

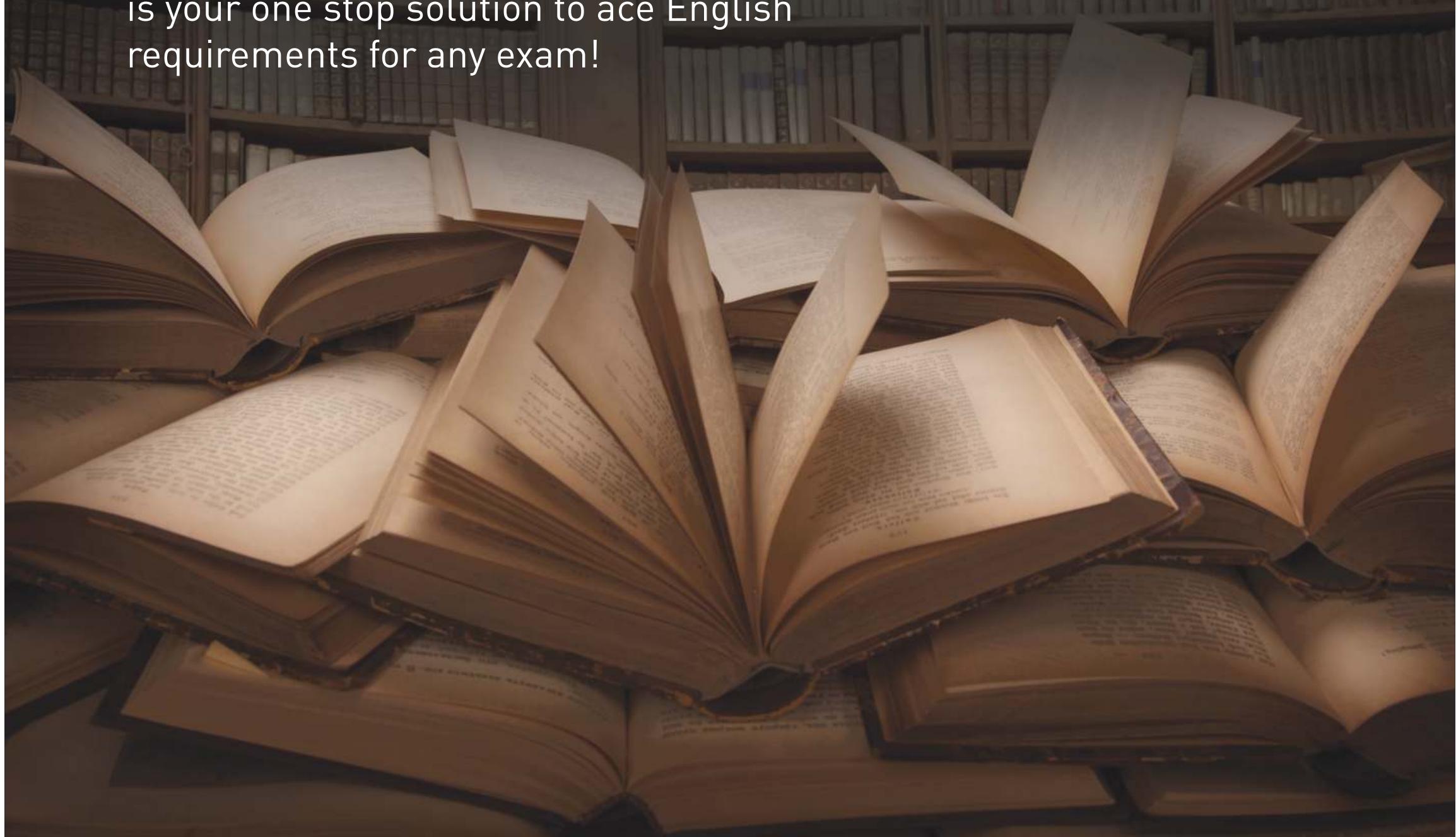


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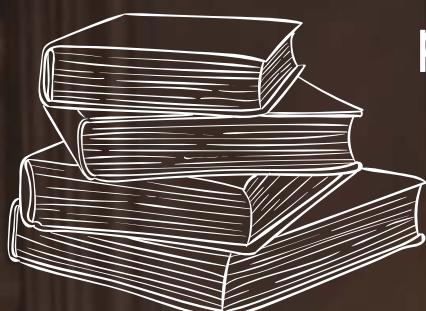
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Traces of lead, nickel found in blood samples of patients in Eluru
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Interest waiver will unsettle banks, Centre tells Supreme Court
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Stakeholders must unite for timely 5G roll-out, says PM Modi
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Kohli's knock in vain as India loses final T20I, wins series 2-1
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NEARBY



Nearly 70% beds free as new cases drop in Delhi

NEW DELHI
Delhi witnessed 3,188 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 5,97,112 on Tuesday. The death toll reached 9,763 with 57 more fatalities reported in a single day. Of the total 18,807 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 69.5% were vacant as of Tuesday evening.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Level Up IAS
Current Affairs
One Year Course Pre-cum Mains 2021
by Santosh Kumar
8826486658, 8826496658

Capital's air quality in 'very poor' category

NEW DELHI
The air quality of Delhi and Gurugram was in the 'very poor' category on Tuesday, and Noida's continued to be in the 'severe' category. The national capital's air quality is expected to stay in the 'very poor' category for the next two days. Stubble burning in neighbouring States accounted for 2% of PM2.5 pollution in Delhi.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

Home ahoy!



Coast is calm: Mechanised fishing boats, which were anchored at Kunthukal during Cyclone Burevi, heading back to Mandapam and Rameswaram on Tuesday after crossing the central span of the Pamban rail bridge. ■ L. BALACHANDAR

Mt. Everest 'grows' taller as China, Nepal announce new height

New figure of 8,848.86 m replaces 8,848 m, a measurement carried out by the Survey of India in 1954

ANANTH KRISHNAN
8,848 metres – the answer to one of the most widely popular quiz questions, and a number drilled into the minds of school students around the world for decades, is set for a revision, with the world's tallest mountain getting a new official height on Tuesday that adds a few centimetres to its already lofty peak.

Nepal and China jointly announced the new height of Mount Everest as 8,848.86 metres in a high-profile virtual ceremony, with their Presidents exchanging letters and the Foreign Ministers in attendance, all aimed at showcasing both a deepening strategic relationship and the amicable resolution of a long-running debate.

Everest – also known as Sagarmatha in Nepal and Mount Qomolangma in China – was an important symbol of the China-Nepal friendship", China's President Xi Jinping said, calling it a "peak of China-Nepal friendship".

The mountain lies on the border between Nepal and Tibet and the summit can be accessed from both sides, although the Nepal route is more popular.

Mr. Xi said survey teams from both countries had spent more than a year on the project and had "overcome all kinds of difficulties and finally reached a conclusion on the snow-covered height based on the International Height Reference System".

China's State media reported that the previous



A member of a Chinese surveying team setting up equipment on the summit of Mount Everest. ■ AP/FILE

calculation by China in 2005 placed the peak at 8,844 metres, while Nepal said it was closer to 8,847 metres. Resolving the three-metre difference, attributed to China calculating the "rock height" underneath the snow and Nepal using the "snow height" which included the

snowcap, was the aim of the joint project, with both sides agreeing to reach a consensus when Mr. Xi visited Nepal in October last year. A Chinese team made a journey to the peak on May 27, the Beijing-based *Global Times* reported, adding that they were aided by "end-to-end" 5G technology.

Advantage China
For Nepal and China, the height of Everest wasn't merely an academic debate. It also had ramifications for a lucrative tourism industry. Officials told the *Kathmandu Post* the slightly higher "snow height" was "one of the key reasons why Nepal had been drawing Everest aspirants in droves". Ang Tsering Sherpa, former president of the

Nepal Mountaineering Association, told the newspaper that climbers from Nepal "started to swell from 2007 when China started issuing Everest climbing certificates stating the height as 8,845.75 metres against 8,848 metres in certificates issued by Nepal for the same peak".

"Now, there will be a common height," he said, but it will give China an advantage in the climbing stakes as "climbing Everest through the northern side is much cheaper than climbing from the southern side".

The new height replaced the long-associated 8,848 metre-height, which was, newspapers in Beijing and Kathmandu noted, a legacy from 1954, and a measurement carried out by the Survey of India.

Some COVID-19 vaccines may get nod in the next few weeks

Centre working with the States on roll-out plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said "some of the COVID-19 vaccine candidates may receive licence in the next few weeks", with preparatory activities for the vaccine roll-out being carried out by the Central government in collaboration with the States and the Union Territories.

The Ministry, at a press conference, said that getting vaccinated is a voluntary exercise and that vaccination cannot just be a State's or the Centre's responsibility;

90-year-old gets U.K.'s first COVID-19 jab

COVENTRY

Nurses cheered on Tuesday as a 90-year-old grandmother in Britain became the first person in the Western world to receive an approved vaccine against COVID-19, at the start of a marathon campaign health officials hope heralds a fight-back against the pandemic. Margaret Keenan, who turns 91 next week, called the jab she received at a hospital in Coventry, central England, "the best early birthday present". ■ PAGE 11



"it has to be people's participation".

Emergency use

Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Health, said, "While we cannot predict when the three vaccine candidates currently with the Drugs Controllers General of India seeking emergency use authorisa-

tion will be cleared as they have to go through the due clearance process, India's regulatory framework has a specific provision for the grant of emergency use authorisation under the New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rule, 2019."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Centre did not allow me to go sit with farmers, says Kejriwal

AAP claims the Delhi CM was placed under house arrest

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

On the day of the Bharat Bandh, which was supported by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the party alleged that its national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was kept "under house arrest" by the "Central government's Delhi Police", a claim denied by the police.

The party claimed that when its MLAs went to meet the CM, Delhi Police "beat them up", and even a domestic help was not allowed to enter Mr. Kejriwal's house.

Later in the evening, addressing party leaders at his residence, Mr. Kejriwal said: "I wanted to go to the border as a common man and not as a CM and sit with farmers and support them and come back. I feel that they [the Central government] came to

know about my plan and did not allow me to go today." Denying the allegations, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Anto Alphonse said: "The allegation of Delhi CM being put under house arrest was incorrect. Police were present around his residence due to security reasons. The people who wanted to meet the CM were

permitted. We had tied up with the CM residence staff for movement of authorised persons."

When contacted, a party spokesperson said around 7 p.m. that there was no longer any problem for Mr. Kejriwal to meet anyone, or for party leaders to meet him.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3 & 4

SC clears land acquisition for Chennai-Salem highway

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday gave the green signal for the National Highway Authority of India and the Union government to acquire land for the 27.3 km-long Chennai-Krishnagiri-Salem National Highway project, worth more than ₹10,000 crore, saying "national highways are the arteries of India's economy".

The eight-lane highway (NH179A and NH179B) is a part of the first phase of the 'Bharatmala Pariyojna' project, which stretches across 24,800 km and has an estimated outlay of ₹5.35 lakh crore, to improve the efficiency of freight and passenger movement.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



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On the boil: Farmers staging a protest against the agriculture laws at the Singhu border on Tuesday; agitators blocking vehicles on National Highway 1 during Bharat Bandh. • R.V. MOORTHY



Bharat Bandh peaceful, confined to Delhi borders

City witnesses sporadic incidents of blockades; police say they kept strict vigil

JATIN ANAND/SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The national capital remained largely peaceful as the protesting farmers, who had called for Bharat Bandh on Tuesday, remained confined to their stir sites at the city borders.

However, the city witnessed sporadic incidents of blockades.

At the Ghazipur border, a large group of protesters blocked both carriageways of the Delhi-Meerut Expressway from 11 a.m. and opened them half-an-hour before the scheduled time of 3 p.m. During the protest, they allowed passage to emergency vehicles. The traffic was diverted to Anand Vihar and Sahibabad border. The one side of the carriageway (Delhi to Meerut) was opened for traffic. Farmers said they ended the protest timely without causing inconvenience to motorists during peak hours.

A small group of farmers from Shamli and Baghpat districts was on a hunger strike for the day. They had



Fully loaded trucks stationed at the Singhu border during Bharat Bandh on Tuesday. • R.V. MOORTHY

taped their mouths.

"We are protesting peacefully on *Gandhigiri siddhan* and we are hopeful that government will listen to our demands," said Kishan Pal, a farmer from Baghpat.

Ghazipur vegetable market, located a kilometer from the protest site, was open.

"We stand with farmers and support their demands but we can't shut down the wholesale market because we will incur losses. There is already a crisis situation in the market due to restriction over the movement of trucks

C We stand with farmers and support their demands but we can't shut down the wholesale market because we will incur losses. There is already a crisis situation in the market

SANTOSH KUMAR
Wholesaler

at the borders," said Santosh Kumar, a wholesaler.

During the shutdown, the police kept strict vigil at borders and other parts of the

city. "We used drones to keep track of protesters. We held a meeting with organisers and policemen of neighbouring districts to keep the situation under control. No calls of any scuffle were received from any of the borders and the day ended peacefully. Security was strengthened at borders and traffic personnel was deployed on diverted routes," said a senior officer.

Impromptu blockade

Minutes before the Bharat Bandh was scheduled to end, a group of youths started raising slogans in support of farmers and created an impromptu blockade at the carriageway leading to the Haryana border next to Gurudwara Hargobindar.

The protesters said the blockade was part of the Bharat Bandh, which was scheduled to be in effect between 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

They said they had parked their four-wheelers and motorcycles on the highway to stall traffic till 3 p.m.

Isolated incidents of agitation were reported from some areas in the Capital on Tuesday during the nationwide Bharat Bandh called by protesting farmers, but normal life within city limits remained largely unaffected.

Despite farmers' strike, no hiccups in traffic movement

Azadpur mandi remained shut in solidarity with farmers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Isolated incidents of agitation were reported from some areas in the Capital on Tuesday during the nationwide Bharat Bandh called by protesting farmers, but normal life within city limits remained largely unaffected.

The commuters did not face any inconvenience as public transport continued to ply.

Alternative routes

The police said they had provided alternative routes to motorists and continued to share updates on social media. They said they also advised people to avoid particular stretches, including National Highway 44. "Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari & Mangesh borders are closed. NH-44 is closed. Please take alter-



Traffic on Delhi-Uttar Pradesh highway on Tuesday afternoon. • SANDEEP SAXENA

nate routes via Lampur, Safiabad, Saboli & Singh school toll tax borders. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba & GTK Road. Please avoid Outer Ring Road, GTK Road, NH-44," tweeted Delhi Traffic Police.

