (CV) sector, which expects to witness a good recovery in the coming year, said Vinod Aggarwal, CEO of VE Commercial Vehicles (VECV), a joint venture between Volvo Group and Eicher Motors.

"As far as the industry is concerned, I think the worst period is behind us," Mr. Aggarwal said in an interview.

"Going forward, you will see things getting better as the sentiments have become positive in the economy. In Q2, the GDP contraction was less than what was earlier anticipated. CV industry is totally dependent on the economy and sentiments."

The VECV MD was speaking on the sidelines of the



Vinod Aggarwal

We expect replacement demand is going to be very high. The volumes will be less than 2018-19, but better than 2019-2020."

In addition to pent-up replacement demand, Mr. Aggarwal said there was good demand for construction trucks, CNG trucks as well as from the e-commerce and haulage segments.

Mr. Aggarwal said the new plant had been set up with the latest manufacturing technologies and based on 'Industry 4.0' standards.

"When the markets come back, we will have the adequate capacity for trucks... from the organization, technology, production and manufacturing quality... this plant is of strategic importance for us," VECV's Mr. Aggarwal added.



from now, similar to what the tech sector did in its fast-growing years, said Mr. Pant.

Over the last few years, Aptech had seen more than

Webinar to explore ties with Belgium on vaccine

To look at logistics for COVID-19 shots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A webinar exploring the prospects for greater collaboration between India and Belgium in various aspects of COVID-19 vaccines, from development, distribution to logistics, and featuring leaders from the fields of pharmaceuticals, life sciences and public health is being organised on December 8 by the Consulate General of Belgium, Chennai.

Consul General of Belgium in Chennai Mark Van de Vreken said as leading global players in the fields of life sciences, vaccines and pharmaceuticals/ therapeutics, India and Belgium should be strategic partners in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tatas to sell MAP Coffee for ₹6.74 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) on Saturday said its Australia-based step-down subsidiary is selling the MAP Coffee Business to Bucceri Group for A\$1.25 million (₹6.74 crore).

According to TCPL's website, MAP Coffee was established in 2002 and supplied Australian cafes, restaurants and bars with a range of Italian and locally-roasted coffee. TCPL subsidiary Earth Rules Pty Ltd., Australia, entered into an agreement on December 5 for the sale.

INTERVIEW | C.P. GURNANI

'Clients prefer large vendors'

+ 'Digital native' acquisitions help us gain skills: TechM CEO

K. BHARAT KUMAR
Tech Mahindra reported a 3.3% year-on-year rise in revenue to ₹9,372 crore for the quarter ended September and also saw a 5.4% growth in profit before tax to ₹1,409.3 crore. Dwelling on the cost savings that the company had been able to achieve, MD and CEO C.P. Gurnani also spoke about why clients prefer large system integrators. Excerpts:

The pandemic is not akin to the Y2k situation, because we have had no time to prepare for this sudden change

zest for offshoring?
■ There isn't any fresh impetus to offshoring as a lever. But at the same time, we have noticed our clients looking at more of business than only IT transformation.

That is why you would see a more cloud-centric wave. A client migrates to the cloud because to him or her, it doesn't matter where the data centre is. And also, by experimentation, they have realised the cloud is more secure than his own data centre. Clients are talking about driving their own customer experience.

Has COVID-19 offered the Indian IT industry another Y2k-like opportunity to get a foot in the door for new kinds of services?
■ If the *Time* magazine had wanted a chief digital officer as Man of the Year for 2020, COVID-19 would be the choice, not a human. Now, does that mean it's a Y2k moment? No. Because the pandemic offered us no fixed timeline for anything.

Y2k was clearly a time bomb. If you don't fix this quaint tissue, you could be shutting down your organisation within a certain date. [It's different now.] I put it in three buckets: run,

change and grow. To run their operations, people had no choice. All of us had to figure out methods overnight because the lockdowns were forced on us. There was no advance warning for any given situation. So, we all improvised, working from home; we set up a central command centre and implemented cybersecurity policies that dare not be breached by our users.

In Q2, TechM has shown a margin improvement and a higher PBT y-o-y. Where has this come from?
■ Tech Mahindra's subcontracting cost was high during April-June due to the acquisition of Cerium and Zen3.

In Q2, there was a reduction in subcontracting cost. Improvements were of the order 410 basis points (bps) in EBIT margins of which cost management, including offshoring, utilisation, reductions in subcontractors contributed 160 bps.

Earlier, if the growth we planned for did not happen, we had to deal with costs. We used this pandemic to resolve this equation once and for all. We redid the equation of subcontractors' growth [linked to] profitability and brought in some very stringent controls on subcontractor hiring. We started using artificial intelligence-based tools to populate our operations dashboards. The result is I have far fewer subcontractors, [though] we have about 13% of our revenue coming from subcontractors. Two, we are no longer creating capacity without letting it go through a rule engine that uses data science to allocate resources very efficiently. The consequence is my growth, hiring, capability building and skill-building are more predictable.

PNB to hold roadshow for proposed QIP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Saturday said it would hold a roadshow for the proposed ₹7,000 crore qualified institutional placement (QIP) issue next week.

The bank will be participating again in the non-deal roadshow and meeting prospective investors on December 7-8, PNB said in a regulatory filing. The bank has taken approval for raising ₹7,000 crore through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) route this fiscal.

In a non-deal roadshow, nothing is for sale, a bank official said, adding it was an opportunity to discuss and develop interest in an upcoming offer.

The bank has already taken approval from the board for raising ₹14,000 crore by way of Tier II, Additional Tier 1 (AT-1) bonds and QIP.

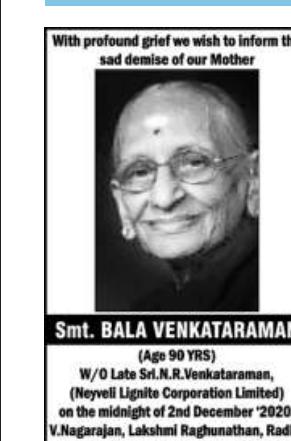
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through a rule engine that uses data science to allocate resources very efficiently. The consequence is my growth, hiring, capability building and skill-building are more predictable.

