

GUARANTEED PRELIMS SELECTION OR GET 100% FEE BACK



• We guarantee you Min 70 Qs Or 20% more than cut off in GS Prelims 2021 from our 10 RED BOOKS for GS Pre Else your 100% Fee will be back.
• We will upload details of Qs from UPSC GS Pre 2021 that will come from these Red Books along with page nos.

3 out of every 4 Qs IN UPSC QS Pre came from our RED BOOKS Since 2008



10 RED BOOKS COVER

- All Old & New NCERTs and 70+ Major Books Covered.
- 100% Coverage of Current Affairs Jan 2020-May 2021
- Covering 14 Sources PIB, Hindu, HT, Mint, PRS, IE, UNO Sites etc.
- Synopsis of India Year Book & Eco Survey 2021

Course Fee - 10000/-

ALSO TRY CSAT PRELIMS

- 5 Books from BASICS to ADVANCED
- Line to Line Explanation for every concept.
- From Concepts to Questions everything at one place.

Course Fee - 4999/-

GS PRELIMS TEST SERIES

- Topicwise Fundamental Tests
- Exclusive Current Affairs Test
- Subject-wise Applied Tests
- Comprehensive Full-Length Advanced Tests.

Course Fee - 8000/-

2020 WE PROMISED & WE DELIVERED

72 questions came from our PRELIMS
10 RED BOOKS in 2020

See Proof:
www.crackias.com/proof

crack
IAS.com
Arrow Education

crackIAS.com
921-7070707
crackiasquery@gmail.com

NEARBY



66 facilities conduct vaccine dry run in Delhi

NEW DELHI
A dry run of the COVID-19 vaccination drive was conducted at 66 healthcare facilities across the national capital on Wednesday. "The dry run was conducted at 66 points, six in each of the 11 districts. It was satisfactory and there were no major problems," said a Delhi government spokesperson.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Punjab govt. to reopen all schools from today

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab government has decided to reopen all government, semi-government and private schools from January 7. Students from Classes V to XII will be allowed to attend classes across Punjab. State School Education Minister Vijay Inder Singh on Wednesday said the government has decided to reopen the schools on persistent demands of parents.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4



SC to study anti-conversion laws of Uttarakhand and U.P.

Bench, however, does not stay implementation of legislation passed by States

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to examine the constitutional validity of laws enacted by States, such as Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, that criminalise religious conversion via marriage and mandate prior official clearance before marrying into another faith.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, however, did not stay the implementation of the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018, despite fervent pleas by petitioners that "rampaging mobs are lifting off people in the middle of wedding ceremonies," buoyed by the enactment of the laws.

'Horifying move'
"What we have here is multiple States like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh enacting these laws which are absolutely horrifying. They require prior permission to marry," senior advocate C.U. Singh submitted.

Mr. Singh argued that the burden of proof was on those who married to show they were not doing so to get converted.

Steps to a controversy

The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, prescribes the procedure to be followed for religious conversion:

- The individual who wants to convert and those who perform such conversions have to submit a notice to the District Magistrate, **60 days and a month in advance**, respectively
- District Magistrate will institute a **police inquiry**
- Once conversion takes place, the person should **submit a declaration** within

"Those who are found guilty under these laws stare at a 10-year prison sentence. The offences are non-bailable. We are getting reports that people are being picked up in the middle of weddings on suspicion of religious conversion," he said.

However, the Bench, which asked the petitioners to go to the respective State High Courts with their challenge, did not stay the implementation of the laws.

"This is the problem. We have already issued notice. You have come here under Article 32 of the Constitution..." Chief Justice Bobde said and resisted the plea for stay.

Mr. Singh said the laws concerned violation of the

60 days. The notice will be publicly exhibited for any objections

• The converted person has to appear before the DM and confirm his/her identity and details

• Violations will attract punishment of **six months to three years' imprisonment** for the person who has converted and one to five years

for the convertor

- The burden of proof that a conversion did not happen through **force, fraud or marriage** rests on the person who facilitated it
- Marriages done for the sole purpose of religious conversion are liable to be declared void**
- All offences under the U.P. law are **non-bailable**

fundamental rights of dignity and liberty enshrined under Article 21. They had been enacted despite a series of judgments by the Supreme Court, including in the Hadia case, that right to marry a person of one's choice was part of an adult's privacy.

"Under the laws, a person marrying into another faith should give a month's prior notice to the authorities. There will be an inquiry. The provisions are oppressive," he argued.

A series of Supreme Court verdicts underline that the choice of a life partner, whether by marriage or outside it, was part of an individual's "personhood and identity".

Hearing soon
The court fixed a hearing in four weeks.

The petition filed by advocates Vishal Thakre and A.S. Yadav and researcher Pranvesh, who were represented

by advocates Sanjeev Malhotra and Pradeep Kumar Yadav, said the laws were against public policy and society at large.

Grave injustice: petition
"These laws will create fear in society and become a potent tool in the hands of bad elements to falsely implicate anyone. A grave injustice will be done by the ordinances... They will create a chaotic situation," it said.

Several rounds of talks between the government and farmer leaders have been inconclusive so far.

No progress in talks with farmers: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday pointed out that there had been no breakthrough in the impasse between the Union government and thousands of protesting farmers demanding the repeal of three controversial laws and the provision of legal backing for the minimum support price (MSP).

"The situation has no improvement at all," Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde addressed Attorney General K.K. Venugopal and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta during a virtual court hearing.

Mr. Venugopal, however, on a positive note, said: "There are chances that the parties may come to some understanding."

Both he and Mr. Mehta said that for this reason the government did not want, for now, to file a counter-affidavit in the court to petitions regarding the laws and the farmers' protest. Mr. Mehta submitted, "Our counter is ready. But there are healthy discussions going on. So we have not filed it [in the Supreme Court]."

Several rounds of talks between the government and farmer leaders have been inconclusive so far.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 3

Anganwadi worker dies after alleged gang-rape in U.P.

Priest, two aides among the accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GAZIABAD

A 50-year-old anganwadi worker died after she was gang-raped, allegedly by a priest and his two aides, in a village in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday night. However, an FIR was registered only on Tuesday after a post-mortem confirmed severe injuries to her private parts.

Two of the accused have been arrested, but the main accused is absconding. The Station House Officer of Ghaziabad has been suspended by the Senior Superintendent of Police, Budaun, for "insensitivity" and "delaying the due process".

'Police didn't help'
The woman's son told reporters that she used to go to the village temple which, according to locals, is more like an ashram. "On Sunday, she went to her mother's place and while returning, followed her routine practice. Around 11.30 p.m., the priest and his two aides dropped her home in a car and left. They said she had fallen into the dry well on the ashram premises. She was bleeding profusely and soon she died."



District Magistrate Kumar Prashant visiting Budaun on Wednesday. ▶ PTI

He alleged that the priest Satya Narayan, 45, and his aides, Jaspal and Vedram, were lying as they didn't take her to hospital. "We approached the police as we felt somebody had raped her but the police didn't help," he said. The woman's husband said he requested the priest to take her to hospital as she was still alive but they refused and ran away.

The son-in-law of the victim told *The Hindu* that his father-in-law was "slightly mentally unstable" and his mother-in-law was the sole bread earner in the family of five children, two of whom were married.

Centre objects to T.N.'s move on cinemas

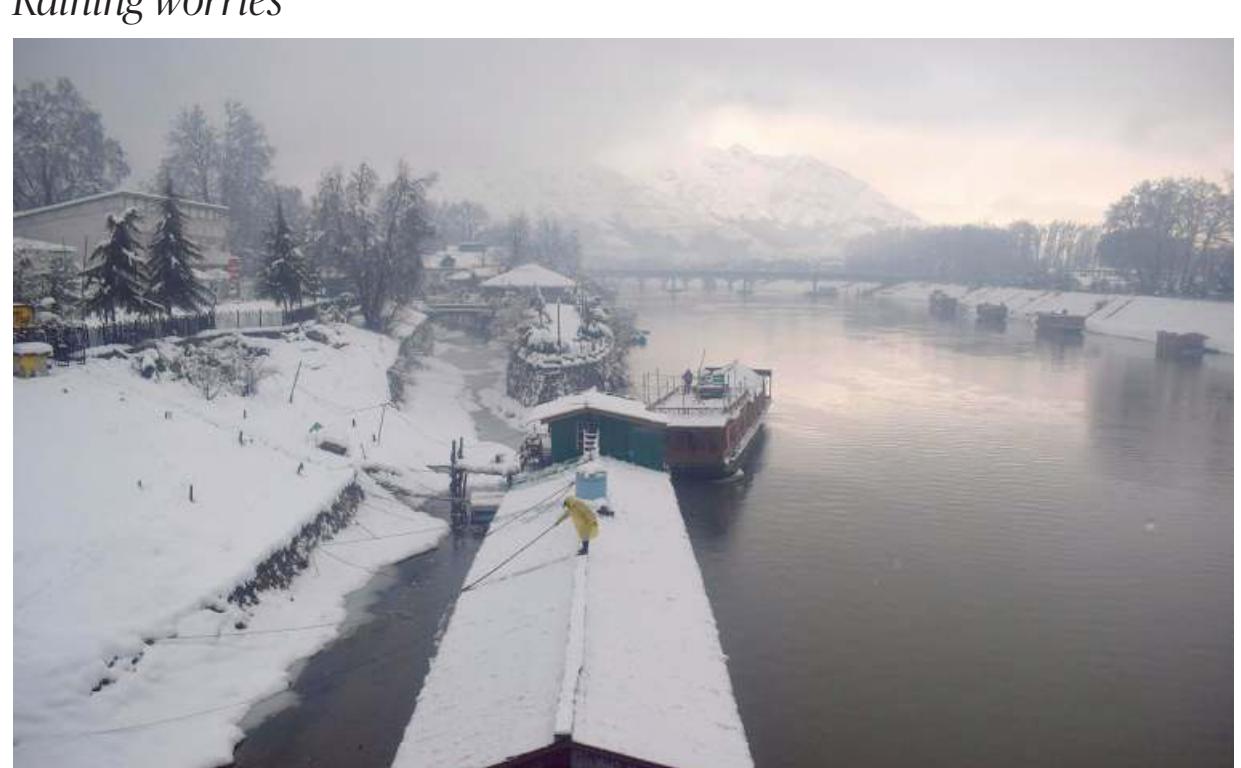
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Disapproving of the Tamil Nadu government's decision to allow cinemas to function with full seat occupancy, the Union Home Ministry has asked the State not to dilute the Centre's COVID-19 guidelines.

In a communication to Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla referred to the January 4 Government Order permitting full seat occupancy and said, "This amounts to a dilution of the MHA order dated December 28, 2020, issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005." The MHA guidelines permit cinemas/multiplexes to fill only 50% of their seats.

Mr. Bhalla noted that the Supreme Court had, last December, directed the strict enforcement of the guidelines/SOPs.

Raining worries



Tough task: A man clearing snow from the roof of his houseboat in Srinagar on Wednesday. Over 100 houses were damaged and many families were stranded as heavy snowfall continued for the fourth day across Kashmir. ▶ NISSAR AHMAD (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

Democrats set to win Senate as Georgia results come in

Warnock is first black Senator from the southern State

SIRAM LAKSHMAN



Democrats inched closer to taking control of the U.S. Senate on Monday as African American pastor Raphael Warnock defeated incumbent Republican candidate Kelly Loeffler – a former businesswoman – in one of two run-off elections in Georgia. Mr. Warnock became the first black Senator elected from the southern State.

The other run-off race was too close to call with incumbent David Perdue, a Republican, trailing his challenger, 33-year-old Jon Ossoff, a documentary filmmaker, by over 16,000 votes with 98% reporting on Wednesday morning (U.S. time).

Both run-offs were necessary because no candidate had won more than 50% of the vote in the November

elections.

A number of votes remained outstanding on Wednesday morning (U.S. time) – military and overseas ballots and votes from heavily Democrat-leaning areas (Atlanta and DeKalb counties, for instance).

The Associated Press called the election for Mr.

Mr. Ossoff wins the race, the Senate would be split 50-50 between the two parties. Democrats, who already control the House of Representatives, would also have Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris's vote in the case of a tie.

If Republicans win the race, the Senate would be split 50-50 between the two parties. Democrats, who already control the House of Representatives, would also have Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris's vote in the case of a tie.

The Associated Press called the election for Mr.

ANOTHER REPORT ▶ PAGE 13

tions were made by the officers but the final call will be taken after the next meeting," the officer said.

ID proof necessary
As per the guidelines, the visitors have to show their ID proof to get ticket for the parade and they have to keep their ID with them while getting entry to the enclosures on January 26.

Due to COVID-19, there will be only 25,000 visitors to witness the parade compared with over one lakh usually. Children under the age of 15 will not be allowed.

Another police officer said

there were intelligence inputs that protesters might attempt to disrupt the parade. The intelligence wing is also keeping a watch on protests going on in the city. There will be more than 40,000 security personnel in the New Delhi area during the parade.

Last year, there were strict instructions to security personnel to frisk visitors when there were anti-CAA protests across the country. The visitors were asked to open their jackets by the security officers to ensure that they were not wearing anything with anti-CAA slogans written on them.

A division bench of justices T.V. Nalawade and M.G. Sewlikar was hearing a petition filed by Rajendra Ambore, a teacher, seeking a direction and injunction to

prevent advertisements on television channels that promote the sale of articles like Hanuman Chalisa Yantra.

Mr. Ambore said that in March 2015, he came across advertisements on TV claiming special, miraculous and supernatural properties/qualities in Hanuman Chalisa Yantra prepared by one Baba Mangalnath, who had achieved 'siddhi' (supernatural powers) and was blessed by Lord Hanuman. The Yantra costs ₹4,900 and was said to be made of 24-carat gold. Singers and such other celebrities were shown in the ads



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R KUMAR
talking about their experience, the plea said.

The court said telemarketers change the names of

Adequate security will be in place to prevent any disruption of parade, say sources

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

The farmers' protest took centre stage at a meeting between the Delhi police and the Defence Ministry on Wednesday to discuss arrangements for the Republic Day parade.

A senior police officer said the meeting was called to discuss security arrangements for the parade. The Delhi police take care of the outer ring of security. The discussion was over visitors entering enclosures. To prevent any disruption by farmers protesting at the Delhi borders, adequate security measures will be put in place.



During the meeting, a discussion was held on whether visitors with only Delhi ID proofs be allowed or it should be open to all. Several suggestions

R-Day security meet factors in farm stir

Adequate security will be in place to prevent any disruption of parade, say sources

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUM

L-G reviews vaccination roll-out plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal chaired a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) at Raj Niwas to review the status of the pandemic in the Capital.

At the 15th meeting of the DDMA, the L-G directed government agencies to maintain strict vigil at transit points across Delhi in addition to enforcing the adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour to contain virus spread.

He also issued directions to ensure current levels of testing, surveillance and contact-tracing of COVID-19 patients in the city even as the positivity rate in Delhi stands at 0.88%, the death rate over the last ten days at 3.13% and the case fatality rate at 1.69% as per Delhi government figures till Tuesday.

He also reviewed the vaccination roll-out plan.

66 healthcare facilities conduct COVID-19 vaccination dry run

Two more residents test positive for U.K. strain of virus, total nine infected so far

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A dry run of the COVID-19 vaccination drive was conducted at 66 healthcare facilities across the Capital on Wednesday. On Saturday, a similar drill was carried out at three centres in Delhi as part of a country-wide programme to check the preparedness of the vaccination distribution system.

"The dry run was done at 66 points, six in each of the 11 districts. It was satisfactory and there were no major problems," said a Delhi government spokesperson.

Facilities run by the Delhi government, Centre and municipal corporations took part in the exercise.

Deputy Medical Superintendent of the Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Hospital, Ritu Saxena, said that about 25 healthcare workers



Vaccination drill at a dispensary run by the South Delhi civic body in Srinivaspuri on Wednesday. ■ R. V. MOORTHY

participated in the dry run at the hospital on Wednesday.

The vaccination booth on the first floor of the hospital had three rooms: a waiting room, a vaccination room, and an observation room.

"We did a drill of everything from transferring the vaccine from a store on the fifth floor to the booth, regis-

tering the healthcare workers for vaccination and moving them through the three rooms. We also created an emergency area near the booth for any cases of complications," said Dr. Saxena.

The emergency area has drugs and equipment needed in case there are any issues, she added.

The drill was held on a day when two more Delhi residents tested positive for the U.K. coronavirus strain.

With this, nine residents have so far been found infected with the new variant.

The city witnessed 654 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 6,28,352. Also, 16 more fatalities have been reported in a single day, taking the death toll to 10,625.

Of the total cases, 6,13,246 people have recovered and there are 4,481 active cases.

13-day streak

This is the 13th day in a row that the number of new cases has been less than 1,000.

Out of the total 14,076 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 12,371 are currently vacant.

There are now 3,202 containment zones in the city.

We are brainstorming on school reopening: Sisodia

International conference on school education from Jan. 11

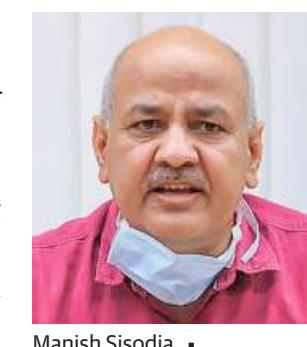
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the Delhi government preparing for the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the Education Department was brainstorming about when schools in the city could open.

He, however, said it would be tough to give an exact date as it was difficult to calculate how soon the vaccine will be available for the public as frontline workers will be the first to get vaccinated.

"Brainstorming is on for how early schools can be reopened in Delhi, especially for Board classes as the dates for Board exams have been announced. Senior students will have to finish their practical component before their examinations, which will require them to attend school," Mr. Sisodia said.

The Minister announced that the Delhi government is organising an international conference on school education between January 11 and 17 to discuss changes in the education sector in the post-COVID-19 world.



Manish Sisodia ■

after the year-long disruption that the education sector has undergone.

"We need to plan for our schools in the post-COVID era just as we are planning the COVID-19 vaccination. The pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for children. Schooling and learning in post-COVID era cannot be business as usual," Mr. Sisodia said while announcing the conference.

The government said that during the conference an independent study conducted by the Boston Consulting Group on the process and achievements of Delhi's education reform over the last five years will be released.

The key note address will be given by Lucy Crehan, author of *The Cleverlands*, a global bestseller capturing the details of five top performing education systems in the world.

January rain maximum in 21 years: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi has already recorded 56.6 mm of rainfall in January, the maximum for the month in 21 years, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Sporadic rain drenched the national capital for the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday.

The IMD said parts of south Delhi reported hail-storm in the morning.

Dark clouds lowered visibility, and a short spell of heavy showers inundated key stretches of major roads in the city, affecting traffic movement.

The Safdarjung Observatory has already recorded 56.6 mm of rainfall this January, said Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre.

The city had registered 69.8 mm rainfall in the same month in 1995, according to IMD data. Dense fog is likely in Delhi over the next two days.

'Poor' air quality

Meanwhile, Delhi's air quality deteriorated to the 'poor' category and Gurugram's to the 'moderate' level on Wednesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

"The Air Quality Index is likely to marginally deteriorate to 'poor' category on Thursday," read a statement by the government-run monitoring agency SAFAR. The AQI of Delhi was 226 as per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 175 and 200, respectively.

The effect of stubble burning on the city's air quality remained low on Wednesday.

Ready to consider application of three students, JNU tells HC

Their PG admissions were rejected due to delay in DU results

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has informed the Delhi High Court that it was willing to consider "sympathetically" the application of three students, whose admission in a post-graduate course was rejected as their graduation results were delayed by Delhi University (DU) due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

JNU's counsel Monika Arora said admissions are still going on for several courses and hence, the varsity will be considering the admission application of the three candidates if seats are still available in the relevant courses, and they qualify on merit for the admission.

JNU's submission came



blished by JNU. However, JNU did not grant them admission due to delay in their undergraduate examinations and publication of results by DU due to the ongoing pandemic.

Contends clause
Advocate Kavita Kaur, appearing for the students, contended that JNU, in its prospectus, had added a clause that the candidate whose result has been declared, would be given preference over those whose result has not been declared.

Advocate Kaur termed the clause as discriminatory as it would result in other students being rendered ineligible for no fault of theirs.

Warming up



A CRPF contingent retires for the day after Republic Day rehearsals amid heavy fog and rain on Wednesday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Karat seeks parity for riots victims who are minor

'Kin of adult victim getting more compensation is flawed'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



CPI(M) politburo member Brinda Karat – in a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal – has pointed out that the families of minor victims of the north-east Delhi riots have been getting lesser compensation than those families that lost adult members.

The Delhi government has been providing compensation of ₹10 lakh each to the families who lost an adult member and ₹5 lakh each to the kin of the minors who died in the Delhi violence.

The CPI(M) leader said that it was a flawed argument that the family of an

adult victim gets more compensation as an earning member deprives the family of an income and thus, more compensation is required.

"As you know the first death anniversary of their children will fall next month, at the end of February. It will be an important message of justice from your government that both the families receive the remaining ₹5 lakh on such an occasion," she wrote.