Delhi Police Public Relations Officer Eish Singh said adequate arrangements have been made to ensure regular movement

of people.

Azadpur Mandi and other mandis here wore a deserted look during the day. Chairman of APMC Azadpur Mandi, Adil Ahmad Khan said that while some trucks arrived at the mandi, there was no business conducted as the entire market came in support of the farmers. However, most of the neighborhood markets were open throughout the day. Large retail markets like Connaught Place, Khan Market, Sarojini Nagar remained unaffected. Some offices, too, were open.

Scene at railway station

Passengers arriving at New Delhi Railway station did not face any problems to find last mile connectivity and most of those travelling to other NCR towns opted for the Delhi Metro.

AAP supports bandh by staging protest

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

AAP workers staged protest at ITO in support of farmers on Tuesday, the party said. The party had extended its support to the Bharat Bandh called by the farmers and asked the Centre to heed to their demands.

On Tuesday morning, the party tweeted that their chief Arvind Kejriwal was kept 'under house arrest' by Delhi Police, a claim denied by police.

Later in the evening, meeting party leaders, Mr. Kejriwal said: "A country where the farmers and the soldiers are sad, that country can never progress. If the farmers of our country are sad, we can never be at peace. We have to keep politics aside and help the farmers, and serve them and stand by them till their movement continues."

Protest could take a violent turn if govt. doesn't resolve deadlock by today, warn agitating farmers

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Counting down the hours till the conclusion of the sixth round of talks, which they consider would be the final stage, with the Centre regarding their demands, agitating farmers said the hith-

erto peaceful protest at the Singhu border would take a sharp turn for the worse if the deadlock was not resolved by Wednesday.

The burning of politicians' effigies would replace rousing stage speeches, the remaining access points to the

city would be blockaded while existing ones would be reinforced and the meagre supplies of food and essentials, which they are currently "allowing" to enter the Capital, would be completely and indefinitely cut off, they warned.

"If the government does not accept our demands, you will see a very, very different atmosphere across the many kilometres which we have occupied. Those behind the birth of these anti-farmer laws will have their effigies burnt to cinders as black as

the laws themselves," said Sarabjit Singh from Ludhiana.

"We have restricted movement at some of the most arterial routes into the city till now but there are more, such as those on the Faridabad side, which are still unaf-

fected. They will be blocked too," he also said.

More on the wait

Gurdyal Singh, another farmer from Ludhiana, said there were "many more" across Punjab and Haryana awaiting a nod to begin marching

towards Delhi from several sides.

"Till now, only big vehicles carrying vegetables, fruits and essential supplies like milk have been affected because of our blockade at the borders," he said.

"Lakhs of farmers will join

us as we form a ring all around New Delhi and completely choke all access points to it. Nothing except vehicles carrying medicines and ambulances will be allowed to move an inch till our demands are met," he added.

Congress chief among other party workers detained at ITO

They protested on Ring Road in support of farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Tuesday protested near ITO flyover on Ring Road and other locations in support of the Bharat Bandh called by agitating farmers.

The party demanded the repeal of the "three anti-farmer black Acts" passed by the Central government.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar, along with several party workers, was detained by the Delhi Police at ITO and taken to the IP Estate police station

where FIRs were filed against them.

"Farmers feel that the anti-farmer Acts, in its present form, would hand over the farm sector to a few chosen corporates of the Modi regime, who would then exploit the farmers for their personal gains," Mr. Kumar said. He added that it was unfortunate that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who talks about the welfare of the farmers, was trying to suppress the voice of the protesters by detaining them at the borders.

In vehement agreement with their demands, Mr. Farooqui from Punjab's Malerkotla arrived at the Singhu border with a team of 25 people and a large consignment of sweet rice hoping to feed those who feed everyone else for a living".

Soon, he was joined by some locals from Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

Advocate Mubeen Farooqui (extreme right) at the community kitchen in Singhu border. • R.V. MOORTHY

Kathua victim's family counsel now brings comfort, food to the farmers

Farooqui running community kitchen at Singhu border

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Advocate Mubeen Farooqui, who secured punishment for the accused in the gruesome Kathua gangrape and murder case, has been camping at the Capital's borders and running a community kitchen for the protesting farmers for the past 12 days.

In vehement agreement with their demands, Mr. Farooqui from Punjab's Malerkotla arrived at the Singhu border with a team of 25 people and a large consignment of sweet rice hoping to feed those who feed everyone else for a living".

Soon, he was joined by some locals from Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

Advocate Mubeen Farooqui (extreme right) at the community kitchen in Singhu border. • R.V. MOORTHY

feeding the farmer who feeds everyone else?"

Tariq Manzoor Alam, who operates a real estate business in Malerkotla and is one of Mr. Farooqui's team members, said between 35 and 40 large pots of rice are pressed into service one after the other to serve *langar* to anyone who stops by their stall, which is among the busiest in a sea of similar ones stretching well into the territorial jurisdiction of Haryana.

In June last year, Mr. Farooqui – representing the family of an eight-year-old Bakkwal girl from Kathua,

who was sexually assaulted and murdered in January 2018, – secured life imprisonment for three key accused and five-years' im-

prisonment for three policemen from a District and Sessions Court in Pathankot. The policemen had allegedly tried to hush up the case.

Justice in the Kathua case, especially the kind that the victim's family deserved, he said, was still far from being done just like much was left wanting in the treatment meted out to farmers by the Centre.

Next in Kathua case

"We will move the Punjab and Haryana High Court for capital punishment in the Kathua case; that battle will continue. In the same way, we came here to stand with them [farmers] and will stay here till they leave," he added.

Noida Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A) 1. **17/GM/SM(WC-1)/2020-21**, Name of Work:- M/o Drain (Repair of Drain, P/L Interlocking tile at site berms from A-1 to A-82 on Udyog Marg Sector-2), Noida

Cost - Rs. 32.96 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date 22.12.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 23.12.2020 at 11.00 AM.

(B) 1. **59/NOIDA/GM/SM(WC-9)/ET/2020-21**, Name of Work:- Emergency Work (Fencing with RCC post of vacant Noida Land for safety of land of different village and sector of Work Circle-9), Noida

Cost - Rs. 51.54 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date 16.12.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 17.12.2020 at 11.00 AM.

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Timings
DELHI

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 09
RISE 07:03 SET 17:25
RISE 05:56 SET 13:39
THURSDAY, DEC. 10
RISE 07:03 SET 17:26
RISE 01:59 SET 14:14
FRIDAY, DEC. 11
RISE 07:04 SET 17:26
RISE 03:04 SET 14:52

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	28	10
Safdarjung	28	10
Palam	25	13

Delhi Palam Today
26°C Moderate to isolated dense fog at morning and comfortable day. Dry cool winds likely during day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
27°C Rise in temperature possible with comfortable day. Surface winds likely to change.

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THE HINDU
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Court grants custody parole to rioters accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday granted custody parole to a man, arrested in a north-east Delhi riots case, to appear for Delhi Police constable examination on December 9.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav granted the parole to Yogesh from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. on December 9 to appear in the exam.

The court directed the Mandoli jail authorities to get the admit card of Yogesh downloaded and make necessary arrangements to take him to the examination centre at Dwarika and back to jail.

Kejriwal pretending to be under house arrest, claim BJP leaders

He is trying to avoid questions after failing to affect shutdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Opposition BJP on Tuesday accused Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of "pretending" to be under house arrest after having failed at affecting a shutdown of the city as part of the Bharat Bandh which he had supported.

While BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia accused Mr. Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of practising politics based on lies and deception, Delhi BJP MLAs and State president Adesh Gupta attacked the Chief Minister at a joint press conference.

"CM Kejriwal loudly claimed to shut down Delhi but failed to do so that's why he brought a new bunch of lies about being house arrested but was exposed. Now, he is hiding to avoid all questions. Businessmen and

Dust pollution unchecked in parts of Delhi

More than 5,000 complaints were received in a month in Green Delhi mobile app: government data

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Despite the pollution being 'severe' and 'very poor' in the city, local dust pollution is still going unchecked in many areas, spot checks by *The Hindu* at different parts of the city have shown.

Moreover, more than 5,000 complaints have been registered under the dust pollution category between October 29 and December 1 on a mobile app launched by the Delhi government.

According to Delhi government data, shared with *The Hindu*, about 30% of these complaints were unresolved and overdue on December 1.

"This year, the government has a stricter campaign to control dust pollution and a lot of agencies were fined for not controlling dust on their construction sites. The government has also launched the Green Delhi mobile app using which people can file complaints of dif-

ferent types of pollution," a Delhi government official said.

The official said that while some roads belong to the Public Works Department many are under the municipal corporations, which are ruled by the BJP. The multiplicity of agencies was a problem, he said.

"Policies and rules to control air pollution are in place. What we need is strict implementation of these rules," said Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a research and advocacy organisation in Delhi.

During the spot checks, mounds of construction and



Water being sprinkled from an anti-smog gun near Nizamuddin in Delhi. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

demolition (C&D) waste and dug-up earth were found in Max Muller Marg, located in the heart of the city. C&D waste and loose earth should be properly covered to prevent dust pollution, as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guidelines.

Dusty roads were found near NTPC Eco Park in Kalindi Kunj in south Delhi, Kotla Mubarakpur in central Delhi and Model Town in north Delhi.

"Whenever a vehicle passes, it kicks up dust. For many years the road has not been repaired. We have complained multiple times about it, but the municipal corporation says there are no funds to repair the roads," said Bunty Sharma, 38, who runs a shop in Kotla Mubarakpur market.

C&D waste being dumped along the roadside, broken pavements, and dusty patches along the road were found

in multiple areas of the city too.

After the Delhi government launched the mobile app on October 29, about 1,700 complaints were received about illegal dumping of C&D waste by December 1.

As per the government data, more than 1,650 complaints were received about potholes, 1,050 complaints about road dust and about 700 complaints about dust pollution due to construction activities in the same period.

Though the government had announced a plan for edge-to-edge paving and greening of all roads, to control dust pollution, the work has not been completed.

"The government is conducting regular checks. But the people should be also proactive and report violations on the Green Delhi app. We have a dedicated team working to solve issues," the official said.

70% beds free as new cases drop in city

3,188 new COVID-19 cases recorded

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
5,97,112	9,763
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
3,188	57

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

ment in the city, 69.5% were vacant, as per the bulletin.

Also, 66.6% of ICU beds with ventilators in the city were occupied by Tuesday night and 46.9% of the ICU beds without ventilators were full, as per Delhi government data.

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

There were 6,357 containment zones in the city as on Tuesday.

Capital's AQI in 'very poor' category

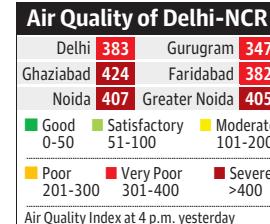
Municipal officials asked to appear before Assembly panel over fires at landfill sites

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Gurugram was in the "very poor" category on Tuesday and Noida's continued to be in the "severe" category, as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. The national capital's air quality is expected to stay in the "very poor" category for the next two days.

Air pollution of "very poor" category can cause "respiratory illness on prolonged exposure", according to the CPCB.

Also, AAP leader and chairperson of the Environment Committee of the Delhi Assembly, Atishi, on Tuesday said that commissioners of the East Delhi Municipal Corporation and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation



have been asked to appear before the committee to discuss frequent fires at Ghazipur and Bhalswa landfill sites.

Both the municipal corporations are ruled by the BJP.

Surface winds

"Surface winds are likely to be picking up slightly and the AQI (Air Quality Index) is forecast to be in the 'very poor' category for the next two days. The AQI is likely to

improve and stay in the middle-end of the very poor category on December 11," said a statement by the government-run monitoring agency SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research).

The air pollution was high in Delhi because the local surface-level winds were calm, which do not help in the dispersion of pollutants. Also, the mixing height, which is the height from the ground level up to which pollutants can be dispersed, was also low at night.

This also prevents pollutants from getting dispersed easily.

The AQI of Delhi was 383 on Tuesday, slightly down from 400 on Monday, as per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin, which is an average of the

past 24 hours. The values for Gurugram and Noida were 347 and 407 respectively.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

The contribution of stubble burning in neighbouring States to PM2.5, a chief pollutant, in Delhi was estimated to be only 2% on Tuesday. Also, the number of fire counts in neighbouring States were only 211, as per SAFAR.

Moderate fog

Meanwhile, minimum temperature dropped to 9.5 degrees Celsius and a blanket of fog covered the Capital, affecting visibility on Tuesday.

2 arrested for importing drugs via courier service

Accused procured it through dark web

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested for allegedly importing contraband from USA through international courier service and supplying it in the national capital, police said on Tuesday.

The accused have been identified as Avinash Jain, a resident of Inder Puri, and Shashank Gupta, a resident of Vasant Kunj, they said.

Information was received that some persons were involved in illegal import of marijuana and other contraband from USA by using 'dark web' through courier service and supplying it to various parts in Delhi and NCR, a senior police officer said.

"Police received a tip-off and laid a trap at Vasant Kunj. The accused were apprehended while they were going to deliver marijuana in their car," Additional

Commissioner of Police (Crime) Shishesh Singh said.

Contraband recovered

During the search, 450 gm of imported weed, 100 gm toffee containing tetrahydrocannabinol and 50 gm malana cream charas was recovered from their possession, he said.

Jain had disclosed that he had been consuming marijuana since the last two years. He was procuring it from one Khanna of Chhattarpur. As it was expensive to purchase from the broker, he learnt the process of importing marijuana from USA and started procuring it through 'dark web', police said.

The payments were made in advance through crypto currency, mainly Bitcoin. Once the payment was done, the parcel was dispatched through courier service, police said.

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HC rejects plea on ballot option in polls

Voter can opt for NOTA, says court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined to entertain a plea seeking the Centre and Election Commission to provide a ballot option to the public to vote for the "least undeserving candidate" in the electronic voting machines (EVMs).

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan, however, said that the voters have the option of expressing dissatisfaction with regard to candidates fielded in an election by opting for the None of the Above (NOTA) option.

'Mental perspective'

The High Court also said that by voting for a particular candidate, the voters have expressed their dissatisfaction for the other candidates. Hence, there was no need for "reflection of

the mental perspective" of a voter while casting their vote, it said.

