





## SHORT TAKES

**Dense fog shrouds Delhi; air quality remains 'severe'**

**New Delhi:** Dense fog reduced visibility to just 100 metres in parts of Delhi on Thursday, affecting traffic movement, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The minimum temperature at the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, settled at 4.5 degrees Celsius. "Dense fog in the Palam area reduced visibility to 100 metres between 5:30 am and 8 am. At Safdarjung, moderate fog lowered visibility to 201 metres," Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre said.

According to the weather department, "very dense" fog is when visibility is between 0 and 50 metres, 51 and 200 is "dense", 201 and 500 "moderate", and 501 and 1,000 "shallow". The city's air quality index (AQI) was 427 at 9 am. The 24-hour average AQI was 433 on Wednesday and 418 on Tuesday.

Air pollution in the neighbouring cities of Faridabad (450), Ghaziabad (442), Greater Noida (454) and Noida (448) also remained in the "severe" zone. — PTI

## ■ Delhi govt sets out mega Covid-19 vaccination plan 51L to be vaccinated in 1st phase on priority basis: CM

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

The Delhi government is fully prepared to receive, store and administer Covid-19 vaccine to 51 lakh priority category persons in the city in the first phase of vaccination, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday.

He said his government is all set to start the vaccination drive as soon as it gets the vaccine from the Centre, and registration is underway for people in three priority categories who will receive it first.

Asked about the charges for the vaccine, and if it will be free of cost, a senior official in the Chief Minister's Office said the government has not taken any decision in this regard so far.

"There are a total of 51 lakh priority category persons in Delhi — three lakh health workers, six lakh frontline workers, and 42 lakh of those aged above

**■ EACH PERSON** in priority categories is being registered to receive the vaccine. They will be informed through SMS and other means whenever their turn for vaccination arrives, the chief minister said.

50 and those below 50 but having co-morbidities," the chief minister said at a virtual press briefing. Each person will be given two doses, and a total of 1.02 crore doses will be required in the first phase of vaccination in Delhi, he said.

Delhi recorded as many as 1,063 fresh coronavirus cases on Thursday. With this, the tally in the state has reached over 6.20 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 10,384. Thirty-seven fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours.

Currently, there is storage capacity for 74 lakh doses, and it will be scaled up to 1.15 crore within a



Arvind Kejriwal

week, Kejriwal said.

Each person in priority categories is being registered to receive the vaccine. They will be informed through SMS and other means whenever their turn for vaccination arrives, the chief minister said.

"The vaccine will be administered to only those people whose registration has been done," he added.

The government has made proper arrangements in case side-effects, if any, are noticed after administering the vaccine, the chief minister.

The necessary staff, officials and health workers have been identified and trained for the vaccina-

tion drive. Each vaccination team will have five members, he added.

The sites where vaccination will be carried out are also being readied, Kejriwal said.

The Covid-19 situation in Delhi has improved significantly in the past few days, but all eyes are set on when the vaccine will become available and people will get rid of the virus, he added.

"Everyone is eyeing the vaccine now. The Delhi government has made all arrangements, and we are fully prepared to receive the vaccine from the central government, store it, and administer it to priority category persons," Kejriwal said.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister chaired a meeting on the roll-out and administering of the vaccine in Delhi. A presentation on the preparedness for the vaccination drive was given by officials of the Health department.

## ■ City BJP chief, workers detained, party denies allegation

# DJB's Chadha accuses BJP of vandalising his office

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Raghav Chadha on Thursday claimed that BJP workers vandalised his office and attacked staff members at the board's headquarters at Jhandewalan here.

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) denied the allegations saying the attack was orchestrated by the Aam Aadmi Party



Raghav Chadha

(AAP). Some of the staff members have suffered injuries, Chadha claimed. "Around 250 people barged into my office and broke the glasses, doors and pots. They threatened my staff and attacked them," Chadha claimed.

The BJP workers had come to the DJB head-

quarters to protest and the police allowed them to enter the premises, he claimed. Chadha also tweeted a video clip purportedly showing broken doors, glass, pots, furniture and blood stains on the floor.

"The Delhi Police has detained party unit chief Adesh Gupta and many workers, but we are not afraid of these tactics," Delhi BJP spokesperson Virendra Babar said.

## 62% cyber complaints in 2020 related to financial fraud: Cops

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

Sixty-two per cent of the total cyber complaints lodged in 2020 were related to the online financial fraud, police said on Thursday.

In a statement, police said that 24 per cent of the complaints were related to the social media, primarily online harassment, and rest 14 per cent

of other cybercrimes such as hacking, identity theft, data theft.

The number of complaints of various types of cybercrimes was around 1,500 in January 2020 which increased to around 3,000 by November.

During the lockdown months and just after that, there was a significant increase in the incidents of cybercrime.

## N-E Delhi riots: Cops search premises of 2 Bar members

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

In a case related to alleged use of forged documents as genuine on judicial record in a northeast Delhi riots matter, police on Thursday searched premises of two members of the Bar, officials said.

Police said that during the course of a bail matter pertaining to an accused of the northeast Delhi riots, use of a forged notary stamp and creation of allegedly false or manipulated evidence at the hands of certain members of the Bar was noticed.

The court had earlier asked the police to investigate the matter after they alleged that affidavits submitted in the case related to the communal violence in Dayalpur area in February this year, were attested by a counsel who had expired in 2017.

## PM to flag off first driverless train on Dec. 28

**New Delhi, Dec. 24:** In an advance New Year's gift to people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to flag off the country's first ever fully-automated driverless train service on the Magenta Line of Delhi Metro on December 28, the DMRC said on Thursday.

The commercial operation of these new-generation trains, set to be a major technological feat, will begin after the event, a senior Delhi Metro official said. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be flagging off the country's

first ever fully-automated driverless train service on the 37 km-Magenta Line (Janakpuri West to Botanical Garden) and will also be launching the fully operational National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) for travel on the 23-km Airport Express Line (New Delhi to Dwarka Sector 21) on December 28, 2020," the DMRC said in a statement.

Both the events, the flagging-off of the driverless train as well as the launch of NCMC on the Airport Express Line, will be hosted via videoconferencing, a sen-

ior DMRC official said.

"After the launch, it will be the first time when commuters will be able to use NCMC on any corridor of the Delhi Metro," he said.

Prime Minister Modi in March 2019 had launched the indigenously-developed NCMC to enable people to pay multiple kinds of transport charges, including using Metro and bus services across the country. Dubbed as "One Nation One Card", the interoperable transport card allows the holders to also pay for their bus travel, toll taxes,

parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money. This is the first major event of Delhi Metro in 2020 which saw an unprecedented lockdown in the earlier months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Delhi Metro had resumed services with curtailed operation on the Yellow Line from September 7 after being closed for over five months.

DMRC has 10 corridors with 242 stations and on regular days, the average daily ridership of the Delhi Metro is over 26 lakh. — PTI

## Cops create green corridor for ambulance carrying heart for transplant at AIIMS

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

The Delhi Police on Thursday provided a fast-moving green corridor of over 18 km for an ambulance carrying a live heart from the airport to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, officials said.

The heart was flown in from Vadodara and took 12 minutes to reach the

hospital from the airport Terminal-2, they said.

According to the police, the AIIMS informed them that a human heart under ventricular assist device is being flown from Vadodara to Delhi for heart transplant surgery and that a fast-moving green corridor is required from the airport to AIIMS Hospital to avoid wastage of time. The traffic police

swung into action and immediately deputed officers and a green corridor was planned, a senior police officer said.

The traffic inspectors piloted the ambulance throughout the route of 18.5 km starting from Terminal-2 to AIIMS.

It took 12 minutes for the vehicle to reach its destination, which would otherwise take anything between 35-40 minutes, the officer added.

# Uttar Pradesh emerges as an economic hub with Policies to attract investors

In the post-COVID-19 national economic scenario, Uttar Pradesh is most likely to emerge as a great economic hub as the Yogi Adityanath government has been working on attracting investments with more flexible and investor-friendly policies. Economic achievements during the COVID-hid period testify the assertion as the government allotted 420 acres of land to the industrial units coming with investments of approximately Rs. 6700 crore and employment potential for more than 1.35 lakh workers.

## During Pandemic Investments of Rs. 45,000 crore attracted

As a result of pro-investor policies and willingness to further tweak regulations to suit industries, the state could attract new investments worth Rs. 45,000 crore from companies from 10 countries, including Japan, the USA, the UK, Canada, Germany, South Korea. As much as 43% of these proposals, worth Rs. 14,900 crore, has so far been firmed up on ground.

## German footwear major starts production in Agra

In the first week of November, famous German footwear major Von Wellx operationalized two shoe-making units in Agra. Von Wellx, earlier having operations in China, has shifted two of its shoe-making units to Agra. These units have been set up in partnership with India's Latric Industries Group at the Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) in Agra. A total of around 2,000 employment avenues have been created in these units. Von Wellx would invest around Rs 300 crore in phases in three projects in the state, generating around 10,000 jobs. Von Wellx had announced in May that it would be shifting its entire production of three million pairs of shoes from China to India.

## Proposed investments

Investments that have already been firmed up include Rs 750 crore from



the Hiranandani Group for a data centre in Noida. The foundation for the data centre was laid in the last week of November. Another investment of Rs 300 crore from Britannia Industries to set up an integrated food processing unit in Barabanki, Rs 750 crore from Associated British Food (AB Mauri) (UK) for a yeast manufacturing facility in Chitrakoot and Rs 200 crore from Dixon Technologies have also firmed up. Surya Global Flexi Films has given investment proposals for 953 crores, Acagrat Inc of Canada is to invest Rs. 746 crore, Edison Motors (S. Korea) will invest Rs. 750 crore in electric mobility in its first phase. In next phases its total investments could

reach Rs. 3,500 to 5,000 crore while Yazaki (Japan) is to invest Rs 2000 crore.

## Film City in Noida adjoining Yamuna Expressway

The government is also getting developed a film city in 1,000 acres near Noida. MSME Park, Electronics Park, Apparels Park, Handicrafts Park and Toy Park are also proposed in the same area. These projects are likely to attract investments to the tune of Rs. 40,000 crore with employment potential of 2.5 to 3 lakh workers.

## Leather Parks

The UP government is promoting a Leather Park in Agra on the Agra-Jaipur Highway (NH-11) for finished Leather Goods or Footwear/ Shoe

Industries. It is being developed with sectoral layout in an area of approx. 283 Acres at cost of USD 328 million. In the first phase, 71.07 Acre of land is being developed and various sizes of plots like 1000, 2100 and 4000 Sq. Mtr are available for industries. Technical assistance from Central Footwear Training Institute (CFTI) & Central Leather Research Institute (CLR) is also available to the industrial units here.

Meanwhile, the government has announced another mega leather park in Ramaipur village of Kanpur with an investment of Rs 5,850 crore. The park, that is part of the mega leather cluster project, is likely to create 50,000 direct and 1.5 lakh indirect job opportunities. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is likely to lay the

foundation stone of the project soon. The mega leather cluster project is likely to attract an investment of about Rs13,000 crores.

## Samsung's largest mobile factory

It may be recalled that UP is the home to the world's largest mobile factory. It was set up by Samsung in Noida. The unit has a capacity of fabricating 120 million phones a year. It makes 10 million phones a month, 70 per cent of which are earmarked for domestic usage.

## Fifth largest employment generator through MSME

During the Covid-19-hit period, the state emerged as the fifth largest employment generator through MSME units. The ranking was recently released by the Reserve Bank of India. The RBI ranked states on the basis of employment data in MSME units during the COVID-19-impacted period. Only Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are ahead of UP in this regard. Government's flagship ODOP scheme has played a major role in this achievement. Even smaller districts have become employment-generating centres with the help of ODOP scheme.