Court rejects Pracha's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has refused to direct the police to forthwith supply to advocate Mehmood Pracha a copy of the video footage of the search conducted at his premises last month.

Mr. Pracha, who is representing some of the accused in the Delhi riots cases, had moved the Sessions court against an order passed by a magisterial court. Additional Sessions Judge observed that in its order, the magisterial court had neither denied nor conclusively determined his prayer for video footage.

30-year-old arrested for beating calf in east Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly beating a calf in east Delhi's Vinod Nagar, the police said on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Deepak Yadav said that the accused has been identified as Kamal Singh, a resident of Mandawali. The entire act was caught on CCTV camera.

In the video, Kamal can be seen walking the street when a calf standing next to a cattle hits the accused and the documents in his hand fall off. Kamal then beats the calf and takes it to a side. He then collects his documents

and comes back to brutally beat it. An injured calf can then be seen sitting on the roadside.

Mr. Yadav said that a call was received regarding cruelty against a calf after which the staff rushed to the spot and found it in injured condition.

"The calf was sent for medical examination at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital and proper medical treatment was given to it. On the basis of daily diary entry and CCTV footage, a case was registered under sections of Prevention of Cruelty Against Animal Act and the accused Kamal was arrested in this case," the DCP said.

Delhi Police busts extortion racket, six members of gang held from Rajasthan

They threatened to upload complainants' morphed videos

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Six members of an extortion gang have been arrested from Rajasthan for allegedly duping people after befriending them on social media and later threatening to upload their morphed videos online, the Delhi police said on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Crime Unit) Anyesh Roy said that the accused have been identified as Waris (28), Rayees (22), Annay Khan (21), Wahid (23), Mufeed (30) and Akram (21) who were allegedly running the extortion racket from a village in Rajasthan's Bharatpur.

The police said that according to the complaints received by them, the victims were contacted over social

media platforms such as Facebook. The victims were engaged in a brief chat and guided to a video call over Messenger or WhatsApp.

Obscene clip
During the call, the victims were shown an obscene clip and their video call was simultaneously recorded. After sometime, they got extortion calls in the name of the offensive video made from the captured video chat.

Amounts ranging from ₹2,000 to ₹30,000 were demanded and some of the victims succumbed to those demands before reporting it to the police.

Using technical help, the location of the accused was zeroed in to Bharatpur, Rajasthan. Later, in coordination with Bharatpur police,

the hideouts of the gang were identified and raids were conducted. Six accused were arrested, Mr. Roy said.

The police said that the accused created fake Facebook profiles and befriended random people. After chatting for a while, they would get the victims on video call. They would then capture the video call and edit it to include an offensive adult content, they said.

These morphed videos were then used to blackmail their targets. Offensive videos of more than 40 victims have been recovered from the mobile phones of the accused who have cheated victims to the tune of ₹25 lakh and 10 bank accounts linked to the gang have been identified and frozen.

Policemen advised to keep away from political propaganda on social media

Officers instructed to respond only to core policing issues

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi police officers have been instructed not to engage with social media accounts indulging in political propaganda and restrict themselves to core policing duties.

A senior police officer said there were instances when knowingly or unknowingly police officers get engaged with people who have certain propaganda on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook and to gain publicity, they often tag police officers into their propaganda tweets.

Even earlier, there were guidelines and instructions for police officers over use of social media.

"The officers have been instructed to respond to the

complaints or queries raised on social media promptly but not to respond to unnecessary questions that have nothing to do with policing," said the senior officer.

Delhi Police has increased their presence on social media and regularly interacts and responds to the queries raised on Twitter. Delhi Police's Twitter handle is actively diverting complaints to the Deputy Commissioner of Police concerned for prompt action and the DCPs are also seen responding to the queries and grievances.

Social media volunteers
In November last year, Delhi Police had asked for social media volunteers, who are willing to work with police on pro-bono basis. The officer said there are social me-

dia volunteers in each police districts who works in coordination with district DCPs. The volunteers keep watch on social media post related to Delhi Police and keep the DCP updated.

It has been instructed to police officers to discuss the matter with the Public Relation Office of Delhi Police in case they need any clarity over the issue before responding.

All district DCPs keep updating recent arrests and recovery of stolen items on Twitter handles. In important cases, the official version of the police is put on Twitter promptly. Several times Delhi Police has taken cognisance of compliant raised by women on social media against harassment faced by other users.

Will rally for funds owed to civic bodies, says BJP

'AAP trying to cripple municipalities'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday said it will hold a signature campaign to demand the ₹13,000 crore allegedly owed to the three municipal corporations of Delhi, over the next three days.

From Thursday till Saturday, the party's *karyakartas* from 13,750 booths will distribute leaflets regarding the issue, said Delhi BJP general secretary Harsh Malhotra.

"All the *morchas* fake will conduct a signature campaign at 1,000 places from January 7 till January 9 to demand ₹13,000 crore due to the municipal corporations, as well as to make people aware of this issue," Mr. Malhotra said.

"Ever since the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government

came to power, it has been conspiring to cripple the civic bodies and that is why the arrears of the three corporations have not yet been released," he alleged.

'Govt. ignoring students'
Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri accused the Delhi government of "ignoring the Scheduled Caste students of Delhi".

Warning of a movement led by such students, Mr. Bidhuri said the Delhi government, which, under the Dr. Ambedkar Fellowship Scheme had announced to send 100 students from the Scheduled Castes abroad for PhDs, Master degrees every year, was yet to fulfil the promise.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, JAN. 07
RISE 07:15 SET 17:41
RISE 00:53 SET 12:50
FRIDAY, JAN. 08
RISE 07:16 SET 17:42
RISE 01:57 SET 13:28
SATURDAY, JAN. 09
RISE 07:16 SET 17:42
RISE 03:03 SET 14:10

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	21	13
Safdarjung	21	13
Palam	19	15

Delhi Palam Today
19°C Drop in temperature with light cool wind. Dense fog at many places in morning. Dry weather likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
18°C Dense fog would prevail. A partly cloudy to cloudy sky. A spell of rain or drizzle may occur at some places.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the accuracy of any advertisement in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper do not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products or services. The Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

Mobile night shelters arrive at protest sites

Delhi gurdwara body sends 25 buses

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI



Apart from makeshift elevated beds, waterproof tents and other resources, mobile night shelters have now made their way to Delhi borders where farmers' have been protesting against three farm laws for over 40 days now.

Around 25 buses, have been provided as mobile night shelters by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) at protest sites across the national capital to provide relief to the protesting farmers from the incessant rain.

The buses, equipped with beds and blankets, have been stationed at the protest sites since Tuesday night, volunteers from the DSGMC said.

Inderpreet Singh, a volunteer from the DSGMC at the Singhu border, said: "Out of the total number of buses, around 10 have been

Mobile night shelters at the Singhu border on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

stationed at the Singhu border and the rest at Ghazipur and Tikri borders. Each bus has a capacity to accommodate 10-15 people."

"Whoever approaches us for shelter will be accommodated in these buses. If the requirement increases, more such mobile night shelters will be arranged. Women and children will be provided separate buses, keeping in mind their comfort," said Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh said that some of the buses have air-conditioning facility as well.

your vacancies are fluctuating, how many people will you call for the mains and interview? If you have power to call any number of candidates for mains and interviews without declaring the actual vacancies, it is known as arbitrariness."

The court also directed the Centre and the UPSC to explain why there was a difference of eight vacancies for disabled in the notification advertised by it against what is calculated by NGO, Sambhavana, a registered

society of the disabled for the disabled.

It, however, declined the plea to stay the mains exam, which is scheduled between January 8 and 17.

Vacancies for disabled

Sambhavana, in its plea, has claimed that the UPSC reserved only 24 vacancies for persons with disabilities out of a total 796 'expected approximate vacancies'.

The NGO said this was below the 4% mandatory reservation under Section

Reinforcements rolling in for tractor rally today, say farmers

Protesters say arrangements have been made to deal with chill, incessant rain

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI



On the eve of the tractor rally, protesting farmers at the Singhu border on Wednesday remained determined to stay put till the Centre meets their demand to repeal the three controversial agriculture laws. They added that a large number of people from villages in Punjab and Haryana were on their way to the Delhi border to join the ongoing agitation.

Several groups of farmers joined the protest at the Singhu border ahead of the tractor rally, which will see thousands march along the eastern and western expressways around Delhi.

Despite the biting cold and incessant rain over the last few days, the farmers at the protest site maintained that all "hurdles" were being dealt with quickly and that all arrangements have been

made to help them sustain their fight indefinitely.

Kulwinder Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Patiala district, said: "I have been here since Day 1 and despite facing harsh weather conditions, our determination has remained the same. We are not going to move from here unless the laws are repealed. It is completely up to the government on when they want us to move. The day

we will return to our villages."

Stating that several women were part of a large contingent coming to the Delhi border on Thursday, Mr. Kulwinder said: "From our particular village, there are around 40 people who will reach the border for the tractor rally, several of whom are women. We are also prepared for Republic Day and to move forward in

our demands are met we will return to our villages."

Amritpal Singh, another farmer from Punjab, said: "We are here for a legitimate cause and we will stand our ground. The government will have to concede as we are not willing to return."

Amritpal Singh, another farmer from Punjab, said: "We are here for a legitimate cause and we will stand our ground. The government will have to concede as we are not willing to return."

The farmers who have been protesting for over 40 days now have demanded a repeal of the three farm laws and a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price.

In a significant decision concerning the welfare of DTC employees, the board also approved a rise in the ceiling of gratuity from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh in a move seeking to benefit all employees and enhance their retirement benefits.

The new low-floor CNG buses would be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities including real-time passenger information system, CCTVs, panic buttons, GPS and other features besides being friendly to differently-abled passengers.

DTC approves funding for purchase of 1,000 buses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) board meeting on Wednesday approved funds for the purchase of 1,000 AC low-floor CNG (BS-VI compliant) buses.

It also approved funds for the annual maintenance of buses up to 7.5 lakh km per bus covering 12 years' comprehensive maintenance insurance.

In a significant decision concerning the welfare of DTC employees, the board also approved a rise in the ceiling of gratuity from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh in a move seeking to benefit all employees and enhance their retirement benefits.

The farmers who have been protesting for over 40 days now have demanded a repeal of the three farm laws and a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price.

Amritpal Singh, another farmer from Punjab, said: "We are here for a legitimate cause and we will stand our ground. The government will have to concede as we are not willing to return."

The new low-floor CNG buses would be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities including real-time passenger information system, CCTVs, panic buttons, GPS and other features besides being friendly to differently-abled passengers.

'How are candidates selected for UPSC mains, interview?'

Selection without declaring actual number of vacancies amounts to arbitrariness, observes HC

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre and the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to explain how they were selecting candidates for the Civil Services mains exam and subsequent interview without declaring the actual number of vacancies, particularly for the disabled category.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh remarked, "When

34 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. The plea added that 4% of 796 vacancies works out to 32.

The petition further said that the UPSC's notice was "illegal as what is certain and clear for the disabled under the RPwD Act, 2016, is made vague, ambiguous and uncertain by the device of expected approximate vacancies".

"The notice becomes a fraud on the RPwD Act since it gives 4% reserva-

tion of 796 expected approximate vacancies. To reserve something of that which does not legally exist is to legally give nothing," Sambhavana said.

Another petitioner in the case, Evara Foundation, in its plea, has contended that the number of seats reserved for visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing and locomotor disabilities was not in accordance with the RPwD Act.

The court will hear the case again on January 29.

IIT-D job placement: over 900 get offers in phase 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

ICICI Bank, Goldman Sachs, HCL, Wells Fargo and IQVIA," it said. Commenting on the sectors that students were being employed in, the institute said that most of them have opted for jobs in their technical core.

In a statement, it said that students were selected for over 250 job profiles from 200 companies, including pre-placement offers.

"Top recruiters on the campus in terms of number of students recruited included Microsoft, Intel, Oracle, Tata Projects, EXL Services,

More than 400 organisations across sectors offering over 675 job profiles have registered as of now for hiring students and many recruiters are expected to recruit students in Phase II of the placement season, which will be held from the end of January to May.

CHHATTISGARH IS GROWING RAPIDLY

Be a part of the evolving state, invest in Chhattisgarh

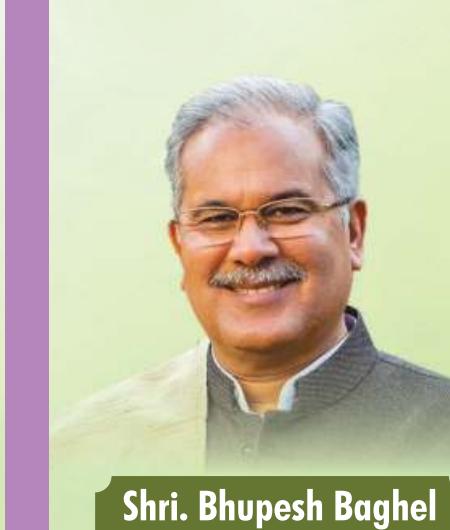
Why Chhattisgarh?

- Industry friendly Government
- Burgeoning steel and sponge iron sector
- Special impetus on Ethanol based industry
- 24 x 7 uninterrupted and quality power
- Hassle free Industrial permitting system
- Skilled workers in abundance
- Land diversion for industry in 15 days
- Discounts up to 30%-60% for land allotment on premium land. 60% discount for high priority industries.
- 30% discount in industrial land rate

- Only 5% interest is to be applied on transfer fee of industrial land
- Lease rate of industrial land reduced from 3% to 2%
- Steel industries to get exemption on electricity tariff
- Chhattisgarh State Food Processing Mission has been extended till 31 October 2024
- Relaxation to industries in fixed ground water rates from 20% to 33%
- Establishment of units for processing minor forest produce with capital grant up to 50%

Achievements in the last 2 years:

- 2136 crore GST in December 2019 – 2349 crore GST in December 2020 (increased by 10%)
- No. 1 in steel manufacturing during the first 3 months of nationwide lockdown (27 lakh tonne)
- No. 2 in MSME promotions and development
- 505 start-ups received recognition
- Chhattisgarh 'Best Emerging Start-up Ecosystem State'
- More than 15,000 entrepreneurs have invested in the state



Wear a mask & maintain physical distance to fight against coronavirus.

Visit: www.industries.cg.gov.in

f ChhattisgarhCMO

t ChhattisgarhCMO

**T.834, SHANMUGA NAGAR
CO-OPERATIVE BUILDING SOCIETY LTD.,
No.1, Kannan Nagar, Thanjavur - 613 007.
Tamil Nadu - India. Phone No. 04362 275246
SITE FOR SALE**

Applications are invited through e-Tender Cum Auction for the sale of vacant sites plots owned by the above co-operative building society. The detailed particulars are available by the following website. <https://tntenders.gov.in/nlcgep/app>

Secretary (I/c) President

kerala Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, Park View, Thiruvananthapuram 695 033, Ph: 0471-2560425/466
E-TENDER NOTICE
Notice Inviting EXPRESSION OF INTEREST for the "Selection of ICT Solution Provider"
Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited from reputed, professional and registered Firms/Companies/Agencies, to partner with Kerala Tourism as ICT solution provider, in its various Information & Communication Technology related marketing and promotional activities.
Category no., Title of Agency **Tender ID no.** **Tender Ref no.**
1 ICT Solution Provider 2021_TOUR404264_1 RS1_5008_2020_DOT
The Firms/Companies/Agencies should have tourism domain expertise, creative competency, adequate exposure and qualified & experienced manpower to handle the various aspects of tourism marketing and promotion, ranging from research to conceptualization of ICT tools, from creative content development to execution of ICT related projects.
The entire procedure of bidding will be as e-Tender. Interested Firms/ Companies/ Agencies may log on to <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> for details. Last date and time for receipt of EOI - 6.00 pm on 19.01.2021.
05-01-2021 Sd/- Director, Kerala Tourism

RAJASTHAN HOUSING BOARD
No. ACE-III/2020-21/291 **NIT No. - 10-2020/21** Date : 04.01.2021
Bids for (1) Construction of MIG-B (7.0X16.0M) 16 Nos. houses for Board Employee at Araval Vihar, Ph-III, Bhawadi, (2) Electrification work and other services of Kota Chaupati at CHS, Kunhari Kota are invited from interested bidders from 18.01.2021 to 29.01.2021. Other particular of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppt.rajknic.in>) of the state & <http://urban.rajasthan.gov.in/rhb> department website.
UBN:- RHB2021WSOB00277, RHB2021WSOB00278
Raj.Samwad/C/8654/2020-2021 Addl. Chief Engineer-III, Jaipur

CHENNAI METRO RAIL LIMITED
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Tamil Nadu)
Admin Building, CMRL Depot, Poonamallee High Road,
Koyambedu, Chennai - 600 107. INDIA
NIT No: CMRL/CON/PHASE-II/CORR-5/CP06/UG06/2021
e-procurement
International Competitive Bidding
e-TENDER NO : PHASE-II/CORR-5/CP06/UG06/2021
CMRL invites online tender through e-procurement bids for the Tender No. - CMRL/CON/PHASE-II/CORR-5/CP06/UG06/2021 (under JICA loan agreement ID-P272)- "Construction of underground stations at Kolathur, Srinivasa Nagar, Villivakkam Sub-urban Station, Villivakkam bus-terminus and Nathamuni with entry / exit ventilation shafts, plumbing, earthmatt architectural finishes including signages etc, including twin bored tunnels from Kolathur retrieval shaft to Nathamuni launching shaft and ramps with U - section in corridor-5 of CMRL phase-II project".-
Tender Documents can be downloaded from E-procurement website.
For further details, please visit e-procurement website: <http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>
www.chennaimetrorail.org Director (Projects)

BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI -221004
No.: BLW/MKTG/81-LE/Sale-Lease off loco/2020-21
NOTICE FOR EOI
By Chief Marketing Manager-I, BLW/Varanasi acting for and on behalf of President of India, invites EOI for the following works: S.N.:1, Name of work: Sale/Leasing/Hiring of in-service Diesel Locomotives and Sale of its spares/assemblies, Pre Bid Date and time: 20.01.2021 at 11.00 hrs. through Video Conference, Closing date and time: 05.02.2021 till 14.00 hrs. Note: Participants interested for Pre Bid Video Conference are requested to send their email-id to dycmgmbw@gmail.com on or before 18.01.2021 for sending link for Video Conference. The detail of above EOI is available at BLW website www.blw.indianrailways.com under link https://blw.indianrailways.gov.in/ticker/16094868623Global_EOI.pdf. The firms which desire to submit their response, are advised to go themselves on the above website link. PROBLW-M-14
Dy. Chief Marketing Manager-I
f / banarasloco work "Website: <https://blw.indianrailways.gov.in>"

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr. P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused namely Atif, S/o Iftekhar, R/o H.N.o. C-93, Gali No. 15, North Ghonda, Bhajanpura, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case of FIR No. 215/2020 U/s 376 IPC, at P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the accused Atif cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Atif has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Atif of case FIR No. 215/2020 U/s 376 IPC, at P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 15.02.2021.
By Order
Sh. Gaurav Sharma,
Metropolitan Magistrate (Central-05),
Room No. 241, 2nd Floor
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
DP/588/CD/2021-(Court Matter)

SEARCH FOR MISSING
General Public is hereby informed that one boy namely Sanjeev Kumar, S/o: Virendra Singh, R/o Village Govindpur Kalan, Post Gataura, P.S. Munda Pande, Dist. Moradabad, U.P., Age: 13 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Wheatish, Note: Menty week, wearing Yellow colour Baniyan and Pajama, has been missing from PF No. 3, Old Delhi Railway Station since 25.08.2019 at about 3:00 PM. In this regard a FIR No. 71/19, dated 09.10.2019 has been registered at P.S. Old Delhi Railway Station, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the boy but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about him please inform undersigned.
SHO
Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph. No.: 011-24368638, 24368641
P.S. ODRS, Delhi Ph.: 011-23961522, 8750871302,
9868352818, 9868377475

Punjab govt. to reopen all schools from today

Students from Classes V to XII will attend physical classes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government has decided to reopen all government, semi-government and private schools from January 7. The students from Classes V to XII will be allowed to attend physical classes across the State.

'Demand from parents'

State School Education Minister Vijay Inder Singla on Wednesday said that on persistent demand of the parents, the government has decided to reopen the schools from January 7.

"The school timings will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



State Education Minister
Vijay Inder Singla. ■ FILE PHOTO

and the students only from Classes V to XII will be allowed to attend physical classes in the schools," Mr. Singla said in a statement.

The Minister said the school managements have been asked to strictly comply with the directives of the government, especially the

advisory issued by the State Health department, to avert the threat of contraction of COVID-19.

Safety of children

He added that while giving his nod, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh directed the department to ensure safety of the children.

He said the Education department had taken feedback from the school heads on the issue.

Besides ensuring safety of the children, they had also suggested reopening of the schools before the annual exams for final revision of the course, Mr. Singla said.