The High Court remark came while hearing a plea by Akshay Yadavrao Bajad, an Ayurvedic doctor, presently working as a medical officer in an insurance company, who contended that providing the option of "least undeserving candidate" in EVMs would compel political parties to nominate candidates with good moral character and integrity.

The plea said that though Mr. Bajad had made a representation in December last year to the Centre on this aspect and it was forwarded to the poll panel, nothing has been done till now.

The High Court declined to pass any orders on the plea and suggested that Mr. Bajad pursue his representations with the poll panel instead.

IN BRIEF

18 held for flesh trade from Greater Noida spa

NOIDA Eighteen people, including seven women, have been arrested for their alleged involvement in illegal sex trade in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, the police said on Tuesday. The racket was busted after the local police raided a spa centre located at the Jagat Farm market on Monday evening, according to officials. PTI

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THE HINDU

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Road project connecting Delhi-Gurugram still under way

Proposal being prepared by DLF, taking into account all the environment concerns, says CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The revised proposal for connecting Nelson Mandela Marg to Gurugram, which was earlier put on back burner because of strong opposition by the environmentalists and the residents, is still under preparation by the DLF.

<p

Road blockades, demonstrations, marches mark bandh in Haryana

Markets, mandis also remained shut for few hours in several districts of the State

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Peaceful demonstrations, protest marches and road blockades, including on State and national highways, across the State marked the day-long Bharat Bandh in Haryana. Though the bandh remained peaceful, a protester died due to heart attack in Jind.

The markets and mandis also remained shut for a few hours in several districts, though the traffic remained as usual.

Leaders detained

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) Rajya Sabha MP K.K. Ragesh, All-India Democratic Women's Association national general-secretary Mariam Dhawale and Centre of Indian Trade Unions' Haryana vice-president Satvir Singh were detained along with a hundred anganwari and ASHA workers at Gurugram's Bilaspur Chowk, off National Highway-48, during a demonstration against the farm laws in the afternoon.



CPI(M) and AIDWA members taking out a protest march in Haryana on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

Mr. Singh said the police stopped them twice and later detained them.

Pataudi SDM Pradeep Kumar said the protesters had violated the Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code and there were apprehensions of them blocking the national highway.

Later, workers from several automobile companies, including Maruti Suzuki and Hero Motorcorp, and All India Trade Union Council, took out a protest march from Hero Honda Chowk to Rajiv Chowk in Gurugram under the banner of Trade

around two hours in the afternoon," he said.

Former Transport Minister and Deputy Leader of the Congress Legislative Party Aftab Ahmed went around Nuh making an appeal to the shopkeepers and commission agents in grain markets to down their shutters. He claimed the support to bandh was complete. Besides, there were reports of demonstrations, protest marches and markets remaining shut in Hisar, Jind, Karnal, Ambala, and Kurukshetra as well.

Several organisations, including CITU and AIDWA, took out a protest march from railway station to Ambedkar Chowk in Rohtak passing through the main market.

Haryana Director General of Police Manoj Yadav told *The Hindu* that the protests remained peaceful, but a 55-year-old man died of heart attack in Jind during the demonstration. "Mostly the blockades were on the village roads. Some national and State highways at a few points were also affected for

Union Council (Gurugram-Rewari).

Several political, social and farmer organisations also held a sit-in near Jharsa Chowk near NH-48 in the Millennium City in the morning.

Haryana Director General of Police Manoj Yadav told *The Hindu* that the protests remained peaceful, but a 55-year-old man died of heart attack in Jind during the demonstration. "Mostly the blockades were on the village roads. Some national and State highways at a few points were also affected for

around two hours in the afternoon," he said.

Former Transport Minister and Deputy Leader of the Congress Legislative Party Aftab Ahmed went around Nuh making an appeal to the shopkeepers and commission agents in grain markets to down their shutters. He claimed the support to bandh was complete. Besides, there were reports of demonstrations, protest marches and markets remaining shut in Hisar, Jind, Karnal, Ambala, and Kurukshetra as well.

Several organisations, including CITU and AIDWA, took out a protest march from railway station to Ambedkar Chowk in Rohtak passing through the main market.

Haryana Congress chief Kumari Selja, in a video, claimed the reports from across the State suggested that the bandh was successful. She expressed gratitude towards the people of the State, party leaders and workers to make it a success.

Mixed response in western U.P.

Bhim Army chief, other leaders placed under house arrest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Western Uttar Pradesh saw a mixed response to the call of Bharat Bandh given by farmer groups and political parties on Tuesday. While most markets in urban areas functioned as usual, mandis in rural areas remained shut.

Members of different factions of the Bharatiya Kisan Union protested on the national and State highways. The police put many local political leaders under house arrest and did not allow them to join the protests, citing Section 144 and the Epidemic Act.

Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad was placed under house arrest when he tried to participate in the bandh. In a tweet, Mr. Azad said, "Today our *annadatas* (farmers) need us", but the Yogi government had put him under house arrest since morning.

In Saharanpur, Haji Fazlurehman, Lok Sabha MP of the Bahujan Samaj Party, was also placed under house arrest. "The BJP government is throttling the voice of farmers with force," said Mr. Fazlurehman. "These laws will only favour the corpo-



Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad was put under house arrest on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

rates and are against the interests of farmers."

Despite heavy security presence, the impact of the bandh was also seen in Agra, Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Hapur and Gautam Buddha Nagar, where farmers blocked State and national highways. In Aligarh, hundreds of farmers blocked the road leading to the Yamuna Expressway with tractors and trolleys. In Meerut, members of BKU blocked the Meerut-Pauri highway.

Detained at Noida

Rajendra Yadav, president, Bhartiya Kisan Sangathan, was detained along with farmers at the Sector 122 crossing of Noida. "We are being held for violating the Epidemic Act but the government could not wait for the pandemic to be over before bringing in just laws for

farmers," he said.

In Budaun, local Congress leaders were placed under house arrest. "We have been stopped from lending support to farmers... It is our democratic right and the BJP government would suffer its consequences in Assembly elections," said Omkar Singh, district president of the Budaun unit of the Congress.

HC stays nod for OIL project in Assam national park

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has stayed the environmental clearance given to Oil India Limited (OIL) for extended-reach drilling (ERD) operations at seven locations beneath the Dibrus-Saikhowa National Park in eastern Assam.

Hearing a PIL on December 7, a Bench comprising Chief Justice N. Kotishwar Singh and Justice Manish Choudhury issued the stay order on the May 11 environmental clearance that OIL had received.

Non-compliance of order

The stay was in view of the non-compliance of a September 7, 2017, order of the Supreme Court in an earlier case that required the exploration major to conduct biodiversity impact assessment

war Singh and Justice Manish Choudhury issued the stay order on the May 11 environmental clearance that OIL had received.

HC stays nod for OIL project in Assam national park

study at the ecologically fragile national park covering 350 sq km.

In an affidavit submitted to the High Court on November 17, the Forest Department said ₹22 lakh was given to OIL for conducting the study but it was yet to begin work.

An OIL spokesperson said the exploration major would not take up any drilling till the Supreme Court order is

BJP leads in Rajasthan rural polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party registered a lead in the elections to panchayat bodies in 21 districts of Rajasthan on Tuesday, winning 1,824 seats in Panchayat Samitis and 200 in Zila Parishads. The ruling Congress won 1,710 Panchayat Samiti and 138 Zila Parishad seats.

The polling was held in four phases, on November 23, 27, December 1 and 5, to elect 4,371 members of Panchayat Samitis and 636 members of Zila Parishads. Counting of votes was continuing till late evening.

The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, an ally of the BJP which fought the elections independently, bagged 56 Panchayat Samiti and seven Zila Parishad seats.

As many as 418 independent candidates and three Bahujan Samaj Party and 16 CPI(M) candidates also won the Panchayat Samiti member seats. Independent candidates are likely to hold the key to the formation of boards in a large number of Panchayat Samitis.

complied with. "As per our commitment made to the apex court, we will not start our ERD operations before carrying out the biodiversity impact assessment study.

We have not carried out any operations of the ERD project. We have already begun the ground work for carrying out the said study," he said from OIL's headquarters Duliajan in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh district.

AASU plans musical protest against CAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has planned a musical protest on December 12 to mark the "dark" anniversary of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

The AASU has dubbed the State-wide protest as *Gana Hunkaar* (public cry) but voices against the "anti-indigenous" Act would be raised through traditional and folk musical instruments, leaders of the outfit said.

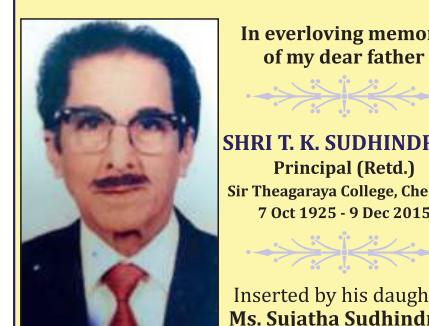
"New Delhi imposed this anti-Assam legislation on us last year and barbarically tried to crush the people's agitation through the police. Five innocent people, including a school student, were killed in the police firing on the protesters," AASU president Dipankar Kumar Nath said.

"Apart from demanding the scrapping of CAA, we will also seek justice for the families of these five martyrs who are yet to get," he added.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

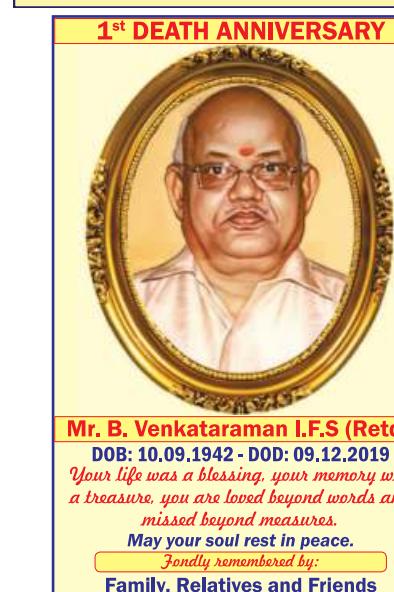
DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



In everlasting memory of my dear father
SHRI T. K. SUDHINDRAN
Principal (Retd.)
Sir Theagaraya College, Chennai
7 Oct 1925 - 9 Dec 2015



IN FOND MEMORY OF
ANAND B. RAJAGOPALAN
(17.3.1972 - 9.12.2018)
You left us this day two years ago,
to find peace at HIS LOTUS FEET.
We are still trying to cope with our irreparable loss...
You are dearly missed, but never forgotten.



1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY
Mr. B. Venkataraman I.F.S. (Retd.)
DOB: 10.09.1942 - DOD: 09.12.2019
Your life was a blessing, your memory was
a treasure, you are loved beyond words and
missed beyond measures.
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Designation and Address of the Advertiser
1. Mode of submission of tender
2. Publishing on website
3. Period downloading of Bidding Documents
4. Bids online submission
5. Bid opening date
6. Details of works

Chief Engineer, Office of M.D. JIIDCO, 3rd Floor, New RIADA Building, Industrial Area, Namkum, Ranchi-834010
Online through www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in

Date 11.12.2020 Time: 11.00 A.M.

Start date 11.12.2020 Time 11.00 A.M.

End date 26.12.2020 Time 5:00 P.M.

Start date 11.12.2020 Time 11.00 A.M. End date 26.12.2020 Time 5:00 P.M.

Date 28.12.2020 Time: 3:30 P.M.

:-

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Construction of Badge Cluster building at Godda

Construction of Wood Craft Cluster building at Bakaro

Estimated Cost/ECV (Rs. in Lakhs)

Amount of Earnest money (Rs.)

Cost of BOQ (Non-refundable in Rs.)

Time of completion of work (in month including monsoon period)

1. 1,24,71,246.98 2,50,000.00 6 7

2. 76,36,968.76 1,53,000.00 10,000.00 09 months

3. 54,51,359.23 1,10,000.00 10,000.00 09 months

7. The original copy of Tender cost and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) must be submitted in JIIDCO office up to 28.12.2020 by 01:00 P.M. If Tender cost and EMD are not received before above mentioned date and time tender shall not be accepted.

8. Place to receiving tender cost and EMD : Office of M.D. JIIDCO, 3rd Floor, New RIADA building, Namkum Industrial area, Namkum, Ranchi-834010

9. Bid Validity :-120 days :-Office of M.D. JIIDCO, 3rd Floor, New RIADA building, Namkum Industrial area, Namkum, Ranchi-834010

10. Place of opening of Technical Bid :-Office of M.D. JIIDCO, 3rd Floor, New RIADA building, Namkum Industrial area, Namkum, Ranchi-834010

11. Further details can be seen on website- www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in

Note: The estimated cost mentioned above in sl. No. 6 column no. 4 is approximate which may be increased or decreased.