## Skill Mapping of Returnees

A big achievement of the state government has been the skill mapping of returnee workforce. More than 30 lakh skilled workers were mapped. Of these, more than 11 lakh have been linked with suitable economic sectors.

## 7,000 industrial licenses being issued every month

The kind of efficiency brought about in the regulatory systems may be seen in the fact that the UP Government is issuing more than 7000 licenses and NOCs every month for starting new industrial units and other business needs. All this has been done through the single-window portal "Nivesh Mitra" that currently offers 166 services related to 22 departments. Starting 58 new services on Nivesh Mitra by the end of November is also in the process.

## Expressway projects running ahead of schedule

Bundelkhand Expressway is likely to be ready ahead of the schedule as more than 21% of civil work in the 296-km-long expressway has already been finished despite the coronavirus pandemic. According to UPEIDA CEO Awanish Awasthi, the draft proposal for seeking expression of interests for the PPP agreements for the proposed Ganga Expressway has been approved by the board and it would soon be forwarded to the state cabinet for approval. Also, the UPEIDA will open offices in Kanpur and Aligarh to facilitate investors in defence industrial corridor.

## UPSIDA to monitor progress on 117 MoUs

The Infrastructure and Industrial Development Department (IIDD) of UP government has identified and mapped 117 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to 13 nodal officers from UP State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) for tracking progress and facilitating its implementation. The MoUs were signed between the investors and the state government during the Investors' Summit in February 2018. Meanwhile, with the continuous support and assistance from the nodal officers, projects with investments worth Rs 770 crore have successfully commenced commercial production.

## Quick Investment Promotion Policy 2020

The Yogi Adityanath government has recently introduced new Quick Investment Promotion Policy 2020 for Backward Areas. Attractive incentives are being given under the policy for setting up industrial units in East UP, Central UP and Bundelkhand where a high number of skilled workers have returned from other states during the COVID-19-induced lockdown. Also, for faster processing of investment proposals, a help desk has been created under "Invest UP", the new framework set up for promotion of investments.

ADVERTORIAL



## IN BRIEF

ED attaches ₹1.85 cr  
FDs in Kerala case

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹1.85 crore, including those of former Kerala principal secretary M. Sivasankar, in connection with its money laundering probe in the alleged Kerala gold smuggling case, the agency said on Thursday. "Fixed deposits along with seized cash recovered from the bank lockers totalling to ₹1.85 crore have been attached. Among the attached assets, ₹1 crore belongs to M. Sivasankar, IAS and former principal secretary to the Chief Minister of Kerala," the agency said in a statement. — PTI

India's first elderly  
Covid survivor dies

**Pathanamthitta, Kerala:** The country's first oldest Covid-19 survivor Thomas Abraham died of age-related ailments on Thursday, his family said here on Thursday. The 93-year-old died in Ranni village in the district and the funeral would be held at a church at Aithala on Friday. He is survived by his wife and three children. The recovery of the 93-year-old Abraham and his 88-year-old wife after a battle against Coronavirus in March this year was dubbed by the medical community as a miracle cure. They were discharged from the hospital in Kottayam on April 3. State health minister K.K. Shailaja had congratulated the doctors, nurses and other staff of the Medical College Hospital for saving the elderly couple. Along with the seven-member team of doctors who led the treatment, 40 medical staff including 25 nurses had actively taken part in various stages of treatment of the two. The couple had contracted the virus from their son, daughter-in-law and grandson who returned from Italy in March. This was the first case of Covid-19 when the pandemic hit the southern state in the second phase. — PTI

India, UK discuss vaccine, new strain  
Oxford, AstraZeneca seek permission to roll out Covid-19 shots

**VINEETA PANDEY**  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

Union health and family welfare minister Dr Harsh Vardhan held discussions with his British counterpart Matt Hancock on the issue of new mutated SARS-CoV-2 virus in the United Kingdom. The issue of vaccines was also discussed in the meeting held on Wednesday evening. "Held an insightful vir-

tual interaction with Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of UK, Rt Matt Hancock, yesterday. We discussed strengthening India-UK ties in health sector, India's preparedness for rolling out Covid-19 vaccine and new variant of SARS-CoV-2 in UK. I said that while Covid-19 vaccine development has been expedited, protocols ensuring its safety & efficacy have not been compromised, India has vast experience in

producing vaccines, we are committed to making the Covid vaccine affordable & accessible to people across the world," Dr Harsh Vardhan said in a series of tweets. The University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, that is making the Covid-19 vaccine, have submitted a full data package to the UK health regulator and sought permission to roll out their vaccines. "I'm delighted that the @UniofOxford/@AstraZe-

neca vaccine, developed in the UK, has submitted its full data package to the @MHRGovuk for approval. This is the next step towards a decision on the deployment of the #coronavirus vaccine," UK health minister Matt Hancock tweeted. The Covid-19 vaccine by Pfizer-BioNTech was the first to be authorised for use by the UK and has already been given to over five lakh people since last month.

Even as India is ready to procure international vaccines, it is keen to join the global teams that have their vaccines and is looking at the international market to push its indigenous vaccines that are still under development. The New Delhi based AIIMS on Thursday invited volunteers for the Phase III clinical trial of the indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine candidate 'Covaxin' for one of the sites.

Indians still stranded  
in China waters: MEA

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

India on Thursday said an "unprecedented situation" causing stress to the crew had arisen after 39 Indian nationals on two separate merchant vessels have been stuck in Chinese waters for the past few months, with the cargo of the vessels not having been permitted to be unloaded at Chinese ports. China has also still not permitted the change in crew on grounds of the Covid situation despite India requesting for it.

New Delhi also said that ships that arrived after these two concerned merchant vessels have, however, been allowed to discharge their cargo at Chinese ports and that the reasons for this were unclear.

New Delhi said its diplomatic mission in China has been in touch with Chinese authorities on the matter and requested for an "early resolution" of the matter to "ameliorate" the condition of the crew.

The MEA on Thursday said, "The bulk cargo vessel *MV Jag Anand* is on anchorage near Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since June 13, 2020 with 23 Indian nationals as crew on board. Another vessel, *MV Anastasia*, which has 16 Indian nationals as its

Talks on LAC standoff  
will continue: Govt

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

In what is perhaps a result of the current tensions in Sino-Indian ties due to the situation in the Ladakh sector, various proposed activities agreed upon by both nations during the 70th anniversary of Sino-Indian diplomatic ties have not been launched.

In response to a question on whether these activities were cancelled, the MEA gave a terse reply, saying that the activities were not launched but did not elaborate on the reasons. It's no secret however that Sino-Indian ties were seriously damaged this year due to the military stand-off between the two armies in the Ladakh sector which still continues. However, New Delhi said on Thursday that the two sides continue to maintain communication to resolve the situation in the Ladakh sector.

crew, is on anchorage near Caofeidian port in China since September 20, 2020, waiting for discharge of its cargo. There is a considerable amount of stress on the crew members on account of this unprecedented situation."

**INDIAN RAILWAYS**  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (Bharat Sarkar)  
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (Rail Mantralaya)  
RAILWAY BOARD

No. RS(S)/2020/747/3 New Delhi, Dated: 22.12.2020  
Sub : E-TENDER NO. 2020IS202 for Procurement of 79,761 MTs Mild/Corten Steel Sheets/Plates/Coils Through e-RA Method

- On behalf of the President of India, the Executive Director, Railway Stores (S), Railway Board, New Delhi invites e-tender for procurement of 79,761 MT (approx.) of Mild, Corten Steel Sheets, Plates and Coils on Running Contract basis.
- The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website <http://reps.gov.in> for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids.
- No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender.
- Tender will be closed at 15:00 hours on 01.02.2021.

By, Director, Railway Stores (S-I) Railway Board

2850/20

**EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

OFFICE OF THE Ex. ENGINEER (ELECT)-II  
SHAHADARA (N) ZONE, Keshav Chowk, Delhi-110053  
NIT NO. E.E.(Elect)-II/Shah./NEDMC/2020-21/TC-09 Dated: 23.12.2020

**PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDERS**

The Executive Engineer (E-I) on behalf of Commissioner, EDMC invites online tenders in Single Bid System for the following work:

Last Date to Purchase and Download of online Tender Document : 31.12.2020 up to 12:00 Noon

Last Date of Bid Preparation & Hash Submission : 01.01.2021 up to 12:00 Noon

Close for Bid : 01.01.2021 to 12:01 P.M. to 01.01.2021 at 15:00 P.M.

Date of Re-encryption of Online Bid from : 01.01.2021 at 15:01 P.M. to 04.01.2021 at 12:00 Noon

Opening of Financial Bid : 04.01.2021 upto 12:01 PM

S. No. 1. Name of work : Improvement of Electrical Internal wiring in EDMC Pry. Schools Gokalpuri New, East Rohtas Nagar, Ram Nagar Loni Road, Bhagwan Pur Khara in Ward No. 35-E, 37-E, & 38-E Under Shahdara (North) Zone.

Tender Amount : 3756201, Head of A/c : XL-VII-Edu., Earnest Money : 75200, Time of Completion : 4 months, Tender Cost : 1000, Rates hold good for : 6M, Online Tender No. : 319450.

Tender form and specifications can be downloaded from the website of EDMC <http://mcdetenders.com>

RO NO - 75/DP/VEAST/2020-21 Ex. Engineer (Elect)-II  
EDMC's Citizens Helpline No. 155303

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING  
THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82 Cr. PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Raju Malik S/o Lt. Md. Rabani R/o H.No. 1586, Gali No.17, New Mustafabad, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 398/20 u/s 394/395/397/342/452/506/412/34 IPC 27/54/59 Arms Act PS: Dayal Pur, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrants of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Raju Malik** could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Raju Malik** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Raju Malik of FIR No. 398/20 u/s 394/395/397/342/452/506/412/34 IPC 27/54/ 59 Arms Act PS: Dayal Pur, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 30.01.2021.**

By order  
Sh. V.K. Gautam,  
AC Metropolitan Magistrate,  
Karkardooma Court,  
Shahdara, Delhi

DP/461/NE/2020

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
Office of the Executive Engineer Quality Control & Procurement Division,  
HMT, Srinagar  
TENDER DOCUMENT  
e-N.I.T. No. -PHE/QC&PD/27/e-Tender Dated: 19-12-2020.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, e-Tenders are invited on item rate basis in two covers (details recorded in tender document) from Registered Original Manufacturers or their sole authorized distributor/dealer as per specifications / details annexed to the e-NIT.

**Subject Of Supply:** Supply Of Laboratory Equipment And Allied Items For Various Water Testing Labs Of Kashmir PHE Jal Shakti Department from Registered Original Manufacturers or their sole authorized distributor/dealer.