Production of mini cars comprising the Alto and S-Presso models climbed marginally to 24,336 units last month as against 24,052 units a year earlier. Manufacturing of compact cars WagonR, Celerio, Ignis, Swift, Baleno, Dzire rose 8.93% to 85,118 units.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Smt. BALA VENKATARAMAN
(Age 90 yrs)
W/O Late Sri N.R. Venkataraman,
(Neyveli Ligite Corporation Limited)
on the midnight of 2nd December '20.
V.Nagarajan, Lakshmi Raghunathan, Radha
Sumantharan, V.Ganesha, V.Mahadevan.
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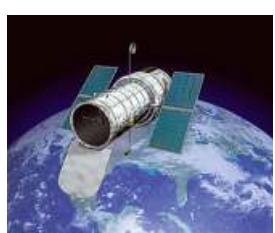
JHUMRI TELAIYANAGAR PARISHAD
Near Bazar Samiti Koderma, Block
Jhumri Telaiya Dist-Koderma Jharkhand 825409
Ph no. 9939457500, E-Mail Id- jhumritelaiyamunicipalcouncil@gmail.com

Reference No.-
ULB/NIT/JHUMRI TELAIYA SEPTAGE/TENDER/1912/2019/826
Date:04-12-20
Tender Notice (2nd Call)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1	Name of Work	Construction, Commissioning of Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant of Capacity 30 m ³ /day at JhumiTelaiyatown (Jharkhand) and Operation and Maintenance for 5 years
2	Estimated Cost (INR)	Construction Cost: ₹ 4,38,08,917 Operation & Maintenance Cost: ₹ 1,82,14,953 Total: ₹ 6,26,44,000 (Rupees)
3	Bid Security (INR)	₹ 10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only); non-refundable
4	Cost of Bid Document (INR)	1 year of construction which comprises 9 months of construction and 3 months of defect liability period including one month of trial run and 5 years of O&M post DLP
5	Time of Completion	12-

SNAPSHOTS



Dark puzzle

In 2018, astronomers found a galaxy NGC 1052-DF2, and a year later another, NGC 1052-DF4, which did not contain as much dark matter expected. Dark matter is key in current models of galaxy formation, so this was extremely puzzling. Now Hubble data analysis shows that the massive galactic neighbour of NGC 1052-DF4 has such enormous gravity that it has torn it, stripping it of dark matter.



Water's dual ego

One explanation of anomalous behaviour of water invokes a two liquid theory - namely water exists as two liquids at different pressures and low temperatures. So far, the two states have been seen only in simulations. Now a Science article describes experimental observation of the two states at minus 63 degrees C. By rapidly varying the pressure, the researchers saw one liquid change into the other.

Challenges in achieving herd immunity through vaccination

Breaking the chain of transmission with a partial vaccination of populations may not be possible

R. PRASAD

On December 1, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that the government has never spoken about vaccinating the entire country against COVID-19. Adding to that, Director-General of ICMR Dr. Balram Bhargava said: "If we're able to vaccinate a critical mass of people and break virus transmission, then we may not have to vaccinate the entire population."

"For a disease where everyone is equally affected, immunisation should be available to all when vaccines are ready. It is important to remember that vaccines are a tool to promote health equity," Dr. Gagandeep Kang, Professor of Microbiology at CMC Vellore says in an email. "If the goal is to achieve herd immunity, we will need about 70% of the population to be covered. Unlike other infections where groups which have high risk of transmission can be identified, the task is complicated for SARS-CoV-2."

Uneven transmission

For instance, the levels of immunisation needed for herd immunity are determined by how the virus spreads in the population, and makes the assumption that spread is homogenous. But SARS-CoV-2 virus spread exhibits a high level of uneven transmission. This is the reason why there have been a number of super-spreading events where some infected

global health and bioethics, says in an email: "We need a clear enunciation of the plan. If it is to vaccinate a subset of the population, we need to see a scientific rationale for that choice, and how the decision to select the subset was made."

individuals spread the virus to very large numbers of people while most infected individuals transmit the virus only to a few or none. Considering that two doses of the vaccine are needed for full protection and increased vaccine hesitancy particularly as the vaccine development and testing are seen to be rushed, achieving herd immunity of 70% to break the chain would be challenging. According to Dr. Kang, it was only in January this year that India achieved



Promoting equity: For a disease where everyone is equally affected, immunisation should be available to all when vaccines are ready, says Dr. Gagandeep Kang. ■ GETTY IMAGES

sure. Also, the duration of protection is not known and hence how frequently the vaccine has to be administered remains unknown. It is critically important to understand these to make sure that no resources are diverted from existing immunisation programmes that need to continue, she says.

Ethical challenges

Considering that the government has already listed out the high-priority groups that will receive the vaccine, the issue of choosing other sections of the population that needs to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity will be ethically challenging. "Objective, transparent processes for making priority-setting decisions are extremely important to maintain trust in the vaccination plans. These should be communicated publicly, including the rationale for the choices, and there should be a mechanism of appeal. Public inputs are crucial," says Dr. Bhan.

Incidentally, the intent behind identifying the high-priority groups to receive the vaccine first was to safeguard them from severe disease and not to break the virus transmission chain. "Breaking the chain of transmission with partial vaccination of

populations is not a concept I understand. Control of transmission requires either very high levels of coverage or combining vaccination at a reasonable level with well implemented testing and isolation," comments Dr. Kang. "I thought the purpose for prioritisation was to protect those at risk of severe disease first and then move to lower risk groups."

Updating the evidence

Another contentious area is the question of vaccinating those who have already been infected. "The immunity offered by the natural infection is probably long term. Till date, we are not aware of the added benefits or risks of vaccinating the people who are already infected. It is time we start doing some quick trials to update the evidence based on the contextual needs," says Dr. Giridhar Babu, Epidemiologist at Bengaluru's Public Health Foundation of India.

Citing the Oxford vaccine trial results that showed 90% efficacy in those who received half dose-full dose regimen, Dr. Babu feels those who have had mild or no symptoms either due to low viral inoculation dose or with better immune response, or both might respond better with vaccination.

Lessons in tiger conservation from Malenad

The tiger population here has increased from approximately 70 to 391 individuals in about 45 years

ASWATHI PACHA

With heavy rainfall, picturesque mountainous terrain and varied flora and fauna, Malenad in Karnataka is also home to the magnificent tiger. The present estimates suggest the tiger population here has increased from approximately 70 to 391 individuals in about 45 years. A new paper has summarised the research and conservation work carried out in this region by the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS) in Bengaluru. It details the problems that still need to be addressed if the tiger numbers have to triple. The researchers hope that these lessons can be applied in the management of wild tiger populations in other parts of the country and globally as well.

Larger, elusive species

The research team carried out a unique macro ecology study across these very large landscapes, involving larger, elusive animal species over a long period between 1986 and 2017. They collected data on tiger ecology, predator-prey ecology, anthropogenic impacts, existing and emergent conflicts.

gent conflicts.

"When we started our work, there was almost zero knowledge about tiger population biology. We carried out innovative work developing new methodologies including identification of individual tigers and leopards from their coat patterns using photos obtained through automated camera traps. We applied new pattern matching software for this purpose and estimating big cat numbers from these data," explains K. Ullas Karanth, Emeritus Director, Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bengaluru, and the lead author of the study recently published in the journal *Biological Conservation*. "We also applied line transects to estimate prey animal densities and occupancy modelling of track survey data to estimate animal species distributions for the first time in Asia. Now many wildlife researchers across Asia as well as in Africa and South America have started applying our methods in those areas"

Though Malenad has over 21,000 square kilometres of potential habitat, reproducing tiger populations are found to survive in less than 30% of the area. The team writes: "If tiger recovery efforts can be optimised in the future, the Malenad landscape can potentially support approximately 1,300 wild tigers."



Burning bright: The Malenad landscape now harbours one of the largest wild tiger populations globally. ■ KALYAN VARMA

sector. In this manner we can add to tiger habitat using tourism incentives, rather than increasingly trashing our wildlife reserves through excessive tourism pressures," he adds.