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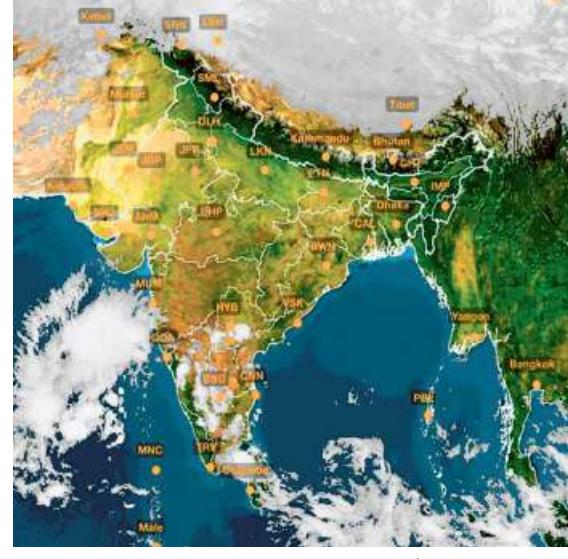
PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, AADITYA Mehta S/O Anjali Mehta born on January 15th, 2004 residing at C4/6 SDA, New Delhi 110016, have changed my name to Aditya Mehta vide affidavit dated December 6th, 2020 at Delhi.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	25.5	15.5	Kozhikode	—	25...33.2	24.4
Ahmedabad	—	34.9	17.1	Kurnool	—	32.2...	22.0
Aizawl	—	—	—	Lucknow	—	27.2...	12.4
Allahabad	—	29.0	12.6	Madurai	19.8	29.7...	23.3
Bengaluru	5.6	25.0	19.5	Mangaluru	—	36.9...	24.0
Bhopal	—	31.3	13.6	Mumbai	—	36.4...	18.2
Bhubaneswar	—	32.7	17.2	Mysuru	1...	27.6...	21.2
Chandigarh	—	25.4	11.7	New Delhi	—	28.3...	9.5
Chennai	27.8	31.4	21.9	Patna	—	23.6...	15.4
Coimbatore	2.4	29.2	22.2	Port Blair	—	30.3...	25.3
Dehradoon	—	25.7	10.7	Puducherry	39.5	30.4...	22.4
Gangtok	—	13.3	7.4	Pune	—	31.4...	20.0
Goa	—	34.8	24.4	Raipur	—	32.2...	15.8
Guwahati	—	26.5	14.0	Ranchi	—	29.4...	13.3
Hubballi	—	28.0	21.0	Shillong	—	16.5...	8.3
Hyderabad	—	30.5	15.5	Shimla	—	18.3...	9.2
Imphal	—	23.5	6.8	Srinagar	—	9.0...	3.1
Jaipur	—	30.4	14.3	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.4...	23.3
Kochi	—	31.6	24.3	Tiruchi	—	1.4...	23.0
Kohima	—	18.3	6.5	Vijayawada	—	30.6...	21.0
Kolkata	—	25.5	17.9	Visakhapatnam	—	30.0...	20.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	37	153	38	159	149	—
Bengaluru	2	55	93	29	—	—
Chennai	11	8	42	53	—	—
Delhi	10	88	166	417	367	—
Hyderabad	5	101	13	110	129	—
Kolkata	16	29	66	356	234	—
Lucknow	5	124	42	411	336	—
Mumbai	8	—	27	134	262	—
Pune	—	80	7	124	100	—
Visakhapatnam	15	75	41	112	113	—

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur 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

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh recorded an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Mysuru, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 22.

Maharashtra sees more than 6,000 recoveries

Active figures dip to 73,374; Mumbai reports 585 new cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Recoveries continued to outpace cases with as many as 6,365 patients being discharged across Maharashtra on Tuesday while 4,026 new COVID-19 cases were reported.

The total case tally now stands at 18,59,367 with the number of active cases dipping further to 73,374. The cumulative recoveries have reached 17,37,080 with the State's recovery rate rising incrementally to 93.42%.

As many as 53 deaths were reported, taking the death toll to 47,827.

The low case surge must, however, be viewed in the context of the lower number of samples tested – just over 45,000 as compared with a daily average of over 70,000.

"Of a total 1,13,77,074 laboratory samples tested thus far, 18,59,367 (case positivity rate of 16.34%) have returned positive with nearly 60,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, adding that the State's case fatality rate marginally decreased to 2.57%.

Pune district reported more than 550 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,58,945 while eight deaths saw its fatality toll reach 7,582. As per the district administration figures, the active cases dipped to 10,731



A health worker takes a nasal swab sample of a woman police officer for COVID-19 test in Mumbai. ■ FILE PHOTO

while its recovery rate rose to 94.50%.

Mumbai city recorded 585 new cases to take its total tally to 2,87,182 of whom 12,231 are active. Seven fatalities saw the city's death toll rise to 10,914.

Nagpur district in Vidarbha reported 447 new cases, taking the district's total tally to 1,17,312 of whom 4,573 are currently active. Five deaths took the toll to 3,050.

In western Maharashtra, Satara reported three deaths to push its fatality toll to 1,698. Just 55 fresh cases saw the total tally rise to 53,484 of whom 1,861 are active.

Neighbouring Sangli reported 36 cases and three deaths as the district's reported cases touched 48,996 of whom just 375 are active. Its death toll stands

at 1,727. Kolhapur reported a mere eight cases and no deaths as its total tally reached 49,078 of whom a little over 100 are active.

The death toll remains constant at 1,654.

In north Maharashtra, Nashik district reported over 500 cases and three deaths as its total tally reached 1,08,421 of whom 2,294 are active. Its fatality toll stands at 1,750.

Neighbouring Jalgaon reported only 34 new cases and no deaths as its total case tally reached 55,358 of whom only 1,009 are active, while its death toll stood at 1,422.

Dr. Awate said that currently, 5,48,961 people across the State were in home quarantine and 5,617 were in institutional quarantine facilities.

Transport unions seek Raj Thackeray's intervention

Letter to MNS chief talks about exorbitant interest rates, harassment for loan repayments



Raj Thackeray

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Faced with financial constraints due to the lockdown, representatives of 14 transport unions on Tuesday met Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray, urging him to talk to the government on their behalf in a bid to get them assistance.

Among their major demands were relief from exorbitant interest rates applied by non-banking financial companies (NBFC) despite guidelines from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), interest-free moratorium on loan repayment till March 2021,

In a letter submitted to Mr. Thackeray, the representatives said that a number of illegal methods were being used by financial institutions against those who missed loan instalments.

"Customers are being threatened over phone via agency; goons are being sent to home and office; and veh-

icles are confiscated illegally on road and they are being sold to third party without consent. These are illegal methods which is in violation of guidelines laid down by the RBI and numerous verdicts from the Supreme Court," the letter said.

Kirtikumar Shinde, general secretary, MNS, said that they had been raising the issues of the transport sector for the last few months. "The lockdown in view of the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on this sector. Owners of auto, taxi, cab, truck, tempo, and buses are facing financial hardships. At this time, the NBFCs and banks are making it harder for them by harassing for loan repayments," he said.

Mr. Shinde said that the party had been meeting various NBFCs and banks asking them to follow law and not use might against vehicle owners who were financially destroyed in the lockdown.

Number of human-leopard conflicts goes up in State

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AURANGABAD

The number of people killed in attacks by leopards in Maharashtra more than tripled to 27 in 2020, compared to eight such incidents recorded in 2019, a senior Forest Department official said. At the same time, the number of deaths of leopards also rose, compared to last year, he told PTI.

The police had arrested builder Vasant Bhanushali for allegedly constructing a flat illegally on the seventh floor in the area meant for a terrace and booked him under relevant sections of the IPC.

The accused and his partner Vijay Bhanushali constructed Shiv Tower in Khopat area of Thane, where they had permission to build four flats on the seventh floor and the remaining area was marked for a terrace.

However, the accused illegally constructed a flat in the area meant for the terrace and made a camouflage agreement of selling the illegal flat to one Rajkumar Bathija.

Mr. Bathija then sold the flat to complainant Haresh Jeswani and annexed the forged plans. He also facilitated bank loan for the purchase.

counts for the highest number of deaths of people in attacks by leopards, followed by the Marathwada region which reported seven deaths. Remaining deaths were reported from other parts of Maharashtra," the official said.

When asked about the reasons for the rise in the number of deaths of leopards, he said some of them were killed in road accidents, while some drowned in wells. He said some leopards died due to natural causes while others were killed by poachers.

When contacted, principal chief conservator of forest Nitin Kakodkar said the population of leopards in the State had gone up exponentially.

"We don't have the exact figures as many leopards are found in sugarcane fields and other areas which are under cultivation," he said.

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Date: 23



Fresh vista

A new parliament building will be celebratory if all have access to health and prosperity

Laying the foundation for a new parliament building for India should be a celebratory occasion, one that every citizen would proudly claim as another edifice of a thriving democracy. It is an opportunity for accord, reflecting a pluralistic, progressive ethos. Yet, the ceremony is now poised to take place under the shadow of litigation, with the Supreme Court allowing the event to be held but temporarily restraining the central government from making site alterations in the form of additions and demolitions of structures and continued removal of trees. The new building, which is part of the Narendra Modi government's ambitious plan to modify the Central Vista skyline of Lutyens' Delhi, will cost an estimated ₹971 crore and be able to accommodate a much larger number of MPs, 888 in the Lok Sabha and 384 in the Rajya Sabha. Just weeks ago, the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said the overall cost of redevelopment of the Central Vista had not been calculated, but the plan is estimated to run into thousands of crores, involving, among other things, a new Central Secretariat and the offices and residences of the Vice-President and Prime Minister. An epochal project, timed for completion ahead of the 75th anniversary of Independence in 2022, it presents a rare moment to involve citizens and build a consensus. But the government is now pressing ahead at a cheerless time when the country remains dismayed over a slowing economy and the double blow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is reasonable to assume that even with a strong revival of the economy in a post-vaccine era, the debilitation cannot be easily overcome. The government's interventions so far have largely been to encourage private consumption and modest revival of businesses, while its own consumption expenditure, during the first half of the year, has been below that of the corresponding period in the previous year. This in effect ensured the persistence of significant GDP contraction. Even on the question of a free COVID-19 vaccine, the government has been prevaricating, with no assurance of universal vaccination. With concerns over allocation of resources, it cannot be anyone's case that shining new Central Vista structures will add to the lustre of an Independence jubilee. There are also indications that the Centre's PWD is trying to modify the overall redevelopment plan on the go, introducing changes piecemeal after getting approvals, which the Expert Appraisal Committee has frowned upon. In a year of unprecedented distress, therefore, what is seen as grand may appear grandiose to stricken citizens, who need every rupee to stabilise their lives. They would be justified in asking the government why the house cannot be beautified after essential repairs have been made to render it safe. The weakest link, exposed by the pandemic, is health care, and the 75th anniversary should be an occasion to guarantee that. A new parliament could then be built to celebrate such an achievement.

Constant vigilance

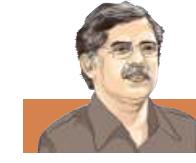
The Khalistan movement is non-existent, but security agencies must watch fringe sections

The arrest of five terror suspects in Delhi – two of whom were allegedly involved in the murder of Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh in Punjab in October – has turned the spotlight on the embers of the long dead and buried Khalistan movement. The Delhi police have claimed that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is seeking yet again to link up terror outfits in Kashmir with pro-Khalistan activists; three of the others arrested were from Kashmir. While these claims need to be investigated before any conclusion can be made about the presence of a link, the central government should not take the threat lightly. The Khalistan movement has long become moribund with the neutralisation of the threat and the ending of the Punjab insurgency in the early 1990s. The movement has lost support from the Sikh community within India and the Sikh diaspora across the world. The killing of Balwinder Singh is one of a few isolated and sporadic incidents that have occurred in the last decade but attempts to revive the movement from fringe groups have failed. There is also no truth in the allegation that there are pro-Khalistan sections as part of the large-scale protests led by farmers in Punjab. The irrelevance of the Khalistan movement notwithstanding, agencies such as the ISI have not stopped trying to foment such violence, either directly by funding fringe sections or by linking them with terror groups in Kashmir. Security agencies must therefore remain vigilant.

Even if the Khalistan movement has been interred, the threat of terror in Kashmir remains well and truly active. Terror incidents and fatalities since the revoking of special status and statehood for Jammu & Kashmir in the last year have remained high. Data from the terrorism monitoring portal, satp.org, show that there were 382 incidents related to terrorism and 302 fatalities in 2020 so far in J&K compared to 369 and 283 in 2019, respectively. While many of these incidents have occurred due to acts of terror emanating from within the Union Territory, infiltration of terrorists from Pakistan continues apace as well, which is also correlated with the increased ceasefire violations at both the Line of Control and the International Border. The lull in terror activities and the relative peace in the Valley from 2011 to 2015 are now a thing of the past and renewed violence besides disaffection have become a new normal, even if they have not reached the high levels of the 1990s and the early 2000s. The persisting disaffection in the Valley can only be addressed by a new political process that seeks to review the unilateral changes made to the region's status and restores its full statehood.

The dangers of misplaced optimism

The government's economic recovery hype is off track and this is not a time for fiscal conservatism



C.P. CHANDRASEKHAR

Preliminary evidence that India's economy contracted by 7.5% in the second quarter of financial year 2020-21 was, as news, both good and bad. Good because that figure is far lower than the 23.9% contraction registered in the first quarter of this financial year. Bad because a 7.5% second quarter contraction is high both in itself and when compared with most similarly placed countries. The figure signals that the substantial relaxation of lockdown restrictions during that quarter has not ensured automatic recovery.

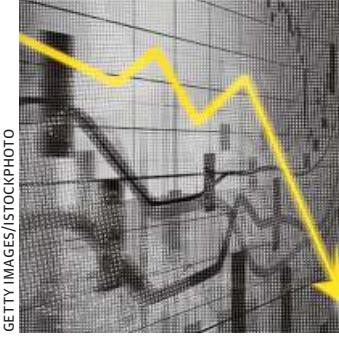
The government, however, sticks with its recovery hype. It has chosen to focus on the unsurprising evidence that GDP rose sharply, by 23%, between the first quarter, when the national lockdown following the pandemic was severe, and the second when restrictions were substantially lifted. Based on that evidence, the Finance Ministry's *Monthly Economic Report*, for November (<https://bit.ly/3lSPeJP> and <https://bit.ly/2JZslxu>), speaks of a V-shaped recovery reflective of "the resilience and robustness of the Indian economy". The danger is that such optimism would provide the justification to avoid adoption of the measures crucially needed to pull the economy out of recession.

Shun fiscal conservatism
Lockdowns limit production and result in a rundown of inventories. They also adversely affect employ-

ment, income and demand. When lockdowns are relaxed, therefore, production must rise, not just to meet demands backed by the available purchasing power but also to restore inventories to normal levels across the distribution chain. Once the latter is done, however, demand must return to and rise above pre-crisis levels for production to recover and grow. With the lockdown-induced adverse effects on demand of the loss of jobs and livelihoods, the increased indebtedness and the bankruptcies precipitated by the crisis bound to be felt well after restrictions are relaxed, the tasks of providing safety nets, reviving employment and spurring demand become crucial. Since the market cannot deliver on those fronts, state action facilitated by substantially enhanced expenditure is crucial. And since government revenues shrink during a recession, that expenditure has to be funded by borrowing. This is no time for fiscal conservatism, as governments across the world have come to accept.