**Schedule of Critical Dates/Information.**

| General  |   |
|--|---|
| Client Name  | Chief Engineer, Kashmir PHE, Jal Shakti Deptt. Srinagar.  |
| Circle   | Superintending Engineer, PHE Mechanical, Jal Shakti Department, Circle South, Srinagar.   |
| Division   | Quality Control & Procurement Division PHE Jal Shakti Department, HMT Srinagar.   |
| Bidding Type   | Open  |
| Amount Details   |   |
| Estimated Cost   | Rs 93.00 Lakhs Approx. (Rupee Ninety-three Lakhs only).   |
| Bid Document Fee (Non Refundable)  | Rs 1500.00 In the shape of treasury Challan/ e-transfer to J&K Bank A/c No:0005010100005110 (FSC: JAKA00CHINAR)                                     |
| Bid document fee payable in the shape of treasury Challan/ e-transfer under major Head MII-0215-Rev-Misc to: | Executive Engineer QC&PD PHE Jal Shakti HMT Srinagar. e-mail: <a href="mailto:genamtpd@gmail.com">genamtpd@gmail.com</a>                            |
| Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)  | Rs. 1.85 lakhs (Rupee one lakh eighty-five thousand only) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG from nationalized banks only having a branch in Srinagar.      |
| Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in favour of:  | Chief Accounts Officer, Jal Shakti Kashmir PHE Department, Srinagar.  |
| Tender Dates   |   |
| Bid Document Downloading Start Date  | 19-12-2020.....09.00 AM   |
| Bid Document Downloading End Date  | 07-01-2021.....02.00 PM   |
| Clarification Start Date   | 21-12-2020.....09.00 AM   |
| Clarification End Date   | 05-01-2021.....04.00 PM   |
| On Line Bid Submission Start Date  | 21-12-2020.....09.00 AM   |
| Bid Submission End Date  | 07-01-2021.....06.00 AM   |
| Date of opening of Cover 1st.  | 08-01-2021.....02.00 PM   |
| Bid Validity Period  | 180 days from opening of the Price Bid.   |
| Officer Inviting Bid   | Executive Engineer QC&PD PHE Jal Shakti HMT Srinagar payable at Srinagar.   |
| Bid opening Authority  | Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti Kashmir PHE Deptt. Srinagar.   |
| Address  | Engineering Complex, Near Silk Factory, Raj Bagh Srinagar Kashmir - 190001, (e-mail: <a href="mailto:kamrthedi@gmail.com">kamrthedi@gmail.com</a> ) |

The tenders of qualifying/eligibility criteria, consisting of general and commercial terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in)

The bids shall be submitted in electronic format on the website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in). The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time, will be opened on the time and date (given in the critical date schedule), in the office of the Chief Engineer Jal Shakti Kashmir PHE Deptt. Srinagar in presence of the bidders who wish to be present. In case of offices happen to be closed due to a holiday, or any other reasons, on the schedule date of opening - the bids will be opened on the next working day at the scheduled time and venue or on any day convenient/feasible to the tender opening committee/authority of the Department.

THE COMPLETE BIDDING SHALL BE ONLINE IN TWO COVER SYSTEM:

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Jal Shakti (PHE) QC&PD  
HMT Srinagar.

DiPK-10715/2020 Dated 23.12.2020

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

**INTERNATIONAL GITA MAHOTSAV**  
17-25 December, 2020  
Kurukshetra, Haryana

**CLOSING CEREMONY**  
**Maha Aarti & Deepotsav**  
Friday, 25 December, 2020 (5:00 PM)  
Purushottampura Bagh, Brahma Sarovar

Chief Guest  
**Sh. Manohar Lal**  
Chief Minister, Haryana

"State Haryana a place of rich culture, heritage, and the origin of Bhagavad Gita. The Gita not only inspires people to serve humanity but also guides the mankind to show courage at difficult times. The Gita teaches us to fearlessly face challenges of life and serve the humanity on the path of truth."  
- Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

Keep yourself safe from Novel Coronavirus and Enjoy the Festival at Home  
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[www.kurukshetra.gov.in](http://www.kurukshetra.gov.in)  
[www.48koskurukshetra.com](http://www.48koskurukshetra.com)

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Govt. of Haryana



## IN BRIEF

**Jkhand: Farm loans of up to ₹50K waived**

**Ranchi:** The Hemant Soren government in Jharkhand waived farm loans of up to ₹50,000, benefitting around 9 lakh farmers of the state, officials said on Thursday. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, partly fulfilling the promise made by the ruling coalition ahead of the 2019 Assembly elections. The government said that an allocation of ₹2,000 crore has been made in the current financial year for the waiver. The ruling coalition had promised to waive farm loans of up to ₹2 lakh, ahead of the Assembly elections last year, if voted to power. Finance minister Rameshwar Oraon of Congress said that his government has decided to give the benefit of loan waiver to marginal farmers at first. — *PTI*

**Rape victim says she was raped by SI**

**Shahjahanpur, UP:** An alleged gangrape victim has charged a police sub-inspector with raping her when she had gone to a police station to get her complaint lodged. ADG, Bareilly, Avinash Chandra has ordered an inquiry on the complaint of the woman. The 35-year-old woman, a resident of a village under the Jalalabad police station area, told reporters on Thursday that on November 30, while she was on her to Madanpur on foot, five men came in a car, forcibly dragged her to a nearby field and raped her. She alleged that when she went to the Jalalabad police station, a sub-inspector present there took her to his room and raped her. — *PTI*

**Ex-CEO of rating agency Barc held**

**Mumbai:** The crime branch of Mumbai police Thursday arrested a former CEO of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc) from Pune district in the fake TRP scam. Partho Dasgupta, the accused, is the fifteenth person to be arrested in the case related to alleged rigging of Television Rating Points (TRP) by some TV channels. He was arrested by crime intelligence unit (CIU) from the jurisdiction of Raigad police station in Pune district and will be produced before a court on Friday. Earlier, the CIU had arrested former chief operating officer (COO) of Barc Ramil Ramgarhia in the case, among others. — *PTI*

**Youth thrashed to death in UP's dist**

**Gorakhpur, UP:** A 25-year-old man was beaten to death for apparently attempting to escape with his newly-wed girlfriend from her in-laws' house in UP's Deoria district, the police said on Thursday. "The incident took place on Wednesday night when one Pankaj entered house of his girlfriend's in-laws place at Nonar Pandey village in Bankata area of Deoria district with 2-3 accomplice from the back door and tried to flee with her," Deoria SP Sripathi Mishra said. "When the woman's husband Vikas Pandey and other family members saw them, they were prevented from escaping and a clash ensued in which Vikas and his father Jitendra Pandey were injured," the SP said. — *PTI*

# Farmers meet Tomar, urge govt not to scrap new laws

*Punjab farmers protesting as agents fear losing business: Satya Pal*

**New Delhi, Dec. 24:** Extending support to three new farm laws, two farmer organisations from Uttar Pradesh on Thursday met Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar and urged him not to repeal the Acts, against which several other unions have been protesting on various borders of the national capital for almost a month now. Kisan Mazdoor Sangh (KMS) and Kisan Sena (KS) made a representation, which also included a demand for strengthening the dispute resolution system in case of any trouble in contract farming.

So far, at least 12 farmers group have extended their support for the laws, the previous ones being from Uttarakhand, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, among other places.

BJP leader and former Union minister Satya Pal Singh was also present in the meeting with a delegation of KMS from Baghpat district.

After the meeting, Mr Singh told reporters that Punjab farmers alone are protesting because the commission agents fear losing their business if trade without tax is allowed outside mandis under the new farm laws.

While there are 16 crore farmers in the country, Punjab with 11 lakh farmers are protesting against the laws, he claimed, adding the reason for this is the loss of business to commission agents.

When asked some farm leaders from Western UP are also opposing the laws, Mr Singh said, "In western Uttar Pradesh, no one is opposing the laws. Only 100-150 people were with (farmer leader) Rakesh Tikait for protest. When the bills were passed in Parliament, he was the first one to thank the Prime Minister immediately. His father Mahendra Singh Tikait in 1993 had demanded the same kind of freedom (for farmers)." — *PTI*



Farmers raise slogans at the Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Thursday during their protest against the Center's new farm laws. — *PTI*

## PM to address farmers, release ₹18,000cr today

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 24

As the protests against recently-passed three farm laws grow louder, the BJP will dedicate the birth anniversary of its patriarch and former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Friday to the farmers with Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing them and transferring ₹18,000 crores to the accounts of 9 crore farmers under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

To make the event grand, the BJP leadership has instructed its leaders, MPs, MLAs and office-bearers in its state units to invite farmers to all the districts and state offices to listen to the Prime Minister's address and it should be widely publicised.

The party has also asked its leaders to make arrangements at all Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) and cooperative

## Kerala Cabinet set to request gov. again for special session

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec. 24:** Days after governor Arif Mohammed Khan declined nod for a special Assembly session, the Kerala cabinet on Thursday again decided to recommend to him to convene a one-day session to discuss and pass a resolution against the three central agricultural laws, against which farmers have been protesting near Delhi.

Instead of the special session earlier, the cabinet meeting, chaired by

centres to ensure mass participation.

The party leadership has asked its leaders that the program at district level should start an hour before the address of PM Modi in which the office-bearers and public representatives should discuss the benefits of the scheme

chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, decided to recommend to the Governor to convene the 21st session of the 14th Kerala Legislative Assembly on December 31 to discuss the farmers' issue.

The Governor had turned down an earlier plea of the Left government to convene a special session on December 23 citing that there was no urgency as a normal Assembly session was scheduled on January 8, 2021. — *PTI*

started by Modi government for the farmers like Neem-coated urea, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Soil Health Card, Minimum Support Price, Prime Minister Sishai Yojana, Kisan Rail and investment of Rs one lakh crore in the farm sector.



Mahesh Singh Negi

## Rape accused U'khand MLA fails to appear for DNA test

**Dehradun, Dec. 24:** Uttarakhand BJP MLA from Dwarahat constituency, Mahesh Singh Negi, failed to appear before the Dehradun district and sessions court for DNA test sampling on Thursday, citing ill health.

The court of CJM Vivek Shrivastava had directed him on Wednesday to appear before it on Thursday to submit his blood sample for DNA testing.

The court had also ordered the complainant woman, who has accused Negi of raping her repeatedly and fathering a child, to be present along with her daughter, whose samples had to be taken too, for DNA testing.

Mr Negi's lawyer told the court that the MLA was taken ill and his doctors advised him 14-day bed rest.

The court has now asked the MLA to appear before it on January 11.

A married woman from the MLA's constituency had in August this year accused him of rape and claimed that he is the biological father of her child.

The counsel of the complainant woman, S.P. Singh, said he had the information that Negi won't appear before the court. Earlier in November, then inspector general of Garhwal range, Abhinav Kumar, had transferred the case from Dehradun police to the woman police station in Pauri Garhwal district to avoid allegations of a biased and unfair probe. — *PTI*

## Owaisi eyes MP: AIMIM likely to contest civic polls

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
BHOPAL, DEC. 24



Asaaddin Owaisi

Asaaddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) is planning to make electoral debut in Madhya Pradesh by fielding its candidates in the upcoming civic body polls in the state, expected to be held in January-February 2021.

This was indicated by acting president of the MP unit of AIMIM Naeem Ansari here on Wednesday.

"AIMIM is seriously considering to debut in electoral politics in Madhya Pradesh in the upcoming civic body polls. We have set in motion the process of fielding candidates in at least a dozen municipal bodies, including in Bhopal and Indore, in the ensuing civic polls," he told reporters.

This was the first time Mr Owaisi's party is testing electoral waters in a bipolar state like MP after its success in the recent assembly elections in Bihar where AIMIM secured 5 seats, taking poll pundits by surprise.

Muslims have sizable populations in municipal areas of Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Khandwa, Sagor, Burhanpur, Khargone, Ratlam, Jaora, Jabalpur,

Balaghat, and Mandasaur. The party is mulling to field candidates in these municipal bodies in the upcoming polls.

Syed Minhajuddin, state in-charge of AIMIM and a 3-time councillor of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has been assigned the task of conducting an internal survey for the purpose, Mr Ansari said.