(With inputs from PTI)

**PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
CONTROLLER OF STORES & DISPOSAL (SOUTH), F-1, SHAKTI VIHAR, PATIALA**

The On-Line Forward E-auction for the sale of various types of Scrap Material lying in various stores of PSPCL is conducted Every Week/ Bi-Monthly on "As-Is-Where-Is" and "As-Is-What-Is" basis for material such as-

"Damaged Distribution & Power T/Fs, HT/LT Alum Coils scrap, ACSR scrap, PVC/XLPE Cables Scrap, Central Store material, TRY/ TRW material, Machinery, Vehicles and other misc. items etc. and Scrap material related to Thermal/ Hydro Plants & Civil Mtcs etc."

"Used/Dirty T/I's Oil, Lubricating Oil & Battery/Cells Scrap etc. and various types of vehicles related to Projects & operation organization"

"E-waste such as computer, laptop, printer etc lying in various Central stores of PSPCL."

The new/prospective bidders, who want to take part in upcoming forward E-Auctions will have to register themselves with the PSPCL's authorized service provider M/s. Synapse Technologies Limited, Pune and will have to deposit the required PEMD of Rs. 1.00 lakh (refundable) with PSPCL, 12 days before the scheduled e-auction dated. Bidders interested in participating in the e-auction of Used/ dirty Transformer oil, Lubricating oil and Battery/ cells scrap, E-waste etc. will have to supply scanned copies of certificates of registration with M.O.E.F. as refiner/ dismantler/recycler along with the consents under the provisions of Water and Air Acts (Prevention and control of Pollution) for operating the facility for collection, storage and transportation of Hazardous waste from the respective State Pollution Control Boards to this office, 12 days before the scheduled e-auction date.

For more details on registration procedure and detailed terms & conditions of e-auction, please visit the link of PSPCL web site www.pspcl.in OR <https://www.indiaengineering.com/pspcl> OR https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yQTLXwNiOk2zYeTi9uMaRZcgwGw_d/view?usp=sharing

C 06/2021 Controller of Stores & Disposal (South), F-1, Shakti Vihar, Patiala, DPRB 76155/12/29/2021/541

Avian flu: more migratory birds reported dead in Himachal

Five birds also found dead in Chandigarh's Sukhna Lake

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

As many as 336 migratory birds were reported dead in Himachal Pradesh's Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary area on Wednesday.

In the Union Territory of Chandigarh, five birds have been found dead.

In all, avian influenza (H5N1) has led to the death of around 2,736 migratory birds in the sanctuary area in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. In Chandigarh, the reason for the death of birds has not been ascertained so far.

An official statement from Himachal forest department said that the cause of mortality among migratory birds at Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary has been identified to be avian influenza on the basis



Migratory birds in Sukhna lake. ■ FILE PHOTO

of test results of samples sent to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHASD), Bhopal.

"The wildlife wing of the Forest Department is working actively to control and contain this outbreak and field staff has been directed to maintain strict vigil and active surveillance on the situation. As per action plan

for preparedness, control and containment of avian influenza issued by government of India, rapid response teams have been constituted and deployed for collection and safe disposal of dead birds as per protocol. The infected areas are being disinfected and sanitized," said the statement.

In Chandigarh, five birds, including migratory birds, were found dead at Sukhna lake and its surrounding areas. A forest department team on the evening of January 5 found one dead common coot, and on January 6, four more birds of other species, including a common crow, were found dead, said a forest officer.

Sample have been sent for testing, the forest department said.

'88,000 calls on women helpline'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The Haryana police received 88,000 complaints on the women helpline number 1091 from January to November last year and registered cases in 2,802 complaints out of these.

Giving this information, Kala Ramchandran, Additional Director General of Police (Crime Against Women), on Wednesday said that 1091 was accessible from anywhere in the country and women police officers were deputed exclusively in each district to attend to such complaints on priority.

Durga Shakti App, the software application offering panic button for women in distress, has also gained more than 51,000 new users in Haryana during this period.

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE:

www.thehinduads.com

011-43579738 • 43579797

EDUCATIONAL

LAW AMBITION LAW INSTITUTE
Since 2001
www.ambitionlawinstitute.com
Your Key to Success Requires Ambition

LAW IS NOTHING BUT COMMON SENSE AND LOGIC,
- Alok Kr. Ranjan

JUDICIARY
FOUNDATION: 11 JAN.
C 8800660301

JUDICIARY
WEEKEND: 11 APRIL.
C 8800660301

IAS (LAW)
FOUNDATION: 15 JAN. 2021
C 8800662140

IAS (LAW MAINS)
TEST SERIES: 7 FEB.
C 8800662140

Toll Free : 1800120002001
Watch FREE Lectures on You Tube Channel of Ambition Law Institute

ANTHROPOLOGY

NEW ONLINE BATCHES Admissions Open DEC. 20 / JAN. 21

Learn from India's best teacher for UPSC SOSIN MADAM

Over 270 Hours of Teaching Test Series Included

Emphasis on conceptual command Doubts corner for regular doubts clearing

Timely completion of entire syllabus Updated class notes and discussions with coverage of latest studies

Exhaustive printed material Telephonic discussion on prior appointment

Writing practice through assignments Score enhancement tips & writing skills

SosinClasses INSTITUTE FOR IAS EXAMINATION

Ashok Nagar X' Roads, Hyderabad www.sosinclasses.com info@sosinclasses.com

VIVIJETHA IAS ACADEMY www.vijethiasacademy.com

Online Classes

ANTHROPOLOGY

Starts: 9th Jan.

011-42473555 9650852636

New Delhi-60

Faculty Required in a Reputed Coaching Institute in North East for AGRI-CULTURE optional and General Studies. Send your resume at: sraju09197@gmail.com or ahrn2103@gmail.com

GENERAL

LOST & FOUND

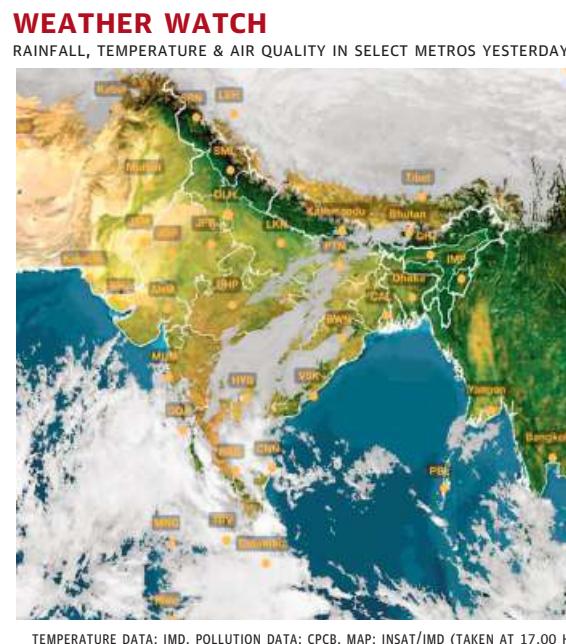
ORIGINAL MA Consolidated Marksheet of Md. Imtiaz Quadir s/o M A Ravoot, Jhulun Hostel, JNU lost in JNU on Jan '19. Lost Report filed in Vasant Kunj PS. Finders contact 8800924312.

**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA
NAGAR PARISHAD, BEED**
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. NPBEED/15 OF 2020-2021

Online tenders (e-tenders) in B-1 form for the following works are invited by Chief Officer, Nagar Parishad, Beed (Phone No. 02442-222423) on Government of Maharashtra Electronic Tender Management System from the contractor registered with Public Works Department of Maharashtra State.

Note : This tender notice contains 1 Work & detailed work wise notice can be viewed on website given below from Dt.11/01/2021

</div



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 11:00 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning very likely at isolated places over Konkan, Goa, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-28.8	13.3	13.3	Kozhikode	...-33.4	24.5	24.5
Ahmedabad	-27.8	11.6	11.6	Kurnool	0.1	30.0	23.1
Aizawl	...-24.0	13.6	13.6	Lucknow	...-28.9	12.7	12.7
Allahabad	-29.2	14.6	14.6	Madurai	4	31.6	22.4
Bengaluru	-25.4	20.0	20.0	Mangaluru	0.3	35.6	22.6
Bhopal	-29.6	15.2	15.2	Mumbai	...-30.3	19.8	19.8
Bhubaneswar	-32.0	15.9	15.9	Mysuru	...-30.8	18.6	18.6
Chandigarh	9.2	23.0	14.4	New Delhi	6	21.3	13.0
Chennai	126.2	28.7	23.1	Patna	...-27.8	16.9	16.9
Coimbatore	...-30.0	22.4	22.4	Poorni Blair	...-31.0	25.8	25.8
Dehradoon	-22.0	12.0	12.0	Puducherry	39.6	25.3	22.2
Gangtok	-15.9	7.9	7.9	Pune	...-32.0	19.7	19.7
Goa	-33.0	25.2	25.2	Raipur	...-30.6	16.4	16.4
Guwahati	-27.2	12.8	12.8	Ranchi	...-30.2	13.4	13.4
Hubballi	-29.0	19.0	19.0	Shillong	...-22.1	10.9	10.9
Hyderabad	-26.2	21.6	21.6	Shimla	12.1	15.4	7.3
Imphal	-28.0	6.0	6.0	Srinagar	9.9	9.7	0.6
Jaipur	-20.8	15.0	15.0	Thiruvananthapuram	0.5	31.5	24.4
Kochi	-31.2	24.4	24.4	Tiruchi	0.4	31.4	23.4
Kohima	-15.4	4.2	4.2	Vijayawada	...-30.0	23.2	23.2
Kolkata	-30.7	16.4	16.4	Visakhapatnam	...-29.0	23.0	23.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Adamedabad	20	.73	.44	.203	.141	GREEN
Bengaluru	...-49	37	.44	...-49	...-44	GREEN
Chennai	10	.5	.68	.83	...-49	GREEN
Delhi	22	.50	.70	.293	.157	RED
Hyderabad	7	.99	.13	.95	.112	RED
Kolkata	23	.34	.94	.364	.271	RED
Lucknow	11	.40	.54	.421	.398	RED
Mumbai	22	.101	.57	.338	.229	RED
Pune	...-39	40	.103	.93	...-49	RED
Visakhapatnam	21	.39	.39	.141	.116	RED

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor □ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Maharashtra's active case tally surges again; 2,570 discharged

4,382 new infections reported; death toll reaches 49,825; Mumbai adds 795 cases

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The pendulum swing in cases and recoveries continues in Maharashtra with the State reporting 4,382 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday as opposed to just 2,570 patients being discharged. The active cases once more breached the 50,000 mark to reach 50,808.

The total case tally has now reached 19,54,553. As many as 66 fatalities saw the death toll climb to 49,825. The cumulative recoveries stand at 18,52,759 while the State's recovery rate is 94.87%.

"Of a total 1,31,34,019 laboratory samples tested thus far, 19,54,553 (with the case positivity rate down to 14.88%) have returned positive with over 73,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, adding that the case fatality stood at 2.55%.

Cases in Pune district and western Maharashtra, however, continue on a downward slide despite a sharp spike in fresh cases in Pune, which in turn was offset by significant recoveries.



A health worker screens passengers for fever after their arrival from Gujarat at Dadar railway station in Mumbai on Wednesday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

Pune reported over 650 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,75,920. Eight deaths saw the toll rise to 7,787. As per the district administration figures, the active cases have dipped below the 5,500 mark to touch 5,498 while the district's recovery rate has gone up to 96.10%. Pune city's active case tally has come down to 2,700.

Mumbai city recorded 795 new cases to take its total infections to 2,96,320 of whom just 7,484 are active. Eight fatalities pushed the city's death toll to 11,155.

Nagpur district in Vidarbha registered nearly 500 new cases, taking the district's total tally to 1,27,818 of whom 4,520 are active. A single death saw the toll reach 3,230.

EOW's SIT to probe U.P. roof collapse incident

Team to inspect shelter's construction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday ordered a probe by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) into the Muradnagar roof collapse incident in which 24 people died. SIT will probe the entire incident, including the construction work, Additional Chief Secretary (Information) Navneet Sehgal said, adding that a detailed report has also been sought from the ADG.

"The Chief Minister has taken a serious note of the Muradnagar incident and decided to order a probe by SIT of EOW," Mr. Sehgal said.

NSA against accused

Twenty-four people, most of them attending a funeral, were killed and 17 others injured when the roof of a shelter at the cremation ground in Muradnagar collapsed on Sunday.

CM Adityanath had directed that the National Security Act be slapped against the accused persons and recovery of loss of public money and the amount of government compensation paid to the bereaved families be done from the erring engineer and contractor. He also announced a financial assistance of ₹10 lakh to each of the kin of the deceased and homeless affected families be provided a house.

The contractor wanted in connection with the incident was arrested from a village near the border of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts. Contractor Ajay Tyagi, who went into hiding after the news of the collapse spread, was nabbed near the Ganga canal bridge of Sathedi village by a joint team of Muradnagar and Niwari police.

The Ghaziabad police on Monday had arrested three people and sent them to judicial custody for 14 days.

Theme-based monitoring for Rajasthan forestry works

It will check progress and timely completion of projects

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

A new theme-based monitoring mechanism has been developed by the Forest department in Rajasthan to enable the field officers to ensure progress and timely completion of works for protection of flora and fauna. The new method will involve selection of a specific theme for every week.

Principal Secretary (Forest & Environment) Sreya Guha said here on Wednesday that the field officers in the districts would visit the sites of forestry works, including those of compensa-

tory afforestation, and shoot video footages of three minutes each. These video clippings will be uploaded on the theme-based monitoring groups.

The State government had recently laid emphasis on evolving an effective monitoring system for the development works and projects. The Forest department apprised its officials in all districts of the theme-based mechanism through videoconferencing earlier this week. Ms. Guha said the inspection reports would be submitted by the Deputy Conservators of Forests to higher officers, who in turn would carry out an intensive exercise for verification of works. The themes to be identified every week would make the task "challenging and demanding".

Eye on BMC polls, Cong. seeks free water for slum dwellers

Party takes a leaf out of the AAP campaign ahead of Delhi elections

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

the clutches of water tanker mafia. Providing free water in the slums would mean freeing the residents from such elements. Water is a basic necessity and making water available to poor population will be of great benefit," said Mumbai Congress president Bhai Jagtap.

Mr. Jagtap said as per his calculations BMC gets up to ₹500 crore as revenue from water bills every month. "This scheme, if implemented, would cost ₹162 crore per month. The amount is not big if we understand that 62% of the population will

benefit," he said.

Asked whether the party supported regularisation of encroachments, Mr. Jagtap said that even the previous Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government had assured of regularising slums up to 2017. "Providing water to regularised slums would not harm anyone. Moreover, it will completely eliminate anti-social elements such as tanker mafias from bastis who charge exorbitant amount from the poor for the sake of few litres of water," he said. While reiterating that the

Congress intends to contest all 227 wards in the BMC, Mr.

Jagtap demanded absolute waiver of property tax from houses up to 500 square feet. "This is not our demand, but we are only asking the present government to implement the decision already taken by the previous BJP-led government," he said, adding that both Houses of the State legislature have unanimously cleared this proposal and government resolutions were issued by the Devendra Fadnavis government twice in 2019.

Rajasthan Congress executive reconstituted after five months

7 vice-presidents, 8 gen. secretaries and 24 secretaries approved after protracted consultations

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

More than five months after it was dissolved during political turmoil, the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee's (PCC) executive was on Wednesday reconstituted with the appointment of seven vice-presidents, eight general secretaries and 24 secretaries. The All India Congress Committee announced the names of the new office-bearers in New Delhi.

AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal said in a statement that the State executive had been constituted after the approval of party president Sonia Gandhi. The exercise for the appointment of new office-bearers involved protracted consultations with party leader Ajay Maken, and several visits by PCC president Govind Singh



Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and senior party leader Sachin Pilot have congratulated the new office-bearers. ■ FILE PHOTO

Dotsara to the national capital.

The new vice-presidents of Rajasthan PCC are Govind Ram Meghwal, Harimohan Sharma, Jitendra Singh, Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya, Naseem Akhtar Insaaf, Rajaendra Chaudhary and Ramalal Jat.

Sitting MLAs
The general secretaries of the party's State unit are G.R. Khatana, Hakim Ali, Lakan Meena, Mangilal Garsia, Prashant Birwa, Rakesh Pareek, Rita Chaudhary and Ved Solanki. Four of them are sitting MLAs of the ruling party.

Mr. Dotsara, who is also the Education Minister, was

appointed the PCC president in July 2020 after the then Deputy Chief Minister and Congress State unit chief Sachin Pilot was sacked from both the posts following his rebellion. The party had also dissolved the State executive and other departments and cells during the crisis, which continued for a month.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Mr. Pilot have congratulated the new office-bearers. Mr. Gehlot expressed gratitude to Ms. Gandhi for constituting the executive and said the new PCC body would carry the policies, programmes, principles and ideology of the Congress party to the far-off villages in the State.

CIDCO appoints Maha Metro for balance works

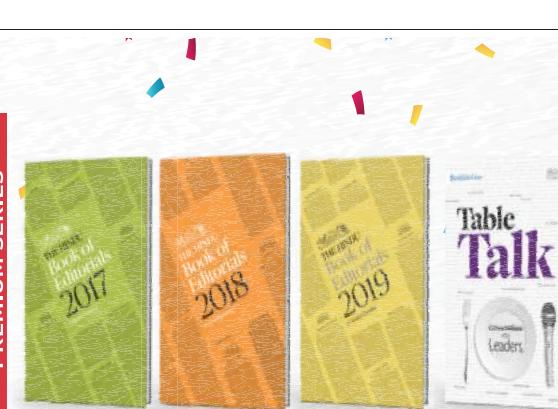
RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) on Tuesday decided to appoint the Maharashtra Metro Rail Corporation (Maha Metro) on deposit terms for the implementation of balance works of the Navi Mumbai Metro Line 1 measuring 11.1 km.

According to CIDCO officials, due to the pandemic and technical issues, the development work of one to six stations of the 11 stations on line 1 was not being implemented at the expected speed. Hence, the earlier contractor was reportedly terminated.

"The CIDCO is developing the Navi Mumbai Metro to make the public transport system in the city more efficient. The trial run of line 1 was conducted successfully on September 1, 2019," a press release said. The trial was flagged off by the then chief minister Devendra Fadnavis.

PREMIUM SERIES



SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS FROM THE HINDU GROUP



Building by accord

Beyond judicial clearance, Central Vista should be able to achieve national consensus

With the Supreme Court's 2-1 judgment clearing the Central Vista project for New Delhi, the Narendra Modi government can now indelibly reshape the national capital's visual landscape. Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari found no infirmity in the approvals granted by the Central Vista Committee, Delhi Urban Art Commission, the Heritage Conservation Committee and other bodies, paving the way for a new Parliament building and other edifices of government to come up. Justice Sanjiv Khanna, while agreeing with the majority opinion on the call for bid, award and the decision of the Urban Commission, dissented on the key issue of public participation in the entire exercise, which vitiated the endorsement of land use change. Governments should naturally be free to plan policies and programmes on behalf of the people, with no prior restraint, but subject to judicial review to ensure accountability. Judged against this principle, the Centre is simply exercising its privilege to plan a new set of buildings to house its establishment and the federal legislature. While the final cost estimate is unclear, planned expenditures are in excess of ₹13,450 crore for, among other things, a new Central Secretariat, Vice-President's enclave and Prime Minister's residence, besides ₹971 crore for the new Parliament. With a national consensus, such a colossal plan might be a crowning achievement for the 75th year of Independence in 2022. What is germane to the question, however, is its appropriateness in a year of unprecedented disruption due to COVID-19. This is when an elected government must give its undivided attention to schemes for the common weal and not be tempted into extravagant indulgence.

As Justice Khanna has pointed out, public consultation in a democracy requires citizens to be able to assess the project's rationale, armed with information on the official reasoning, and with sufficient time at their disposal. The essence of their view should inform the final decision. Opportunities for public consultation, already incorporated into modern laws and also in the Delhi Development Act, in no way fetter the executive. It would be appropriate, therefore, for the Centre to attempt consensus-building on Central Vista, without showing undue anxiety and haste in taking up all planned structures together. The pandemic's course points to uncertainty on restoration of economic health, and ameliorating the damage to large sectors of the economy, especially in services. In the run-up to 2022, the government will be tested on its ability to ensure good health for all citizens, revive normative education and provide stronger welfare. Prioritising Central Vista can prove to be a distraction from the task.

The pursuit of Assange

The U.S. must take a more benign view of WikiLeaks and drop Assange's prosecution

The decision by a British district judge to block the extradition of Julian Assange to the U.S. on the grounds of his mental health is a temporary setback to America's efforts to try the WikiLeaks founder under its law on spying charges. In her ruling, judge Vanessa Baraitser said "the mental condition of Mr. Assange is such that it would be oppressive to extradite him to the U.S." While it is a small victory for his lawyers and supporters, their fight to prevent his extradition and secure his freedom is far from over. Judge Baraitser has blocked his extradition only on medical grounds because she thought his possible detention in isolation in the U.S. would likely result in a suicide attempt. She rejected the defence lawyers' arguments that Mr. Assange's prosecution was politically motivated and violated his rights to free expression. She also observed that his conduct "took him outside the role of investigative journalism", agreeing with the U.S. authorities' assertion on WikiLeaks. Mr. Assange, who is wanted in the U.S. on multiple charges of breaking espionage laws and conspiring to hack a military computer, has repeatedly defended his organisation's operations, terming them public interest journalism. U.S. prosecutors allege that he helped former U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning crack an encrypted password and download classified information, the leaking of which endangered American intelligence sources. The Justice Department also claims that he had conspired with hackers to obtain classified information.