Debated topic

But resettlement of people living inside reserves continues to be a debated topic. "This is a complex conservation issue because fundamentally people living inside reserves have well-documented negative consequences for wildlife and biodiversity because of human

activities. For people living inside some want to continue to live inside due to long term ancestral and social connections to the land while many others want to relocate outside seeking to better their lives in the face of hardships they endure daily," explains Krithi Karanth from the Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bengaluru, and one of the authors of the paper in an email to *The Hindu*. "These problems include high human-wildlife conflict, lack of access to quality health care and education, and isolation from a rapidly changing world. This needs to be viewed as a freedom of choice - the choice to move or stay which often gets mixed up."

She concludes: "We face a huge variety of conservation challenges including managing existing wildlife reserves, human-wildlife conflict, land-use change, impacts from infrastructure growth and development, the emergence of zoonotic diseases, wildlife trade and poaching, and these need to be addressed while continuing to monitor wildlife populations."

Thai researchers unearth rare Bryde's whale skeleton

A part of the vertebrae coming out of the ground, were spotted by a cyclist in early November

REUTERS

Thai researchers have unearthed a rare partially fossilised skeleton belonging to a Bryde's whale believed to be around 5,000 years old at an inland site west of Bangkok.

The 12.5-metre-long (41 feet) skeleton was found by a cyclist, who spotted part of the vertebrae coming out of the ground, in early November. Excavation has been going on since then.

"This whale skeleton is thought to be the only one in Asia," said Pannipa Saetian, a geologist in the Fossil Protection division of the Department of Mineral Resources.

Perfect condition

"It's very rare to find such a discovery in near-perfect condition," said Pannipa, estimating that about 90% of the whale's skeleton had been recovered.



Tropical whale: Bryde's whales are found in coastal waters in parts of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, including in the Gulf of Thailand. ■ GETTY IMAGES

bited. Scientists hope the skeleton will provide more information to aid research into Bryde's whale populations existing today as well as the geological conditions at the time. Bryde's whales, sometimes known as tropical whales for their preference for warmer waters, are found in coastal waters in parts of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, including in the Gulf of Thailand.

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Can aid research

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The



Caste in the census

Why is a count on these lines considered necessary and what will be the outcome?

K. VENKATARAMAN

The story so far: The Tamil Nadu government has decided to appoint a commission to formulate a methodology to collect caste-wise particulars of its population and use that to come up with a report. It is not clear if this will involve a full headcount of all members of every caste, or whether it is better described as a 'survey' than a 'census'. The Centre conducted a 'Socio-Economic Caste Census' (SECC) in 2011 throughout the country, but it did not make public the caste component of the findings. In Karnataka, the outcome of a similar exercise has not been disclosed to the public.

Is collection of caste details part of the census? Caste was among the details collected by enumerators during the decennial Census of India until 1931. It was given up in 1941, a year in which the census operation was partially affected by World War II. In his report on the 1941 exercise, then Census Commissioner of India, M.W.M. Yeatts, indicated that tabulation of caste details separately involved additional costs. "The sanctioned tabulation for British India does not cover caste, but even had the full course been taken, there would have been no all-India caste table. Even in 1931, it was severely limited due to financial reasons; the time is past for this enormous and costly table..." he wrote. However, at the time of sorting the details, some provinces or States that wanted a caste record for administrative reasons were given some data on payment.

Has there been criticism of including caste in the census?

The principal argument against taking caste particulars of individuals is that it tends to perpetuate the caste system. J.H. Hutton, the Census Commissioner in 1931, notes that on the occasion of each successive census since 1901, some criticism had been raised about taking any note of the fact of caste. "It has been alleged that the mere act of labelling persons as belonging to a caste tends to perpetuate the system," he writes. However, he rejects the criticism, arguing that there is nothing wrong in recording a fact, and ignoring its existence would be ostrich-like.

What was the view after Independence?

R.A. Gopalaswami, the first Indian Registrar-General of independent India, said in the 1951 report: "The 1951 census was not [emphasis in the original] to concern itself with questions regarding castes, races and tribes, except insofar as the necessary statistical material related to 'special groups' and certain other material relating to backward classes collected and made over to the Backward Classes Commission." 'Special Groups' has been explained as referring to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Anglo-Indians and certain castes treated provisionally as 'backward' for the purposes of the census. This implies that BC data were collected, but not compiled or published.

So far, backward classes commissions in various States have been conducting their own counts to ascertain the population of backward castes. The methodology may vary from State to State

How have caste details been collected so far? While SC/ST details are collected as part of the census, details of other castes are not collected by the enumerators. The main method is by self-declaration to the enumerator. So far, backward classes commissions in various States have been

conducting their own counts to ascertain the population of backward castes. The methodology may vary from State to State. Details available about some commissions in the public domain suggest that these panels use methods like distribution of questionnaires, meeting with representatives of stakeholders, touring relevant areas and localities, and in some cases, such as the J.A. Ambasankar Commission in Tamil Nadu and the Venkataswamy Commission in Karnataka, door-to-door enumeration.

What about SECC 2011?

The Socio-Economic Caste Census of 2011 was a major exercise to obtain data about the socio-economic status of various communities. Even though there could be an overlap in the dataset of SECC 2011 with that of the census taken that year, the findings could be markedly different. The general census is conducted in a small window of a month, while the caste census is conducted over a longer period of time, and there is a good deal of revision and correction. The SECC 2011 had two components: a survey of the rural and urban households and ranking of these households based on pre-set parameters, and a caste census. However, only the details of the economic conditions of the people in rural and urban households were released. The caste data have not been released till now. While a precise reason is yet to be disclosed, it is surmised that the data were considered too politically sensitive. Fear of antagonising dominant and powerful castes that may find that their projected strength in the population is not as high as claimed may be an important reason.

What is the legal imperative for a caste count? Over the last two decades, the Supreme Court has been raising questions about the basis for reservation levels being high in various States. In particular, it has laid down that there should be quantifiable data to justify the presence of a caste in the backward class list, as well as evidence of its under-representation in services. It has also called for periodical review of community-wise lists so that the benefits do not perpetually go in favour of a few castes.

Inflation's import in monetary matters

Why has the RBI kept key rates unchanged in its latest announcement?

K. BHARAT KUMAR

The story so far: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced its decision to hold the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 4%. Vowing to stick with its 'accommodative' policy stance in the next fiscal year to help support economic recovery amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the MPC opined that inflation was likely to remain elevated, "barring transient relief in the winter months from prices of perishables". This, it stressed, "constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth".

What is the projection on CPI inflation?

The rate-setting panel noted that the recovery appeared to be "far from being broad-based" and was dependent on sustained policy support, which the central bank offered through a raft of measures to ensure that credit availability remains adequate. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, the RBI said, would average 6.8% for Q3 and 5.8% in Q4 – both levels above or close to the 6% upper bound of the target range for ensuring price stability – before easing to a 5.2% to 4.6% range in the first half of the next financial year, starting April 2021.

How does India measure retail inflation?

Inflation is the rate of change in the prices of a given set of items. India bases its retail inflation metrics on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The index records changes in prices for a sample of family budget items that are representative of what consumers typically spend their household income on – food, fuel, housing, clothing, health, education, amusement and even *paan*, tobacco and intoxicants. The measure is based on a weighted average. That is, some items in the index may get greater weightage depending on their priority in a typical family's budget. The CPI-based retail inflation is measured monthly and is published as a percentage value of change in the index from the corresponding year-earlier period. Data for a certain month are released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation generally on the twelfth day of the subsequent month.