"Mr Owaisi will take the final call on the matter on the basis of the survey", he added.

Mr Ansari said the party would invite Mr Owaisi to attend various programmes in the state in coming days to create a favourable atmosphere for the party in the state.

AIMIM launched its state unit in 2015, but the party has not contested in any polls in the state so far. Sources said the party is planning to use the upcoming civic body polls in MP as a springboard to prepare for the upcoming assembly polls in MP.

## MHA to take call on NSCN ceasefire offer

**MANOJ ANAND**  
GUWAHATI, DEC. 24

The announcement of Naga insurgent group NSCN(K), led by its commander Niki Sumi, to join the peace process has completed the separation between Naga insurgent of India and Myanmar but ministry of home affairs is yet to take a call on unilateral ceasefire offer of the outfit.

Pointing out that NSCN(K) had signed a ceasefire agreement with the Centre in 2001 but unilaterally abrogated it in 2015 when the then "chairman" of the group, S.S.

Khaplang, was alive security sources said that ministry of home affairs has not received any formal proposal from the outfit.

Admitting that they have input from various channels, sources, however, said that commander of the outfit Niki Sumi was the prime accused in the killing of 18 Indian Army soldiers in Manipur in 2015 and the National Investigation Agency had announced a reward of ₹10 lakh for his head.

Sources, however, admitted that this group is the last group of Indian origin leaders and cadres operating from Myanmar.

## ‘Toy train’ resumes in Darjeeling

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI**  
KOLKATA, DEC. 24

Nearly nine months after its shutdown due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, Toy Train, an integral part of Darjeeling and also a world heritage known for its "Joy Ride" for the tourists, will be back on its track in the hills from the Christmas on Friday with three daily services.

North East Frontier Railway chief public relations officer Shubhanan Chanda said, "Consequent upon the permission received from the Govt of West Bengal to resume the "Joy Ride" train services; NFR authorities has decided to re-start some of the services which had to be suspended due to outbreak

of the COVID-19 pandemic since last week of March."

He added, "Three daily services of the "Joy Ride" train will presently run w.e.f. 25th December 2020 between Darjeeling to Ghum and back to Darjeeling with stoppage for passengers at Batasia loop for 10 minutes to visit Batasia Eco Garden & Gorkha War Memorial and 20 minutes stoppage at Ghum to visit Ghum Museum." Located at an altitude of 7,407 ft in the lap of the Himalayas, Ghum is the highest railway station in India.

The first service of the day, from 9.25 am to 11.20 am, will be run by a steam engine while the second, from 12 pm to 13.40 pm, will be on a diesel one followed by the last, from 1.50



pm to 3.45 pm, a steam engine again.

According to Mr Chanda, with the resumption of the services in the Darjeeling Himalayan

Railway, local economic activities will get the much needed boost due to arrival of tourists.

"Depending on the requirement of tourists,

▶ **THE FIRST** service of the day, from 9.25 am to 11.20 am, will be run by a steam engine while the second, from 12 pm to 13.40 pm, will be on a diesel one followed by the last, from 1.50 pm to 3.45 pm, a steam engine

more such services will be restored. Resumption of 'Joy Ride' services is very good news for travellers willing to enjoy the Christmas in the lap of Himalayas. Built in 1889, DHR was declared as a World Heritage site on 02.12.1999," he said.

All passengers will have to strictly follow the Covid-related guidelines issued by the state government for their safety.

## Rahul meets Prez Kovind over laws, Priyanka held

■ **Continued from Page 1** memorandum signed by 2 crore farmers was placed. After meeting the President, Mr Gandhi launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that there was no democracy in India.

"There is no democracy in India. If some of you think there is, then it's in your imagination... PM Modi is making money for crony capitalists. Whoever will try to stand against him will be called a terrorist — be it farmers, labourers and even Mohan Bhagwat," he said referring to the chief of the RSS. The Congress has also demanded a joint session of Parliament to discuss the laws, which the Opposition alleges were rammed through in Parliament, in violation of rules.

"I want to tell the Prime Minister that these farmers are not going to go back home

until the farm laws are repealed... The farmers and labourers are uniting now. But like always, the moment someone speaks against the government of the day, they are labelled anti-nationals and terrorists. This is unfortunate... People's voices are being stifled," he said.

The Congress charged the Central government of trying to stop its march to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Congress general secretary Ms Priyanka Gandhi said, "We are living in a democracy and these are elected MPs — they should be allowed to meet the President. What is the problem with that?"

The Congress had planned a protest march from the party office to Rashtrapati Bhavan to hand over a memorandum signed by two crore farmers. But the Delhi police imposed Section 144 CrPC around Rashtrapati Bhavan, including the Congress office.

## Centre again invites farmers for dicussions

■ **Continued from Page 1** open for discussion and added that it is the responsibility of the government to listen to farmer organisations and farmers.

The government has held several rounds of discussion with farmer unions under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and urged them to choose a date as per their convenience for the next round of talks. Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, UP, Rajasthan and some other states are protesting against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce and

Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

The three farm laws, enacted in September, have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country. The farmers who have been protesting for about a month at Delhi borders have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of MSP and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

In his letter, Mr Aggarwal reiterated that the government is "eager

to resolve logically" all issues raised by the protesting farmer unions. He also thanked unions for giving clarity that Dashan Pal, state president of Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab, had written a letter on behalf of all protesting farmers unions in response to the government's December 20 letter.

Mr Aggarwal said, "In all communications, representatives of farmer unions had informed the government to send invites and letters separately to each organisation. You have made it clear that Dashan Pal's letter was written on behalf of all farmer unions. Thank you for this clarity."

## Tagore's vision essence of self-reliant India, says PM

■ **Continued from Page 1** artists and artisans of handicrafts, who used to come to the fair, could not do so this time due to the pandemic.

Visva-Bharati students can contact the artists and artisans and collect information about them and their products. They can look into how to ensure the sale of their work online. These products can also be taken to the international market in future."

Referring to the link between Tagore and his home state Gujarat, the Prime Minister noted, "When Gurudev's elder brother Satyendra-nath Tagore was in the ICS, his appointment happened in A h m e d a b a d. Rabindranath Tagore fre-

quented Gujarat also. He spent a long time there. While staying in Ahmedabad he penned two popular Bengali poems. A part of Khudhito Pashan was also written during his stay in Gujarat."

Ms Banerjee alleged, "When was I invited? When? Am I bound to abide by whatever the BJP says? I do not know anything. I was neither invited nor did I get any invitation or even a call to attend the centenary event. Still I extended my greetings... Now some with religious fanaticism have come up suddenly. But they cannot be allowed to destroy Visva-Bharati in a day. They are not permanent... Their days are numbered." Her Cabinet colleague Bratya Basu accused Mr Modi of

a goof-up in his reference to Tagore's family connection with Gujarat.

"Gujarat cropped up often in the PM's speech. Why is he confining Rabindranath Tagore to Gujarat? He said Satyen Tagore's wife (Rabindranath Tagore's sister-in-law) learnt how to drape sarees in a certain fashion from Gujarati women. The fact is that she learnt it from the Gujaratis as well the Parsis. But the PM wouldn't mention Parsis," Mr Basu claimed.

"The Prime Minister also spoke about the varieties of Delhi and Lahore, but failed to make a mention of Calcutta University, which played an important part in the country's freedom movement," he added.



## THE ASIAN AGE

25 DECEMBER 2020

### PM's platitudes at AMU play up contrast to reality

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at the centenary celebrations of Aligarh Muslim University the other day offered Indians a reassurance that this nation belongs to all of its citizens, that India is on the path of progress and that no citizen would be left behind because of their religion. "Everyone would get equal opportunities so that everyone can fulfill their dream," the Prime Minister told the young people, and through them, to the nation, rekindling the spirit of the speech the first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru delivered on January 24, 1948, months after India's Independence and days before the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. "The basic objective," Pandit Nehru had said, "is to build up a free India of high ideals and noble endeavour where there is equality of opportunity for all and where many variegated streams of thought and culture meet together to form a mighty river of progress and advancement for her people." Mr Modi went on to say, quoting the university's founder Sir Syed, that "for the body to remain healthy, every body part should be healthy."

**The recently introduced, patently discriminatory, anti-conversion law that militates against the basic tenets of our Constitution has been used indiscriminately against interfaith couples**

Mr Modi also urged people not to look at everything from a political lens. One may have points of difference with the Prime Minister when he compartmentalises politics and development but none would quarrel with him when he says nobody would be left behind because of their religion as the nation makes progress. All that one would doubt is whether the Prime Minister is reflecting the realities his fellow citizens experience in their daily lives. Uttar Pradesh, where the AMU stands, has a different story to tell. The recently introduced, patently discriminatory, anti-conversion law that militates against the basic tenets of our Constitution has been used indiscriminately against interfaith couples. It's nothing less than horrendous to learn that the Uttar Pradesh police have arrested 17 persons under the provisions of the law when the Allahabad high court, and several other high courts, have made it abundantly clear that the state has no business intervening in the decision of two adults on how they would live their lives. The fundamental rights to equality, life and religious freedom are violated by the state even as the Prime Minister wants to remind us that we have a shared future.

The Central Bureau of Investigation recently chargesheeted four persons for the gangrape and murder of a teenage dalit girl in Hathras in the state. It may be recalled only with trepidation that a very senior police official of the state had stated that there was no rape in the case as no semen was found in the body of the victim, displaying extreme insensitivity and complete ignorance of the law. The same state police had burnt the body in the dead of the night against the wishes of her family, sending all right thinking people to doubt whether Indian laws are in force in the state or not when it comes to minorities and dalits.

When the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy speaks of equality, then everyone has a duty to listen to him and work towards fulfilling that ideal. It must be a national endeavour, and not a national pastime.

### Curtains for Netanhayu?

Will it be curtains for the artful survivor Benjamin Netanhayu who will soon be facing an even greater existential crisis? His former allies Naftali Bennett of the Yamina party and Gideon Saar, who broke away from the Likud party to set up his "New Hope" party, are setting their sights on March 23, 2021, the day of reckoning in the fourth election in two years, as an ideal opportunity for them to dethrone the longest serving Israeli Prime Minister.

Endearingly called "Bibi", the master political strategist has been brought down this time as an unorthodox coalition between his right wing Likud and Benny Gantz heading the centrist Blue and White party gave way under the weight of near impossible contradictions. The two rivals had been brought together in May 2020 to resolve a 17-month political stalemate after Israel's top court had ruled that Mr Netanhayu could head a government while under indictment for corruption charges.

Glowing in the benign warmth of his friend Donald Trump at the White House, Mr Netanhayu had prospered in the eyes of the world as his country wiped away years of solemn history to gain the diplomatic recognition of four Arab states. A prominent face in Bibi's last election campaign had been Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi whose friendship the Israeli had flaunted to win votes and remain in power amid the political minefield that Israel has become in its Left and Centrists versus the Right politics that has been dragging the country into bitter electoral battles, which are known not to yield clear mandates.

Indicted for fraud, breach of trust and graft in a series of scandals involving quid pro quo with wealthy media moguls, Bibi has displayed phenomenal dexterity. The court ominously said its legal ruling did "not diminish the severity of pending charges for violations of moral integrity". Blame it on the times we live in but leaders with conflicts against the highest moral and ethical standards seem to constitute the "New Normal" on the world's stage. It is in standing up to the coronavirus sweeping nations across the globe that they seem to be failing.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



## Christmas, like Diwali, is a special day in India



Karan Thapar

As I See It

Something I have always been proud of is the fact that India celebrates Diwali, Christmas as well as Id. Regardless of our faith, we keenly anticipate each occasion and participate with enthusiasm. There aren't many countries that can make a similar boast.