It is ironic that the U.S., which takes pride in its freedoms and commitment to protecting human rights, is relentlessly pursuing a man who exposed some of the worst rights violations by the American military. Until WikiLeaks released the classified documents that Ms. Manning downloaded, the world believed that the July 2007 killings of a dozen Iraqis, including two Reuters staffers, happened in a firefight with a U.S. aircrew. But video footage by WikiLeaks showed the aircrew laughing after they killed 12 innocent people. WikiLeaks files also exposed the killings of hundreds of Afghan civilians by U.S. forces. These were incidents the U.S. had swept under the carpet, and WikiLeaks had undoubtedly done public service, allowing the questioning of the conduct of war by the world's supreme military power. Instead of accepting its military's mistakes, the U.S. went after the messenger. In the U.S., sensitive or leaked information published by the news media is protected under the First Amendment, a reason why the Obama administration decided against prosecuting WikiLeaks. But the Trump administration reversed tack. The new Biden-led government must rethink its predecessor's approach. It is unfortunate that a fresh bail application filed by Mr. Assange's lawyers was rejected by a British judge on Wednesday. The British legal system should take a benign view of his condition and cause.

The challenge of distributing opportunities better

The line between 'reserved' and 'general' is blurring, impacting reservation as an idea and as practice



SATISH DESHPANDE

Doctors dealing with head injuries ask certain questions to determine if the patient is fully oriented. What year is this? Who is the prime minister of India? And so on. These are questions to which "Don't know" is definitely an abnormal response. I have often wondered whether "what are your views on reservation?" would be a good or a bad post-concussion diagnostic question. On the one hand, every Indian has an opinion. On the other hand, the most opinionated usually air their views without accessing their brains.

A changing divide

But things are changing. Until recently, reservation was at once our most divisive and our most unifying public issue. It divided Indians into the implacably opposed camps of the 'reserved' and the 'general' categories, with the latter dominating every aspect of public life with the partial exception of electoral politics. It also cemented internal solidarities within each camp, helping to hide hierarchical divisions and conflicting interests. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, the tables are turning; the line separating 'reserved' and 'general' is becoming blurred, while long-simmering differences within each group can no longer be suppressed.

How have these changes impacted reservation as an idea and as practice? The answer to this question has many dimensions.

Only those relating to dominant ideologies and the law are considered below.

Quota, ideology and merit

The ideologies that influence us most deeply shape our view of the world while remaining fully transparent themselves, like the lenses of our spectacles. Reservation – especially caste-based reservation – is a subject saturated in ideology. To eyes schooled in the dominant upper-caste ideology, quotas for "them" loom large and are seen as unambiguously bad and unjustified. Quotas meant for "us" – like the reservation for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), or for the wards of employees or alumni of universities and colleges – are not even visible as quotas, and even when they are, they do not look the same at all.

Here is an interesting example. Some years ago, the large public university where I teach formalised and standardised the uneven practices followed in the past by different departments. It created the largest quota we have by setting aside half of all postgraduate seats for the students enrolled in its own undergraduate honours programmes. In other words, 50% of our seats in MA/MSc honours degrees in the same subject are reserved for those with BA/BSc honours degrees in the same subject from our own university. This is a straightforward quota, but it is officially called the 'Merit Stream'.

It does not matter whether the name was deliberately chosen to ward-off the stigma of reservation or whether it is a genuine case of ideological blindness. What is interesting about the name is that it unintentionally brings together words such as quota and merit that are thought to be ideological opposites. The seemingly contradic-

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



tory name reminds us that, in fact, all quotas are merit quotas since they apply merit-based criteria of selection to the pool of eligible candidates.

Never mutually exclusive

This leads to the unsettling discovery that merit and reservation are not – they have never been – mutually exclusive. Just as every quota today involves fierce competition among the eligible, every claim to merit is also built on structures of exclusionary access, or reservation-like arrangements, that allow merit to be acquired.

For example, expensive private schools or coaching institutes are effectively reserved for the rich. In the real world, what is called merit is always a mix of ability, effort, and social capital, with the latter usually playing a big role.

This may seem rather obvious, but it is vehemently denied by the ideology of merit which constructs it as an exclusively individual and innate thing. In practice, 'merit' has been a code word expressing the upper-caste sense of entitlement. But its magic is weakening as ever-growing numbers of "them" start to score higher marks than many of "us". Moreover, the problems with depending exclusively on examination marks – the universal, and usually only, measure of merit in our system –

are becoming hard to ignore. As competition forces a descent into the absurdity of third and fourth decimal place rankings, a new note of doubt is creeping into the language of upper-caste entitlement.

The most recent judgment of the Supreme Court on reservation (*Saurav Yadav vs. State of Uttar Pradesh & Others*, October 18, 2020) serves as a reminder that it is an increasingly complex intersectional issue because social identities are no longer singular. The judgment also upholds the principle, stated and clarified in the wake of the so-called "Mandal judgment" during the 1990s, that the un-reserved category must be open to all, including those belonging to categories entitled to reservations.

Not surprisingly, ideology has lagged behind the law. Upper-caste sentiment has been slow to accept that the un-reserved category cannot be treated as a quota reserved for the upper castes. A side-effect of the "reservation castes" forcing their way into the un-reserved category has been the grudging acknowledgement that rather than recognising excellence, merit criteria actually perform a rationing function in our system. They offer a socially acceptable way to reconcile the large number of meritorious candidates with the small number of places available. True merit cannot be measured by examination marks alone, as the late Arun Jaitley declared in Parliament when piloting the EWS reservation bill.

Turning points

The year 2021 happens to be the centenary year of the "Communal" Government Order (GO) in Madras Presidency, which intro-

duced reservation based on castes and communities. January 9 will be the second anniversary of the EWS reservation law passed in 2019, which created the first explicit mechanism of reservation for the upper castes (though carefully not named as such). And January 26 will mark the 70th birthday of our Constitution, which created, for the first time in our history, the figure of the caste-less citizen. These three legal events also mark crucial turning points in the intertwined histories of merit-as-ideology and reservation-as-policy.

Acknowledging caste as norm

The Communal GO was the colonial government's way of acknowledging the inequalities of caste and finding politically expedient ways of dealing with it. The two unintended consequences of our Constitution were first, the birth of the ideology of casteless-ness, and the positioning of reservation as the explicit exception to this implicit norm.

The second was the consequent rise of the rhetoric of merit as caste-politics by other means. EWS reservation seems to bring the republic back full circle, tacitly acknowledging caste as the implicit norm despite continuing with the masquerade of castelessness.

We are nowhere near a resolution, but at least upper-caste politics is also in the open now. Most important, the ideological weaponising of merit is being exposed for what it is. Hopefully, this will enable us to tackle the shared challenge of finding better ways of distributing opportunities and measuring abilities.

Satish Deshpande teaches Sociology at Delhi University. The views expressed are personal

Boosting India with maritime domain awareness

Beyond monitoring Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean, India's initiatives could help generate intraregional synergy



ABHIJIT SINGH

The legendary military theorist, Sun Tzu, is once said to have observed that the critical element in battle was foreknowledge, but that it "could not be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor by analogy with past events, nor from calculations". As the great Chinese general saw it, foreknowledge could only be gathered with specialised tools and by men who knew the enemy well. A prior reading of the adversary and the theatre of battle, the master tactician asserted, could decisively shift the balance of fortune in war.

Nature of the enemy at sea

In the modern maritime arena, war is a more complex proposition than in the days of Sun Tzu, but 'foreknowledge' is still critical. Today, the enemy at sea is often unrecognisable – a terrorist, a pirate, a criminal or a sea robber – an invisible presence that lurks behind regular actors such as fishermen and port workers. Law enforcement agencies today need to be a lot more vigilant, highly reliant on high-grade sensors and communication networks that observe and track suspicious movements, sharing information in real time. Practitioners describe this state of enhanced consciousness as maritime domain awareness.

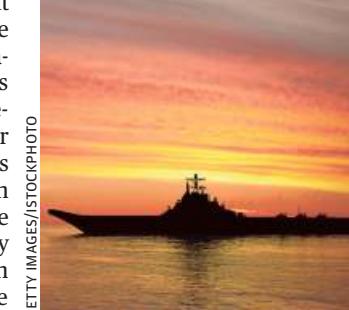
Of late, the Indian Navy has been on a drive to improve domain awareness in the Indian Ocean. The Navy is seeking to ex-

pand India's surveillance footprint by setting up radar stations in the Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh; Mauritius, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka have already integrated into the wider coastal radar chain network. The Indian Navy's efforts seem focused primarily on monitoring Chinese activity in the Eastern Indian Ocean, particularly in the seas around the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Since June 2020, when the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army clashed in Galwan in northern Ladakh,

Indian maritime planners have been wary of the possibility of a greater Chinese presence in the eastern littorals. In recent months, India's P-8I aircraft have scoured the near-seas for People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) submarines, and Indian naval ships have patrolled the Andaman Seas and eastern chokepoints to deter any maritime adventurism by Beijing.

Neighbourhood synergies

But maritime domain awareness is also generating cooperative synergies in the neighbourhood. There are reports that seven Indian Ocean countries – Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and the Seychelles – will soon post Liaison Officers at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region in Gurugram. France already has an officer at the IFC, and four other Indo-Pacific navies – Australia, Japan, the UK and the U.S. – have also agreed to position officers at the centre, fast emerging as the most prominent information hub in the Eastern Indian Ocean. From an operational perspective, however, the Indian Navy's priority remains



engagement in the Western Indian Ocean by positioning a Liaison Officer at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar. Established under the auspices of the Indian Ocean Commission that India joined recently as an 'observer', the RMIFC is a key centre of maritime information in the Western Indian Ocean. India has also posted an officer at the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) in Abu Dhabi to assist in the monitoring of maritime activity in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

The French connection

India's moves in the Western and South Western littorals have been facilitated by France, a key Indian Ocean power and a critical partner for India in the region. Having signed a logistics agreement with New Delhi in 2019, Paris is keen for a stronger partnership in the maritime commons. France has been instrumental in securing 'observer' status for India at the Indian Ocean Commission, and is pushing for greater Indian participation in security initiatives in the Western Indian Ocean. From an operational perspective, however, the Indian Navy's priority remains

South Asia, where the naval leadership remains focused on underwater domain awareness in the Eastern Indian Ocean.

China watch

There is concern among maritime watchers that the PLAN may be poised to develop a generation of quieter submarines that would be hard to detect in the near-seas. Three years after the Chinese staged a breakthrough in submarine propulsion by successful testing of shaftless rim-driven propellers, analysts fear that the next generation of PLAN nuclear submarines could be stealthier than ever, capable of beating adversary surveillance. The recent discovery of a Chinese unmanned underwater vehicle close to a southern Indonesian island suggests that China may already be mapping the undersea terrain in the approaches to the Indian Ocean Region, with a view to advance submarine operations.

Not surprisingly, India has moved to expand its underwater detection capabilities in the Eastern chokepoints. In a bid to enhance surveillance over sensitive sea spaces, the Indian Navy has inducted two Sea Guardian drones on lease from the United States. With nine operational P-8I aircraft, the Navy's coverage of the Bay of Bengal littoral is already considerable. With nine more aircraft planned to be inducted – three under an ongoing contract from the U.S. and six as part of a deal being negotiated with Washington – the surveillance footprint is set to further grow. Speculation abounds that New Delhi might also partner Japan in installing an array of undersea sensors near the An-

daman Islands to help detect Chinese submarines.

The real test

India's initiatives in the maritime domain are motivated by more than just strategic considerations. Indian decision makers recognise the need for cooperative tools to fight transnational crime in the littorals. White shipping agreements with 21 countries in the Indian Ocean have enabled a comprehensive picture of maritime traffic, even as efforts are underway to help smaller island states build capacity to combat regional threats. India's military satellite (GSAT-7A) may soon facilitate a real time sharing of maritime information with partners. These endeavours, naval officers say, are a manifestation of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), Prime Minister Narendra Modi's philosophical mantra that advances the idea of India as a 'security provider' and 'preferred partner' in the Indo-Pacific region.

Indian initiatives, however, are yet to bring about an alignment of objectives and strategies of regional littoral states. While cooperative information sharing allows for a joint evaluation of threats, countries do not always share vital information timely. To bring real change, India must ensure seamless information flow, generating operational synergy with partners, and aim to expand collaborative endeavours in shared spaces. That would be the real test of the maritime domain awareness 'game-changing' potential.

Abhijit Singh is a retired naval officer and Senior Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Central Vista cleared

The Supreme Court's clearing the Centre's plan for a bigger Parliament House and Central Vista must be looked at in a positive way. There may be many counter-questions on the timing of the project and its expenditure in the wake of COVID-19, but such challenges should not deter forward-looking plans. It is a great asset that is being created. However, the building infrastructure should be in tune with modern day technological advances. The Opposition should welcome this decision, for tomorrow it could be in the seat of power. Once completed, children

should be encouraged to visit the project and understand how Parliament is so sacred to the nation.

BALASUBRAMANIAM PAVANI,
Secunderabad

■ Only the 'negative aspects' seem to be getting highlighted rather than its inherent necessity and utility. Here is an excellent and alternative project having spectacular modernity, matched with the latest technology, architecture, and planned as an exemplary edifice of a 'power corridor'. It will definitely augment inner- and inter-departmental synergy. With the delimitation of constituencies, the number

of MPs will also increase. A mammoth infrastructural investment will open numerous opportunities for employment and livelihood.

CHANCHAL NANDY,
Durgapur, West Bengal

■ Why is the public exchequer being appropriated for unproductive issues? It is the (honest) tax-payer who has to foot the bill in the end. There are instances of mega projects such as giant statues as prime examples of how public money is being squandered without good reason. The bullet train project too is not going to serve any major purpose. A three times bigger Parliament is uncalled for

when technology could have been utilised to house lesser manpower. Looking at an almost empty Parliament during business hours, even the present one looks too big a one.

The urgency of the government to push ahead with the mega plan is beyond one's comprehension.

SUBRAMANIAN VENKATRAMAN,
Chennai

■ Jean Jacques Rousseau had famously said, "There is something called 'general will' which is not necessarily the majority will". Unilateral decisions have become second nature to the government of the day. It is a matter of regret that in rebuilding the 'temple of

democracy', democratic touchstones have been altered.

AYYASERI RAVEENDRANATH,
Aranmula, Kerala

Vaccination and after
The biggest vaccination programme can turn out to be the lengthiest if recipients have to be monitored after taking the Covaxin jab. Accelerated authorisation of Covaxin and saying that the vaccine will be administered in "clinical trial" mode will add to the logistics of the vaccination programme. Will it not be prudent to wait for a few weeks till the final trials of the vaccine are over and public confidence is gained?

Dr. THOMAS PALOCAREN,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Pataudi was witty
I recollect this anecdote after reading the column, "Richard Dawkins on collegemate Tiger Pataudi: 'Sublime' ('Sport' page, January 6). When India toured England in the early 1970s, a question was put to Tiger Pataudi by a cricket journalist on how he was planning to play the English fast bowlers, especially with one eye.

The importance of social interactions

A year of being homebound has deepened divisions in a society already fraught with prejudices



ASHA VENUGOPALAN

A year of restricting ourselves to the confines of four walls has made us keenly aware of our past exchanges, not only with our families, but also with the larger society. Of the many victims of the COVID-19 pandemic are social interactions and the millions of friendships that should have formed at schools and workplaces. In a country riven with oppressive prejudices, the past year may have widened the greatest fault line in the Indian society – religion.

Hindus and Muslims constitute not only the largest religious communities in India, but they perhaps also form the pair with the most fraught relations in the recent decade. Still, over the years, children and adults have mitigated the barriers created by socialisation through everyday interactions across religious groups. But what happens when everyone spends a year without forming new friendships or circumscribing their interactions to limited online (or offline) meetings? The pandemic's collateral damage may include tolerance and understanding between the majority and the minority.

Many inequities

The religious identities of Hindus and Muslims have shaped their social ties, their political loyalties and their interaction with the Indian state. The long history of Hindu-Muslim ties in the subcontinent is marred by grotesque violence fuelled by myths, rumours and prejudice.

The prevalence of cow-vigilante violence and 'anti-conversion' laws in recent years stands testimony to the worsening of inter-religious ties and deepening of prejudice by the majority community. In fact, tropes used to concoct fear about the Muslim community in the 1920s, such as 'cow-killers' and 'abductors of Hindu women', have found appeal even in the 21st century. The propagation of such stereotypes and the resulting prejudices allow for, and even nor-



Fraying bonds: In a country where religious and cultural prejudices run deep, social interactions are important to overcome bias. ■ FILE PHOTO

malise, violence against the minority to 'protect the self'. While it would be an exaggeration to claim that every social encounter between members of the two groups is troubled, all is certainly not well in India. The display of prejudice need not take a violent form at all. The refusal to grant tenancy to members of the Muslim community pushes them to seek houses in a more homogenised area, progressively creating ghettos and further fuelling stereotypes. How do you mitigate a prejudice that is so pervasive and intense?

Contact Hypothesis'

In 1954, Gordon Allport published *The Nature of Prejudice*, which contained, among other analyses of inter-group behaviour, a theory on prejudice. Specifically, it contained a hypothesis on how to reduce prejudice among majority and minority groups, popularly called the 'Contact Hypothesis'. The idea was simple: contact (with some caveats) reduces prejudice. Subsequently, decades of social psychology research arrived at a far simpler idea: friendship reduces prejudice. Could that work in India? The answer to both questions is the same: yes, to some extent.

The empirical evidence largely supports the proposition. Multiple studies have noted that frequent interactions between members of different religious groups vastly reduce negative perceptions and anxiety towards 'the other'. For instance, a study in 2017, conducted by Lokniti-CSDS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, found that 83% of Hindus who had a non-Hindu friend were comfortable having a non-Hindu neighbour, compared to 70% of Hindus who did not have a non-Hindu friend. Another paper discovered that even among people who consume media plentifully, interactions with people outside their community weakens prejudice.

Education, however, presents an interesting puzzle. A recent study finds that college-educated Hindus are more likely than non-literate Hindus to perceive the Muslim community negatively, irrespective of whether they had a friend from the community or not.

Although close interaction may 'significantly' reduce prejudices, this reduction is minimal at best. Firstly, the attitudes of suspicion and negativity towards the Muslim minority are deeply entrenched in the Indian society. Secondly, as this newspaper

has reported over the last few years, the ghettoisation of Muslims continues to define both urban and rural landscapes. This ensures that most instances of quotidian social interactions – be it an evening tea or meeting at markets – are effectively denied, thereby limiting the building of lasting friendships at workplaces and schools. Thirdly, while Hindu individuals might hold great respect and affection for Muslim friends, they might not hold the same view about the community as a whole since they would consider a Muslim friend to be an 'exception to the rule'. As a result, whilst interactions do take place and reduce prejudice, they do not cross a threshold already laid down by generations of socialisation and stereotypes.

Redefining the 'us'

Prejudice is a peculiar phenomenon. It is sustained through time, remains unaffected by even positive interpersonal relations, and provides the ammunition for communalism. Ashutosh Varshney asks in his book *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, 'Why do Hindus and Muslims live peacefully in Calicut but not in Aligarh?'. The answer, as he notes, lies in civic engagement and redefining the 'us'. Ties need to be forged not just between individuals, but also across larger communities such that the relationships breach the confines of religious identities and encompass a multitude of identities. Be it local neighbourhood associations, professional unions or linguistic associations, membership of this civil society creates a new 'us'. It allows society to maintain open lines of communication, even during a pandemic.

During a year in which students and professionals have remained within the confines of their houses, what they have missed out on are unencumbered everyday interactions with their peers. Bonds of camaraderie are built over watercooler chats and rants about bus mates. In the absence of such avenues, it behoves parents, teachers and employers to encourage engagement through social organisations or other forms of safe civic engagement.

Asha Venugopalan is a PhD Student, Department of Political Science, Stony Brook University

The quagmire that is Brexit

Once the euphoria of nationalism subsides, Britain will have to face the real issues that affect it



AMIR ALI

Brexit was a bit of a cliffhanger, but a deal was reached, merely a week before the deadline on December 31, 2020. It put to end years of agonised speculation over whether Brexit would end in a calamitous no-deal.

The agreement became yet another superficial grandstanding moment for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, as he was photographed with arms triumphantly outstretched, thumbs upturned on either end. He, quite predictably, proclaimed that Brexit had been "done". The reality, however, will be grimmer and the devil lying in wait in the detail of the document will inevitably catch up with Mr. Johnson. It may spell doom for his career in much the same manner as the Europe question has brought an end to the career of many a Conservative Prime Minister before him.