Why is faster inflation a concern for policymakers?

Faster retail inflation is indicative of prices of household



The RBI committee noted that the recent economic recovery is far from being broad-based. ■ AFP

The Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI has noted that 'cost-push pressures continue to impinge on core inflation, which has remained sticky and could firm up as economic activity normalises and demand picks up'

items rising quickly. While inflation affects everyone, it is often referred to as a 'tax on the poor' as the low-income stratum of society bears the brunt. Persistent high inflation pushes several items out of reach for this category of consumers. For example, onions and potatoes are generally a key staple in an average Indian family's diet. But, if the price of potatoes starts rising rapidly, a poor household is often forced to sharply reduce or forgo its consumption of this key source of essential nutrients, including carbohydrates. Over time, if unchecked, persistent high inflation erodes the value of money and hurts several other segments of the population, including the elderly living off a fixed pension. It hence ends up undermining a society's consumptive capacity, and thereby, economic growth itself.

What is the RBI's role in tackling inflation?

The RBI's explicit mandate is to conduct monetary policy. "The primary objective of monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. Price stability is a necessary precondition to sustainable growth," the RBI states on its website.

In 2016, the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, was amended to provide a statutory basis for the implementation of a flexible inflation-targeting framework, where the Central and the RBI would review and agree upon a specific inflation target every five years. Under this, 4% was set as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation target for the period from August 5, 2016, to March 31, 2021, with the upper tolerance limit of 6% and the lower tolerance limit of 2%. To the extent that ensuring price stability is its primary goal, the RBI through its MPC must constantly assess not just current levels of inflation and prices of various goods and services in the economy, but also take into consideration inflation expectations both of consumers and financial markets so as to use an array of monetary tools, including interest rates, to contain inflation within its target range.

What is core inflation and why is it important? Core inflation helps measure inflation after excluding the effects of temporary volatility, especially from prices of items such as fuel and food. For example, seasonal spikes in food prices may skew the inflation rate, but the effect is only transitory. The RBI's action on rates, however, affects the economy with a lag, by which time the spikes in the price of those food items may have reversed. Viewing inflation after stripping out such volatility helps give it a better picture of the underlying trend in prices. In Friday's statement, the MPC noted: "Cost-push pressures continue to impinge on core inflation, which has remained sticky and could firm up as economic activity normalises and demand picks up."

The honey industry and its bittersweet reality

What does 'pure honey' mean and why does the recent report flagging adulteration by popular brands matter?

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) last week released results of an investigation it had conducted into the quality of honey being produced in India. It reported that products by many popular brands were not honey, and, in fact, had been spiked with added sugar. Therefore, they ought not to be branded and sold as honey. The CSE also showed that adulteration technology had become sophisticated and there were commercial products available which are designed to cheat the tests that Indian food testing laboratories conduct to ascertain the purity of honey.

Is there anything called 'pure honey'?

Over millennia, 'honey' was what bees made from plant nectar and people only just squeezed out the contents of honey combs, scrubbed it clean of bees, pollen and other visible residues. This is honey that is either sourced from wild bees or domesticated bees in aparies. However, none of this constitutes 'pure honey', because it is a marketing term and a superficial phrase that masks the complexity that is 'honey'. India's food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), in July published a new set of regulations – the third in three years – called the 'Revised Standards of Honey'. Nowhere does one find the term 'pure honey' in it. However, given that the adulteration of honey with added sugar is a global problem, the regulations listed the chemical contents, i.e., tolerable limits of 'impurities' that must be detected by specific tests for a batch of honey presented by a company for labelling to earn the right to market its

product as honey. 'Honey' is then classified as either 'Blossom' or 'Nectar Honey', which is what comes from nectar of plants, or 'Honeydew', which comes mainly from excretions of plant-sucking insects (*Hemiptera*) on the living parts of plants. The honey that is ultimately made available can be a combination of these and can differ widely in 'honey profiles'. There are at least 300 recognised types of honey.

How is honey tested?

Honey is primarily a complex of the fructose, glucose and sucrose sugars. It has a relatively high fructose content, which is why it is sweeter than commercial sugar, which is heavier on sucrose. The latter also breaks down less easily. Laboratory tests determine acceptable ratios of these sugars and tolerance limits. There is also a tolerance for 'ash' content and HMF (hydroxymethylfurfural), which forms when honey is heated. HMF is actually toxic for bees.

The reason a wide range of chemical variety is allowed is because different flowers have varying characteristics of nectar and express different chemical compounds that are sensitive to light, temperature and geography. Therefore, it is possible to have raw honey that may be less sweet or high on sucrose, or is lighter or



darker. Researchers in New Zealand have reported that raw honey from the manuka tree, which is believed to have medicinal qualities, is known to fail a standard test called the C4 test. Then, there are minimal levels of pollen count and foreign oligosaccharides that a quantity of honey must have. All of these have a broad tolerance range and are also influenced by the laboratory tests employed to detect them. Apiaries are known to feed beehives with sugar (sucrose) to stimulate production, and this, too, can influence the honey profile. But whether this makes the honey 'raw' is an open question. In all, there are 18 parameters for a product to be certified as honey. The most common are the so-called C4 and C3 tests, that determine if sugar from corn, sugarcane or rice was used to adulterate honey.

Why does spiked honey matter?

Honey typifies 'natural sweetness'. The enzymes that bees use to make honey out of plant nectar render it rich in antioxidants, amino acids and other products that give honey its medicinal properties. This is why honey is part of traditional medicine and has been promoted as an immune system stimulant, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The addition of artificial sugar syrups reduces the concentration of these elements per gram of honey. As a sweetener, honey is digested more easily than sucrose-heavy sugars, but it spikes blood sugar levels the same way commercial sugar does. Therefore, responsibly sourced honey poses similar risks to diabetics as ordinary sugar.

The aftermath of Iranian scientist's killing

With the country moving to strengthen its nuclear programme, will the U.S. be able to revive the nuclear deal?

STANLY JOHNY

The story so far: The assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian nuclear physicist, on November 27 on the outskirts of Tehran has turned the spotlight back on Iran's nuclear programme as Joe Biden prepares to assume the U.S. Presidency. Mr. Biden had promised during his campaign to take the U.S. back to the Iran deal, which President Donald Trump had abandoned. But after Fakhrizadeh's killing, Iranian lawmakers moved quickly to pass a Bill that would set a timeline for the government to strengthen the country's nuclear programme.

What does the law mean for Iran's nuclear programme?

The new law, if approved by the Supreme Leader, would oblige the government to raise the levels of nuclear enrichment in its key facilities – Natanz and Fordow – and deny access to UN inspectors to these sites. According to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the 2015 nuclear deal is called, there is a 3.67% cap on Iran's uranium enrichment.

Low-enriched uranium, which has a 3.5% concentration of Uranium-235, can be used to produce nuclear fuel for power plants. Under the new law, which has been passed in Parliament and got the clearance of the Islamic constitutional watchdog Guardian Council, the government should raise the enrichment levels to 20% if the European signatories to the JCPOA do not provide relief to Iran from sanctions within two months. It also mandates the government to install advanced centrifuges in its nuclear plants for higher enrichment.