The Gymkhana, Rotary and Lions Clubs across the country hold special Christmas tea parties for their members' children. There is always a Santa Claus, dressed in red, with a straggly white beard and a discordant ho-ho-ho! Most of us can sing *Jingle bells* and many can hum *Silent Night*. And no matter how many they make, our bakeries always run out of Christmas cake. The truth is that Christmas in India may be different but it's also special. Christmas is as much our festival as it is that of the majority Christian world. Unfortunately, however, the Narendra Modi government neither understands this nor respects it.

If a report put out by the ANI news agency and published by a number of leading newspapers turns out to be correct, "the Bharatiya Janata Party is planning to dedicate December 25, the birth anniversary of former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee, to farmers". The report suggests that the Prime Minister will make this announcement on Christmas Day itself when he will also speak on the controversial issue of the new farm laws.

Frankly, this would be terrible. It would be reprehensible and deplorable. It amounts to a blatant and unforgivable

breach of India's valued tradition of respecting every religion. Worst of all, it ignores the fact that Christmas is as important a festival in India as it is for the countries of Europe and America.

Unfortunately, this will not be the first time that the Modi government has denigrated Christmas Day by trying to convert it into something else. Narendra Modi had barely been in power for six months when in December 2014 he decided to designate Christmas as Good Governance Day. That, too, was done in memory of Atal Behari Vajpayee. Because December 25 is Vajpayee's birthday the Modi government feels it can designate the day in any way it wants. The fact that it is Christmas Day is either secondary or irrelevant.

This logic is not just bizarre, it's offensive. December 25 is Christmas Day, first and foremost. Vajpayee's birth on that date was a coincidence. It cannot take priority or prominence over the birth of Jesus Christ. Nor can India's farmers, who are the purported excuse for the new dedication this year.

If you disagree with me, just ask yourself a simple question — would Narendra Modi dare to designate Diwali or Holi as Good Governance Day or dedicate it to India's protesting farmers? Even the thought of it would not occur to him. Why? Because, as a Hindu, he knows too well that this would deeply upset his co-religionists.

Why then as the Prime Minister of a secular country does he feel free to proclaim Christmas as Good Governance Day? Or, as ANI sug-

gests, dedicate December the 25 to India's farmers? Nothing could hurt our Christian brothers and sisters more. Our Prime Minister should be protecting and defending their emotions and sentiments, not wilfully and repeatedly disregarding them.

In 2014 the Archbishop of Bengaluru publicly questioned why Christmas had been chosen as Good Governance Day. The government's response was that it happens to be Atal Behari Vajpayee's birthday. What the government did not address was the obvious next question — is that a sufficient reason for redesignating the holiest day in the calendar for Christians? The same question will occur again if today is dedicated to India's farmers. And I'm pretty sure we'll probably get the same hurtfully dismissive reply.

The irony is that were he alive Atal Behari Vajpayee would be as upset as I am. He would not applaud the government. Instead, he would lacerate it with his stinging criticism. He was, after all, a secular man with great respect for Christians. He would hate to be the excuse for this affront to them. And although I have not checked with her, I do not believe this would please Vajpayee's daughter Namita either.

Let me make one further point. This year the attempt to redesignate Christmas is likely to be more hurtful to India's Christians than the 2014 redesignation as Good Governance Day. This is because fear of the virus

has already changed the character of this special day. We may not be locked indoors as the British are, but we are equally fearful of congregating in churches or celebrating in large family gatherings. For many Christmas is likely to be spent "home alone". Redesignating Christmas Day will only increase the sense of loss.

Again, this is something that Mr Modi's government should readily understand. Diwali was no different for India's Hindus. The virus ruined it for tens, if not hundreds of millions. But on that occasion the government was only too aware of the need to lift spirits. Why is that not the case now?

I know mine is not a lone lament. Millions — indeed the vast majority — of my countrymen are likely to echo my concern. For them, the sanctity of a day of God is beyond questioning. Then why are our politicians silent? If I recall correctly, in 2014 I did not hear a clear protest or even criticism from the Congress Party. I suspect this year too its voice will be silent. But why? I really want to know.

If there is a politician in India who understands the importance of Christmas and what it means to Christians, it has to be Sonia Gandhi, who was born a Catholic. Yet she said nothing in 2014 and I fear that could be the case again.

Today, I wait to see if the India I am so proud of is changing for the worse. I so much want to be proven wrong. In fact, I would really like the day to end with readers of this column proclaiming that I was terribly mistaken. This is one occasion when I sincerely want to be totally incorrect... well, we'll soon know.

Finally, and if it's not too late, Merry Christmas.

*The writer is a television commentator and anchor*

#### LETTERS

#### RECKLESS PIETY

The Kerala government has moved the Supreme Court against the high court's order which raised the number of permissible daily pilgrims at the popular Sabarimala temple to 5,000 from 2,000 during the festival season starting from December 20, 2020. The move seems to be justified on the grounds of people's health risks, administrative difficulties and the new coronavirus strain.

**Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal**

#### GREATER THAN PELE?

**TURBANS OFF** to the magnificent footballer, Lionel Messi, on surpassing Pele's long-standing record for most goals for a single club on Tuesday. The Argentinian struck his 644th goal for Barcelona in their 3-0 La Liga win over Real Valladolid to get to the milestone. Messi had equalled the iconic Brazilian's all-time scoring tally on Saturday. Barcelona's recent form has been nothing short of impressive, winning three of the last four matches in the La Liga. Way to go!

**N.J. Ravi Chander**  
Bengaluru

#### LET BORIS SKIP R-DAY

**CAN SOMEONE** bring back the Christmas of old, when mum made sweets and her pork curry was gold, when the stars and cribs were made from paper and hay, when days became nights and nights became day, when we practiced the hymns till our throats got sore, when our only new clothes, with pride we wore, when we decorated the house with the same old lights, except that they shone brighter during those nights, when we went for Mass every Christmas night, and made sure our childhood crush was within our sight, when we wished every one with a hug and kiss, can someone bring back those days, oh how I wish. I asked the Lord, "How can I do that? How can I have the same feeling, I once had?" He said, "My son, back then, I was the centre of it all. Try doing the same and Christmas might just be the same after all!"

**Jubel D'Cruz**  
Mumbai

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



## SHORT TAKES

## 15-YRS' JAIL TO HAFIZ SAEED IN ONE MORE CASE

**Lahore, Dec. 24:** Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed was on Thursday sentenced to 15 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan in one more terror financing case. The court also imposed 200,000 Pakistani rupees fine on him.

Saeed, 70, has already been convicted for 21 years imprisonment in four terror financing cases of late. Now, Saeed will have to undergo collective imprisonment of over 36 years in five terror financing cases at the Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore. His punishment will run concurrently in these cases.

## BODIES OF 20 MIGRANTS RETRIEVED

**Tunis, Dec. 24:** Tunisia's coastguard on Thursday retrieved the bodies of 20 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa after their boat capsized at sea, a spokesman for the defence ministry said. Five other migrants who were on board were rescued, ministry spokesman Mohamed Zekri said, adding that a search operation was underway. Zekri did not give further details, but said the rescue operation took place off the port of Sfax in central Tunisia. Khaled Hayouni, a spokesman for the interior ministry, said the boat was heading to Italy from the Sidi Mansour district of Sfax when it sank.

More than 40 people were on board the makeshift boat, Mourad Turki, a spokesman for the Sfax court, said.

## ETHIOPIA GUNMEN KILL MORE THAN 100

**Addis Ababa, Dec. 24:** Gunmen killed more than 100 people in an attack on Wednesday in western Ethiopia, the national human rights body said, the latest in a series of deadly assaults in the area.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a government-affiliated but independent body, said in a statement late on Wednesday that "more than 100 people have been killed in fires and shooting perpetrated by armed men" in the Benishangul-Gumuz region.

The commission said survivors had "disturbing photo evidence of the attack" which started in the pre-dawn hours "on sleeping residents" in the region's Metekel zone and continued until Wednesday.

## KANSAS COP FATALLY SHOT SUSPECT

**Kansas, Dec. 24:** Wichita police say a police officer fatally shot a bank robbery suspect after the man rammed a stolen pickup truck into the officer's police cruiser.

Paul Peraza, 50, was fatally shot Monday afternoon after allegedly robbing a credit union and leading police on a chase that ended in a crash. Police said Tuesday that after striking an SUV, Peraza put the truck in reverse and struck a police cruiser. "The officer, concerned about his safety and the public's safety, fired shots and struck Peraza," Deputy Police Chief Jose Salcido said in a written statement. The truck then struck a Honda Accord before coming to a stop. Peraza was pronounced dead at the scene.

## TURKEY HANDS EXILED JOURNO 27-YR JAIL TERM

**Istanbul, Dec. 24:** A Turkish court on Wednesday sentenced the exiled former editor-in-chief of the Cumhuriyet daily to more than 27 years in jail on espionage and terror charges for one of the reputable paper's stories.

The court found Can Dundar — who fled to Germany in 2016 — guilty in connection with an article about an alleged Turkish arms shipment to Islamist Syrian rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad.

He was sentenced to 18 years and nine months for "securing confidential information for espionage" and eight years and nine months for "aiding a terrorist group" led by US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen.

The Turkish government blames the cleric for orchestrating a 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

## UK, EU clinch post-Brexit free trade agreement

Details to emerge in next few days with final ratification by both Parliaments

**London, Dec. 24:** The deal is done, Downing Street in London and European Union (EU) officials in Brussels confirmed on Thursday as both sides managed to thrash out a post-Brexit free trade agreement (FTA) just days before the December 31 deadline. Thousands of pages of legal text accompanying the deal, with details of the agreement set to emerge in the course of the next few days, including the final ratification of the FTA by Parliaments on both sides.

"We have got Brexit done and we can now take full advantage of the fantastic opportunities available to us as an independent trading nation, striking trade deals with other partners around the world," Downing Street said in a statement. "We have signed the first free trade agreement based on zero tariffs and zero quotas that has ever been achieved with the EU. The deal is the biggest bilateral trade deal signed

by either side, covering trade worth GBP 668 billion in 2019," it said, adding that the UK has taken back control of its "money, borders, laws, trade and our fishing waters".

"The deal also guarantees that we are no longer in the lunar pull of the EU, we are not bound by EU rules, there is no role for the European Court of Justice and all of our key red lines about returning sovereignty have been achieved. It means that we will have full political and economic independence on 1st January 2021," Downing Street declared.

On the other side, the EU said it has a good deal to show for the "long and winding road". "We have finally got a deal, a fair and responsible deal," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at a press conference from Brussels.

"The EU rules and standards will be respected... the United Kingdom is a long-standing partner,"

● **THE LAST** few months and weeks have proved particularly tense on the path to such an agreement, with the UK concerned about the EU's insistence to close alignment to its rules even after Brexit and the EU accusing the UK of expecting unfair advantages.

she said, adding that while "parting was such sweet sorrow" it was time to look to the future as the UK is now classified as a "third country" in relation to the economic bloc.

Earlier, it had emerged that crunch talks overnight meant UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson summoned his Cabinet for a late Wednesday night conference call to indicate that a post-Brexit trade agreement is ready to be signed off soon. Johnson and Von Der Leyen have been in close contact over the past few days as the December 31 transition period cut-off

loomed over the negotiations, which have missed repeated deadlines as they failed to agree on key areas of fishing rights in each other's waters and competition rules that would apply to the UK as a non-member of the 27-member economic bloc.