The deal was rushed through on December 30 for Parliamentary approval with little opportunity for any meaningful deliberation. It seemed as if everyone just wanted to put Brexit behind them and 'get on with it', as the catchphrase that caught on, put it. To the relief of many, a deal was struck, but the widespread sentiment seems to be that a bad deal is at least better than a no-deal.

Brexit may turn out to be a prop that hid the genuine problems of the country: de-industrialisation and the loss of manufacturing, a lopsided economy skewed far too heavily towards services and the financial sector, low productivity, and a country whose public services had been stripped almost to the bone by a decade of almost Scrooge-like Conservative government-enforced austerity measures. It was only the overwhelming presence of the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the British government to loosen the purse strings of the exchequer.

The question that now looms is what will happen to the U.K. and the EU. Both entities can never be the same again. The U.K. wants to be an independent island state with the full panoply of its sovereignty intact. Soon, the most ardent of Brexiteers are bound to realise the pyrrhic nature of this Brexit victory. What will Britain do with all the sovereignty supposedly retrieved from the EU? The sovereignty reclaimed will probably be like a currency whose value rapidly depre-

cates, or a worthless piece of ornamentation that no one knows what to do with.

Through the law of unintended consequences, Brexit might just result in huge changes for both the U.K. and the EU. Ultimately, the English nationalism at the heart of the Brexit project may be responsible for the break-up of Britain. One parliamentarian from the Scottish National Party (SNP) has described the recently concluded deal as a 'steaming mug of excrement'. The position of Northern Ireland has become that much more precarious and untenable in the union. As for the EU, this is also a bloc riddled with many problems.

The role of the liberal-Left

This is where the liberal-Left in the U.K., grieving almost disconsolately for the loss of Europe, could play a significant role. The tendency to stare too long at the Brexit door that has been shut in the face of the European Union prevents the liberal-Left from looking at other doors and windows that might have opened.

What has really made the EU project meaningful and worthwhile for many in the liberal-Left is its ability to underline the dangers of resurgent nationalism across various member states of the EU. To that extent, it is a worthwhile and noble project. The more fundamental flaw at the heart of the EU is the particular kind of economic neoliberalism that underpins it, 'German ordoliberalism' as it is known. It is this idea that may need to be redressed. Otherwise, it might become the undoing of the Europe project itself.

On a spectrum of soft and hard versions of Brexit, the deal that was effected by Boris Johnson was very much on the side of a hard one. Such a hard version of Brexit, favoured by the extreme Eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party, has always wanted to create a deregulated, low-tax economy. This could bring the U.K. into greater conflict with the more regulation-friendly EU, which is likely to view the U.K. as a competitor, leading to an increase in tariff barriers. For a future free of conflict, both sides should perhaps rid themselves of the particular versions of neoliberalism that have beset them and brought them to this point of bitterness. For the U.K., it is a Thatcherite, low-regulation, and low-tax neoliberalism with its associated hatred of Europe; for the EU, it is the German ordoliberalism that creates economic rules-based orthodoxy, that may in its rigidity undermine the worthy nature of the EU project itself.

Amir Ali teaches at the Centre for Political Studies, JNU, New Delhi

When art comes to the audience

Holding the International Film Festival of Kerala in four cities will help reach a wider demography

KUNAL RAY

The International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), hailed by many as the best film festival in the country, recently announced that the festival will be held across four locations in Kerala between February-March this year as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 to avoid crowding and eliminate travel for those willing to attend it. The festival, which is held in Thiruvananthapuram every year, will now also travel to Kochi, Thalassery and Palakkad. While this may be a special measure considering the state of the pandemic in the country and around the world, this model perhaps merits some serious consideration for the future.

It is a known fact that film festivals centred around cities have a certain logistical convenience. During such an event, film lovers from different parts of the State and country travel to the location to participate in the proceedings and catch up with the latest works in the world of cinema.

Film festivals, however, are not just screening avenues, but also spaces for dialogue and deliberation on the nature and craft of filmmaking. A film festival is thus much more than an event – it induces a culture of learning and thoughtful debate around the art of films. One could argue that the world of film festivals is a parallel institution and a breeding ground for generations of potential filmmakers. The educational role of such festivals cannot be overlooked or denied. Cinema, after all, is an outcome of sociopolitical and artistic sensibilities.

Local meets global

Film festivals usually offer a combination of foreign films with a generous dose of indigenous and homegrown filmmaking practices that are scheduled during the event. This lends a specific context to the festival, which exposes its viewers to films from various parts of the world, as well as some of the most exciting new works in the country. This rendezvous is paramount for festival programming and curation. The Kochi-Muziris Biennale also does a marvellous job of showcasing some of Kerala's talent in the visual arts alongside artistes

from all over the world. The creation of such a cultural cauldron is achieved not at the cost of erosion of local voices and talent.

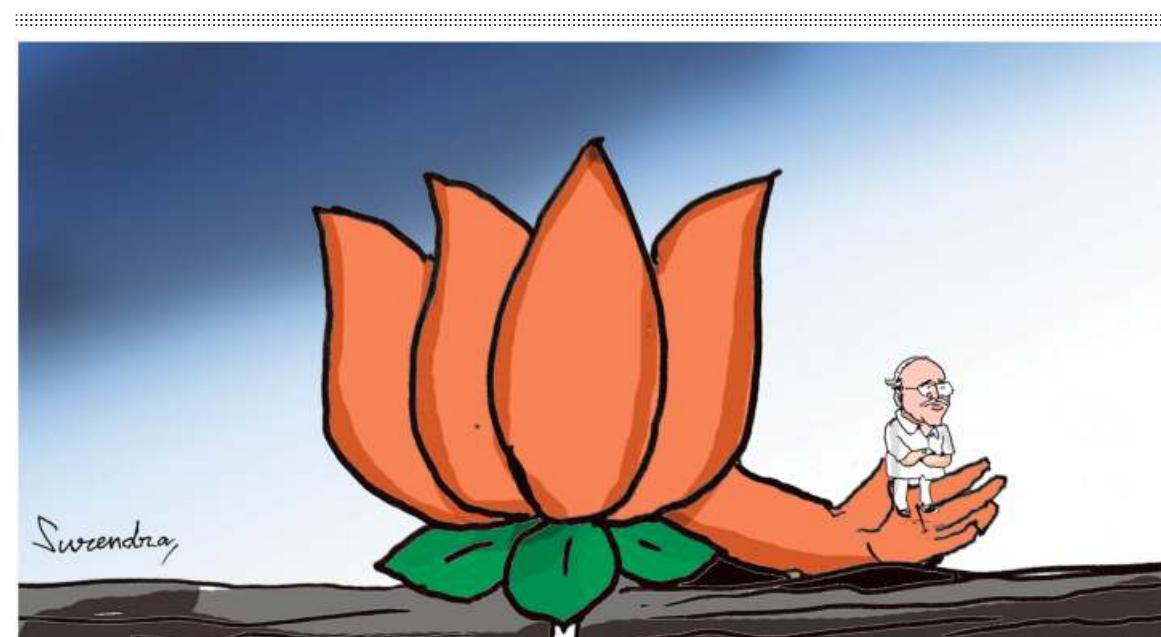
The decision to hold the film festival across four locations in Kerala, a step towards decentralisation, is a welcome move. This will help reach a wider demography – a population that may be interested in films but may not have the means to travel to the centre to participate in the festival. Instead of the audience going to the centre, the centre, thus, chooses to reach the audience. This further strengthens peoples' right to access cinema – to watch films made beyond their State and language, which are anyway released in local theatres for economic reasons.

Cinema literacy

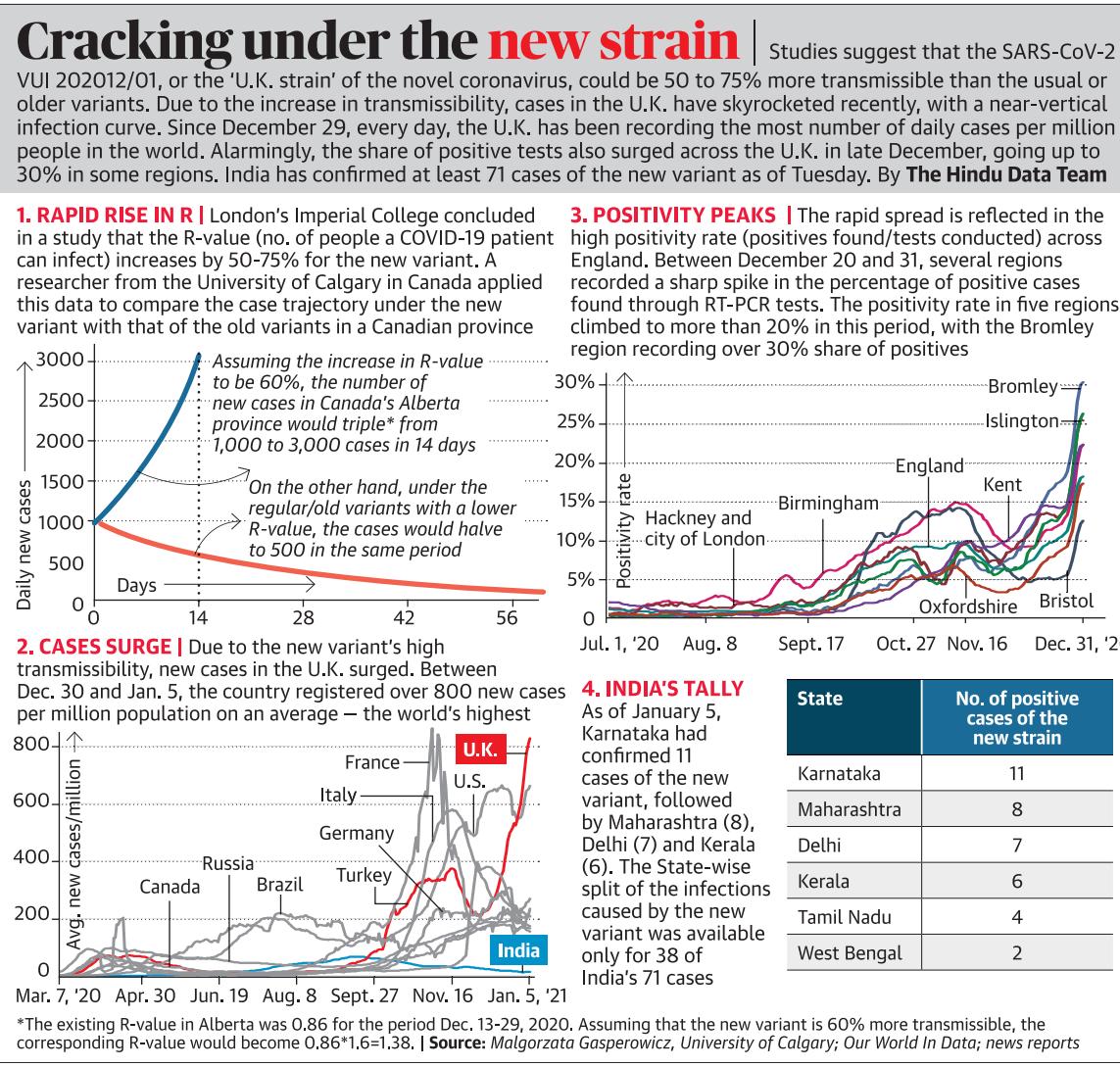
The step also assumes significance in a film-literate State like Kerala, where a popular legend is that South Korean director Kim Ki-duk was once mobbed upon his arrival in the State; the recent outpouring of grief after his death also demonstrates that Malayalis thought of the director as one of their own. Only films can induce cinema literacy, and for such literacy to be broad-based, film festivals are crucial. During the ongoing pandemic, several film festivals went online and we saw movies from the confines of our homes. However, that was a small number considering infrastructural challenges. Physical film festivals, thus, do not have any alternative in terms of outreach.

While I am not suggesting that taking cinema to various locations will herald major changes in viewership, it could perhaps work as an introduction to a different aesthetic altogether. Hence, the inclusion of local content is of great importance in a festival's programming. In recent times, the emergence of various locally-funded, smaller film festivals in non-metropolitan pockets of the country further indicates the need and desire to watch films beyond the usual commercial releases. In this spirit, the experience of a film festival should be regularly extended to all and not confined to cities alone.

The writer teaches literary & cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



DATA POINT



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 7, 1971

Complaint to Poll Chief

[NEW DELHI, January 6] A conference of representatives to recognised parties is likely to be called by the Election Commission to consider steps to check the use of unfair means in the coming mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha.

This was indicated by a team of nine Opposition leaders to pressmen after its meeting with the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. S.P. Sen Verma, this morning. The parties represented in the team were Congress (O), the Swatantra, the Jan Sangh, the B.K.D., and the Samyuktha Socialist Party.

The Opposition leaders had presented a memorandum alleging blatant abuse of Government machinery by the ruling party (Congress-R) and suggesting that the Election Commission should go ahead with the proposed electoral reforms proposed a year ago to make the law more stringent in regard to corruption.

One instance mentioned by the Opposition leaders to Mr. Sen Verma was that the use of all vehicles could be stopped on the polling day, barring those relating to emergency transport.

The Opposition leaders in their memorandum said the press conference held by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi on December 29, 1970 was an instance of misuse of Government machinery for party ends by the Ruling Congress.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 7, 1921

Land Acquisition Agitation.

[POONA City, January 6] A representative of the Associated Press interviewed Mr. N.N. Kelkar to-day with reference to the Mulshi valley land acquisition agitation, which is gaining strength owing to the support promised by Mr. Spoor to the agriculturists, who waited on him personally to explain their case at the "Kesar" office on Tuesday. Replying to the statement by Mr. R.D. Tata published in the "Bombay Chronicle" Mr. Kelkar said Mr. Tata's argument about the lands in the valley being mortgaged, was based on an exaggeration of the situation. Though some of the lands may be technically hypothecated, the agriculturist owners have the right of redemption, but have been ever in actual possession tilling the soil and living on it as if they were owners for all practical purposes. The peasantry again is threatened with the destruction of homes-teds which at any rate have been their own.

FROM PAGE ONE

Supreme Court to study anti-conversion laws

The court had said in its Hadiya case judgment, "Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity. Neither the State nor the law can dictate a choice of partners or limit the free ability of every person to decide on these matters."

In the K.S. Puttaswamy case, or 'privacy' judgment, a Constitution Bench said the autonomy of the individual was the ability to make decisions in vital matters of concern to life. Any interference by the State in an adult's right to love and marry had a "chilling effect" on freedom. Intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy, which is inviolable, the court has said. "The absolute right of an individual to choose a life partner is not in the least affected by matters of faith".

Cong. silent on Tharoor's R-Day tweet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday distanced itself from party Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor's tweet that the government should cancel the Republic Day celebrations in view of the pandemic.

"Now that @BorisJohnson's visit to India this month has been cancelled due to the #COVIDSecond-Wave, & we don't have a Chief Guest on #RepublicDay, why not go one step farther & cancel the festivities altogether? Getting crowds to cheer the parade as usual would be irresponsible," Mr. Tharoor tweeted.

Without commenting on the tweet, the Congress said it fully backed the idea of celebrating the "democratic and constitutional festivals". "...the Congress feels that such festivities should be celebrated with enthusiasm," spokesperson Alka Lamba said.

Budaun case: Priyanka flays U.P. govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday targeted the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh over the gangrape and murder of a 50-year-old woman in Budaun. She said, "The Uttar Pradesh government's intention towards women security is suspect."

"In Hathras, the government administration did not listen to the pleadings. The government protected officials and suppressed the victim's voice. In Budaun, the police officer neither listened to the pleadings nor did he examine the place of the incident. The U.P. government's intention on women's security is flawed," Ms. Vadra tweeted.

The 50-year-old woman was gangraped allegedly by a priest and two others at a temple complex. While the police claimed to have arrested two persons, the main accused is reported to be missing.



Slow progress: A person rowing his boat on a layer of ice on Dal Lake in Srinagar on Wednesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

2 die, over 100 houses damaged due to snow

Kashmir Valley remains out of bounds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two persons died and over 100 houses were damaged in snow in the Kashmir Valley on Wednesday. The Valley remained out of bounds for the fourth straight day, while 22 stranded families were rescued and shifted to safer locations.

An official said CRPF sub-inspector H.C. Murmu died after a structure collapsed under the weight of snow and hit him at the residence of a former legislator in the Hazratbal area here.

Reham Begam, 70, from Shah Mohalla at Trehgam in Kupwara, died after snow accumulated on the house roof fell and buried her in.

A police spokesman said 22 stranded families were rescued and shifted to safer locations in Kulgam.

"The families were living

Amid war of words, Mamata meets Governor

Cabinet inductions in the wake of high-profile ministerial exits likely to have figured in discussion

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

As the war of words between West Bengal's ruling party and the Governor continued to rage unabated, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday made a surprise visit to Raj Bhavan and met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

While there was no word from the Chief Minister about the hour-long meeting, Mr. Dhankhar tweeted a photograph of the meeting with Ms. Banerjee. "Myself and Mrs Sudesh Dhankhar greeted Hon'ble Chief Minister @MamataOfficial when she visited Raj Bhawan today (sic)," Mr. Dhankhar said, sharing the photograph on social media.

According to sources, Ms. Banerjee is likely to induct new members to her Cabinet after two Ministers – Suvendu Adhikari and Laxmi Ratan Shukla – resigned recently. Ms. Banerjee is most likely to have discussed a suitable date for the swearing-in. It is also seen as an attempt by



A file photo of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee meeting Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar in February last year.

the Chief Minister to break the ice.

Hours before the meeting, Trinamool Congress spokesperson and MP Kakuli Ghosh Dastidar reiterated the party's stand on the Governor, saying that it wanted him removed from the post.

Five TMC MPs, including Ms. Dastidar, had only a few days ago written to President Ram Nath Kovind seeking

the Governor's removal.

Mr. Dhankhar had earlier in the day reiterated that the 2021 polls in the State should be free of violence.

He added that it pained him when he heard that some people called fellow countrymen "outsiders" in the State.

The last one-to-one meeting between Ms. Banerjee and the Governor was al-

most a year ago, when the former visited the Raj Bhavan in February. With the recent acrimonious public utterances by both Raj Bhavan and the Trinamool Congress, relations have hit a new low.

Plea to HC

The West Bengal government on Wednesday filed an application before the Calcutta High Court urging it to recall or modify its judgment directing the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to audit cyclone Amphan-related relief over allegations of irregularities.

As the process of disbursement of funds is continuing, the direction for audit by the CAG at this stage is premature, the State government said. It also prayed for a stay of operation of the judgment of December 1 last year passed by the Division Bench of Chief Justice T.B.N. Radhakrishnan and Justice Arjit Banerjee.

Claiming that absolute transparency was maintained regarding disbursement of funds, the application stated that direct benefit transfer to beneficiaries' bank accounts was adopted to curb any kind of foul play in rendering financial assistance to the cyclone-affected people in 16 districts of the State. The State government submitted that the process of disbursement of funds is still going on and as such District Magistrates would not be in a position to submit utilisation certificates.

In its judgment on December 1, 2020, the Division Bench had urged the CAG to conclude the performance and financial audits within three months of receiving a copy of the order.

Praying for recalling the order, the State government stated in the application that a list of 20.7 lakh accepted applications for house building grants was displayed on 'Egaye Bangla', the official website of the West Bengal government.

(With inputs from PTI)

'Cases of crime against women reduced in U.P.'

Police inform panel headed by Congress leader Sharma

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI



Anand Sharma

The Uttar Pradesh police on Wednesday informed the parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs that the number of cases of crime against women had reduced in the State, even as many members flagged various incidents, including the gang rape and subsequent death of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in Hathras in September last.

This was the fifth meeting of the committee headed by senior Congress leader Anand Sharma on Atrocities and Crimes against Women Children.

Sources said a BJP member of the committee pointed out that the number of cases may have been dipping simply due to the police's reluctance to register complaints. "The BJP MP said and rightly so, that when the government doesn't register cases, naturally the number of cases

will decline," a member said. Even in the Hathras case, the family had to struggle to get the police file an FIR and in the initial investigation, the police insisted that the girl had not been raped contrary to her own statement, before her death, two weeks after the incident.

Mr. Sharma, however, said the case had been transferred to the CBI and was no longer under the police's jurisdiction. The committee members said the U.P. police, unlike

other States, had not registered a single zero FIR. A zero FIR can be registered in any police station irrespective of where the incident took place. The provision of a zero FIR came up as a recommendation in the Justice Verma Committee Report in the new Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, devised after the December 2012 gang rape of a 23-year-old girl in the territory.

In Wednesday's meeting, representatives from the Rajasthan police and administration were also present. It has met representatives of the Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, U.P. and Maharashtra governments. The West Bengal government refused to send its representatives after it had a spat with the Union Home Ministry over forcible transfer of three IPS officers. The Chief Secretary and the DGP of Haryana also could not attend the Wednesday meeting, citing the ongoing farmers' protest.