GDP movements

It is in this light that the granular evidence on GDP movements must be read, with the caveat that these are preliminary estimates based on limited information. Going by the available numbers, there are a number of features underlying aggregate performance that are suggestive of the dynamic of the post-COVID-19 economy. To start with, while the decline in private final consumption expenditure at constant prices, which accounts for 56% of GDP, has come down from minus 27% in the first quarter (relative to the corresponding quarter of the previous year) to minus 11% in the second, it still remains high. Though there are signs of a short-run recovery in private consumption demand with



the lifting of lockdowns, net incomes and consumer confidence are not at levels that can even restore last year's levels. Second, as is to be expected, with production restraints relaxed, depleted stocks are being replenished. The direction of changes in stock levels has reversed, with a fall of 21% in the first quarter turning into an increase in stocking of 6.3% in the second quarter. Third, however, these signals from the demand side have not been adequate to spur an investment revival. While the decline in fixed capital formation has fallen from a high minus 47% in the first quarter to minus 7% in the second, investment is still falling year-on-year. These are all signs of an economy that is severely demand constrained, requiring a significant step up in government expenditure.

Impact on States

However, the government, in Delhi, has not just chosen to hold back on its own spending but is adopting a stance that would squeeze expenditure at the State level as well. To start at the central level, figures from the Office of the Controller General of Accounts (<https://bit.ly/3Tq3Xz>) relating to the first seven months of 2020-21 (April to October) indicate that, over this crucial period, the total expenditure of the central government stood at 55% of what was

provided for in the Budget for 2020-21, which too was woefully inadequate even for normal times. In fact, in a non-COVID-19 year, 2019-20, the ratio of actual spending by the central government over April-October relative to that budgeted figure was a higher 59%. The shortfall in spending was sharper in the case of capital expenditure, with 48% of that budgeted being spent over April to October. The corresponding figure for 2019-20 was 60%.

This refers to the Centre's own expenditures. Meanwhile, with Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues having fallen from their lower-than-expected levels during the COVID-19 months, the States have been cash-strapped. Yet, the government has decided not to compensate them for the shortfall, as promised under the GST regime, on the grounds that only a part of the shortfall was due to the shift to the new regime, with the rest being the result of an "Act of God" that the Centre cannot be held responsible for. States have been left to fend for themselves by going to market and borrowing at high interest rates, which they would find difficult to cover. Needless to say, as a consequence, State spending has also been curtailed.

Allocations for welfare

The net result of this voluntary and enforced fiscal conservatism in the middle of a pandemic, which calls for hugely enhanced spending, is visible in the GDP figures. Government Final Consumption Expenditure, which rose by 10% in the first half of 2019-20, relative to the corresponding period of the previous year, declined by 4% in the first half of 2020-21, when it should have been rising. This is because, after a half-hearted 'stimulus' in the first quarter, that raised government con-

sumption expenditure by a modest 16%, that expenditure fell by as much as 22% in the second quarter. This trend suggests that allocations for welfare expenditures – ranging from subsidised food to minimal guaranteed employment – needed to support those whose livelihoods have been devastated by the pandemic, would be reduced over time. As collateral damage, this frugality in a time of crisis is likely to prolong the recession, which could intensify as stocks are replenished and demand from those whom the government no longer supports, despite loss of earning and heightened indebtedness, shrinks.

A possible explanation

The rationale that underlies this privileging of fiscal conservatism over growth and, more importantly welfare, is nowhere explained. But there are signs of where it possibly comes from. This is a government that chose to push through regressive labour codes and Farm Bills in the midst of a pandemic. It is a government which sees not an opportunity to tax when incomes and wealth of the super rich explode during pandemic times, but a cause to celebrate India's ability to 'ease' the doing of business and generate its own billionaires. It is, in sum, unabashedly neoliberal, possibly in the mistaken belief that, COVID-19 notwithstanding, such 'reform' would deliver a 'robust' and 'resilient' economy. That possibly explains the optimism that a V-shaped recovery is imminent, and that optimism, in turn, would justify the view that fiscal conservatism pays. It does not, as time would tell.

C.P. Chandrasekhar is former Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

In Stanford ranking, hope for Indian science

Its grading of scientists could provide much-needed impetus in the backdrop of the National Research Foundation plan



K. GIRESAN &
JOS CHATHUKULAM

It would be quite relevant to recollect these words now: 'India is at the origin of everything; intellectually, religiously or politically where even the Greek heritage seems pale in comparison'. Ancient India has made contributions to several complex and present-day scientific achievements. But these words spell some hope as far as the apparent dip in the performance of Indian scientists in the contemporary world is concerned. If one is to look at a new report, by Stanford University, U.S. on the world ranking of scientists it paints a positive picture and shows there are definite signs of Indian scientists regaining lost ground.

A comprehensive database

Scientists at Stanford University, led by John Ioannidis, have created a database of 1,59,683 (top 2%) scientists of the world (<https://bit.ly/2JAQBZY>), based on standard indicators such as information on citations, h-Index, co-authorship and a composite indicator. This database has largely depended on the citation index provided by resource databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. It is based on the number of research papers published, the number of times the author has been cited and the h-index, which is a measure of the

impact of an author's work and other people's research. There is no other database that systematically ranks all the scientists across the world with such accuracy and depth. From India, 1,594 Indians have made it to the list of top 2% scientists in the world.

An appraisal of the report, which includes disciplines of science, technology, medicine and allied areas, shows certain significant trends. Scientists from government-supported institutions have shown supremacy in the disciplines of science and technology, whereas scientists from private institutions find more place in the disciplines of medicine and allied areas. An analysis of the report shows that there is an equitable distribution of scientists working in institutions in urban and rural areas. In certain disciplines, a large number of scientists have secured a place in the list, whereas in some disciplines, only one scientist could be included.

Government institutes score

From the entire list of disciplines, one finds that more than four-fifths of the scientists are from government-supported institutions that include institutions of national importance, central universities, State universities, and government-funded research institutions. Among the institutions of national importance, several scientists from the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, and the Indian Institutes of Technology and the National Institutes of Technology have made it to the top. The University of Delhi and the University of Hyderabad

find inclusion. In the disciplines of science and technology, the share of scientists from government-supported institutions, especially the institutions of national importance, is very high as they feature in most of the places in the list. The conclusion is that the listings point to the outcome of freedom, flexibility and facilitation to the faculty in these institutions to carry out research on any relevant topic. The practices of peer review, motivation to participate in international seminars, and incentivisation packages offered in these institutions are sure to have had a positive impact in this connection.

Outside the urban hub

A number of scientists from private colleges and other institutions even from the remote areas have managed to find a place in the list. This is noted in a number of conventional and modern disciplines, thereby showing the reach and the extent of the performance of these scientists beyond the centres of excellence. One also finds several institutions located in remote areas – much away from the 'urban hubs of education' – being listed. It highlights the professional excellence and equitable sharing of excellence in the rural and urban settings. The reading of this is that this could act as a great incentive

to many rising scientists from the rural areas.

Scientists working in non-governmental organisations, and private institutions have also made it to the list consisting of science, technology and medicine. In disciplines such as general and internal medicine, anatomy, ophthalmology and optometry, nutrition and dietetics, etc., scientists from private institutions find mention. This points to the need for reorienting and taking a relook at the investment in research and development by government medical institutions. The Medical Council of India, the Pharmacy Council of India and other regulatory institutions would need to review their guidance and support mechanisms for enhanced research and development.

In disciplines such as applied physics, artificial intelligence and image processing, mechanical engineering and transportation, organic chemistry and polymers, one finds more than 50 but less than 100 scientists in the list. It is a matter of great pride that so many Indian scientists from these disciplines have received international acclaim and recognition which is a motivating factor for a number of young scientists. At the same time, it is disappointing to note that only a few scientists in disciplines such as anaesthesiology, applied mathematics, emergency and critical care, genetics and heredity and geology have made the grade. It is a signal to these scientists to work harder, with purpose, and to demonstrate professional excellence. Drawing inputs from the National Education Policy, the Government of India has pro-

posed the setting up of a National Research Foundation, or NRF. India invests less than 1% of its GDP in research and innovation.

Relevance of the NRF

The proposal to set up an NRF is aimed at boosting research and innovation in all higher education institutions in the country. If it sees the light of day, it would boost the overall research ecosystem in the country by focusing and extending support to take up research and development in thrust areas relevant to India's national priorities. As in the proposal, the NRF will have four major divisions such as sciences, technology, social sciences, and arts and humanities. Additional divisions such as agriculture, environment, etc. could be added by the governing board of the NRF.

The NRF paves the way for a self-reliant India while advocating merit-based but equitable peer-reviewed research funding, an incentivisation of research, and to usher in a new culture of research and development in the country. Despite certain limitations, the announcement of the NEP and the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan may enable the country to redraw the contours of research beyond the conventional disciplines. The report by Stanford University provides the impetus to Indian scientists to reach international standards.

K. Gireesan is Associate Professor, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sripuramkulam, Tamil Nadu. Jos Chathukulam is Director, Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala

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.

Parliament building

Despite questions concerning the legality of the Central Vista project being in court, the Centre is in an unseemly hurry to break ground to score brownie points (Page 1, "SC nod for Central Vista inauguration", December 8). However, this is sending a wrong signal to government-run departments which often have a penchant to lay the foundation stone of big ticket projects without statutory approvals (especially environmental) in place. The predictable outcome is time and cost overruns. Many construction agencies have

to exit in the face of uncertainty, thereby rendering myriad projects unviable. This is a reason why parties quote invariably high for government tenders. There are ample cases when many could not be commissioned for want of requisite approvals despite construction and are inevitably abandoned. The government, rather than being a role model and setting unquestionable standards, is itself indulging in acts of omission and commission. It is incumbent upon it to issue a diktat to all Ministries that no greenfield/brownfield project must be kicked off

unless all approvals are in place.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

■ Completion of 75 years of Independence, in 2022, is no doubt a milestone, but embarking on a project estimated to cost ₹20,000 crore, is a colossal waste. The proposed building is said to have a seating capacity for over 1,000 MPs. As it is, the present House wears a deserted look most of the time, thanks to large-scale absenteeism by MPs. One can only imagine how the new House would look like with seats lying vacant.

P.G. MENON,
Chennai

Farmer's notebook

I am a farmer and can affirm that a farmer's life does not have the comfort of a monthly salary. It's a life of perseverance for years and where profit is not guaranteed. There are issues of quality produce, quantity, the weather, good sowing and harvesting. A farmer does not always make a profit with every year's production; it is usually one bumper production year. All these make the current farm laws suspect because in contract farming, prices are fixed prior and the produce is bought only if quality conditions are met. Else it is sent to the free market where it can go any way.

EKLASPUR SHIV,
Hubli, Karnataka

Slow journalism
Delayed Gratification is a quarterly published from London by The Slow Journalism Company. The magazine is considered as an antidote to 'throwaway journalism' which seems to

have become the order of the day. The magazine picks up three-month-old stories

when 'the dust has settled' and claims to be 'the last to breaking news'. Three reports, with their telling headlines, published side by side (Inside pages, December 8), are examples of how TV anchors need to tread. While social media platforms provide individuals the liberty to express their views, it cannot be at the cost of being careless or hurtful. Delayed gratification is not such a bad idea after all.

SAURABH SINHA,
Bhilai, Chhattisgarh



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FROM PAGE ONE

Some COVID-19 vaccines may get nod in few weeks

"This provides that under specific special situations mentioned in the rule, relaxation, abbreviation, omission, or deferment of data, including local clinical trial data, may be considered for approval. Similarly, other countries also have laws. The timeline for issuing licence is under the national regulator's domain," Mr. Bhushan added.

Three companies – Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute of India and Pfizer – have so far sought emergency use authorisation for their vaccines. Mr. Bhushan said once a green signal was obtained from scientists, the Centre "will launch massive production of the vaccine".

"The Central government has made elaborate preparations and drawn an outline to ramp up production of vaccines to make it available to each and every person in the shortest possible time. We will be running parallel vaccination programmes for several priority groups," Mr. Bhushan said.

The Ministry said at present, there are around 2.39 lakh vaccinators (auxiliary nurse midwife or ANM) across the country, but only 1.54 lakh ANMs will be used for COVID-19 vaccination to ensure that the drive has minimal impact on routine health services, including routine immunisation.

Prioritised groups

It added that the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 has made recommendations on prioritised population groups, including healthcare providers, personnel from State and Central police, armed forces, home guards, civil defence and disaster management volunteers, municipal workers, and persons above 50 years of age.

Mr. Bhushan added that the process of collecting databases of health workers

SC clears land acquisition for Chennai-Salem NH

The highway intends to cut travel time between Chennai and Salem by half.

"By its very nomenclature, a national highway is to link the entire country and provide access to all in every remote corner of the country for interaction and to promote commerce and trade, employment and education, including health related services. This approach enhances and furthers the federal structure. The existence of a national highway in the neighbourhood paves the way for the fulfilment of aspirations of the locals and their empowerment," a three-judge Bench, led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, observed in a 140-page judgment.

The project faced opposition from locals, including farmers, over fears of losing their land, besides environmentalists, who were against felling of trees. The project runs through reserve forest and water bodies.

But the court said the highway project is "dedicated for the ordinary and reasonable user of the road as a national highway from one designated town [Chennai] up to another town [Salem]. It would be open for affected persons to approach the appropriate forum on the correctness or validity of the environmental clearances, the judgment said.

Justice Khanwilkar, who authored the judgment, said the Madras High Court had been wrong to quash the acquisition proceedings on the ground that no prior environmental clearance was taken.

The top court said it was too premature to have got such clearances. The government was not required by law to get them as it had,

has started across all States/UTs and Central Ministries. "This data is being uploaded on CO-WIN software which will be used for the vaccination process. CO-WIN platform is a mobile application, which can be downloaded for free by all, for vaccination delivery. The mobile app will record vaccine data and will be used for remote real-time monitoring," he added.

Giving details of the current cold chain system, the Ministry said it consisted of 85,634 equipment for storage of vaccines at about 28,947 cold chain points across the country. "Current cold chain is capable of storing additional quantities of COVID-19 vaccine required for first 3 crore health care and frontline workers. Additional supplies would be available to States/UTs beginning 10th December 2020," the Ministry stated.

Asking the people to have faith in vaccines cleared by Indian regulators, V.K. Paul, member (Health), NITI Aayog, said: "This is a scientific, technical body with vast experience. Don't succumb to contrary opinion, have faith in these institutions. Take into consideration only accountable transparent information from the government, otherwise we will not find ourselves standing strong against the pandemic. We are chasing the virus and we need to make sure that the virus doesn't chase us."

He added that besides the three vaccine candidates that are before the regulator seeking permission for emergency use, other vaccines may also arrive.

Replying to a question on the data being relied upon for possible issue of emergency use approval, Indian Council of Medical Research head Balram Bhargava added that the regulator probably has to be satisfied with risk-benefit ratio in this emergency situation.