According to early reports, both sides have come to a base agreement which would ensure most of the current tariff-free, quota-free arrangement but unlikely to mean entirely frictionless trade as businesses had hoped. The UK Parliament needed to ratify the deal and as it has already risen for Christmas break, the likelihood is that MPs will be recalled to the House of Commons next week for urgent business. Johnson's comfortable majority in the Commons means the deal is likely to be signed off in time. On the EU side, the European Parliament would then ratify the agreement, which is expected in the New Year and with all

the member-countries briefed on it, they are unlikely to exercise their veto powers. It has now been four and half years since Britain voted to exit the EU in a referendum in June 2016.

It officially left at the end of January this year and entered into an 11-month transition period, or a phase of status quo, to hammer out a new free trade agreement.

However, the last few months and weeks have proved particularly tense on the path to such an agreement, with the UK concerned about the EU's insistence to close alignment to its rules even after Brexit and the EU accusing the UK of expecting unfair advantages.

The main sticking points were fishing rights and the so-called "level playing field" — measures to prevent what is seen as unfair competition through the lowering of standards or the use of state subsidies. — PTI

## UK-France border to stay open

**Dover, Dec. 24:** Rail and sea links between the UK and France will remain open over Christmas to clear the backlog of thousands of trucks stranded by border closures due to the discovery of a new strain of Coronavirus, Britain said Thursday.

Thousands of European truckers on Wednesday spent a fourth night sleeping in the cabs of their vehicles, which are stuck close to the major cross-Channel port of Dover while the drivers wait to pass a Covid test, as required by France for travel.

Around 6,000 trucks were waiting early Wednesday evening to cross the border according to Britain's Department of Transport, including 3,750 vehicles parked at the old Manton airport, which is also a Covid testing site.

The others are stuck on the nearby roads in the southeastern county of Kent. "As testing in Kent continues... I've spoken to my French counterpart (Jean-Baptiste Djebbari) and we've agreed the UK/-



Police speak with a driver as freight lorries remain queued up on the M20 motorway, leading to the Port of Dover in England on Thursday, as rail and sea links between the UK and France are to remain open over Christmas to clear the backlog of trucks stranded by a new strain of Coronavirus. — AFP

French border at Eurotunnel, Dover & Calais WILL remain open throughout Xmas in order to help hauliers & citizens return

home as soon as possible," UK transport minister Grant Shapps wrote on Twitter. The massive testing operation, which is

being bolstered by the military, began late Wednesday under an agreement between London and Paris. — AFP

## JEWISH CENTRE BOMBING: MAN CLEARED

**Buenos Aires, Dec. 24:** A court has said it has cleared the only Argentine still facing charges in the 1994 bombing that killed 85 people at a Jewish cultural center in the nation's capital.

The federal court ruling came on Wednesday after former auto dealer Carlos Telleldin again denied knowing that the truck he sold would be used as a bomb in the attack on the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association, which caused the organization's main building to collapse. He proclaimed his "total and absolute innocence." — AP

## Release men charged in Pearl murder: Pak court

**Karachi, Dec. 24:** In a surprise move, a Pakistani court on Thursday ordered the release of British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides, who were convicted and sentenced in the abduction and murder case of US journalist Daniel Pearl.

A two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court, presided over by Justice K K Agha, directed security agencies not to keep Sheikh and other accused under "any sort of detention" and declared all notifications of the Sindh government related to their

● **THE COURT** observed that the four men's detention was "illegal". In April, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench commuted the death sentence of 46-year-old Sheikh to seven years imprisonment.

detention "null and void". The court observed that the four men's detention was "illegal".

In April, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench commuted the death sentence of 46-year-old Sheikh to seven years imprisonment.

The court also acquitted

## Don vetoes def bill; cites certain provisions as risk

**Washington, Dec. 24:** US President Donald Trump vetoed a broad defense funding bill sent to him by Congress Wednesday, complaining that it helps Russia and China and objecting to provisions to rename military bases.

The bipartisan bill was passed by high enough margins in both chambers of Congress for lawmakers to — in theory — override the president's rejection. The veto of the \$740 billion measure to fund the military for fiscal 2021 came a day after the US leader, with less than one month left in office, threw a separate \$900 billion Covid-19 relief bill and overall funding for the government into question.

Trump criticised the annual National Defense Authorization Act for not responding to his demand to end liability protections for social media companies, known as Section 230 — an issue with no relationship to the US Defense Department.

He also objected to a provision in the NDAA to rename military bases bearing the names of generals from the secessionist, slavery-supporting South in the 19th century US civil war.

And he objected to a provision which could impede his decision to sharply cut US troop levels in Germany, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The NDAA "fails to

## TRUMP PARDONS MORE, INCLUDING KUSHNER DAD: WH

**Washington, Dec. 24:** US President Donald Trump issued a new raft of pardons on Wednesday for allies including the father of his son-in-law Jared Kushner, adding to a long list he has granted in his waning days in office.

In addition to the pardon for Charles Kushner, Trump also pardoned his 2016 campaign chairman Paul Manafort and longtime ally Roger Stone, the White House said in a statement.

They were among 26 people pardoned and three who had all or part of their sentences commuted on Wednesday by Trump.

— AFP

include critical national security measures, includes provisions that fail to respect our veterans and our military's history, and contradicts efforts by my administration to put America first in our national security and foreign policy actions," Trump said in a statement.

Without the changes to Section 230, Trump said, the NDAA "is a gift" to China and Russia." — AFP

## Rocket hit: Trump warning to Iran

**Washington, Dec. 24:** US President Donald Trump warned Wednesday he would hold "Iran responsible" in the event of a fatal attack on Americans in Iraq, as the first anniversary of the killing of a top Iranian general in a US air strike approaches.

"Our embassy in Baghdad got hit Sunday by several rockets," Trump said on Twitter, referring to an attack that caused damage but no deaths.

"Guess where they came from: IRAN," he added.

"Now we hear chatter of additional attacks against Americans in Iraq," he

added, before offering "some friendly health advice to Iran: if one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over," he said.

Responding to Trump, the Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javid Zarif tweeted on Thursday: "Putting your own citizens at risk abroad won't divert attention from catastrophic failures at home." He also attached an image of years-old Trump tweets that claimed ex-president Barack Obama would have started a war with Iran to win reelection. — AFP

## Plane tails: Indian gets into Guinness

**Dubai, Dec. 24:** A 12-year-old Indian boy in the UAE has entered into the Guinness Book of World Records by identifying the most aeroplane tails in a minute, media reports said on Thursday.

Siddhant Gumber, an Abu Dhabi-based home-schooled boy who identified 39 aeroplane tails in 60 seconds, is also the youngest Indian to identify top 100 tallest buildings, Gulf News reported. Gumber, who hails from Haryana, was earlier recognised by the 'India Book of World Records'.

He achieved the Guinness world record last month, the report said.

His name also features in the 'India Book' for being the youngest to identify the top 100 tallest buildings of the world with their respective heights and locations, it said.

"I have been a Lego buff since I was a toddler, and my father and I spent a lot of time creating a variety of models — rockets, air planes, buildings and vehicles. I was able to recognise a lot of the air plane tails, and my mother helped me compile them in PowerPoint slides so I could identify them (very quickly)," Gumber told Gulf News. — PTI

## CHRISTMAS | CHAOS

Since poll loss, Prez has almost vanished from public engagements

## No Christmas vacation for angry Trump

**Washington, Dec. 24:** An enraged Donald Trump helicoptered off the White House lawn for one of the last times in his presidency Wednesday, leaving Americans chaos as a Christmas present.

The Republican was bound with his wife Melania for a vacation at his lavish Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

From Marine One, the first couple must have got a magnificent view on a clear, wintry day of the White House, decorated in chocolate box fashion with Christmas wreaths and red ribbons at every window.

But with the clock ticking to Joe Biden's January 20 inauguration, there

won't be too many more occasions to enjoy the experience.

And Trump, consumed by election conspiracy theories, abandoned by allies and determined to take opponents down with him, is not exactly in a merry mood.

Crises engulf the man supporters call "disrupter in chief" ("chaos president" to his critics.)

What's more, most of them are of his own making:

— Trying to overturn the result of the election.

— Unexpectedly refusing to sign a massive economic relief bill for Americans struggling from coronavirus fallout, insisting at the last moment that it be

● **YET FOR** all his bluster, the larger than life showman who for four years held the media, his party and the entire country in thrall now cuts a diminished figure.

rewritten.

— Choosing to say nothing, other than to play it down, about what senior officials and members of Congress describe as a devastating Russian cyberattack.

— Vetoing just before he left for Florida the bill funding the US military.

— Declaring war on top members of his own party who dare concede that Biden won.

Yet for all his bluster, the larger than life showman who for four years held the media, his party and the entire country in thrall now cuts a diminished figure.

Normally, the departure on Marine One from the South Lawn of the White House has been a favorite stage for Trump to act out his flamboyant press conference/performance art routine.

Boasting, ad-libbing, entertaining and insulting, Trump used to love nothing more than "chop-her talk" with journalists jostling to hear the world's biggest media star against the roar of an idling military helicopter.

But since losing the

November 3 election and embarking on a desperate mission to reverse the result, Trump has almost vanished from public engagements. His last extended Q&A with journalists was a bad tempered Thanksgiving encounter on November 26.

The once epic Marine One departures have been whittled down to the perfunctory exercise of a man catching a ride to the airport. With Covid-19 restrictions, only around a dozen journalists can attend the sessions anyway, meaning that even if Trump decides to stop and talk, the old, manic energy is gone.

Wednesday, he just walked past. — AFP

## NEPAL: CHINESE ENVOY MEETS PRACHANDA

**Kathmandu, Dec. 24:** Chinese ambassador Hou Yanqi on Thursday met Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who claims control over the ruling party after removing Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli from the posts of the party's parliamentary leader and chair. The meeting at Prachanda's residence in Khumaltar — which lasted for about 30 minutes — dwelt on the contemporary political situation after the NCP split.

"They discussed the issues of bilateral concern," according to sources close to Prachanda. Bishnu Rijal, a leader close to the Prachanda-faction, tweeted that "Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Hou Yanqi met Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' this morning. They discussed the issues of bilateral concerns."

Hou's meeting with Prachanda comes two days after she called on President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Tuesday at the latter's office in Sheel Niwas.

Hou is said to have discussed the latest political development following the president's move to dissolve the House of Representatives and announce mid-term elections. *My Republica* reported. This is not the first time that the Chinese ambassador has intervened in Nepal's internal affairs at a time of crisis. — PTI



## quick BITES

| INDICATORS             |            | %      |
|------------------------|------------|--------|
| Sensex                 | 46,973.54  | 1.14   |
| Nifty 50               | 13,749.25  | 1.09   |
| S&P 500*               | 3,700.86   | 0.29   |
| Dollar (₹)             | 73.54      | 0.30   |
| Pound Sterling (₹)     | 100.01     | -1.04  |
| Euro (₹)               | 89.66      | 0.29   |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹)       | 50,030▼119 | 0.24   |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)*  | 51.10      | -0.10  |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield    | 5.929      | -0.003 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.936      | -0.019 |

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

## ESIC adds 11.75L new members in October

Around 11.75 lakh new members joined the ESIC-run social security scheme in October against 11.49 lakh in the previous month, official data showed on Thursday, giving a perspective on formal sector employment in the country. Gross new enrolments with ESIC were 8.27 lakh in June, 4.87 lakh in May and 2.62 lakh in April, showing an increase in enrolments after easing of the lockdown, the data showed.