A demonstration in Tehran against the killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. ■ REUTERS

the way forward. President Hassan Rouhani has publicly voiced his opposition to the Bill.

Why is Mr. Rouhani opposed to the legislation?

President Rouhani's opposition suggests that the Iranian government is still hopeful that the nuclear deal could be revived under a Biden administration. The legislation would be "harmful" to diplomatic efforts to restore the deal and ease sanctions, said Mr. Rouhani. The violations Iran has already announced can easily be rolled back if an understanding is reached with the U.S. in the next few months. Even when Iran started raising the fuel stockpile, it continued to allow full access to the IAEA to its facilities. This was one of the reasons the other signatories did not abandon the accord. But if the Bill is approved and Iran blocks access to nuclear inspectors to its sites, it could be seen as a major provocation. By voicing his opposition publicly, Mr. Rouhani has given credence to the argument that the regime is divided on what its response should be. Mr. Rouhani, however, does not have the power to veto the Bill. If he declines to sign it, the Parliament Speaker could sign it and send it to the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, who takes the final call.

What's next?

A lot depends on Mr. Biden's policy on Iran. If he reopens the diplomatic path, takes the U.S. back to the deal and at least eases some sanctions, it could bring the deal back to life. If he seeks more concessions from Iran as a precondition to rejoin the deal, as he suggested in a recent interview, it could prolong the crisis and strengthen the hands of the already powerful hardliners in the regime.



OIC

Islamic multilateralism with internal fissures

The organisation routinely takes up issues around the world, from Palestine to Kashmir, but remains divided within on how to tackle them

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

Dennis Michael Rohan did not dream of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), yet this Australian's dreams would lead to the creation of one of the oldest multilateral bodies of the Islamic world. The OIC, which hits the headlines in India whenever it comments on the Kashmir issue, was born in the backdrop of a series of historic developments in the Arab world, beginning with the Six-Day War of 1967 that led to the shocking defeat of the frontline Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

The war also led to the loss of East Jerusalem, which hosts the Al-Aqsa mosque, one of the three holiest shrines in Islam after Mecca

and Medina. The sensational victory of the Israel Defence Forces was topped by the arrival of the Jewish troops at the Western Wall, the Jewish holy site adjoining Al-Aqsa. While the Israeli government promised to preserve the holy Islamic shrine, fanatics across the world dreamt of a new era. Dennis Michael Rohan, in Australia, dreamt of the second coming of Jesus Christ and he took it upon himself to make way for the messiah and he flew to Israel.

The original pulpit of Al-Aqsa was an object of wonder. The 12th century wooden structure had survived the ups and downs of history that visited Jerusalem and left its mark on the city that was holy to three religions.

In 1969, Rohan arrived in Israel and in the night of Au-

gust 21, he carried a can of kerosene into Al-Aqsa and set fire to the pulpit. As smoke rose from the ancient mosque's windows, sending out shock and horror across the world, Islamic countries began brainstorming about the Palestine cause and the need to protect the holy shrines that fell in the occupied territories.

The storm of public outrage triggered the first conference of Islamic governments, which was held in Rabat, Morocco, on September 22-25, 1969, where they resolved to protect the Palestinian territories, and condemned the arson attack.

The Rabat conference had two criteria of membership: the countries with Muslim majority and those with a Muslim head of state could

be considered for membership of the collective that would eventually become the OIC. Former Indian Ambassador to Morocco, Gurubaran Singh, has said India was invited to be a participant in the inaugural summit and yet, when the Minister of Industrial Development Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed arrived in Rabat, the Indian case was mixed with the riot in Ahmedabad, which was brought up by President Yahya Khan of Pakistan.

India as a secular democracy was formally invited through Ambassador Singh, but Pakistan, which had already fought two wars with India and had a heating political scenario in East Pakistan at that time, successfully scuttled the Indian case at the Rabat summit.

The summit boosted the Palestine cause considerably and the next four years, the world witnessed a series of developments, including dramatic hijacking of aircraft by various organisations demanding the liberation of Palestine. Meanwhile, Yahya Khan had a personal setback with the defeat of Pakistan in the 1971 war against India.

This defeat, which was noted within the OIC, was followed by the Yom Kippur War of 1973 during which the Arab air forces were able to stun Israel. This was quickly

followed by the oil shock, which was the outcome of the energy embargo imposed by the Arabs mainly at the behest of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia.

Lahore summit

Soon thereafter, OIC Secretary-General Tunku Abdul Rahman suggested an emergency summit of the Islamic countries for brainstorming the future of the Islamic world. Tunku, who was the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, decided to shift the summit away from the Arab world. In 1974, Lahore hosted the OIC summit.

In the past, Malaysia and Pakistan had troublesomes. Malaysia had not supported Pakistan in the 1965 war. However, the past was forgotten as the Pakistan leadership found the summit as an opportunity to get out of the economic downturn and diplomatic isolation caused by the defeat in the 1971 war.

The summit turned out to be a success for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government. Many big names such as Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran, the young Colonel Moammar Gaddafi of Libya were hosted at Lahore, and Prime Minister Bhutto personally received each one of the guests.

Pakistan managed to score a major diplomatic point by inviting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh and recognised the new country. The images of Mr. Bhutto, who had just three years ago demanded harshest punishment for Sheikh Mujib, welcoming him at the airport was broadcast across the world. Gaddafi became the star of the summit as he represented a new oil rich power which had the potential of bankrolling Pakistan's

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Since the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the OIC never managed to bridge the divide between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which continues to resonate in West Asian politics

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weakness in the organisation. For example, Gaddafi was opposed by the Shah of Iran as the former had described him as a U.S. ally. Mr. Bhutto had personal problems with the Shah, who had reached out to Indira Gandhi around this time for oil trade. The Lahore summit brought the Pakistan factor in a prominent way in the OIC. However, the next big developments like the siege of Mecca's Grand Mosque in November 1979 and the Islamic Revolution of Iran earlier that year added new dynamics to the organisation.

Iran-Iraq war

Soon, the OIC was divided across the middle as the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980. During the war, Saddam Hussein of Iraq was backed by Saudi Arabia against the Shia theocratic Iran. The jihad in Afghanistan against Soviet troops in the 1980s gave an opportunity for unity among themselves, but they never managed to bridge the Iran-Saudi sectarian and geopolitical gap, which continues to resonate in West Asian politics.

As the group remained divided over its two powerful members, Pakistan brought up the Kashmir issue repeatedly. India was given a rare opportunity in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack to state its case on global terrorism at the Foreign Minister-level meeting of the OIC in Abu Dhabi. This, however, did not deter the organisation from remaining focused on the state of affairs in Kashmir, which was stripped of special status six months after the Pulwama strike.

Headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the group now has 57 member states, and former Saudi Minister Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen is its current Secretary-General.

In recent years, apart from terrorism, the OIC has routinely taken up vexing problems like the Rohingya refugee crisis, the Syrian civil war, Kashmir, the conflict in Yemen and, of course, the Palestine issue. But besides passing resolutions, the group could do little to resolve any of these problems.