Punishing a person for falling in love is a crime'

It is among worst forms of crime: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

It is a crime to punish a person for falling in love and yearning to have a life in each other's company, the Supreme Court has said.

"You cannot punish someone for falling in love," Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde observed orally at a hearing on Tuesday. It was among the worst forms of crime, he said.

The Chief Justice, leading a three-judge Bench, was hearing the case for granting bail to 11 former khap panchayat members who ordered the murder of a Da-

lit boy, his cousin and a girl. The boy had eloped with the girl. The cousin had helped them run away. They returned to the village a few days later, thinking the anger had cooled. They were caught and hanged from a tree. The genitals of both the boys were burnt before they were hanged.

The gruesome incident happened at Mehrana village in Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh in 1991.

The Uttar Pradesh government objected to the bail plea on health grounds.

The case will be taken up after two weeks.

PARADIP PORT TRUST

GLOBAL INVITATION OF REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION for Development of Western Dock on BOT basis to handle Cape size vessels

Paradip Port Trust (PPT) invites applications from interested parties (Applicants) in accordance with the Request for Qualification (RFQ) document in order to shortlist competent Applicants who would be subsequently invited to bid (RFP) for the project. The last date and time of submission of the RFQ is 18.02.2021 till 11:00 hrs. For details log on to website of Paradip Port Trust : www.paradipport.gov.in

Superintending Engineer (H)

PPT/PR/360/2020-21, Dt.06.01.2021

STATE INDUSTRIES PROMOTION CORPORATION OF TAMILNADU LIMITED (A GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU UNDERTAKING)

No.19-A, RUKMANI LAKSHPATHY ROAD, EGMORE, CHENNAI - 600 008

Short Term Tender Notice
Tender Notice NIT.No. 120/CW/DO/T.No. 124/2020-21
Dt. 05.01.2021.
For and on behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, sealed tenders are invited under "Two Cover System" for the following work from Class-I State level Civil / Electrical contractors registered in State/Central or Government of Tamil Nadu undertakings having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be received upto 3.00 PM on 25.01.2021 and the same will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM.

Name of Work Approx. value EMD

Rs.10.10 lakhs (Including 12% GST) Rs.32,500/-

1. Construction of RCC Precast Compound Wall, Laying of Paver Block Roads, and PCC side drains, Supply & Erection of Steel Trusses for sheds (S) Nos) and providing High mast arrangements and Street Light system for the Solid Waste Disposal Centre at SIPCOT IT Park, Siruseri and Industrial Complex, Cheyyar, Siruseri.

2. Construction of 3m vent RCC Box Culvert at the entrance of SIPCOT Information Technology Park, Siruseri.

3. Providing Barbed Wire Fencing with Precast RCC Posts arrangements to safeguard the avenue Plants to be planted in the OSR areas at SIPCOT Industrial Complex, Cheyyar.

EMD is in the form of DD in favour of SIPCOT Ltd., payable at Chennai. (In the name of Tenderer / Firm only)

The tender Schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in

DIPR/100/TENDER/2021 SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SIPCOT, Chennai - 8

Tender received without EMD will be put rightly rejected.

By Order of Commissioner, BMC

City Engineer, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation

OIPR-13002/11/0068/2021

Competitive Bidding through e-Procurement Notice Inviting Tender Bid Notice No. BM-CDD-CE-03/2020-21

On behalf of Commissioner, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Vivekananda Marg, Near Kalpana Square, Bhubaneswar-751014, the City Engineer, BMC, invites ON-LINE tenders under two-bid system for Outsourcing of different category of Personnel, Diploma Civil Engineer, Diploma Electrical Engineer, Degree Civil Engineer, Amin, Data Entry Operator, Head Assistant etc at various worksites under BMC through Manpower Service Provider from reputed and experienced Outsourcing agencies to provide different manpower services for Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation. The details of the bidding process are as follows:

Sl. No. Name of the Work EMD Cost of Bid document Period of Completion

1 Engagement of Agency for providing Man-power for Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation 1% of quoted value inclusive of GST Rs.11,200/- One Year (to be extended maximum up to 2 years on requirement)

The Bid documents containing eligibility criteria, scope of the work, terms and conditions of the tender and draft agreement can be downloaded from e-procurement portal of the State Government www.tenderodisha.gov.in in "e.w.e.08.01.2021 (10:00 Hours IST) to 25.01.2021 (17:00 Hours IST)". The tenderer should submit Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) @1% of the total quoted value and the cost of bid document (as indicated in the above table) along with the tender ON-LINE. The bid should be submitted by the bidders in two parts. The two parts of the proposal are Part 1: Technical Proposal and Part 2: Financial Proposal. The Technical & Financial Proposals will be submitted through online. Bids received online will be opened at 11:00 Hours IST on 27.01.2021.

The tender received without EMD will be put rightly rejected.

By Order of Commissioner, BMC

City Engineer, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation

OIPR-13002/11/0068/2021

Committee to look into Ladakh issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A committee would be constituted under Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy to find an appropriate solution to the issues related to language, culture and conservation of land in the Union Territory of Ladakh, the Home Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. A 10-member delegation of Ladakh met Home Minister Amit Shah.

"In view of the difficult geographical conditions and the strategic importance of Ladakh, all the representatives expressed their concern with respect to conservation of language, culture and land of Ladakh, participation of the people of Ladakh in its development, protection of employment and changes in the demography of Ladakh region. A protest was also held in this regard before the LAHDC [Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council] elections," the Ministry said.

Land and culture
Mr. Shah said the Centre was committed to developing Ladakh and conserving its land and culture. The committee would comprise members of the delegation that met the Home Minister, elected members from Ladakh, members of the LAHDC and ex-officio members representing the Government of India and the Ladakh administration.

HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19? CALL APATHAMITA ON 14410

Wear Mask | Follow Physical Distancing | Maintain Hand Hygiene

6 Feet

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)
Advt No. J.S.V.296 (2020-21)

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (CIVIL) PLANT SDW S/E SRINIWASPUR: NEW DELHI: 110065
Press N.I.T. No. 24 (2020-21)

"STOP CORONA; Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

S. Name of work Estimated Cost Date of release of tender in E-procurement solution Last Date/ Time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution

1 Cleaning of Gravity Duct No. 3 from Taxi Stand behind Cambridge School to Okhla STP. (Re-Invite) 2,10,81,670/- (Based on DSR 2016 and approved rates) 04/01/2021 03/02/2021 up to 3:00PM

*Further detail in this regard can be seen at <https://delhi.govtprocurement.com>

EX.ENGINEER (CIVIL) PLANT SDW S/E

O-853: 30.12.2020 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RAIRANGPUR

OIPR-250/10/11/0022/2021

Pranab was ready to break norm in 2014

12 avian flu epicentres in India

Rajasthan, M.P., Himachal and Kerala directed to enforce culling of sick birds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Avian flu has been reported at 12 epicentres in four States – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala. Directions have been given to enforce culling of sick birds as per the government's 2015 National Avian Influenza Plan, according to a press statement from the Ministry of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry on Wednesday.

In these States, cases of bird flu have been confirmed in crows in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, in "migratory birds" in Himachal Pradesh, and in poultry and ducks in Kerala.

Avian influenza (AI) viruses have been circulating worldwide for centuries with four known major outbreaks recorded in the last century. India notified the first outbreak of avian influenza in 2006. Infection in humans is not yet reported in India though the disease has an animal origin.



Preventive moves: A Forest Department official picking up a sick crow in Jaipur. ■ PTI

"There is no direct evidence that AI viruses can be transmitted to humans via the consumption of contaminated poultry products. Implementing management practices that incorporate bio security principles, personal hygiene, and cleaning and disinfection protocols, as well as cooking and pro-

cessing standards, are effective means of controlling the spread," the Health Ministry advisory added.

In India, the disease spread mainly from migratory birds coming into the country during the winter months from September–October to February–March. However, secondary spread

by human handling cannot be ruled out.

In 2005, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, had prepared an action plan which was revised in 2006, 2012, 2015 and 2021, for the guidance of State governments in the prevention, control and containment of avian influenza.

Modi briefs Merkel on vaccine status

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India will deploy its ability to combat the pandemic across the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday. The two leaders interacted via video conference, and Mr. Modi described the discussion as fruitful.

"The Prime Minister briefed Chancellor Merkel on the developments in India with regard to vaccine development and assured her of the commitment to deploy its capacities for the benefit of the world," the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Walter J. Lindner, German Ambassador, said in a social media message that the discussion also included Asia-Pacific developments. India and Germany are marking the 70th anniversary of a formal diplomatic relationship and the 20th anniversary of a strategic partnership.

Another vaccine dry run in all districts tomorrow

Each district will identify three types of session sites

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry will organise another "dry run" to test the vaccine roll-out on January 8 in all districts, said a Health Ministry release on Wednesday.

"As a simulation of actual execution, another round of dry run/mock drill in all 700-plus districts of all States/UTs [Union Territories] is planned on January 8, 2021, to ensure efficient planning and management for vaccine delivery in each district. Each district will identify three types of session sites, similar to the previous dry run, including a public health facility (District Hospital/Medical College), private health facility and rural or urban outreach sites," the Health Ministry release said.

The only exception will be districts in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana that had a dry run on January 5 and will have one more on January 7.



Around 1.7 lakh vaccinators have been trained.

and Haryana that had a dry run on January 5 and will have one more on January 7.

The dry run was important to check the performance of the CO-WIN software, which include beneficiary verification, vaccination, cold chain and logistics management, bio-medical waste management and adverse event reporting, the release said.

"The dry run will also fa-

miliarise the State, District, Block and Hospital level officers on all aspects of the rollout. This activity will help administrators in strengthening the linkages between planning, implementation and reporting mechanisms, identification of any residual challenges prior to the actual implementation and provide confidence to the programme managers at all levels to carry out smooth implementation of the vaccination drive," the release noted.

Around 1.7 lakh vaccinators and 3 lakh vaccination team members had been trained on the process to be followed at the vaccination sites, which include beneficiary verification, vaccination, cold chain and logistics management, bio-medical waste management and adverse event reporting, the release said.

The dry run was important to check the performance of the CO-WIN software, whereby all beneficiaries will be informed and tracked on matters of vaccine administration.

"The dry run will also fa-

Criticism of vaccine approval continues

Some have termed the move 'hasty'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Joining the criticism of the government's green light to COVID-19 vaccines, the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN), a federation of popular science movements across the country, condemned the "hasty regulatory approval".

In a statement, the AIPSN said that while it lauded the efforts of Indian scientists in developing indigenous vaccines in less than a year, the government and the Central Drugs and Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) had "...seriously damaged these hopes, and also undermined confidence in Covaxin and other vaccines against COVID-19, in particular concerning Covaxin, due to lack of evidence and unsatisfactory scientific basis, non-transparency and con-

cerns around possible political pressure."

The CDSCO approval for SII's Covishield, which is based on the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, should have awaited results from the ongoing Phase-III trials and bridging studies in India to demonstrate efficacy and that the vaccine had the same effect in Indians as in the United Kingdom. "However, given the U.K. approval, the approval by the CDSCO, although not ideal, may be understandable," it noted.

However the approval for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin was more problematic as the Subject Expert Committee of the CDSCO had called for additional data from the Phase-III trials, but "appears to have been pressured overnight into reconsidering its decision."

While there has been no breakthrough on the ground in terms of disengagement or withdrawal of troops, the two sides have held eight rounds of Corps Commander-level meetings, and are "in consultations" to hold the ninth round shortly, an official said.

U.S. meddling in stand-off: Chinese envoy

America's relations with others must not target any specific country, says Sun Weidong



We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in the China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country

SUN WEIDONG
Chinese Ambassador to India

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U.S. relations with others not target any specific country," Chinese Ambassador to the India-China stand-off.

"We have noticed recent remarks with reference to China by the U.S. side. We firmly oppose any third-party meddling in China-India border issue and hope the U

With sanitised safari Jeeps, smaller tour batches, and a will to bring wildlife tourism back on track, national parks and sanctuaries across the country are now opening the gates to local tourists

AISHWARYA UPADHYE AND NIVEDITA GANGULY

When the forest gates opened at Maharashtra's Tadoba Andhari National Park in October in 2020, after a gap of seven months, Hyderabad-based K Venkateswarlu was one of the first visitors to step inside. Passionate about wildlife photography, Venkateswarlu has been visiting forests for 13 years. But this time, given the pandemic, his experience was different.

"The process of checking into resorts was longer and there were many rules in place. Guests above of 55 and children below 10 years were not allowed. At Tadoba, in the initial days, the rooms were not given on a twin-sharing basis even if you had travelled together. And there were far less number of vehicles being allowed into the forest," says Venkateswarlu.

His experiences with the forest safaris were different too. Of the eight safaris he did, he got a glimpse of the tigers of Tadoba just thrice. "This is unlike my previous experiences when I had a great sighting of tigers. We couldn't see much other wildlife like deer, sambar, wild dogs too," he says.

He had a similar experience in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, one of the prime tiger territories of India, when he visited in October. "While the tiger sightings were relatively less during the initial safaris, after the forests reopened, the tourist Gypsies were allowed to move out of their designated routes to enter other areas if a tiger was sighted there. It was a move to encourage wildlife tourism, an industry severely crippled due to the pandemic," says Venkateswarlu, who is gearing up for his next two trips to Bandhavgarh in January.



Now you see me, NOW YOU DON'T

The pandemic impact

When the Government of Karnataka decided to reopen its national parks and sanctuaries in the first week of June, wildlife photographer Harsha Narasimhamurthy breathed a sigh of relief. "In my career of five years as a professional wildlife photographer, I hadn't stayed away from the forests for so long," he says.

Harsha and his fellow photographer were the only two tourists at the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka's Chikmagalur district. "The first safari was a unique experience as the animal behaviour had changed due to prolonged human absence. Even animals like spotted deer and elephants which usually do not care about safari Jeeps, were startled to see them and moved to take cover. It took them almost four-five days to get used to the Jeeps again," says Harsha.

Here alone, there are 220 Gypsy drivers and over 70 tour

According to a 2018 study by the World Travel & Tourism Council, the total economic contribution of wildlife tourism to global GDP was about \$343.6 billion and supporting 21.8 million jobs. With wildlife tourism coming to a grinding halt this year, it had put both the wildlife and the communities that depend on it at risk. The opening up of the forests was seen as a beacon of hope for the Gypsy drivers and tour guides.

"In Bandhavgarh, we mostly see long-stay foreign tourists and wildlife photographers coming in all through the year. They are a major source of income for us. But now the tourist profile has changed. We are mostly getting families from the neighbouring State of Chhattisgarh and very few photographers who have started booking safaris recently," says Banty Yadav, a driver in Bandhavgarh.

Here alone, there are 220 Gypsy drivers and over 70 tour



guides dependent on wildlife tourism. According to Yadav, who has been dependent on the wildlife tourism industry for over a decade now, the safari bookings are way below the pre-pandemic days, though weekends are packed now.

"Apart from the lack of foreign tourists, the constantly changing guidelines by the State and Central government have been impacting travel trends," says Ravinder Jain, owner of Ranthambore Regency and Sawai Vilas near Ranthambore National Park. "We have 130 rooms in both our properties and throughout the year we have an average of 70% occupancy. Usually, 90% of our guests are foreign tourists. Now, we are relying solely on local travellers. We opened the resorts in October as winter is the best time to visit the national park. Things looked good when we reopened as we had bookings from Jaipur, Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. But the guidelines issued by the Maharashtra Government in the last week of November that requires tourists coming from Rajasthan to undergo an RT-PCR test, has led to cancellations. Before the guidelines, we had almost 10 to 15 bookings per day, but now it is barely three or four guests," says Jain.

It is not just the upkeep of the hotels but also sanitisation that is adding to the expenses. "We sanitise vehicles on arrival and

Chasing the big cats (Clockwise from left) A tigress and her cub in the forests of Kabini; at Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra; tourists in Tadoba ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND KR DEEPAK

then the luggage is also sprayed with sanitisers. There is an added expense of over ₹60,000 per month. The check-in process is completely contactless and the keys are handed to the guests in sealed packets. We sanitise the rooms before and after the guest leaves, and also between stays," Jain adds.

In Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh, however, the situation is better. "Tiger sightings have been good in November and in the first week of December," says Sheikh Alim, a driver who has been in the industry for the past three decades. "Tiger Diana and her four cubs are being regularly sighted," he adds.

The travel companies specialising in wildlife tourism are now limping back to business. Bengaluru-based travel and photography company, Toehold, which conducts guided tours in India, Africa, Antarctica and Norway is now relying solely on domestic tours.

"Until last year, we conducted 10 to 12 tours in a year at Kabini, but this year since June we have been hosting three to four every month there. This is largely because it is closer to Bengaluru and most of the tourists prefer to drive down rather than take a flight," says Jayantha Sharma, founder of the company. She adds that the forest's lone black panther pictures that went viral during the lockdown have added to the popularity.

Looking ahead

As most national parks in Karnataka are open during the monsoon unlike the ones in North and Central India, Toehold saw a surge in demand for tours to Kabini Tiger Reserve, Bandipur National Park and Bhadra Tiger Reserve. "We are gearing up to host tours in Ranthambore National Park and Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary in the next two months," adds Sharma.

People in the industry are hopeful that 2021 will make up for the loss of business of 2020. "More and more people are shunning crowded places and escaping into forests. This is a good opportunity for the wildlife tourism sector," says Yadav.

Meditation on rice flour

How this yoga artist's love for the art of *kolam* is gaining momentum in Japan



JAYANTHI SOMASUNDARAM

Nao Yamashita's house, located in the city of Nara, Japan, is a stand out – unlike traditional Japanese houses in a quaint suburban neighbourhood, hers boasts an impressive *marghazi* set of *kolams* at the entrance. "During the winter season, birds and insects are famished. I have seen them peck my *kolams* clean. That's the time I became more conscious of my understanding of *bhuta yajna* (feeding animals, birds and insects)," explains Yamashita, over a Zoom call.

A graduate of Fine Arts from Musashino Art University, Tokyo, when Yamashita joined a Vedanta study camp in 2017 in Japan, the first question she asked was: "Do you know any place where I can learn to draw *kolam*?"

"I've always loved patterns



Cultural outreach (Inset) Nao Yamashita, (from left) the *kolam* art on display in Japan ■ NAO YAMASHITA



and had a curiosity towards Indian culture. The first photograph of the *kolam* I saw left a lasting impression and I was keen to learn to draw it," she says.

Her Vedanta course led her to Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Anaikatti, Coimbatore, where she met her first *kolam* teacher, Revathi. "In Japan, there is nothing similar to the *kolam* culture. About 400 years ago, they used to create large 3D sand art in Kagawa Japan, which was called Ze-nigata Sand Art."

Nao's love for *kolams*, led her to organising *kolam* workshops in 2018. Yamashita recollects the time she had to rent a yoga studio in Osaka, to host the first session. "In Japan it's difficult to get permission to draw in open grounds, even on personal roads, so we had to opt for a closed space," she says, adding that the first workshop saw over eight participants, follow-

ing which, she did 13 more workshops. "In these workshops I also teach some *shlokas*. And before lunch we chant a *shloka* from the *Gita*, followed by an Indian lunch," she adds.

Due to the pandemic, her workshops have moved online and the proceeds go to charity. "All the contributions are used to support *kodomo shokudo* (children's cafeteria) that offer free or low priced meals to children from the economically-backward classes in Japan."

Through her workshops, Yamashita hopes to teach the significance of *kolams*. "I find Japanese introverted by nature, so my workshops include

a 'kolam' brainstorming session'. The first thing participants are asked to do, is to move their hands freely and draw whatever comes to mind, regardless of the quality or perfection. It helps break the ice."

At the start of 2020, prior to lockdown, Yamashita visited Avuroville and Chennai and met many seasoned *kolam* experts. Her interaction with Chennai-based Gayathri Shankarnarayanan, a home-maker, widened her perspective of *kolams*.

"For me *kolams* are not only a form of self expression, but a form of prayer. It's very meditative, and helps me connect with mother Nature," she says.



a 'kolam' brainstorming session'. The first thing participants are asked to do, is to move their hands freely and draw whatever comes to mind, regardless of the quality or perfection. It helps break the ice."

At the start of 2020, prior to lockdown, Yamashita visited Avuroville and Chennai and met many seasoned *kolam* experts. Her interaction with Chennai-based Gayathri Shankarnarayanan, a home-maker, widened her perspective of *kolams*.

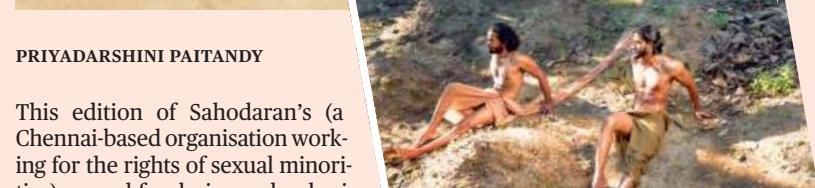
"For me *kolams* are not only a form of self expression, but a form of prayer. It's very meditative, and helps me connect with mother Nature," she says.