The figures for Tuesday's polls are based on data available at 8.15 p.m. on Tuesday. There could be minor variations in the final figures, the State Election Commission (SEC) said. The encouraging turnout in the first phase

notwithstanding the COVID-19 factor reflected the public's faith in democracy and elections, V. Bhaskaran, State Election Commissioner, said.

Among the five districts, Alappuzha recorded the highest turnout with 77.23%, followed by Idukki 74.56%, Kollam 73.41%, Thiruvananthapuram 69.76% and Pathanamthitta 69.70%. In the 2015 edition of the local body polls, Thiruvananthapuram district had recorded a turnout of 71.9%, Kollam 74.9%, Pathanamthitta 72.5%, Alappuzha 79.7% and Idukki 79.7%, according to data furnished by the commission.

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Among the five districts, Alappuzha recorded the highest turnout with 77.23%, followed by Idukki 74.56%, Kollam 73.41%, Thiruvananthapuram 69.76% and Pathanamthitta 69.70%. In the 2015 edition of the local body polls, Thiruvananthapuram district had recorded a turnout of 71.9%, Kollam 74.9%, Pathanamthitta 72.5%, Alappuzha 79.7% and Idukki 79.7%, according to data furnished by the commission.

Nonetheless, the turnout was low compared to 2015 when the five districts had averaged 75.74%.

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CAs can help farmers grasp laws' benefits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal on Tuesday sought the help of the chartered accountants' fraternity to make farmers understand the benefits of the legislative reforms undertaken by the Centre. He was speaking at an event hosted by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

Mr. Goyal, who is also the Minister for Railways, Commerce and Industry, said the government was ready to address the fears expressed by some sections of farmers.

"I would urge you to help farmers understand the great benefits that we are trying to provide to farmers across the length and breadth of the country," Mr. Goyal told the CAs in attendance, stressing that the new laws were made to support farmers.

Haryana farmer producer bodies back farm laws

However, they want MSP to continue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Some farmer producer organisations from Haryana, claiming to represent 1.2 lakh farmers in the State, have come out in support of the three agricultural marketing reform laws. In a letter to Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, they also sought the government's suggested amendments and a reassurance that minimum support prices will continue.

A delegation of about 20 farmers, representatives of three different groups, met Mr. Tomar late on Monday, and expressed their support

Successful protest, say farmers

Thousands join bandh nationwide, block roads; many opposition leaders detained

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
VIKAS VASUDEVA

NEW DELHI

Farm unions under the banner of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha on Tuesday claimed that more than 50 lakh people participated in the Bharat Bandh call at 20,000 locations across the country. At least 25 political parties supported the bandh, along with trade unions, retail and transport associations and many professional bodies.



Back and forth: BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait outside the residence of Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday. • PTI

in India. The government of India now knows it doesn't have a way out," said Gurnam Singh Chaduni, leader of one of the biggest factions of the Bharatiya Kisan Union in Haryana.

Pre-emptive arrests

Large numbers of protesters and leaders, including several legislators, were detained during the day, both pre-emptively and during the agitation.

While representatives of the 32 farmers' unions from Punjab and leaders of farmers' groups from other States have so far participated in five rounds of meetings with the Centre, on Tuesday, Mr. Shah reached out to the farmers' groups suggesting an "unofficial" meeting with 13-14 representatives at his residence at 7 p.m., some leaders told *The Hindu*.

At the last minute, the venue was shifted to the Na-

tional Agricultural Science Complex, Pusa, and the meeting began after 8 p.m. However, some leaders met Mr. Shah at his residence before the Pusa meeting, ac-

cording to some sources. One leader, Rudru Singh Mansa was disgruntled by the venue change, and initially headed back to the Singhu border, before being persuaded to attend the meeting.

Joginder Singh, president of BKU-Ugrahan, who was not included in the meeting,

said the unions should not have met Mr. Shah separately as the move would create "misunderstanding among struggling people."

He added that BKU-Ugrahan had previously been ap-

proached twice for separate

talks with the government,

but had refused the offer.

"We had always demand-

ed that all organisations

should be invited jointly and

we will stick to the demand," he said.

Govt. employees, trade unions join demonstrations in Punjab

Roads blocked, rail traffic disrupted in some areas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Normal life was disrupted in Punjab on Tuesday due to the nationwide Bharat bandh called by several farmer unions.

Shops and commercial es-
tablishments were com-
pletely or partially closed in
many parts of the State. In
the capital Chandigarh, ho-
wever, shops were open in
many markets. The vehic-
ular traffic was also close to
normal in the city.

Joginder Singh, president of
BKU-Ugrahan, who was not
included in the meeting,

said the unions should not
have met Mr. Shah sepa-
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talks with the government,

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"We had always demand-

ed that all organisations

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we will stick to the demand," he said.

In other parts of the State,
as several group of farmers,
members of government
employee associations and
trade bodies held peaceful
sit-ins on key roads, includ-

ing national and State high-

ways, and even on railway

tracks at a few places, vehic-
ular and rail traffic move-
ment was severely disrupted

on the Chandigarh-Delhi,
Amritsar-Delhi highways.



Ploughing on: Farmers and their supporters taking part in a tractor rally in Amritsar on Tuesday. • PTI

Roads were also blocked in Patiala, Moga, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Barnala, Faridkot, Muktsar, Mansa, and Bathinda among other districts.

Public transport including buses and taxis were few and far between.

Punjab Civil Secretariat Staff Association president Sukhchain Khaira claimed that nearly 50,000 govern-
ment employees across in

the State had taken casual
leave to express their
support.

Several thousand people,
including the elderly, wo-
men and youth joined the
dharnas and shouted slogans
against the BJP-led gov-
ernment at the Centre, ac-
cusing it of implementing
"anti-farmer" policies, and
called for the demands of
the farmers to be met.

'Response to bandh call shows people's support'

Left parties congratulate farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Five Left parties, in a joint statement, congratulated farmers' organisation for the day-long 'Bharat bandh' on Tuesday, saying the spontaneous response to the call showed the extent of people's support to farmers' cause.

The statement is signed by CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and his CPI, CPI(ML), AIFB and RSP counterparts D. Raja, Dipan-
kar Bhattacharya, Debabratia Biswas and Manoj Bhattacharya respectively.

"The historic Bharat Bandh called by the united

platform of kisan organisa-
tions has received an unpre-
cedented response all over
India in the face of the refu-
sal of the Central Govern-
ment to withdraw the anti-
India, anti-farmer Agri-
Laws. The spontaneous res-
ponse it received shows the
extent of people's support to
the struggle of the kisans of
India," the statement read.

The Left parties urged the
Central government to ac-
cept the legitimate demands
of farmers.

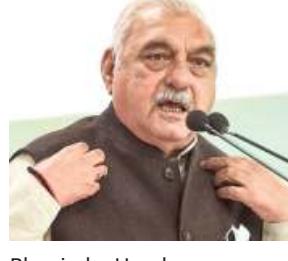
Mr. Yechury said, "Our
MPs are there [at protests
sites], as parliamentarians,
to show solidarity."

Congress presses for special session

Party says a meeting of Parliament will allow discussion on agriculture reforms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Bhupinder Hooda

(DMK) – all the parties that
had jointly backed the call
for Tuesday's 'Bharat bandh'
by farmers' unions.

Addressing a press confe-
rence at the party headquar-
ters, former Haryana Chief
Minister Bhupinder Singh
Hooda said the Congress was
not against agricultural re-

forms but changes to the
agricultural sector should be
made only after consulting
all stakeholders.

He alleged that the go-
vernment pushed through
current laws without any
consultation with the farmers
amidst the COVID-19 pan-
demic and they did not re-
flect the reforms that the
sector needed.

MSP mechanism

Justifying the call given by
the farmers, Mr. Hooda said
the Minimum Support Price
(MSP) mechanism needed to
be incorporated in the law to
protect the interests of
farmers.

"We are not against re-

forms but the current laws
must be repealed and a fresh
reform process initiated af-
ter discussion and consulta-
tions with all stakeholders,"
he added.

Mr. Hooda, who had
chaired a working group of
Chief Ministers during the
Congress-led United Pro-
gressive Alliance regime,
questioned why the govern-
ment did not agree to the
Opposition demand of bring-
ing another law to punish
those buying farm produce
below the MSP.

Mr. Hooda charged the
BJP with 'misrepresenting'
facts and said the UPA had
initiated the process of con-
sulting stakeholders.

"We are not against re-

RAJASTHAN MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.

(A Govt. of Rajasthan Undertaking)

Gandhi Block, Swasthya Bhawan, Tilak Marg, Jaipur-302005, India

Phone No.: 0141-2228066, 2228064 CIN: U24232RJ2011SCCS035067,

Website: www.rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in, E-mail: edprmsc@nic.in

Ref.No.: F02(85)/RMSCL/Proc/Non Drug/NIB-17/2020/445 Dated: 3.12.2020

Notice Inviting E-Bids

SHORT TERM E-bids for rate contract are invited to us 03:00 PM of 18.12.2020 for Supply of NITRILE GLOVES. Details of NIB-17/2020 (UBN MSC2021GLRC00114) may be seen in the Bidding Documents at our office or at the website of State Public procurement Portal <http://sppp.rj.nic.in>, [www.diproline.org](http://diproline.org), <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in> and may be downloaded from there.

Executive Director (Procurement)

RMSCL

No.EE/SJN/TEND/10/2020-21 Date: 07-12-2020

Brutah Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike

Office of the Executive Engineer, Shivaji Nagar, Queens Road, Bengaluru-560 052.

No.EE/SJN/TEND/10/2020-21 Date: 07-12-2020

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only) (Two Cover System)

The Executive Engineer, (Shivaji Nagar Division), BBMP, Bengaluru on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in Brutah Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES/National Highway or any State Government Organisations for the construction of work in the detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)
1.	Providing borewells and water pipeline in Ward No.62, Shivaji Nagar Constituency.	100.00	2,00,000/-
2.	Comprehensive development of drains at Kempaiah Block and MV Block Surrounding areas in Ward No. 62, Shivaji Nagar.	75.00	1,50,000/-
3.	Comprehensive development of Footpath and Roads at 4th Main and Church Road at in Ward No.62, Shivaji Nagar Constituency.	75.00	1,50,000/-
4.	Improvements to drain and providing asphalting to Benson 'A' Cross Road 'A' Street and surrounding area in Ward No.63.	75.00	1,50,000/-
5.	Improvements to drain and providing asphalting to 1st Cross,Ramaiah Reddy Layout, 1st Main Road, Nandidurga Road and 7th Cross Road and surrounding area in Ward No.63, Jayamahal.	70.00	1,40,000/-
6.	Renovation and repairs to BBMP Office Building at Thimmaiah Road, Queens Road at Ward No.63, Jayamahal.	100.00	2,00,000/-

Calendar of Events: (1). Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of the Govt. of Karnataka from 10-12-2020. (2). Pre-bid Meeting will be held on 21-12-2020 at 12.00 Noon. (3). Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on 22-12-2020 before 4:00 p.m. (4). Technical Bids will be opened on 23-12-2020 at 4:30 p.m., if possible, or on next working day. Further particulars can be obtained from the above Office during working hours on working days or from website: [https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in](http://eproc.karnataka.gov.in).

Sd/-, Executive Engineer, Shivaji Nagar Division, BBMP.

HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19? CALL APHTHAMITRA ON 14410

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

Wear Mask

Follow Physical Distancing

Maintain Hand Hygiene

ADMISSION TO PH.D. PROGRAMME - JANUARY 2021

Online applications are invited for admission to Ph.D. programme for January 2021 session.

Application process will be done ONLINE

- Starting of filling up of online application form : 09.12.2020
- Last date for filling up of online application form for IIST Fellowship areas : 29.12.2020
- Last date for filling up of online application form for External Fellowship areas : 06.0

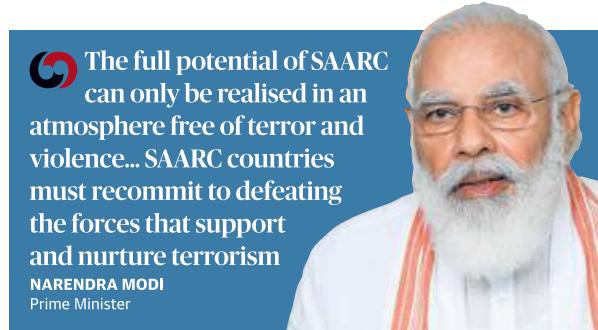
SAARC needs a terror-free milieu: PM

India reiterates stand on regional group's Charter Day as Pakistan, Nepal give call to hold summit early

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

SAARC can only be fully effective in the absence of "terror and violence", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a message to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation on its 36th Charter Day anniversary. In their messages, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli called for the SAARC summit to be held soon.

"The full potential of SAARC can only be realised in an atmosphere free of terror and violence," Mr. Modi said in a letter released by the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, that indicated India's concerns over cross-border terrorism from Pakistan remain a primary obstacle in India's participation in



the summit. He also called for SAARC countries to "re-commit to defeating the forces that support and nurture terrorism".

In his statement released a few hours later, Mr. Khan said, "It is unfortunate that due to long-standing unresolved disputes amongst the member states, SAARC countries have been unable to take advantage of Pakistan's potential as a melting pot for

positive economic interest and consequently the region has not been able to achieve the desired socio-economic cooperation and prosperity in the region so far." He also claimed that "artificial obstacles" had been raised against the SAARC process.

Nepal is the current chairman of SAARC, a position which moves by rotation through the eight countries of South Asia – Afghanistan,

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It held the last SAARC summit in 2014. In 2016, Pakistan was due to hold the next summit, but it had to be put off after India refused to attend the event in Islamabad, and Nepal continues to hold the chair.

In his message, Mr. Oli too said the "stalled SAARC process" should not be delayed further.

"SAARC is not a choice, but a necessity for meaningful regional cooperation in South Asia... The longer we delay, the more will be the opportunity cost," wrote Mr. Oli in his message on SAARC Charter Day.

"Giving fresh impetus to the stalled SAARC process including through the early convening of the summit can rekindle hope among our pe-

ople and provide ground to move forward," he added.

In an interview to *The Hindu* last week, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had said Pakistan, not India, was holding up the SAARC process.

In their SAARC day messages on Tuesday, other heads of state conveyed their commitment to SAARC, and commended the SAARC COVID-19 emergency fund proposed by India in March this year when Mr. Modi had convened a virtual conference.