Despite the bonhomie, the countries were barely united under the umbrella of the OIC, and the disunity has been a consistent factor of

In Focus

■ After an arson attack on Al-Aqsa mosque in the Israel-held East Jerusalem, leaders from Muslim countries met in Rabat in 1969, and called for closer ties among Muslim governments

■ The Rabat meet had two criteria for membership: the countries with a Muslim majority and those with a Muslim head of state could be a member in the group, which became the OIC

■ The OIC, headquartered in Jeddah, has 57 member states, and former Saudi Minister Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen is its current Secretary-General

NEERA TANDEM

Hard-hitting Democrat

Biden's Cabinet pick is known for her harsh criticism of both rivals and allies

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN



U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pick of Neera Tanden, president and CEO of the Center for American Progress (CAP), for Director, Office of Management and Budget, became embroiled in controversy almost as soon as it was announced. This was primarily because Ms. Tanden, known to be an outspoken advocate of the political values and policies of the Democratic Party, had on several past occasions lashed out on Twitter, principally at Senate Republicans but also some on the left wing of the Democratic Party. She appeared to make a pre-emptive strike on further controversy when she deleted roughly 1,000 past tweets.

So, what have some of her tweets said, that they have caused such a sense of outrage? On the one hand, Ms. Tanden appeared to have a no-holds-barred approach to criticising Republicans on specific policy issues, such as in one deleted tweet where she said, "The Republican party is gleefully supporting an alleged child molester. And everyone who gives money to the RNC is doing the same," a reference to Republicans' support of Roy Moore, accused by several women of sexual assault, as a Senate candidate in Alabama election. Similarly, another deleted tweet dating back to August 2018 said, "Trump just called a black woman a dog

and about 80% of the GOP don't think he's racist." She also referred to Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell as "Moscow Mitch."

However, Ms. Tanden's tweets have raised such a furor also because they do not spare the left wing of the Democratic Party either, including supporters of Senator Bernie Sanders, the self-proclaimed "Democratic socialist." A little more than a year ago, through the presidential primary campaign, Mr. Sanders shot off a letter to the CAP, accusing Ms. Tanden of "maligning my staff and supporters and being little progressive ideas".

U.S. media reported years ago Ms. Tanden allegedly "punched" Mr. Sanders' 2020 campaign manager, "in the chest" – an assertion that she denies, but reportedly admits she may have pushed him. She is also said to have described as "crazy leftists" people who supported a minimum wage of \$15, one of Mr. Sanders' top

policy priorities. Unsurprisingly then, a number of Republicans have expressed scepticism about confirming her nomination to a role that will empower her to direct the production of the annual Budget and influence appropriations legislation that sets annual spending levels for the federal government.

Polarised politics The key question is the extent to which having a cage-rather of the Tanden variety will be beneficial to the incoming Biden administration, at a time when 73 million people voted for incumbent President Donald Trump, and partisan bitterness has deeply polarized the politics of Washington.

In one sense, Ms. Tanden represents the typical multicultural background of the aspiring Democrat of the next generation. She came from humble beginnings, born to immigrants from India.

dia. When she was around five years of age, her parents got divorced and her mother had to rely on food stamps and government-subsidised housing to survive. It was from the politics and policies of the Clintons that she apparently derived her passion to serve the public, and the values that underpinned that drive.

Armed with a Bachelor of Science from the University of California, and a law degree from Yale Law School, Ms. Tanden's career soon soared as she became an Associate Director for domestic policy in former President Bill Clinton's White House and as a senior policy adviser to the First Lady. She earned her spurs in the highest echelons of Democratic Party firmament when she became the director of domestic policy for the Obama-Biden presidential campaign of 2008. That led to her role as a senior adviser for health reform at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, an opportunity to contribute to the development and passage of former President Barack Obama's seminal legislative policy – the Affordable Care Act.

If her nomination is confirmed, Ms. Tanden could continue to shine as one of the Democratic Party's most prominent rising stars. However, her style of engagement with opponents and allies alike may require moderation if she is to survive the vicissitudes of Washington politics.

Extremist network This group has since its origins become an extremist network on the Internet, spreading rampant misinformation about politics and the COVID-19 response, in particular about mask wearing and the lockdown. Two Republican Congressional House candidates Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert, who have endorsed the QAnon theories, have won elections.

The crazy theory behind QAnon is that President Trump's administration was leading a crusade against a ring of cannibal paedophiles, including Democratic Party leaders and celebri-

ties. And that there was a Trump administration insider, 'Q', who was feeding information about this crusade and everything under the presidency was "under control", in contrast to the chaos that was being depicted by mainstream media.

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Meanwhile, some QAnon believers had moved from hateful rhetoric on the internet to hate crimes such as plotting to plant a bomb in the Illinois State Capitol in 2018, using an armoured car to block traffic on a bridge in



Trump's loss in the election, something that was unimaginable for QAnoners.

Companies like Facebook, which has more than 2.7 billion users worldwide, have long had an "organic content" problem, which is also shared by other 'Big Tech' websites such as Twitter and Google-owned YouTube. BigTech algorithms on social media are designed to connect people by grouping them based on similar likes and interests and to amplify "viral content". Keeping people online is key to revenues for social media companies and an algorithm approach that feeds cognitive biases (likes and interests) is a clear outcome of this strategy. Algorithms seek to promote, on user feeds, content that "engages" their attention, producing a cascading effect on information sharing that has little to do with credibility or accuracy and more with reinforcement of beliefs within echo chambers.

This is how groups based on conspiracy theories such as QAnon achieved acquired potency for misinformation, leaving platforms like Facebook and Twitter to scramble for ways to regulate them much after they had become popular. As the U.S. continues to experience a high daily COVID-19 death toll of more than 2,000, it is now clear that the pandemic and the "infodemic" have been interlinked and a coherent response to the former will have to include one for the latter.

QAnon

Riding the 'infodemic' wave

Boosted by algorithms, the misinformation group thrived on social networks

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

More than one month since presidential elections were held in the U.S., incumbent President Donald Trump has refused to concede his loss to Joe Biden despite the fact that the latter has clearly secured 306 Electoral College votes (to Mr. Trump's 232) and 51.3% of the popular vote (against 46.9%).

Mr. Trump continues to push conspiracy theories of a rigged election and has sought to overturn verdicts in several battleground States by trying to nullify postal ballots. Despite courts across these States dismissing more than three dozen lawsuits filed by the Trump campaign and facts flying at the face of obvious disinformation and lying fed by them, opinion polls estimate that three fourths of Republican voters now believe that Mr. Biden won because of voter fraud.

No other phenomenon exemplifies the scourge of misinformation more in the U.S. than the far-right, fringe conspiracy theory called, 'QAnon' that emerged as anonymous postings on the frivolity laden message board "4chan" in 2017 and since then spread as wildfire across social media platforms.

The crazy theory behind

QAnon is that President Trump's administration was leading a crusade against a ring of cannibal paedophiles, including Democratic Party leaders and celebri-

ties. And that there was a Trump administration insider, 'Q', who was feeding information about this crusade and everything under the presidency was "under control", in contrast to the chaos that was being depicted by mainstream media.