## India challenges Voda arbitration in Singapore



India has challenged in a Singapore court a verdict of an international arbitration tribunal that overturned its demand for Rs 22,100 crore in back taxes from Vodafone Group PLC, sources said on Thursday. An arbitration court had on September 25 rejected tax authorities' demand for Rs 22,100 crore in back taxes and penalties relating to the British telecom giant's 2007 acquisition of an Indian operator.

## SpiceJet ties up with GMR cargo for Covid vax

Low cost carrier SpiceJet on Thursday announced that it has signed an MoU with GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo, a GMR group company, for providing a seamless service to all vaccine manufacturers in the region. As part of this association, SpiceXpress the cargo arm of SpiceJet envisions to provide efficient, speedy and reliable solutions for vaccine delivery, while also creating a sustainable cold chain network.

## Auro signs deal with Covaxx for Covid vaccine

Aurobindo Pharma Ltd and Covaxx, a United States-based company, have entered into an exclusive license agreement to develop, commercialise and manufacture UB-612, the first Multitope Peptide-based vaccine to fight COVID-19, for India and UNICEF. According to a release issued by the city-based drug maker, Covaxx is currently conducting a Phase 1 clinical trial for the vaccine candidate.

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# Smartphone sales to see 2-digit growth

New Delhi, Dec. 24: When the pandemic forced people to stay indoors, smartphones became their window to the world, helping them stay connected with friends, work from home (WFH) and even learn new recipes.

And 2021 promises to bring back double-digit growth for the smartphone industry as people embrace hybrid work models, binge on web series and continue the pursuit for the perfect selfie on their six-inch screens.

This year has been challenging for the industry right from the beginning as supply chains for components were disrupted amid rising Covid-19 cases in China. Given the heavy reliance of Indian phone and electronics industry on imports from the neighbouring nation, there were apprehensions that stocks would run out, hitting local assembly.

By March, there were bigger worries. Rising number of coronavirus cases in India forced the government to impose a nationwide lockdown that barred movement of everything but essential items like food and medicine.

However, after the lockdown was eased, the industry saw a never-seen-before level of demand. Shipment in the September quarter is estimated to have touched an all-time high of over 50 million units. Pent up demand, coupled with people rushing in to buy devices to ensure continuity of work and studies, saw tech brands literally struggling to keep up.

Counterpoint Research senior analyst Prachir Singh said that despite losing almost one-and-a-half months to lockdown, there is just a six per cent year-on-year fall in shipment at 148 million units in 2020, reflecting the "resilient nature" of the



## Laptops, desktop sales continue to rise in 2021

Oakland, California, Dec. 24: The world stocked up on laptop and desktop computers in 2020 at a level not seen since the iPhone debuted in 2007, and manufacturers still are months away from fulfilling outstanding orders, hardware industry executives and analysts said.

Remote learning and working has upturned the computer market during the coronavirus pandemic, zapping sales of smartphones while boosting interest in bigger devices, which had become afterthoughts to iPhones and Androids over the last decade.

Annual global shipments of personal com-

puters, the industry's collective term for laptops and desktops, topped out at about 300 million in 2008 and recently were sinking toward 250 million. Few expected a resurgence.

But some analysts now expect 2020 will close at about 300 million shipments, up roughly 15 per cent from a year ago. Tablets are experiencing even faster growth.

By the end of 2021, installed PCs and tablets will reach 1.77 billion, up from 1.64 billion in 2019, according to research company Canalis.

They added 2021 sales forecasts would be higher if not for the supply issues. — Reuters

Indian smartphone market.

"In 2021, the Indian smartphone market is estimated to grow at 20 per cent year-on-year. Major reasons for such a high growth will be increased consumer spending as economic activities grow, and aggressive product

strategies from top brands," he said, adding that Jio's anticipated launch of low-cost 4G smartphone with Google could add further momentum.

Domestic players like Micromax could also make a strong comeback next year. — PTI

# Taxmen train guns on GST input tax credit fraudsters

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 24

Detection of input tax credit-related frauds has witnessed a rising trend of late. Of the total number of fraudsters arrested by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, almost half have been held in the past six weeks. The CBIC has booked 12,000 cases of Input Tax Credit fraud and arrested 365 persons in such cases so far. In the past six weeks alone more than 165 persons were arrested. These are people who avail and pass on ineligible ITC credits through fake or fly-by-night firms.

According to industry experts, the government

has been focusing on identifying such fraudsters in the past two months. They have been analysing backend data to find out fraudulent cases.

"Data driven targeting of the fraudsters is the need of the hour. The data is being collected from Income Tax and Customs departments and banks and necessary matching is being done to identify fraudsters... Precise targeting of fraudsters is being done only in specific cases after doing a comprehensive analysis using advanced data analytics tools," said CBIC.

CBIC also has issued a few notifications to deal with the menace. It has introduced mandatory

authentication of Aadhar number, wherever applicable or physical verification of business premises for the purposes of obtaining GST registration.

It has now restricted filing of outward supply details in GSTR 1 return for businesses who have not paid tax for the past periods by filing GSTR 3B. Till now, non-filing of GSTR 3B resulted in blockage e-waybill but will now result in GSTR 1 blockage as well.

"The government's idea here seems to be to curb input tax credit passing by businesses which have otherwise not paid their GST liability," said Abhishek Jain, Tax Partner, EY.

# 2020 turns out best for IPOs, debutants trade at twice price

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 24

The year 2020 has been a good year for the primary market initial public offerings (IPOs) with several of the initial public offerings trading at double their public issue price or at a hefty premium.

In December, after Burger King's grand listing, another IPO by Mrs Bectors Food Specialities on Thursday provided investors more than 100 per cent return on debut.

Compared to the public issue price of ₹288 per share, Mrs Bectors Food listed at ₹500 on NSE and ₹501 on BSE and touched a high of Rs 601.20 on BSE and stock settled 106.79 per cent up at ₹595.55 on the BSE.

Mrs Bectors Food's market capitalisation at market close on BSE stood at ₹3,498.65 crore. Happiest Mind, Route

## 2020 IPOs That Trades At Over 50% Premium To Public Issue Price

| Company                          | Public Issue | Current Market |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Mrs Bectors Food Specialities    | 288          | 592.50         |
| Burger King India                | 60           | 180.95         |
| Gland Pharma                     | 1,500        | 2425           |
| Computer Age Management Services | 1,240        | 1,685.90       |
| Route Mobile                     | 350          | 1,119          |
| Happiest Minds Technologies      | 166          | 346.90         |
| Rossari Biotech                  | 425          | 939            |

Figures price in Rs Source: NSE



Mobile, Rossari Biotech, Gland Pharma, CAMS, Burger King, Mrs Bectors Food have given handsome returns to investors, to name a few.

All 14 IPOs listed in 2020 so far traded above their public issue price, the year saw few large IPOs. Gland Pharma raised ₹6,479.55 crore and shot up to be among the top ten

Indian pharma companies after successful listing.

SBI Card also raised ₹10,354.77 crore but the shares got hit after listing due to Covid led market meltdown and touched a low of ₹495.25 against public issue price of ₹755 per share before a sharp recovery as the broader market recovered.

Computer Age Manage-

● All 14 IPOs listed in 2020 so far traded above their public issue price, the year saw few large IPOs.

● Smaller size IPOs like Happiest Minds, Burger King, Route Mobile, Rossari Biotech, Mrs Bectors Food made higher listing gains and continue to trade at a hefty premium to the issue price.

# Indian economy is coming out of deep abyss, says RBI

Mumbai, Dec. 24: The economy is coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic's deep abyss faster than most of the predictions, and the growth will enter positive zone in the third quarter of the current fiscal, said an article on the 'state of economy' in the RBI Bulletin.

"More evidence has been turned in to show that the Indian economy is pulling out of Covid-19's deep abyss and is breaking out amidst winter's lengthening shadows towards a place in the sunlight... it is refracting at a pace that beats most prediction," said the article written by the officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, the

Indian economy dipped by a historic 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year. The contraction narrowed down to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter.

Quoting reports, the article said, "Real GDP growth is expected to break out into positive territory in Q3 — albeit, to a slender 0.1 per cent."

Two important forces are conspiring to bless this turning of the page on the virus, the article said. "First, India is bending the Covid infection curve: since mid-September, barring localised surges, infections are slanting fashion to support investment and consumption demand," it said, "The fiscal measures

have been sequenced in a designed shift in focus from consumption expenditure in Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package to investment expenditure in Aatma Nirbhar 2.0 and 3.0," the article added.

Abstracting from the inherent flux in high frequency indicators, the underlying trend would reveal that the pick-up in momentum of economic activity that commenced with the onset of the second half of 2020-21 is sustained, it noted. "The absence of the dreaded 'second wave' of pandemic in India so far has imparted elevation to this momentum in an environment of supportive macroeconomic policies," it added. — PTI

# Tata Motors launches most advanced LCV

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, DEC. 24

Tata Motors, India's biggest commercial vehicle maker, has introduced the new Ultra T.7 light commercial vehicle or LCV that has been specially designed for urban transportation. The Mumbai-based automaker claims that it is the most advanced LCV that it has

ever developed. With the new Ultra T.7, Tata Motors is targeting applications such as transportation of e-commerce products, FMCG, industrial produce, consumer durables, electronics, essential goods and LPG cylinders.

The reefer variants of T.7 are best suited for transportation of vaccine, pharmaceuticals, perishable goods, food items

such as eggs and milk, along with farm produce.

The Ultra T.7 range comes with a modular platform with variants of various deck lengths and in 4-tyre and 6-tyre combinations to suit a wide range of applications.

The model's 1900mm-wide cabin has been engineered to offer the best-in-class comfort to reduce the turnaround time.

# L&T 3D prints India's 1st building

New Delhi, Dec. 24: Larsen & Toubro Construction on Thursday said it has successfully 3D printed a ground plus one building, claiming it to be the first in India.

The company has 3D printed the building of a 700 square feet built-up area at its Kanchipuram facility with an in-house developed concrete mix, using indigenously available regular construction

● Except for the horizontal slab members, the entire building structure was 3D printed 'Cast in Situ' at the job site in an 'open to sky' environment within 106 printing hours.

materials. "L&T Construction announced having successfully 3D printed a G+1 (ground plus one)

Building with reinforcement for the first time in India," the company said in a statement.

With the country aggressively pursuing the objective of creating 60 million houses under the Housing for All by 2022 programme, this achievement will certainly give a huge fillip for the mass housing segment, it added.

The building was printed with both vertical rein-

forcement bar and horizontal distributors, using a welded mesh that satisfies provisions in the Indian codes and optimises the cost of construction. Except for the horizontal slab members, the entire building structure was 3D printed 'Cast in Situ' at the job site in an 'open to sky' environment within 106 printing hours, using a fully automated 3D printer.

# More than \$1.3 trillion worth deals were clinched in Q4 alone M&A deals come roaring back

New York, Dec. 24: Global merger and acquisition activity clawed its way back from near-decade lows in 2020, facing down the Covid-19 pandemic with a string of large transactions in the second half of the year that dealmakers hope will continue.

Deal volumes are now down about six per cent for the year to \$3.5 trillion, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Still, the fact that about two-thirds of those were inked since the start of July has advisers talking about a dramatic comeback, after the first half of 2020 froze M&A and sent North American deal activity down more than



50 per cent.

How transactions got done also changed, as bidders flew drones to conduct due diligence and the head of a UK pharmaceutical giant inked his biggest-ever deal while quarantined in a hotel room in Australia. Globetrotting bankers transitioned to days of nonstop video calls, either from

home or nearly empty offices. "We saw a sharp decline in M&A activity after the outbreak of the pandemic but then a very strong recovery in the second half of the year," said Berthold Fuerst, co-head of investment banking coverage and advisory for Europe, the Middle East and Africa at Deutsche Bank AG.