One with the soil

The latest edition of Sahodaran's annual calendar is devoid of glamorous sets and costumes, focussing instead on the rawness of the Earth



Days and dates Snapshots from the calendar ■ ARNOLD REVANT



PRYADARSHINI PAITANDY

This edition of Sahodaran's (a Chennai-based organisation working for the rights of sexual minorities) annual fundraiser calendar is a stark contrast from those of previous years. The fashion-oriented calendar is muted, sans bright colours and grand ornaments. What it carries instead is a message loud and clear: that of preserving the earth.

"The pandemic gave me time to reflect," says Sahodaran founder and fashion designer Sunil Menon who has been bringing out this calendar since 2010. "It's a homage to something we take for granted. We have abused it so much over centuries," he adds.

Models pose on different types of terrain – red soil, granite quarry, sandy beach – to showcase the wide variety that humankind is blessed with. "I looked at it from a practical angle. Given the situation, we could not travel or have a big team. We shot in Kerala in and around my house, and in Kovalam on ECR," says Sunil over the phone from Irinjalakuda, Kerala.

Sunil admits he did not plan to come out with a calendar this year, because of the lockdown and the pandemic. But in the beginning of December, calls from loyal fans of the annual calendar propelled him to get back on track.

Then, Kapil Ganesh, who started this initiative with Sunil a decade ago and

was the photographer till 2017, called from Dubai, asking about the progress of this year's calendar. "I told him, it's so difficult to even step out of the house, how can I get a calendar ready? But he said it showcases Sahodaran's work and has been an annual fixture and there should not be a break," says Sunil, adding that he promptly started ideating with his current photographer Kabilan AP and finished the project in two days.

The initial plan was to have just six shots. But eventually, a flood of requests poured in from upcoming male models, and now the calendar has 12 photographs featuring eight of them, along with Mekha Rajan, a well-known face from television commercials and Namitha, who won Miss Transgender India last year. Over the years, this project has been known to give opportunities to male models from humble backgrounds: Welders, auto drivers, shop assistants... "I like to work with the underdog," says Sunil. "There's so much joy in being part of that."

To book a calendar, call 044 23740486. Each is priced at ₹1,500.



CM YK

**Unusual hotels**

Being stuck within four walls at home has triggered a thirst for the exotic. A spate of unusual accommodation has come to their rescue, including tree houses in Jamaica, game reserves in South Africa, glass igloos in the Arctic wilderness and lighthouses in Ireland.

Unlike traditional hotels that have rooms within one block, these are spread out, offering privacy as well as physical distancing.

Take 700'000 Heures, the world's first ephemeral hotel, by Thierry Teissier. "Each year, our wandering hotel sets up in one or more destinations in the world for a few months," says Teissier. One needs to become a member to access these experiences. This year, the brand is setting up two nomadic hotels in Japan: one within a traditional Japanese house in Ise and the other in a temple in Koyasan. "Until 2020 people chose our experiences for the uniqueness of our trips. They enjoyed the privacy and immersion in different cultures. But in this period of time, this experience of being far away from the crowd and the risks associated, is of course more valuable than ever."

Sure these stays work out expensive — €1,250 per night per person in Japan and €750 in Salento, Italy (including meals and activities) — but Teissier says people who love travelling are looking for new experiences. With COVID-19 making travelling precious, people will travel less but better.

Cleared for takeoff

Planning that much-needed holiday? Here are the top travel predictions for 2021

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Last year, with the pandemic hitting the world, flight tickets were cancelled, passports gathered dust, and globe-trotting luggage festered in storage.

This was also the year when virtual travel rose, as people sat on their couches in pyjamas wistfully scrolling through peaks of Dolomites, the caves of Algarve and hot pools of Rotorua, adding destinations to growing bucket lists. No wonder, according to a survey by Booking.com, 94% of Indian travellers indulged in "Search Escapism," seeking vacation inspiration and comfort through the lockdown.

Now, 2021 is upon us, filling us with the promise of a better year, with vaccines and vacations. What will travel look like the next time you pack a suitcase? Industry pros tell us what they believe.

**Private yachts**

According to an April 2020 report by Technavia, the "luxury yacht market size has the potential to grow by 310 units during 2020-2024, and the market's growth momentum will accelerate during the forecast period".

Charlie Birkett, co-founder and CEO of Y.CO — a Monaco-based yacht company that supports over 100 large yacht operations worldwide — says, "It is clear clients are viewing yachting as a freer alternative to shore-based holidays. Because of a yacht's natural

isolation and self-sufficiency, it can be seen as a safe respite from the restrictions that have been imposed in some areas."

Stating that there is a lot of demand for charters early this year through to next summer, Birkett says the popularity of chartering private yachts comes from the fact that the world has changed, and people are emerging with new perceptions and priorities. More people are re-evaluating the way they work and live, realising that they can run businesses remotely and therefore spend more time at sea.

Y.CO's guests have varied requirements — some bring their family together after a disrupted year and want a "high-energy" crew to create treasure hunts and teach their kids to windsurf, while others want to simply escape to remote destinations. Some require heli-skiing instructors, submarine pilots or private tutors. Currently, yachting is about exploring secluded areas, spending maximum time on board and less in ports. This year, says Birkett, many want to experience an out-of-the-ordinary destination in an out-of-the-ordinary way: Kayaking with orca whales in the Antarctic peninsula, or skiing in the island archipelago of Greenland.

Offbeat destinations

While many are more than happy to revisit their favourite cities or make do with a selfie in front of the Eiffel, this year, however, there has been a shift in that pattern. Mohit Batra of Scandinavian Tourism Board says, "There is a definite interest in offbeat places both for reasons of escaping the crowded cities and for spending quality time with family and friends." Travellers

wish to explore places they have not visited before, while also addressing their safety concerns. Mohit lists places such as Mons Klint and Bornholm in Denmark and the Skane region in Sweden. Longer stays and authentic local experiences such as foraging are in demand too.

The Swedish Right of Public Access entitles you to forage and set up camp almost anywhere you want in Swedish Nature, as long as you treat flora, fauna and other people's property with respect and care, adds Mohit. As a result, Sweden has turned the entire country into a DIY-restaurant, with The Edible Country initiative. Top chefs are curating menus with ingredients found in Nature — the local forests are filled with berries, mushroom, and nettles. Several wooden tables have been placed all over the country, and anyone can make a reservation.

Buyouts

Paranoia may not necessarily be a bad thing for the hospitality industry. For, from it stems yet another travel trend of 2021: Buyouts — these allow guests to reserve an entire/part of a property exclusively for a set period of time. Buyouts have existed in the last five years but now more hotels, resorts, ranches and other accommodations are making themselves available across various budgets.

The 288-year-old Normandy Farm (Pennsylvania, US) that started offering its property for buyouts in 2018 has seen more enquiries and bookings for 2021. "After the events of 2020, it seems folks from both the corporate and social side appreciate exclusivity more than ever before," says Suzanne Gildea of Normandy Farm. The benefits include more flexibility in how the space is used and the relief in knowing that you are safe with people from just your group.

**Offline travel**

As a result of the virtual making its presence felt in almost all aspects from dating and shopping to work, people have been experiencing online fatigue. To get away from it all, they are now looking at offline travel. Which means once they reach their destination or accommodation, they simply switch off their phones. They are also choosing accommodation that does not offer Wi-Fi, high tech gadgets and other trappings of modern life.

Properties like Len Foot Hike Inn in North Georgia (US), private island resorts like Petit St Vincent in the Caribbean, and traditional homes like Ansitz Hohenegg in Bavaria among others give you that much-needed digital detox while providing access to acres of pristine Nature. Increasingly, hotels are also throwing in the option where guests can submit their mobile phones and gadgets at the reception for a designated time period and take the time to connect with themselves and those around. Zoom calls be gone.



Cleanliness first (Left) MicroGo's contactless hand hygiene station GoAssure being used in a hospital; and in a rural community in Hazari Tola, Uttar Pradesh; being used in a school • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

microbial solutions to maintaining hygiene. During lockdown, its product GoAssure, billed as India's first smart automated hand hygiene station that ensures WHO compliance with a 20-second routine, has been in demand throughout the country.

Currently, MicroGo's products are being used in hotels, airports, hospitals and educational institutions in India. The start-up also reaches out to remote villages and rural communities through hygiene awareness drives. "The whole idea of sanitation is that it should be available to all, irrespective of social standing," Dave adds.

In contrast to approximately 4.5 litres of water used in a regular hand wash routine, GoAssure does the same job with just 0.02 litres. Its touch-free mechanism takes users through the steps of hand washing as mandated by the WHO, with a built-in dispenser for a hand rub formulation (recommended by WHO) and water, and also alerts them with LED lighting when they may have not completed procedures correctly.

Among its other products are GoPure, that disinfects raw or waste water using its patented Tubelet technology to dispense chlorine dioxide gas,

GoClean, a surface disinfectant and GoFresh for cleaning fruits and vegetables.

Dave cites the instance of a three-month pilot project at a luxury hotel in Chennai using GoAssure, which has helped with both compliance and generated savings.

"The hotel saved money, but also maintained the hand hygiene compliance at 92%, besides indirectly saving 16,000 litres of water."

MicroGo's devices are run with Internet of Things (IoT) technology, which allows the start-up to customise protocol to suit the client's requirements. So in a school setting, for instance, the GoAssure hand wash station can record the time and number of students who have used it, and also pinpoint those who have not followed the procedure correctly. "This allows the school authorities to monitor compliance and also work on minimising infections in the classrooms," says Dave.

MicroGo's products are available only in India currently, and its work is supported, among others, by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Department of Science and Technology and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

The clean route to health

Here's how biotech start-up MicroGo has been focussing on making hygiene mandatory in everyday life

NAHLA NAINAR

For much of 2020, the world has been battling an invisible enemy called COVID-19. And while the pandemic has forced us to recalibrate our lives like never before, it has also reinforced some home truths, such as 'prevention is better than cure'.

"It's easy to wash your hand if you see some dirt on it. But as you can't see the COVID-19 virus, people can become complacent about something like hand hygiene, which is the first step to prevent the spread of infectious diseases," says Rachna Dave, founder of the Chennai-based biotech start-up MicroGo.

Working on preventive technology since 2016, Dave, who did her doctoral studies in Microbiology at New York University, quit her job as a scientist at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Kalpakkam, to co-found MicroGo with Deepa Avinash and Deepthi Subbaraya.

The company, which operates out

of the Golden Jubilee Biotech Park (inside SIPCO), focusses on delivering solutions for water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) issues.

"Our public is still not very aware about hygiene. So we need other reasons to mandate that our people practise hygiene and yet don't find it an economic burden," says Dave.

MicroGo has seen its initial focus shifting from anti-infection and anti-

microbial solutions to maintaining hygiene.

Currently, MicroGo's products are being used in hotels, airports, hospitals and educational institutions in India.

The start-up also reaches out to remote villages and rural communities through hygiene awareness drives.

"The whole idea of sanitation is that it should be available to all, irrespective of social standing," Dave adds.

In contrast to approximately 4.5 litres of water used in a regular hand wash routine, GoAssure does the same job with just 0.02 litres. Its

touch-free mechanism takes users through the steps of hand washing as mandated by the WHO, with a built-in dispenser for a hand rub formulation (recommended by WHO) and water, and also alerts them with LED lighting when they may have not completed procedures correctly.

Among its other products are GoPure,

that disinfects raw or waste water using its patented Tubelet technology to dispense chlorine dioxide gas,

GoClean, a surface disinfectant and GoFresh for cleaning fruits and vegetables.

Dave cites the instance of a three-month pilot project at a luxury hotel in Chennai using GoAssure,

which has helped with both compliance and generated savings.

"The hotel saved money, but also maintained the hand hygiene compliance at 92%, besides indirectly saving 16,000 litres of water."

MicroGo's devices are run with Internet of Things (IoT) technology, which allows the start-up to customise protocol to suit the client's requirements. So in a school setting, for instance, the GoAssure hand wash station can record the time and number of students who have used it, and also pinpoint those who have not followed the procedure correctly. "This allows the school authorities to monitor compliance and also work on minimising infections in the classrooms," says Dave.

MicroGo's products are available only in India currently, and its work is supported, among others, by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Department of Science and Technology and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

**Towards a better 2021**

At the beginning of this year, we asked you, our readers, what you wanted out of 2021. And now, we have roped in experts and social



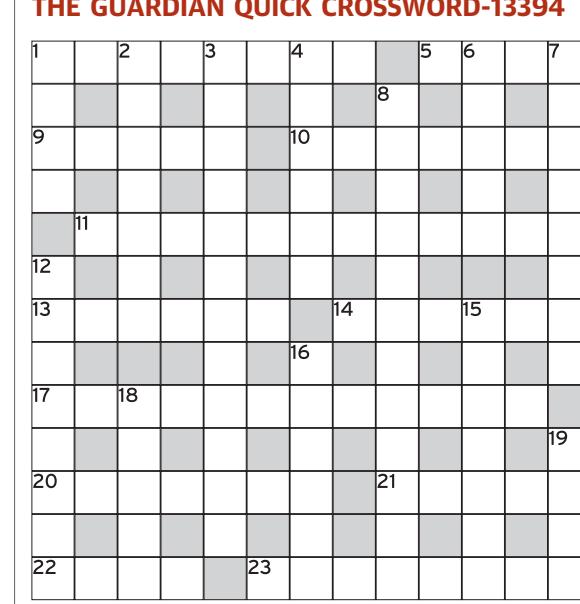
influencers to help you actualise these hopes and resolutions. Starting out with these two:

"I want to learn from my mistakes."

Jan 10, 5 pm: International table tennis player Sathiyan Ganeshkaran says we often want to learn from our mistakes, but we must also observe our successes and learn from those too. Catch our Live with this Arjuna awardee as he shares his process of self introspection and record keeping. This Sunday, on Twitter, @THMetroPlus.

"I want to stop overthinking."

Jan 13, 6 pm: Divija Bhasin, a Delhi-based counsellor says we often overlook physical symptoms of anxiety building up inside. In this Live, Divija will be discussing how she makes herself stop overthinking and slipping into nervous spirals, with the first step being how to recognise when you are in one. Coming Wednesday, on Instagram, @thehindumetroplus.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13394

© GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA LTD., 2016

To play the Guardian Quick Crossword, visit www.theguardian.com/crosswords. The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sunday & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

6 Person from Burundi (5)

7 Hard wood (8)

8 City of Brotherly Love (12)

12 Sharp pains in the side caused by running (8)

15 Cool darker patch on our star (7)

16 In (2,4)

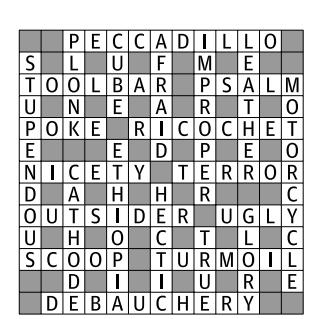
18 Delete (5)

19 Colourer (of clothes, perhaps) (4)

The solution will appear on January 14, 2020

Solution No. 13393

■ Across	(3,5,4)
1 Climb awkwardly – move quickly (8)	20 Sack (5-2)
5 Part of wine glass (4)	21 Delighted (5)
9 Large antelope with short spiral horns (5)	22 Get rid of – mout (4)
10 Release (7)	23 Dazzlingly successful person (8)
11 Little farm (12)	■ Down
13 Very small (6)	1 Appear (4)
14 More than likely (4-2)	2 Let in again (7)
17 Eliot poem – talented Shaw (anag) (6-6)	3 Not thinking clearly (6)
	4 Appealingly sordid (6)



A N D - N O D E

Georgia run-offs break records and trends

Pastor Raphael Warnock defeats Republican Kelly Loeffler; Democrat Jon Ossoff leads second race

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

With control of the Senate as their prize, the high stakes Senate run-offs (re-races) in Georgia have broken several records and trends. In electing African American pastor, Raphael Warnock, the State chose its first black Senator ever and the first Democrat since 2000. If Democrat Jon Ossoff, who leads the second race, defeats incumbent David Perdue, he will be the youngest Senator since Joe Biden in 1973. He also broke Senate fundraising records by raising \$106.8 million in two months.

Historic win

"Whether you voted for me or not – know this: I see you. I hear you. And I will fight for you," Mr. Warnock said from his home during a televised victory speech, which underscored the historic nature of his win. The pastor had defeated former businesswoman Kelly Loeffler who was appointed by Georgia's Governor in January last year after her Republican predeces-

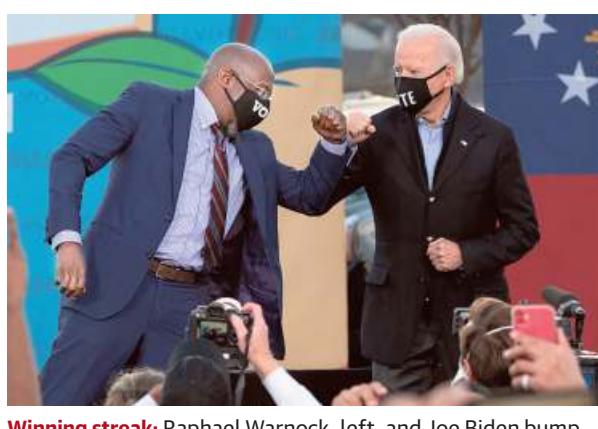
sor stepped down for health reasons.

Speaking of his mother, Mr. Warnock said: "The 82-year-old hands that used to pick somebody else's cotton went to the polls and picked her youngest son to be a United States Senator."

The pastor, who preaches at the Ebenezer Baptist Church where Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. preached, was a likely factor in the high early voting turnout among African Americans in the State.

"With new votes joining the tally, we are on a strong path..." tweeted former candidate for State Governor, Stacy Abrams, who is credited with mobilising votes in Georgia and playing a central role in its Democratic shift. In addition to the significance of Mr. Warnock's victory for the party, Georgia had voted in November to send Mr. Biden to the White House, the first time a Democrat has won the presidential race in the state since 1992.

Mr. Perdue and Ms. Loeffler had portrayed their op-



Winning streak: Raphael Warnock, left, and Joe Biden bump elbows on stage at a rally in Atlanta, Georgia, on Sunday.

ponents as "dangerous", "radical" and "socialist" and had embraced U.S. President Donald Trump, whose refusal to acknowledge his defeat may have turned off some GOP voters from voting in Georgia, harming the Republican candidates' chances.

Mr. Perdue's team called for "time and transparency" early on Wednesday morning as votes were being counted while Mr. Ossoff's side expressed confidence that their candidate would win on the back of uncounted ballots.

The Republican candidates' message to Georgia voters that Democrats could take control of the Senate was undermined by Mr. Trump's attempts to overthrow the election result.

COVID-19 aid
One of the earliest consequences of a Democrat-controlled Senate is likely to be eligible Americans getting \$2,000 in coronavirus aid – up from the current \$600. The higher number is generally supported by Democrats on Capitol Hill as well U.S. President Donald Trump. But enough Republicans in the Senate – including former Majority Leader Mitch McConnell – were against it so it never got a vote as the 116th Congress wound down last week (the 117th Congress convened on Monday). The details of a follow-up COVID relief package passed by Congress would very much be impacted by who controls the Senate.

"If you send Jon and the Reverend to Washington, those \$2,000 checks will go out the door..." Mr. Biden had said while campaigning in Georgia on Monday.

No free pass

The main consequence of a Democrat-controlled Senate is that Mr. Biden will have more leeway in terms of policy making, Cabinet and judicial appointments than he would have otherwise had in a Republican-controlled Senate. In the latter case, Mr. Biden would have likely relied heavily on Executive Or-

ders to push through his policies – as both Mr. Trump and Mr. Obama did when faced with a split Congress.

However, Mr. Biden will not have anything close to a free pass just because Democrats control the Senate as most legislation (such as non-budget related legislation) requires a majority of 60 rather than a simple majority of 51 (legislation passed via 'budget reconciliation'). This can technically be changed but will require ending the filibuster (a tactic used by those opposing legislation to continue debate on it so it does not go to vote) to suspect Mr. Assange would "fail to surrender" for future appeal hearings.

For bills that cannot be passed using the reconciliation route, Mr. Biden will need bipartisan support or will have to get only some of it done using the reconciliation process. Likely examples of these include legislation relating to Mr. Biden's \$2 trillion climate plan and the Infrastructure Bill.



People demonstrating outside the court in London. AP

pointment" and urged the U.S. Justice Department to drop the charges.

A lawyer for the U.S. government earlier urged Judge Baraitser not to release the controversial Australian publisher, and detailed how it planned to challenge her decision to block his extradition on mental health grounds. "We respectfully submit on behalf of the U.S. that there are insurmountable hurdles to Mr. Assange being granted bail," Clair Dobbin said.

Hong Kong acts again to crack down on dissent

53 activists held under security law

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HONG KONG

China's crackdown in Hong Kong escalated on Wednesday with police arresting more than 50 opposition figures in their largest operation since a draconian security law was imposed on the financial hub.