The viralizing of misinformation has led to social media platforms seeking to regulate and ban QAnon groups and posts on them – an analysis by Facebook found that the major QAnon groups and pages had more than 3 million members in August 2020. The social network then sought to aggressively take down content promoted by QAnon groups. QAnon message administrators have since then sought to regroup in other message boards, but there has been a lull in activity since Mr.

TV PICKS

Australia v India: 2nd T20I, Soni 1 & Six (SD & HD), 1.40 p.m.
South Africa v England: ODI, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: Soni Ten 2 (SD & HD), 5 p.m., onwards
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m., onwards
Sakhar GP: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 10.40 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Corey Anderson retires, signs up with MLC
CHRISTCHURCH
New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson, who once held the record for fastest ODI hundred (36 balls), has called time on his international career and signed a three-year deal with USA's Major League Cricket (MLC). In 93 international games across formats, the 29-year-old scored 2277 runs with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries. He also took 90 wickets. PTI

Rijuji resolves Srinath's customs duty issue
NEW DELHI
The Sports Minister Kiren Rijuji, on Saturday, said that Srinath Narayanan will get a refund after he was asked to pay custom duty on the gold medal that he had won in the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad. According to reports, Srinath had to pay custom duty of ₹6,300 to get the gold medal. Rijuji, on Saturday, said his office has contacted the player and the issue has been resolved.



Premier Handball League from Dec. 24
HYDERABAD
Telangana Tigers, UP Icons, Maharashtra Handball Hustlers, King Hawks Rajasthan, Bengal Blues and Punjab Pitbulls will vie for honours in the inaugural Premier Handball League (PHL) at Jaipur's Sawai Mansingh Indoor Stadium from Dec. 24 to Jan. 10, according to A. Jagan Mohan Rao, president, Handball Federation of India.



Flying high: Hardik Pandya has showcased his skills as an all-rounder in the games held so far. ■ AFP

India eyes series win

Aussie skipper Finch not fully fit

INDIA IN AUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

The debate around the concussion-sub continues as a resurgent India takes on Australia in the second T20I here on Sunday. A win will give Virat Kohli's men an unassailable 2-0 lead and also serve as a confidence-booster for the Test series.

Following its victory on the back of concussion-sub Yuzvendra Chahal's terrific bowling display, India will enter the game with a lot of confidence even though all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja's batting lower down the order will be missed after he was ruled out of the series.

India would expect a better performance from the top-order, especially senior opener Shikhar Dhawan, who has gone off the boil after the half-century in the first ODI.

Kohli has made decent

contributions and a solid effort from the skipper will go a long way in addressing India's batting problems.

The visitors will also be boosted by the news that captain Aaron Finch, who has been in fantastic form, may not be fully fit.

For Australia, veteran Test specialist Nathan Lyon has been drafted into the T20 squad and it remains to be seen if he replaces Mitchell Swepson in the playing XI. Lyon could be used in PowerPlay the way India successfully employed off-spinner Washington Sundar in the opening T20I.

Match starts at 1.40 p.m. IST.

India vs. Australia in T20Is at SCG

Played 2 | India 2 | Australia 0

2016: India won by seven wickets

2018: India won by six wickets

Test hopefuls get into the action

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

India will look to figure out its playing XI as the Test squad gets into the groove by taking on Australia-A in a three-day warm-up game at Drummoyne Oval here from Sunday.

With India and Australia playing the second T20I on the same day, the visiting Test squad has been named India-A for the first of the two practice games scheduled ahead of the much-anticipated four-Test series.

In batting, Mayank Agarwal is set to open the innings but there is a question mark over his partner with the choice being between Prithvi Shaw and Shubman Gill.

For Australia, the spotlight will be on William Pucovski as he looks to grab the opener's slot following an injury to David Warner, who has been ruled out of at least the opening Test.

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand –1st innings: 519 for seven decl.

West Indies – 1st innings: K. Brathwaite c Blundell b Boulton 21, J. Campbell c Williamson b Southee 10, S. Brooks c Taylor 1, D. Bravo b Jamieson 9, R. Chase lbw b Wagner 11, J. Blackwood c Latham b Southee 23, J. Holder (not out) 25, A. Joseph c Mitchell b Southee 1, K. Roach b Jamieson 2, S. Gabriel lbw b Wagner 1; S. Dowrich (absent hurt); Extras (b-8, lb-7, w-1, nb-3): 19; Total (in 64 overs): 138.

Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-55, 3-55, 4-79, 5-79, 6-119, 7-119, 8-135, 9-138.

New Zealand bowling: Southee 19-7-35-4, Boulton 17-5-

Mayank. ■ FILE PHOTO

Windies in dire straits

Southee-led pace attack wreaks havoc

WINDIES IN NZ

REUTERS
HAMILTON

New Zealand's bowlers twice ripped through the West Indies batting line-up on Saturday and brought their side to the brink of a comprehensive first Test victory at the end of the third day at Seddon Park here on Saturday.

The visitors were bowled out for 138 in their first innings after lunch, 381 behind the Kiwis' 519 for seven declared and Kane Williamson had no hesitation in imposing the follow-on.

Jason Holder's team slumped to 89 for six in their second innings and with wicket-keeper Shane Dowrich unable to bat due to a finger injury, risked its heaviest Test defeat.



Bravo is castled by Jamieson. ■ AP

A dogged resistance from Jermaine Blackwood (80) and Alzarri Joseph (59), and their unbeaten 107-run stand, took Windies to 196 for six in their second innings.

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand –1st innings: 519 for seven decl.

West Indies – 2nd innings: K. Brathwaite c Blundell b Boulton 21, J. Campbell c Williamson b Southee 10, S. Brooks c Taylor 1, D. Bravo b Jamieson 9, R. Chase lbw b Wagner 11, J. Blackwood c Latham b Southee 23, J. Holder (not out) 25, A. Joseph c Mitchell b Southee 1, K. Roach b Jamieson 2, S. Gabriel lbw b Wagner 1; S. Dowrich (absent hurt); Extras (b-8, lb-7, w-1, nb-3): 19; Total (in 64 overs): 138.

Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-55, 3-55, 4-79, 5-79, 6-119, 7-119, 8-135, 9-138.

New Zealand bowling: Southee 19-7-35-4, Boulton 17-5-

30-1, Jamieson 13-3-25-2, Wagner 15-3-33-2.

West Indies – 2nd innings: K. Brathwaite c Blundell b Boulton 21, J. Campbell c Williamson b Southee 10, S. Brooks c Taylor 1, D. Bravo b Jamieson 9, R. Chase lbw b Wagner 11, J. Blackwood c Latham b Southee 23, J. Holder (not out) 25, A. Joseph c Mitchell b Southee 1, K. Roach b Jamieson 2, S. Gabriel lbw b Wagner 1; S. Dowrich (absent hurt); Extras (b-8, lb-7, w-1, nb-3): 19; Total (in 64 overs): 138.

Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-55, 3-55, 4-79, 5-79, 6-119, 7-119, 8-135, 9-138.

New Zealand bowling: Southee 8-1-40-1, Boulton 10-1-47-1, Wagner 11-0-62-2, Jamieson 10-2-33-1, Mitchell 3-0-7-1.