India had pledged US \$10 million to start the fund, the others, including Pakistan, committed about \$9.8 million together, and the SAARC Secretariat committed \$5 million. India has sent medical equipment worth \$1 million to Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives.

We won't order any step that will hobble economy: SC

Centre says moratorium interest waiver will unsettle banks

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday orally said it would not pass any order that would risk the economy going "haywire" after the Union government revealed that a blanket waiver of interest on debts incurred by all classes and categories of borrowers for the moratorium period would mean forgoing an estimated over ₹6 lakh crore.

"If the banks were to bear this burden, it would necessarily wipe out a substantial and a major part of their net worth," Justice Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, submitted before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan.

Reserve Bank of India counsel V. Giri said the discretion to frame a resolution plan should be with the bank and not the borrower.

The Supreme Court is hearing the government's response to separate pleas made by industry, real estate and power sectors and others for debt relief, including waiver of interest, during the moratorium.

Proactive actions

"The Ministry of Finance, under the Disaster Management Act, and the RBI have acted proactively. The overriding objective was to prevent financial markets from freezing up; ensure normal functioning of financial intermediaries; ease the stress faced by households and businesses; and keep the lifeblood of finance flowing," Mr. Mehta said.

He explained that for every loan account, there were about 8.5 deposit accounts in the Indian banking system. "As mentioned on oath by the Indian Banks Associa-

tion, the State Bank of India has stated that interest amount from borrowers during six months moratorium works out to be ₹88,078 crore [approx.], whereas the interest payable to the depositors during the said period works out to be ₹75,157 crore [approx.]," he submitted.

It was necessary for the Centre to "rationalise any kind of financial relief". The government cannot do anything which would topple the economic scenario.

The health sector required huge expenditure and it was necessary to ensure that the common man got his livelihood at the earliest.

"The resolution framework provides that loan accounts which slip into NPA between invocation and implementation may be upgraded as standard on the date of implementation itself," Mr. Mehta said.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India had issued circulars to relax the "recognition" of defaults committed during moratorium.

"The Kamath Committee set up by the RBI has recommended financial parameters for debt restructuring of 26 sectors affected by COVID-19," Mr. Mehta noted.

The court will continue the hearing on December 9.

'COVID-19 won't delay Rafale delivery'

Despite lockdown, fighter jet production is on target, says French Ambassador

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN
DENNIS S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI



A Rafale jet from the first batch, delivered in September. ■ FILE PHOTO

French Ambassador to India Emmanuel Lenain on Tuesday said France would deliver all 36 Rafale fighter aircraft to India by 2022 despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown on French defence industry.

Mr. Lenain, who visited the offices of *The Hindu* during his two-day visit to Chennai, said, "Although France also had a lockdown in the spring 2020 and factories closed for a while, our defence industries have doubled efforts; they have worked extra shifts and over-

night or weekends to be able to deliver and to supply the Rafale jets on time."

Asked if the delivery schedule of the fighter jets would be shifted due to the pandemic, Mr. Lenain said, "According to the contract, they are delivered in France, in Mérignac, where they are produced. Then it is up to India to decide on how long they keep the jets in Mérignac, where they can train the pilots and the technicians."

Mr. Lenain was on a visit to Chennai during which he held wide-ranging talks with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on French investment and engagement in industry, R&D and renewable energy in the State.

Asked about the impact of Brexit and the U.S.-China trade war on French investment strategy in the changing global business climate,

Mr. Lenain said, "One of the lessons that all governments drew from the COVID crisis is that the need for strategic autonomy on certain essential production capacity... It is true for certain medical products."

However, he added that this did not mean autarky. "We are not going to bring back every supply chain from other places to Europe. That is not realistic. And companies are going to localise in friendly and reliable countries. India is at the top of the list. When you are making an investment for 10, 20 or 30 years, you want to make sure of the partner you choose."

No joint commemorative stamps with India, says China

No reason was given for the decision, says state broadcaster

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's State Post Bureau on Tuesday said it had decided to cancel its plan to jointly launch commemorative stamps with India.

The announcement was reported by China's official English-language State broadcaster, China Global Television Network, which added that "no reason was given for the decision."

India and China had planned a series of events to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this year,

plans which have been disrupted both by the COVID-19 pandemic and the worst crisis on the border in decades, sparked by China's multiple transgressions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) starting in May.

Last week, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told *The Hindu* in an interview that talks on the LAC could continue much longer, drawing a parallel to a similar military stand-off in Arunachal Pradesh's Sumdorong Chu in 1986 that took nearly nine years to resolve. Mr. Jaishankar said for In-

dia, the bottom line was that China had violated past agreements by amassing troops at the border and that if "peace and tranquillity" at the border was disturbed, the rest of the India-China relationship was affected.

"Complicated issues will take time and I will go for what is my interest and my bottom line. I mean, I will not be stampeded into accepting something which is less," he said, adding that India had undertaken an "enormous military response" in reaction to the Chinese deployment.

'Conduct workshop for prison authorities'

HC on Navlakha being denied spectacles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Referring to civil rights campaigner Gautam Navlakha being denied his spectacles at Taloja Central Jail, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday said, "Humanity is most important. This is high time to conduct a workshop for prison authorities."

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik said, "Humanity is most important. Everything else will follow. Today we learnt about Gautam Navlakha's spectacles."

On Monday, *The Hindu* reported that Mr. Navlakha's partner Sahba Husain had alleged his spectacles were stolen on November 27 and he was not allowed to inform his family about this till November 30. He is nearing 70 years old and is almost blind without the spectacles as his power is more than 6.5, Ms. Husain had said. She said she had sent a pair of spectacles to the prison on December 3. However, they were returned on

Humanity is most important. Everything else will follow... It is high time to conduct a workshop

BOMBAY HIGH COURT

To which the Bench said, "Can you deny all these small items? These are all humane considerations."

The court, however, was hearing a criminal application filed by Mr. Navlakha's co-accused Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe in the Bhima Koregaon case, challenging their arrest by the NIA.

Senior advocate Mihir Desai, representing the duo, who are members of the Kabir Kala Manch, a Pune-based group of artists, said they were being coerced by the NIA to give statements against other accused.

Mr. Desai argued that they were arrested only because they had refused to make statements before a magistrate against the other accused.

Mr. Desai argued that they were arrested only because they had refused to make statements before a magistrate against the other accused.

Tata Sons contests NCLAT order on reinstating Cyrus

It amounted to vesting control with a minority shareholder

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Tata Sons Private Ltd. submitted in the Supreme Court on Tuesday that the decision of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on December 18, 2019, to reinstate Cyrus Mistry as the company's chairman effectively amounted to vesting the control of the Tata companies with a minority shareholder.

"What NCLAT has done now is vest the control of the company with minority. Minority with 18% holding has been effectively given power to rule over all the Tata Companies," senior advocate Harish Salve for Tata Sons submitted before a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde on the first day of the hearing.

The hearing will continue on December 9.

Mr. Salve said the major shareholder of Tata Sons is Tata Trusts, which holds a 68% stake. "The trustees controlled Tata Sons and

Highway halt



Snowed in: Trucks stranded on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway after a fresh bout of snowfall hit Qazigund in south

Kashmir on Tuesday. ■ NISSAR AHMED

'Illegally detained, house locked up'

Mufti disallowed to visit evicted families

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Former Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday said she was locked up inside her Srinagar residence and disallowed to visit the "evicted families" at Budgam in central Kashmir.

"Illegal detention has become the GOI's [Government of India's] favourite go to method for muzzling any form of opposition. I've been detained once again because I wanted to visit Budgam where hundreds of families were evicted from their homes," she tweeted.

In a video posted online, she pointed at the locked gates of her residence.

"Why am I not being allowed to go out? Later, the Lt. Governor will say 'she is not under house arrest'. What is this? Why am I being detained illegally? Where are the papers under which I am stopped?" she said.

Ms. Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti also questioned the administration's move. "On one hand, BJP politicians are given full security cover and other facilities to undertake journey of their choice and on the other, Mehbooba has been caged at her home," she said.

She accused the government of continuing with "inflicting oppression on the people of J&K without any questions asked".

A PDP spokesman said Ms. Mufti was scheduled to visit Budgam area "to meet people who are being illegally evicted from their lands and homes".

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CM YK

M ND-NDE



Where business meets pleasure

Skoda's Octavia RS 245 is a characterful car with stellar performance and exceptional handling capabilities

SAUMIL SHAH

Come 2020 and Skoda reintroduced the third-gen Octavia RS for a second stint. Now called the Octavia RS 245, this fully-imported version costs over ₹11 lakh more than the 2017 car. So, does the updated RS offer enough to justify the premium price tag?

Based on the MQB modular architecture, the Octavia RS 245 carries forward its transverse engine and front-wheel-drive layout. Its dimensions and styling are identical to the outgoing version with a key new addition being the larger stylish 18-inch wheels. Skoda claims its ground clearance remains identical to its predecessor, at 141mm, which is 15mm lower than the now-discontinued Octavia sedan, but 15mm higher than the international RS version.

On the inside, the fully-digital instrument cluster, with various customisable screens, is a new addition and so is the new 'RS mode' button, which is a shortcut button for the various drive modes. The well-appointed cabin remains spacious and practical; and at 590-litres, boot space is huge too.

In terms of features, the RS 245 is equipped with auto LED headlamps, 18-inch wheels, virtual cockpit digital dials, a slick touchscreen with Android and Apple connectivity, driving modes, ambient lighting, nine airbags, ESP, cruise control and a lot more.

Like the RS 230, power comes



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	1984cc, 4-cyls, turbo-petrol
POWER	245hp at 5000-6700rpm
TORQUE	370Nm at 1600-4300rpm
GEARBOX	7-speed dual-clutch auto
LENGTH	4689mm
WIDTH	1814mm
HEIGHT	1469mm
WHEELBASE	2677mm
BOOT CAPACITY	590 litres
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	50 litres

from the VW Group's EA888 1,984cc direct-injection, four-cylinder turbo-petrol engine, which now makes 245hp and 370Nm of

torque. The unit gets a revised camshaft, some software upgrades, a new turbocharger and some other engine components. With a wide spread of torque from as low as 1,600rpm till 4,300rpm, this engine feels extremely potent and eager to rev. Put your foot down and it scoots forward, reaching silly speeds in no time. 0-100kph is dealt with in just 6.39sec, which is 0.26sec quicker than the RS 230, and the gap further widens as the speeds increase. In-gear acceleration times are also a bit quicker.

Power is transmitted to the front wheels by a new 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, codenamed the DQ381, not to be confused with the DQ200 7-speed DSG which did its duty in the Octavia 1.8 TSI. This new transmission is seamless and the upshifts are lightning-quick, however, you will find yourself reaching out to the steering-mounted paddle shifters for immediate downshifts, as the transmission does take a second to react automatically, when you suddenly put your foot down.

The RS245 also puts the power down more cleanly and feels a lot sharper and agile around corners than the RS230. This is due to the car's new limited-slip differential – what Skoda calls 'electronically controlled front axle inter-wheel lock (VAQ-Vorderachsquer-sperrre)'. Compared to the RS 230's XDS electronic differential lock, which worked in sync with the ESP to cut power to the wheel losing traction,

the RS 245's limited-slip differential can transfer up to 100% of the power to the front wheel with greater traction. Direction changes are a lot more confidence-inspiring now and the steering feels direct and pointy. Due to the stiff suspension, the RS 245 is less prone to scraping its underbelly on regular speed humps.

The beauty of the Octavia RS lies in its duality – it is just as practical, spacious and usable as a regular sedan as well as one with explosive performance and dynamic characteristics. However, at ₹35.99 lakh (inclusive of import customs duties), the Skoda Octavia RS 245 is clearly overpriced and treads into the BMW 330i's territory. If you want a characterful car with stellar performance and exceptional handling capabilities, as well as a certain degree of exclusivity (limited to 200 units in India), the pricey Octavia RS 245 is a very tempting offer.



Style and substance The Octavia RS245 sports stylish 18-inch wheels ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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AUTO SNIPPETS



Nissan Magnite launched at ₹4.99 lakh

Nissan has launched the new Magnite compact SUV in India with prices starting at ₹4.99 lakh and going up to ₹9.45 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi). The prices are introductory and will go up from January 1, 2021. Buyers have a choice of two 1.0-litre, three-cylinder petrol engines – a naturally-aspirated unit good for 72hp or a turbocharged mill that churns out 100hp and 160Nm (152Nm for the CVT model) of torque. Both engines come paired with a 5-speed manual gearbox as standard with the turbo-petrol additionally getting the option of a CVT automatic.



Yamaha launches FZ-S Vintage Edition

Yamaha has launched a special edition of the FZ-S called the Vintage Edition. Priced at ₹1.10 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi), it comes with retro-themed graphics on the fuel tank and a tan leather-finish. Aside from the cosmetics, the Vintage Edition also gets Bluetooth connectivity as standard which is an option on a regular FZ-S. This system works via the Yamaha Motorcycle Connect X App that offers information about trip distance, battery voltage and average speed. The BS6-compliant Yamaha FZ and FZ-S are powered by a 149cc, single-cylinder engine that makes 12.4hp and 13.6Nm.



All-New Ducati Monster revealed

Italian bike manufacturer Ducati has revealed the all-new Monster. Unlike its predecessor, the all-new bike does not get a numerical suffix and is solely called the Monster. The new Monster has taken on a slimmer and less muscular stance than its predecessor. The upswept angle of the twin exhaust mufflers looks good and the tail section is more sport-bike inspired as well. The Monster now runs on the same 937cc 90° V-twin motor as the Supersport and develops 111hp and 93Nm of torque. It gets three riding modes – Sport, Touring, and Urban.

Q AND A WITH HORMAZD



A diesel-automatic SUV

My daily commute is 100 km (60% on the highway, 40% in the city). For within a budget of ₹20 lakh, I want a diesel-automatic SUV and have shortlisted the Hyundai Creta and the Tata Harrier diesel. Which is better? Tushar Gupta, Faridabad

Given your usage, which is primarily on the highway, we feel the Harrier will be a better option than the Creta. Also, the Harrier's 170hp, 2.0-litre engine feels much stronger than the Creta's 1.5 diesel, which develops a lower 115hp. However, bear in mind that, at low speeds and whilst parking, the bigger Harrier, with its old-school hydraulic power steering can feel quite heavy.