The sweep is the latest salvo in Beijing's battle to stamp out dissent in the semi-autonomous city after millions hit the streets in 2019 with huge pro-democracy protests.

Police confirmed 53 people – including a U.S. citizen – were arrested for "subversion" in an early morning operation that involved about 1,000 officers.

The charges were sparked by an attempt by opposition groups last year to win a majority in the city's partially-elected legislature.

Hong Kong's security chief John Lee described the arrests as "necessary" and aimed at a group of people

who tried to "sink Hong Kong into an abyss" and "overthrow the government".

Beijing's Liaison Office in Hong Kong said those facing prosecution "strategically organised or implemented a plan to paralyse the government".

But the operation sparked a rebuke from Antony Blinken, U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pick for Secretary of State, who said authorities were launching "an assault on those bravely advocating for universal rights".

The Biden-Harris administration will stand with the people of Hong Kong and against Beijing's crackdown on democracy," he added.

The EU – which recently agreed a major investment deal with Beijing – called for the "immediate release" of those arrested and said it was eyeing further sanctions on China over the crackdown.

The team was due to study the origins of COVID-19, first reported in Wuhan

ANANTH KRISHNAN

again made it clear the mission is a priority for the WHO."

The comments marked a rare instance of the WHO head expressing some displeasure with China's government, which he has consistently praised from the start of the pandemic.

He travelled to Beijing in January 28 last year, a week after authorities first revealed publicly that a pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan could spread between people following three weeks of delays by local authorities. In a meeting then with President Xi Jinping, the WHO chief "praised the seriousness with which China is taking this outbreak, especially the commitment from top leadership, and the transparency they have demonstrated".

Beijing on Wednesday defended its decision to delay the visit. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the issue of origin-tracing was "very complicated".

Chinese authorities have suggested they will exert control over how much access international scientists will have and have also controlled research within China on the origins. In recent weeks, the State media in China has increasingly backed a narrative suggesting the virus came to China from elsewhere.

Chinese scientists have been told that any studies into the origins of the coronavirus will have to be vetted by the authorities, while some scientists in China have put forward studies suggesting the virus was circulating in other countries, such as Italy, before it came to China. One pre-print, later withdrawn, suggested the first human transmission took place on the Indian subcontinent.

In November, Michael Ryan, the Executive Director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, said it would be "highly speculative" for the WHO "to say that the disease did not emerge in China".

No. A.12026/9/2020-Estt.IV
Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources,
River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

Narmada Control Authority (NCA) is a Body Corporate set up by the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 6A of the Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956, for the purpose of securing compliance with the implementation of the decision and direction of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal. The Narmada Control Authority has its headquarter at Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

2. Applications are invited from eligible and suitable officers for filling up one post of Executive Member in Narmada Control Authority, Indore in the Pay Matrix Level-15 (Rs.182200-224100/-) on deputation (including short-term contract basis).

3. Details of the post, eligibility conditions etc. are available at mowr.gov.in, dopt.gov.in and nca.gov.in. Applications complete in all respects of suitable and eligible officers and who can be spared immediately in the event of selection may be sent through proper channel to: The Under Secretary (Estt.IV), Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Room No. 435, Shram Shakti Bhawan, Rafi Marg, New Delhi - 110001 within a period of four weeks from the date of issue/publishing of this Advertisement in the Employment News.

4. Advance copies of application or application received after the prescribed period or not accompanied with the requisite information/documents are liable to be rejected.

(Shalini Deo)
Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

U.K. court denies bail to Assange

He has incentive to abscond: judge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange must remain in custody in Britain, while the U.S. appeals a court decision to block his extradition to face charges there for leaking secret documents, a judge in London ruled on Wednesday.

Judge Vanessa Baraitser, who on Monday refused to grant his extradition, told Westminster Magistrates Court that if released there were "substantial grounds" to suspect Mr. Assange would "fail to surrender" for future appeal hearings.

"Mr. Assange still has an incentive to abscond from these as yet unresolved proceedings," she said.

"As a matter of fairness the U.S. must be able to challenge my decision. If Assange absconds during this process then they will lose the opportunity to do so."

Lawyer Stella Morris and Mr. Assange's fiancee called the decision "a huge dis-



People demonstrating outside the court in London. AP

pointment" and urged the U.S. Justice Department to drop the charges.

A lawyer for the U.S. government earlier urged Judge Baraitser not to release the controversial Australian publisher, and detailed how it planned to challenge her decision to block his extradition on mental health grounds. "We respectfully submit on behalf of the U.S. that there are insurmountable hurdles to Mr. Assange being granted bail," Clair Dobbin said.

Merrick Garland is Biden's pick for Attorney General

He taps Vanita Gupta for Associate A-G

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden has selected Merrick Garland, a federal appeals court judge who in 2016 was snubbed by Republicans for a seat on the Supreme Court, as his Attorney General, two people familiar with the selection process said on Wednesday.

In picking Judge Garland, Mr. Biden is turning to an experienced judge who held senior positions at the Justice Department, including as a supervisor of the prosecution of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Senate Republicans will have to contend with the nomination of someone they spurned in 2016 – refusing even to hold hearings when a Supreme Court vacancy arose.

Mr. Biden is expected to announce Judge Garland's appointment on Thursday, along with other senior leaders of the department, including former Homeland Security Adviser Lisa Monaco as Deputy Attorney General and former Justice Department civil rights chief Vanita Gupta as Associate Attorney General.



Control over 'data' behind Alibaba's tussle with authorities

'Consumer-credit data giving tech giant unfair advantage'

ANANTH KRISHNAN



Mounting pressure: A file photo showing the Ant Group headquarters in Hangzhou. AFP

At the heart of the on-going tussle between Jack Ma's Alibaba Group and regulators in China is the control over "troves of consumer-credit data" that authorities believe have given the e-commerce giant an unfair advantage over its competitors, according to a report on Wednesday.

"How to regulate data monopolies is at the heart of the issue here," an adviser to the antitrust committee of China's State Council, or Cabinet, was quoted as saying by *The Wall Street Journal*.

On December 24, the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) said it had launched a probe into Alibaba's "suspected monopolistic acts", including "forcing merchants to choose one platform between two competitors".

This followed the last minute suspension, the previous month, of what was expected to be a record-breaking \$35 billion initial public offering (IPO) of the Ant Group, which is the group's financial arm and behind Alipay, China's biggest digital payments platform.

China's State media said last month Mr. Ma was "summoned" for talks ahead of the Ant Group's IPO, and

talks with regulators are ongoing.

The People's Bank of China – China's central bank – said last month it was, along with the banking and insurance regulator and the securities regulator, holding talks with the Ant Group aimed at "implementing financial regulatory requirements, holding onto fair competition and protecting consumers' legitimate rights".

The on-going probe has led to speculation about the future of Mr. Ma, who has cut back on public appearances since the IPO suspension. On Tuesday, the CNBC business news channel in the U.S. reported that the billionaire "was not missing" but "lying low for the time being".

While neither regulators nor State media in China have accused him of personal wrong-doing, he has been asked, Bloomberg reported earlier, to stay in the country while investigations into the group continue.

No. A.12026/9/2020-Estt.IV
Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources,
River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

Narmada Control Authority (NCA) is a Body Corporate set up by the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 6A of the Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956, for the purpose of securing compliance with the implementation of the decision and direction of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal. The Narmada Control Authority has its headquarter at Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

2. Applications are invited from eligible and suitable officers for filling up one post of Executive Member in Narmada Control Authority, Indore in the Pay Matrix Level-15 (Rs.182200-224100/-) on deputation (including short-term contract basis).

3. Details of the post, eligibility conditions etc. are available at mowr.gov.in, dopt.gov.in and nca.gov.in. Applications complete in all respects of suitable and eligible officers and who can be spared immediately in the event of selection may be sent through proper channel to: The Under Secretary (Estt.IV), Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Room No. 435, Shram Shakti Bhawan, Rafi Marg, New Delhi - 110001 within a period of four weeks from the date of issue/publishing of this Advertisement in the Employment News.

4. Advance copies of application or application received after the prescribed period or not accompanied with the requisite information/documents are liable to be rejected.

(Shalini Deo)
Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Wholly Owned by Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
(CIN-U04010KA2002SCG030438)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (Through e-procurement portal)

Tender Enquiry No: BESCOM/CGM(Proj)/OFC/BC-14/2020-21

/19/Call-2 Dated: 05.01.2021

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company invites tender for Transaction Advisory Assistance Services for Optical Fibre

Cable Business by BESCOM. The bid documents can be downloaded from 08.01.2021. The necessary assistance can

be obtained through the e-procurement portal website: https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in. Aspiring bidders need to register on e-procurement portal. Bidders can take the assistance

from the office of the Chief General Manager, Electy, Projects, 2nd Block, 4th Floor, Corporate Office, BESCOM, Bengaluru.

Contact Person: Chief General Manager (Electy), Projects, Corporate Office Contact No: +91 94498 44885 and Deputy General Manager (Ele), DAS, Corporate Office, BESCOM, Contact No: +91 94498 44627.

Sd/-

For electricity related complaints Call: 1912
Download BESCOM Mithra Mobile APP

Chief General Manager, (Elec)
Projects, BESCOM

<p

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	48,174	-0.54
US Dollar	73.11	0.08
Gold	51,125	0.31
Brent oil	53.95	1.79

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	496.80	-2.65
Asian Paints	2805.35	11.50
Axis Bank	654.25	-10.20
Bajaj Auto	3462.70	-29.95
Bajaj Finserv	8786.35	-34.50
Bajaj Finance	5030.30	-88.70
Bharti Airtel	525.30	11.30
BPCL	387.30	-4.70
Britannia Ind	3539.70	-11.40
Cipla	824.80	-2.45
Coal India	135.10	-0.05
Divis Lab	3879.85	37.75
Dr Reddys Lab	5288.30	1.40
Eicher Motors	2645.35	-29.55
GAIL (India)	134.00	4.70
Grasim Ind	984.60	23.30
HCL Tech.	978.20	-13.15
HDFC	2638.85	-13.00
HDFC Bank	1420.55	-6.15
HDFC Life	719.05	5.30
Hero MotoCorp	3083.55	16.35
Hindalco	259.05	8.75
Hind Unilever	2417.30	-33.25
ICICI Bank	546.70	9.45
IndusInd Bank	922.35	0.70
Infosys	1282.10	-11.70
Indian Oil Corp	94.10	1.10
ITC	205.40	-6.05
JSW Steel	401.70	6.45
Kotak Bank	1970.40	10.65
L&T	1314.00	7.70
M&M	736.10	-4.00
Maruti Suzuki	7628.60	-26.85
Nestle India Ltd.	18515.25	-43.00
NTPC	97.85	0.25
ONGC	96.95	2.00
PowerGrid Corp	196.15	8.15
Reliance Ind	1914.50	-51.85
SBI Life	910.30	4.75
State Bank	285.05	3.30
Shree Cement	24824.35	928.85
Sun Pharma	605.30	1.85
Tata Motors	195.40	2.20
Tata Steel	683.80	3.25
TCS	3051.50	-41.50
Tech Mahindra	997.15	-6.70
Titan	1572.60	1.65
UltraTech Cement	5448.35	107.15
UPL	472.40	1.15
Wipro	406.40	0.10

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.90	73.22
Euro	89.94	90.36
British Pound	99.62	100.06
Japanese Yen (100)	70.89	71.20
Chinese Yuan	11.29	11.35
Swiss Franc	83.16	83.57
Singapore Dollar	55.38	55.64
Canadian Dollar	57.66	57.94
Malaysian Ringgit	18.18	18.26

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Toyota unveils upgraded Fortuner, Legender SUVs

MUMBAI Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) on Wednesday introduced the upgraded version of Toyota Fortuner and the new Legender at starting ex-showroom price of ₹29,98 lakh and ₹37.58 lakh respectively. "I am confident that the new Fortuner and exclusive new Legender will offer value, versatility and superiority attracting many customers," Masakazu Yoshimura, MD, TKM said.

Tata Motors decides to reintroduce Safari SUV

MUMBAI Tata Motors has announced it will bring back the Safari brand via a flagship SUV, now codenamed as the Gravitas. "We are confident that the launch of the Safari will once again re-energise the market, amplifying its cult status," Shailesh Chandra, president, Passenger Vehicles Business Unit, Tata Motors, said. The new SUV will arrive in showrooms in this month, the company said.

Eurozone contraction could get worse in 2021

LONDON Eurozone economic activity contracted more sharply than previously thought at the end of 2020 and could get worse this year as renewed restrictions to contain COVID-19 hit the bloc's service industry, an IHS Markit survey showed. The economy is expected to gain momentum later this year on vaccine hopes, a December Reuters poll found. REUTERS

Udaan raises \$280 mn from Tencent, others

NEW DELHI E-commerce major Udaan on Wednesday said it had raised \$280 million (about ₹2,048 crore) in funding from existing and new investors. Existing investors Lightspeed Venture Partners, DST Global, GGV Capital, Altimeter Capital, and Tencent participated in the latest funding exercise, besides new investors Octahedron Capital and Moonstone Capital, Udaan said in a statement. PTI

Services PMI signals expansion slowing, businesses halt hiring

IHS Markit's survey shows growth in the sector slid to a three-month low in Dec.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI India's services sector activity expanded at a slower pace in December as growth in sales eased to a three-month low and staff hiring came to a halt amid weak business optimism, a monthly survey showed on Wednesday.

IHS Markit's seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 52.3 in December, from 53.7 in November.

Momentum slips
"Although the news that the service sector remained in expansion mode during December is welcome, the fact that growth lost momentum yet again shouldn't be disre-



Cooling again: Survey reveals increased business uncertainty about the outlook, says IHS Markit's Pollyanna De Lima. ■ AP

garded," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.

Companies indicated that growth was supported by new work orders, though curbed by competitive pres-

sures and the COVID-19 pandemic, IHS Markit noted.

Global COVID-19 restric-

tions, particularly travel bans, reportedly restricted international demand for Indian services at the end of

2020. New export business decreased sharply, but at the slowest pace since March.

"A spike in COVID-19 cases was reported as a key factor restricting growth of new work intakes among service providers, which in turn curbed the rise in output and led to increased business uncertainty about the outlook," Ms. Lima noted.

"Given the damaging impact of the pandemic on the service economy, some companies are facing financial difficulties, which is preventing staff hiring. December saw the ninth round of job shedding in ten months," Ms. Lima added.

Input cost inflation was

the strongest since February.

U.K. car sales drop most since WWII

REUTERS
LONDON

British new car sales fell close to 30% last year in their biggest annual drop since 1943 as lockdowns to curb the spread of the coronavirus hit the sector, an industry body said.

Demand stood at 1.63 million cars in 2020, according to data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT). It was particularly hard hit by a 97% fall in April, the first full month of a national lockdown.

Dealerships gradually reopened in June. "We lost nearly three quarters of a million units over three or four months, which we never got back," said SMMT CEO Mike Hawes.

FM reviews NIP as part of infra spending push

Pipeline expanded to 7,300 projects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday reviewed the progress of the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) as the government seeks to accelerate infrastructure spending in the economy.

The NIP has been expanded from 6,385 projects at the time of its introduction a year ago, to more than 7,300 projects, and is making progress despite the pandemic, the government said in a statement.

"The NIP is a part of the Government of India's initiative to provide world-class infrastructure to its citizens and enhance the ease of living," Ms. Sitharaman said, urging Ministries to promote investible projects by holding discussions with prospective investors. The Minister reviewed progress of the NIP, with a specific focus on 34 water and health-related infrastructure projects worth ₹3.6 lakh crore.

NBFCs may see growth revive in FY22

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has floated a discussion paper on review of ownership and governance norms to facilitate new entrants to set up stock exchanges and depositories, otherwise called as market infrastructure institutions (MIs).

As per the key proposals, a resident promoter setting up an MI may hold up to 100% shareholding, which will be brought down to not more than (either 51% or 26%) in 10 years.

A foreign promoter from Financial Action Task Force (FATF) member jurisdictions setting up an MI may hold up to 49% shareholding, which shall be brought down to not more than (either 26% or 15%) in 10 years.

At least 50% of ownership of the MI may be represented by individuals or entities with experience of five years or more in the areas of capital markets or technology related to financial services.

The findings were based on a survey conducted across 60 NBFCs, which together account for more than 50% of the sectoral AUM and about 23 investors.

"Growth in FY22 is envisaged to be driven by the improvement in demand from all the key target segments vis à vis current fiscal, which was impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown," said A. M. Karthik, V-P, sector head financial sector ratings, ICRA.

Maintain status quo on accounts of Anil Ambani firms, HC tells SBI

Reliance cites relief from RBI diktat granted to other firms

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the State Bank of India (SBI) to maintain status quo with regard to the accounts of Anil Ambani's Reliance Communication, Reliance Telecom and Reliance Infratel, which have been declared fraudulent.

Justice Prateek Jalan, however, allowed the SBI to take further steps in the nature of investigation or proceedings against the erstwhile directors and the three companies, independent of the order declaring the accounts as fraudulent.

The high court was hearing a plea by the erstwhile directors of the three com-

prior notice or communication to the account holder. The petition also stated that there were similar cases filed by other companies challenging the circular pending before the high court.

The counsel for Reliance argued that the high court had granted protection to the other companies in those cases.

Taking note of the submission, the high court directed the SBI to maintain status quo with regard to the accounts of the three companies till next date of hearing on January 13, when it will be heard along with other similar cases.

The court also asked the RBI to submit its response to the petition.

READ

FRONTLINE

LEADING THE DEBATE SINCE 1984

EVERY FORTNIGHT

To Subscribe, Visit

www.thehindugroup.in/subscribe

Oil scales 11-month high as Saudi vows output cut

Brent crude price rises almost 1%



Fired-up: Saudi Arabia agreed to make additional, voluntary oil output cuts of 1 million bpd in February and March. ■ AP

REUTERS
TOKYO

Oil prices rose on Wednesday to their highest since February 2020 after Saudi Arabia agreed to reduce output more than expected in a meeting with allied producers, while industry figures showed U.S. crude stock piles were down last week.

The auction is being held after a gap of four years and more than two years after the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) calculated and recommended a base price for the radiowaves. The DoT has fixed January 12 for the pre-bid conference and January 28 as the last date for seeking clarification to the notice. Telecom operators will need to submit their application by February 5 for participation.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, agreed on Tuesday to make additional, voluntary oil output cuts of 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in February and March, after a meeting with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other major producers that form the

group known as OPEC+.

Reductions agreed to by Saudi Arabia were included in a deal to persuade other producers in the OPEC+ group to hold output steady.

With coronavirus infections spreading rapidly in many parts of the world, producers are trying to support prices as demand takes a hit from new lockdowns.

OPEC member Iran's seizure of a South Korean tanker in the Gulf on Monday also continued to support prices. Tehran denied it was holding the ship and its crew hostage while pushing for Seoul to release \$7 billion of funds frozen under U.S. sanctions.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, agreed on Tuesday to make additional, voluntary oil output cuts of 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in February and March, after a meeting with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other major producers that form the

Rohit-rich India looks to build on MCG high

Saini to debut, Agarwal dropped as the visitors set their eyes on retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy

INDIA IN AUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Having touched nadir and zenith in a span of 10 days, India will look to start afresh against Australia with star batsman Rohit Sharma's presence adding a new dimension to what promises to be an enthralling third Test starting at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday.

If Ajinkya Rahane's side can go 2-1 up and help the visitors retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, it will be one of the finest hours in the history of Indian cricket.

Rahane, who led the way both with the bat and as captain at Melbourne, will play with more confidence while facing the Australian attack of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

Winning battles

In the bowling department, R. Ashwin has won crucial battles against Australia's key players, including Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne.

Jasprit Bumrah will lead the pace attack, bringing out



Battle royale:
Ashwin and Pant gear up
for the big test.
TWITTER/BCCI

**India vs.
Australia
in Tests
at SCG**

Which way will the tide turn?

A look at how India and Australia have fared after being 1-1 midway through a four-Test series

India	Australia	Overall record in four-Test series
1967-68: beat New Zealand (W L W), away	1998-99: drew with West Indies (W L L W), away	12 Played 25
2012-13: lost to England (W L L D), home	2016-17: lost to India (W L D L), away	4 India
2016-17: beat Australia (L W D W), home	2017-18: lost to South Africa (W L L L), away	9 Australia
2018-19: beat Australia (W L W D), away	2018-19: lost to India (L W L D), home	6 Played 17

**Played 12 | India 1
Australia 5 | Drawn 6**

1978: India won by an innings and two runs

First: vs. England (home), 1881-82; Australia won 2-0

Latest: vs. India (home), 2018-19; India won 2-1

COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN & G. PRASAD

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

his bagful of tricks. Pacer Navdeep Saini will make his debut, replacing Umesh Yadav who flew back after an injury.

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

Seldom has an Australian batting unit, that boasts of a

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

"He is energetic, professional, who could make an instant impact and fills guys with confidence," Paine's

player of Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect.

Warner being pushed

The pressure is understandable as Australia is literally pushing a 70% fit David Warner out there in the middle

to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