Man City enters top four

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
LONDON

Manchester City eased past Fulham 2-0 to climb into the Premier League's top four on Saturday. City made a superb start at the Etihad, with Raheem Sterling putting it ahead in the fifth minute to end a goal drought.

Kevin de Bruyne, in Guardiola's 700th game as a manager, doubled the lead from the penalty spot after Sterling was brought down.

Real Madrid earned a 1-0 victory at Sevilla, thanks to

an own goal from keeper Bono to snap a three-game winless run in LaLiga.

Important results: Premier League: Burnley 2 (Brady 3) drew with Everton 1 (Calvert-Lewin 45+3); Manchester City 2 (Sterling 5, de Bruyne 26+pen) bt Fulham 0.

LaLiga: Sevilla 0 lost to Real Madrid 1 (Bono 55+og).

Serie A: Spezia 1 (Nzola 64) lost to Lazio 2 (Immobile 15, Milinkovic-Savic 33).

Bundesliga: Freiburg 2 (Lienhart 32, Grifo 49+pen) drew with Borussia Monchengladbach 2 (Embozo 23, Plea 50); Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Kamada 9) drew with Borussia Dortmund 1 (Reyna 56).

NEUFC blanks East Bengal

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

Robbie Fowler's SC East Bengal suffered yet another reverse while an unbeaten NorthEast United moved to second in the ISL table with a 2-0 win at the Tilak Maidan in Vasco on Saturday.

Three matches, three defeats, zero goals scored, seven goals conceded and lying at the bottom of the table – that's been East Bengal story in the ISL so far.

In the 33rd minute, Kwesi Appiah fired in a low cross across goal which struck Surchandra Singh, who was unsighted, and rolled into the goal.

East Bengal had a couple of appeals for penalty turned down: for a foul by

Ashutosh Mehta inside the NEUFC box in the 19th minute and when a shot at goal struck the arm of Mashoor Sheereh at the hour-mark.

With the Kolkata team pushing high for the equaliser, NEUFC struck again in the 90th minute.

Substitutes V.P. Suhair and Rochharza combined to find the target, the latter providing the finishing touches.

The result: NorthEast United FC 2 (Surchandra 33-0, Rochharza 90) bt SC East Bengal 0.

SUNDAY'S MATCHES

Mumbai City FC vs Odisha FC

5.00 P.M.

FC Goa vs Kerala Blasters

7.30 P.M.

STAR SPORTS 2 (SD & HD), 3

Kashyap and Prannoy test positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Four shuttlers – former Commonwealth Games gold medallist P. Kashyap, H.S. Prannoy, R.M.V. Guru Sai Dutt and doubles player Pranava Jerry Chopra – have tested positive for COVID-19.

According to sources close to a player, one of them developed mild symptoms after attending Sai Dutt's wedding recently. All of them are asymptomatic and under self-quarantine at their respective places.

TIME AND PLACE PLATE

(1,600m), rated 40 to 65, (Cat. II), 3:45. 1. Story Teller (9) Nakhat Singh 55.5, 2. Magic Street (11) Suraj Narredu 56.5, 3. Farmville (7) B.R. Kumar 56.5, 4. Dream Station (8) Ajit Singh 56.5, 5. Quality Warrior (1) G. Naresh 56.5, 6. Tenth Action (14) Akshay Kumar 56.5, 9. The Prospect (12) A.A. Vikrant 56.5, 10. Angelita (5) Gaddam 54.5, 11. Flamingo Fame (14) Santosh Raj N 52, 12. Sporting Smile (10) Nakhat Singh 54.5, 13. Moonlight Ruby (13) Irvin Singh 54.5, 14. Over Joy (9) Kuldeep Singh 54.5 and 15. Sally (11) Md. Ismail 54.5.

1. ASHA JAUHAR, 2. JARVIS, 3. QUALITY WARRIOR

2. TIC TOC PLATE (DIV. I)

(1,200m), rated 40 to 65, (Cat. II), 2:45. 1. Strategist (7) Suraj Narredu 60.5, 2. Her Legacy (5) Kiran Naidu 59.5, 3. Asteria (3) Rohit Kulkarni 59.5, 4. Guiding Force (2) Santosh Raj N 58.5, 5. Prince Caspian (13) Jitendra Singh 57.5, 6. N.R.I Elegance (12) Koushik 57, 7. Ayur Shakti (8) Afroz Khan 55.8, 8. Evan Von Brandt (1) R. Laxminathan 53.5, 9. Meritocracy (4) Abhay Singh 53.5, 10. Celestis (6) Md. Ismail 53.1, 11. Classy Guy (9) C.P. Bopanna 52, 12. Hidden Hope (10) Kuldeep Singh 51 and 13. Wah Ms Zara (11) Irvin Singh 51.

1. STRATEGIST, 2. CELERITAS, 3. HIDDEN HOPE

3. MAGIC STREET, 2. STORY TELLER, 3. ROYAL GREEN

4. TIME AND PLACE PLATE (DIV. II)

(1,600m), rated 40 to 65, (Cat. II), 3:45. 1. Artistry (1) Irvin Singh 60.2, 2. Dandy Man (5) Ashad Asbar 59, 3. Egyptian Prince (3) Surya Prakash 59, 4. British Empire (13) Akshay Kumar 58.5, 5. Platinum Clause (10) Afroz Khan 58.5, 6. Human Touch (8) Abhay Singh 58.5, 7. Shiloh (14) Deepak Singh 58.5, 8. Solo Winner (7) Jitendra Singh 58.5, 9. Starboy (13) Ashad Asbar 57, 10. Brush The Sky (4) Afroz Khan 57, 11. Country's Gift (6) B.R. Kumar 54, 12. Smarty (5) Gaurav Singh 54, 13. N.R.I Flame (7) Gaddam 52.5 and 14. Negress Princess (11) G. Naresh 52.5.

1. MARVEL PRINCESS, 2. SUBLIME, 3. STARBOY

8. MEDAK PLATE (1,400m), 4-y-o & upward, rated 40 to 25, (Cat. III), 4:45. 1. Starwalker (12) Akshay Kumar 60, 2. Sun Dancer (11) Afroz Khan 60, 3. Tough Lady (9) Surya Prakash 60, 4. Valley Ikon (4) Deepak Singh 60, 5. Dillon (8) Gaurav Singh 59.5, 6. Maxwell (5) Jitendra Singh 59.5, 7. Royal Avenger (13) G. Naresh 59.5, 8. Halo's Princess (17) John R 59, 9. Original Temptress (7) Abhay Singh 58.5, 10. Whiskery (15) Md. Ismail 58.5, 11. Bedazzled (18) Nakhat Singh 58, 12. Moko (1) Ajit Singh 58, 13. Kintsgui (16) Koushik 57.5, 14. Acadian Angel (14) Kiran Naidu 57, 15. Agilis (10) Gopal Singh 54.5, 16. Moment of Silence (Ex: Vijays Maestro) (6) A.A. Vikrant 54, 17. Hopscotch (2) B.R. Kumar 52 and 18. Golden Parasaka (3) Santosh Raj N 50.

1. STARWALKER, 2. DILLON, 3. TOUGH LADY

Day's best: ASHWA J