As the pandemic shut down cities in the first quarter, companies around the world scrambled to move their businesses online and organise newly remote workforces while plugging holes in their supply chains. The chaos left chief executive officers too busy to make acquisitions, and deal-making got off to the slowest start since 2013.

The situation started to stabilise as companies realised they could operate in the new environment, said Scott Barshay, chair of the corporate department at law firm Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison.

"All of a sudden, you could see a real shift in

thinking to what will the world look like post-pandemic, and how do we put ourselves in the best position to succeed post-pandemic?" Barshay said. "It seemed to be coming from companies in all sectors all at once."

More than \$1.3 trillion of deals have been announced in the fourth quarter alone. S&P Global Inc.'s all-stock \$39 billion acquisition of IHS Markit Ltd. came on the heels of technology megadeals including chipmaker Advanced Micro Devices Inc.'s \$35 billion purchase of Xilinx Inc. and Salesforce.com Inc.'s agreement to buy Slack Technologies Inc. for \$27.7 billion including debt. — Bloomberg

# Key products to have separate warehouses

New Delhi, Dec. 24: The government on Thursday said that it will set up product-specific warehouses at ports and national waterways.

The purpose of development of this infrastructure is to reduce the storage losses, minimise logistic costs and facilitate distribution of cargo in the hinterland, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) said in a statement.

"The (MoPSW) intends to create product-specific warehouses or silos at various ports (including both major and non-major ports), Multi Modal Logistics Parks located near port area and alongside the national waterways," the statement said. The ministry is target-

ing to develop the product-specific warehouses at ports for cement silos, liquid tanks, chemicals tanks, cold storage, electronics product storage, and pharmaceutical storage, among others.

"While the big players have their own warehouses and storage spaces, the smaller players find it difficult to get their product-specific storage silos at various locations," the ministry of port said in the statement.

The development of these world-class warehousing spaces will give a big push, especially to such small logistics players for their ease of doing business with better planning and inventory management, the ministry added. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Oly-bound athletes get vaccine priority

**New Delhi:** A parliamentary panel on Thursday recommended putting athletes, coaches and support staff going for the 2021 Japan Olympics in the priority group for the Covid-19 vaccination process.

The committee also voiced concern over large number of vacancies of coaches, saying they should be filled up in a time-bound manner so that Olympic preparations do not suffer.

The Japan Olympics are slated to be held from July next year. The panel has also recommended identifying training facilities, stadia and sports centres for Olympic qualified athletes which have not opened yet.

It said the closed centres should be reopened "at the earliest" or the athletes should be relocated to alternate centres which have opened.

The department-related parliamentary standing committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports headed by Vinay P Sahasrabudhe submitted its report on "Preparation for Olympics 2021" to Rajya Sabha Chairperson M. Venkaiah Naidu through virtual mode.

— PTI

## BCCI AGM approves 10 teams for 2022 IPL

**Ahmedabad, Dec. 24:** The BCCI's governing body on Thursday ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 and also decided to back the ICC's push for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics, during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) here.

"Two new teams will be introduced in the 2022 IPL," a Board source said.

It is learnt that time at hand is too short for even a nine-team IPL next year as an elaborate tender-floating process, increase of matches and ensuring that all foreign player's international calendars are adjusted, would be prove to be a herculean task.

## T20 CRICKET IN OLYMPICS

In another major development, the Board, in principle, decided to back the ICC's bid for inclusion of cricket, in the T20 format, in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics "after getting some clarifications from the International Olympic Committee".

"Look, the BCCI is an autonomous body and it would like to maintain its autonomy. Our legal team

is looking to get a few clarifications. Obviously, cricket in Olympics is great for the game. Let's hope we can move in the right direction," the member, who attended the AGM, said.

The Board, however, did not reveal the nature of its queries with regards to the matter.

## BCCI LIKELY TO LOSE \$123 MILLION

The BCCI has decided that if its does not get full tax exemption from the government of India to host the World T20 next year, as sought by the ICC, then it would agree to deduction from its annual revenue of \$390 million from the global body.

"We have told the ICC that we will approach our government for tax rebate but if we don't get that exemption, the amount, which is around \$123 million, will be deducted from our annual revenue, so we will get around \$267 million. But India is hosting the 2021 T20 WC," the source said.

## COMPENSATION FOR DOMESTIC PLAYERS

Also, it was decided that all first-class players, both



(from left) BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal, president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah pose after the 89th Annual General Meeting in Ahmedabad on Thursday. — PTI

men and women, will be suitably compensated for the curtailed domestic season due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The BCCI plans to get the domestic season underway, after several months' delay, in January with the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 championship.

Asked about the money to be set aside for this, the Board source said: "The BCCI will give a lump-sum compensation amount to the state units. Now they will draw up their own list

and accordingly compensate their male and female players."

## JUNIOR AND WOMEN'S CRICKET DURING IPL

The BCCI has decided that women's tournaments (senior and junior) along with age-group tournaments (U-23, U-19, U-16) will be held simultaneously at the time of IPL-14 which, in all likelihood, will be held in India despite the raging Coronavirus pandemic-related concerns.

## SHUKLA BECOMES NEW VP

In other decisions, veteran Congress leader Rajiv Shukla was officially anointed the Board's vice president in place of his protégé Mahim Verma from Uttarakhand.

Brijesh Patel will continue as the chairman of the IPL Governing Council.

## GANGULY-SHAH, INDIA'S FACE AT ICC

It was also learnt that the general body decided in favour of BCCI President

## CHETAN APPOINTED NEW CHAIRMAN OF SELECTORS

**Ahmedabad, Dec. 24:** Former India pacer Chetan Sharma was on Thursday appointed chairman of the senior national selection panel by the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC), which also picked Abbey Kuruvilla and Debashis Mohanty in the five-member team.

The selection panel also has former India players Sunil Joshi and Harvinder Singh.

As per the BCCI constitution, the candidate with the most Test caps becomes the chief selector. — PTI

Sourav Ganguly continuing as a director in the ICC Board. Secretary Jay Shah will be the alternate director as well as India's representative at the Chief Executive Committee meets of the global body.

## WOMEN'S TEST MATCHES

The house deliberated on having women's Test matches and there could be a two-Test series in the offing next year but a final call in this regard will be taken by the BCCI Apex Council.

## GM SACKED

The BCCI has sacked GM (Game Development) KVP Rao, who was asked to

resign. While Rao termed leaving BCCI as his "happiest day", it is learnt that in general, his lack of proper action plan amid the Covid-19 pandemic was one of the big reasons for his ouster.

## RETIREMENT AGE OF UMPIRES INCREASED

The BCCI's affiliated scorers and umpires will now retire at 60 instead of 55 years after the governing body ratified the move.

"We believe that both umpires and scorers are physically fit enough like any other profession to continue till the age of 60 years," source said. — PTI

## Australians charged up

## Hosts look to pile misery on Kohli-less India in 2nd Test

**Melbourne, Dec. 24:** Coach Justin Langer said the mark of a great team was to keep winning as he threw down a challenge to Australia Thursday against a depleted India desperate to restore pride in the second Test this week.

Australia head into the Boxing Day clash at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on a high after crushing the visitors by eight wickets inside three days in the opening Test at Adelaide.

The dramatic victory was built on the back of devastating spells from pace spearheads Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, who skittled India in the second innings for their lowest Test score of 36.

Langer said it was an incredible effort, and he wants to see it repeated.

With star opener David Warner again ruled out with a groin injury, Langer said Australia would stick with the same XI, barring last-

minute issues.

That means the under-pressure Joe Burns retains his spot as opener after a handy 51 not out in Adelaide, with Matthew Wade again moving up the order to accompany him, while Cameron Green earns his second cap.

India have far more selection dilemmas, with captain Virat Kohli missing the final three Tests for the birth of his first child.

Either the experienced KL Rahul or Shubman Gill are tipped to take his place at number four, while Ajinkya Rahane assumes the captaincy.

Although India haven't officially confirmed it, Mohammed Shami is also expected to be absent after reportedly fracturing his wrist after being hit by a Cummins thunderbolt in Adelaide. It means they will be without two of their first-choice bowlers, with Ishant Sharma still injured.

— AFP

## INDIA SWEAT IT OUT AHEAD OF REVENGE BOUT ON BOXING DAY

**Melbourne, Dec. 24:** The Indian cricket team on Thursday tried a hitherto unseen training drill that vaguely resembled a wrestling bout, with a pair of two players each seemingly striving to outdo each other.

New Zealander Nick Webb, India's strength and conditioning coach, had introduced a few drills in the past and among them is a wrestling-like strength training activity. But the players haven't really been seen performing this particular drill in the past.

One of the purposes of this activity is to help players get ready for high-intensity duels. There was also a bit of touch rugby-like session hap-

pening.

It is understood that these sessions are basically conducted to give players a break from the monotony of regular training regime.

Ravindra Jadeja was the first to arrive at the nets for the training session and he was put through a fitness test as he ran between the wickets with a bat on his hand, two days before the Boxing Day Test begins at the hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground.

One of the tour's finds, T Natarajan bowled well at the nets and often managed to beat the outside edge of both Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara.

— PTI

## Man Utd, Spurs enter semis

**London, Dec. 24:** Manchester United left it late to book their place in the League Cup semifinals with a dramatic 2-0 win at Everton, while Tottenham joined them in the last four after beating Stoke 3-1 on Wednesday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side dominated for long periods of their quarter-final at Goodison Park, but it took until the 88th minute before Edinson Cavani broke the deadlock. Anthony Martial bagged United's second goal in stoppage time.

After a rocky period that raised questions about Solskjaer's future following their exit from the Champions League, United have recovered their equilibrium. They are third in the Premier League and have won their last three matches in all competitions.


United joined holders Manchester City, Tottenham and second-tier Brentford in the League Cup semi-finals. — AFP

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## Live on TV


**CRICKET**  
India vs Australia: Second Test - Day 1 from 5 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, 3, Sony Six, HD

**WWE**  
SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

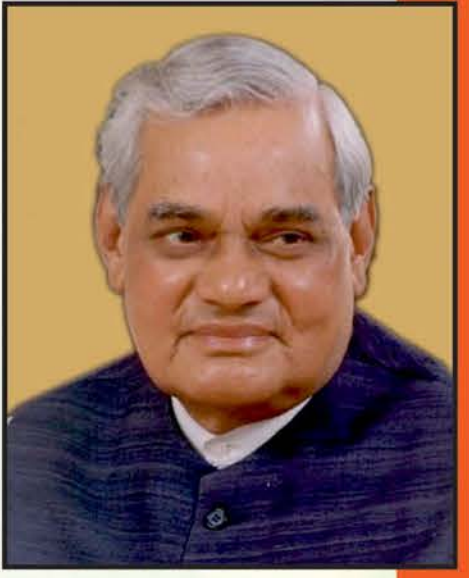


# GOOD GOVERNANCE DAY

## December 25, 2020



**Haryana Remembers**  
The Great Freedom Fighter  
**Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya**  
and  
Bharat Ratna & Former Prime Minister  
**Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee**  
On Their Birth Anniversary



**State Level Programme will be organized at Haryana Niwas, Chandigarh**

**Chief Guest**  
**Sh. Manohar Lal**  
Chief Minister, Haryana

**Programme will be conducted at District, Tehsil & Block level**

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**- Manohar Lal**  
Chief Minister, Haryana

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