Tyre check

I am planning to replace the tyres of my 2011 Honda Civic. Which brand should I choose? My usage is mostly in city conditions. Dinesh, Chennai

The Continentals, in our experience, seem to have a softer sidewall and hence are prone to sidewall damages or cuts. In this regard, the Michelin would be a better choice. If your running is mainly within city limits, you could opt for the XM2s, but if it is on highways, the Primacy would be the preferable option.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of Autocar India. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in

CM YK

A triumphant reason to hit the roads

Good ground clearance, great suspension and powerful brakes at an amazing price make the Triumph's Street Triple R an attractive option

FIROZE IRANI

Triumph's Street Triple RS offers an impressive chassis, electronics and engine package. However, the RS is not exactly affordable and falls in a price bracket that might be too big a hurdle for many. This is where the R comes in, giving buyers a taste of the accomplished RS.

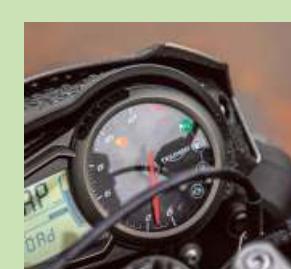
The first thing you will observe about the R is that the ergonomics are quite aggressive for a naked, and it will take a few minutes to get used to how high your feet sit. Something else you will notice is that the seat is narrow near the fuel tank and it also slopes upwards at the back, so you constantly have to readjust yourself.

Like every other Street Triple, the R continues to be welcoming, and it feels light on the move and not very intimidating. The bike does not shoot ahead at low revs and the bi-directional quickshifter works as expected.

The R makes the same torque figure as the RS, and at 118hp – it is down by just 5hp.



Its engine runs a slightly lower compression ratio and Triumph also says that it uses a different crank shaft. What also remains the same is that it is missing that low-end urgency you would want from a bike in this segment. The bike is pretty quick, but it feels quite mellow below 6,000rpm. Things are far more exciting when you keep the bike in the hotspot of its powerband. It is at this point that you also get the best sound track, where the en-



Rip-roaring ride The Street Triple R is refined, versatile and incredibly quick ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



gine hum gets a bit louder, but the mean intake howl overpowers it.

Despite having one of the lightest kerb weights and shortest wheelbases in the segment, the Street Triple R feels exceptionally stable on the highway. The fully adjustable Showa SFBD fork and monoshock did feel firmer than the old Street Triple S, and more like the suspension you will find on the RS.

The suspension is also one of the best setups at its price point, from a sport-riding point of view. While it is firm, the adjustability will give the rider the ability to fine-tune it to their weight and liking.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	765cc, 3-cyls, Liquid-cooled
MAX POWER	118hp at 12,000rpm
MAX TORQUE	79Nm at 9350rpm
NO OF GEARS	6
WEIGHT	168kg (dry)
WHEEL BASE	1405mm
GROUND CLEARANCE	160mm
SEAT HEIGHT	825mm
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	17.4 litres
FRONT SUSPENSION	41mm USD fork
REAR SUSPENSION	Monoshock

As for the brakes, the Brembo M4.32 monobloc calipers are not as mighty as the M50s on the RS, but they do offer a wonderfully powerful, immediate and sensitive feel.

As for the four riding modes, there is not a huge difference to be felt.

The Street Triple's design has become iconic. Over the years, the headlights went from being round to what has become an almost triangular shape. As for the bodywork, it is still quite scanty, but a lot more aggressive.

In typical Triumph fashion, the bike is put together really well: there are no abnormal panel gaps, the welding beads on the frame are near perfect and there are no exposed wires. The new rear-view mirrors look like works of art.

The most obvious visual differences between the R and the RS are the lack of a belly pan and the digi-analogue gauge in place of the fully-digital display. The former is something the bike could have done with, but the latter is not bad. The digi-analogue gauge shows you all you need to know.

Triumph has to be given credit for the Street Triple R's price tag of ₹8.84 lakh, almost ₹2.5 lakh cheaper than the top-spec RS. It is more expensive than the new BS6 Z900, but costs significantly less than the BMW F 900 R. This sport-naked is for you if you want something refined and versatile, yet incredibly quick.





Plantable seed pens sow a source of income for people with disabilities from Kerala, while also nurturing the environment and helping in growing kitchen gardens



When the pen BLOOMS

HARIKUMAR JS

paper pens have become a source of livelihood. These functional ball pens, full of seeds, can be planted in the soil once the refill is empty. Apart from providing meagre but useful financial aid, it generates awareness about an eco-friendly lifestyle.

For Janeesh KK from Kumarakom in Kottayam, the vocation is an extension for his love of Nature and agriculture. Janeesh, who used to work as a toddy tapper, became wheelchair-bound after a fall from a coconut tree 10 years ago. "I make about 50 pens a day, but it is difficult for me to sit in the same posture for a long time," he says. He sources seeds with the help of friends from local societies that promote agriculture. "I prefer vegetable plants that produce quick yields such as snake gourd and ladies' finger. Sometimes I go for varieties of spinach. These are easier to source," he points out.

In Kondotty, Mallapuram, Musthafa Paramban has moved beyond making paper pens to take training classes on the same for others who are differently-abled. "Classes are conducted un-



The write way (Top to bottom) Paper pens made by Gopi V; Janeesh at work; Anagha with her mother, Priyaja

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

der the aegis of local collectives and under Panchayat programmes," he says, adding that however since the

pandemic, he has been focussing more on making seed pens at home.

"I typically use seeds of the fast-growing *agathi cheera* (commonly known as vegetable hummingbird) and *mullangi* (South Indian radish). I make about 100 pens a day and sometimes get bulk orders too," he says. Mustafa's pens come in three varieties – one using magazine paper and two other types from colourful craft paper, one with steep clips and the other without.

Gopi, Janeesh and Musthafa find buyers for their pens, which cost from ₹7 to ₹10 depending on the type, via Facebook and WhatsApp. The orders are couriered.

Aided by her mother Priyaja Madhu, 23-year-old Anagha Madhu from Thrissur does her best with fashioning seed pens. It is not easy but Priyaja keeps at it patiently till Anagha, who has cerebral palsy, gets it right. "My only worry is what will happen to Anagha after my time. Every day, our endeavour is to empower her and impart vital training as much as possible," says Priyaja. Anagha was first introduced to this craft by Handicrops, an organisation that coordinates empowerment programmes for the differently-abled with manufacturing eco-friendly products.

Though he does not make paper pens himself, Ernakulam-based Aswin ER's mission is to support himself and a few of his friends who are differently-abled, by selling the pens they produce. Visually challenged, Aswin makes use of GPS services in reaching his customers. "I can still move around and I want to help four of my wheelchair-bound friends – Selvan T, Anitha Reetha, Kavitha PK and Thangamani KP – who have spinal injuries. I collect the pens from them in bulk, say 500 or 1,000 at a time, to market them," says Aswin. The profits are split among themselves.

Aswin, who holds a Masters in Political Science, says he struck upon the idea during his final-year exams when his scribe was using a paper pen. "It is better for the environment and a pen is something you would use in every household."

been written and produced by the members themselves.

'Breath,' the first song of the album is written and composed by vocalist Youngjae under his pseudonym, Ars. The mid-tempo track focusses on the members' distinct vocals while capturing the essence of ethereal love in its lyrics. The whistle hook heard throughout the song adds a flavour to the rhythm.

The title track 'Last Piece', written and produced by leader J.B under his penname Defsoul, brings in a new sound with distorted guitar notes and synth. 'Born Ready' written by the eldest member and rapper, Mark, is an energising anthem as the vocalists experiment with verses in rap.

Youngest members, Bambam and Yugyeom have also contributed melodies to the album through 'Waiting For You', a mellow R&B track with mild instruments and soft verses, and the soulful ballad in honeyed vocals, 'Thank You, Sorry'. The song 'I Mean It' on the other hand, begins with husky whispers, reminiscent of the earlier days of GOT7 as flower boys.

'Tis the season of love

GOT7 makes a comeback with its latest album *Breath of Love*, at a time when K-Pop is reaching global heights

ANTHEA ISAAC

While the world paused for months, the K-pop world didn't. There were back-to-back album releases, online concerts and virtual fan meets. The most popular boy band, BTS' recent nomination for the Grammys, and its



English single, 'Dynamite' ranking No. 1 at Billboard Top 100, affirms the rising K-Culture.

At a time when K-pop is reaching new heights, boy band GOT7, known for its global audience, made its comeback of the year in April with its eleventh EP, 'Dye'. After a month of pro-

motions, the septet went on a hiatus working on its solo projects.

But, as GOT7's (GOT7 fans) expected, the members were working on a bigger project: its recently released fourth full-length album, *Breath of Love: Last Piece*. The self-produced LP has 10 songs, of which seven have

been written and produced by the members themselves.

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Age-old tales from the land

Animated, multilingual video series *Kutty Kahani* has children sharing stories through music, dance, poetry, acting and puppetry



NEERAJA MURTHY

Mumbai-based Svaha Dasgupta narrates a Bengali story *Bhoy peona* (Don't be scared), written by Sukumar Ray, Satyajit Ray's father, of a monster inviting people to its cave. The Class IV student modulates her voice to add a tinge of drama. While Hyderabad's Prasiddha Prasad narrates the story of Saptaswara, Stuti B

Sathavalli in her *Fishy Tales* draws a *kalam* of *matsya* (fish) and talks about Meenakshi, the fish-eyed and Matsya avatar. These eclectic stories – some age-old tales and some from mythology come alive with a touch of animation at *Kutty Kahani – Eternal Stories, Young Storytellers*, a delightful multilingual (with subtitles) storytelling video series.

Speaking about their choice of story, Svaha's mother Swapnokalpa Dasgupta says, "The story draws attention to the fact that people tell young children many things but it is for us to decide what their intentions are; One should be wary and alert."

Ananda, had to don a different role during the process; from chasing parents for deadlines to explaining the video production process and asking them to re-shoot was a different experience. But she is glad *Kutty Kahani* has caught the imagination of young kids, and parents wake up every morning to the next story.

The videos are uploaded at 8 am every day on Natyaramba's social media pages and also at narthaki.com



Bite-sized stories
Created, produced and presented by Natyaramba – a digital platform by Hyderabad-based renowned dancer Ananda Shankar Jayant – *Kutty Kahani* premiered on November 20, and will continue till December 31. The series has young storytellers (aged six to 13) from across India, Malaysia, the UK and the US, sharing timeless stories through chanting, music, dance, poetry, puppetry, acting and storytelling in bite-sized, five-minute-long video capsules.

Stories help us connect to our roots, says Ananda, who conceptualised the series. "Whatever content we have now, has adults speaking to the child. We wanted to let stories come through the prism of a child," she adds.

Ananda's brief to young parents and teachers across the country and overseas for the collection, was to focus only on *kahanis* from the Indian soil. She was also particular about not making them into reading sessions. Parents were provided with instructions and

Bite-sized stories (Top)
Screenshots from the videos;
(right) Ananda Shankar Jayant • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



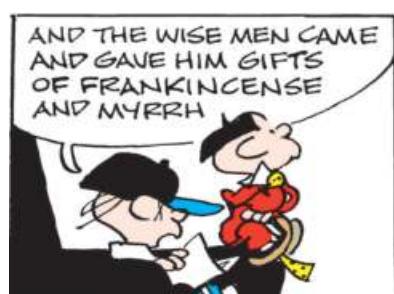
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Biden picks retired Gen. Lloyd Austin as Defence Secretary

The four-star General could be the first African-American Pentagon chief

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden is expected to nominate retired General Lloyd Austin as his Defence Secretary according to reports, making Gen. Austin the first African American in the post, if he is confirmed by the Senate.

In choosing Gen. Austin, Mr. Biden has passed over contenders for the job, such as former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson and Pentagon official Michèle Flournoy.

Mr. Biden could announce his nomination of the 67-year-old four-star General on Tuesday, as per *Politico*, which first reported the story. Gen. Austin formerly headed the U.S. Central Command overseeing combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Gen. Austin oversaw the U.S. response to



Key role: A file photo of retired Gen. Lloyd Austin. AP

the rise of the Islamic State (IS) – including a \$500 million failed programme to recruit Syrian fighters against IS – and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

U.S. law requires a seven-year cool-off period from the Army before becoming Defence Secretary – Gen. Austin will need a waiver from the U.S. Congress if he is to be confirmed to the position.

Move criticised

Several analysts took to social media to criticise the nomination of a former military officer for a civilian role.

"From a civil-military relations perspective, this seems like a terrible idea," Georgetown University academic and former Pentagon official Rosa Brooks said on Twitter. "Lots of damage during the Trump era. Especially after Mattis, Kelly, McMaster, Flynn... putting a recently retired 4 star, no matter how wonderful, into the top civilian DoD position sends the worst possible message."

Some also criticised the fact that Gen. Austin had joined the board of arms manufacturer Raytheon after retirement. "OH COME ON. A General and Raytheon board?" Danielle Brian, who heads the Project on Government Oversight, tweeted. "Possibly the worst of all options. Bad news for civilian control and any real distance from the military-industrial complex," she said.

Afghan civilian deaths surged during Taliban talks: report

Strikes by govt. forces are now harming more civilians: report

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Deaths of Afghan civilians in air strikes jumped from 2017 after the United States loosened its criteria and escalated attacks on the Taliban, according to a report on Monday.

The number of civilians killed annually in U.S. and

coalition air strikes soared by 330% to some 700 civilians in 2019, said Neta C. Crawford, co-director of the Costs of War Project at Brown University.

The U.S. pulled back on air strikes after striking a peace deal with the Taliban in February 2020. But the Afghan forces stepped up

Sri Lanka to get \$300 mn Chinese tyre factory

It will come up near Hambantota port

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka announced on Tuesday the first large-scale Chinese investment in manufacturing in the country, a \$300-million tyre factory near a strategic deep-sea port.

Western nations, as well as regional power India, have long been concerned about Chinese influence in Sri Lanka through projects under its gargantuan Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

The factory will be adjacent to the Hambantota port, which was leased to a Chinese company in 2017 after Sri Lanka failed to service the \$1.4-billion debt from Beijing used to build it.

Generous concessions

Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved the setting up of the tyre plant under legislation that allows generous tax concessions, Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella told

reporters in Colombo. He said Shandong Haohua Tire Co Limited will export at least 80% of production, with the option of selling the rest on the local market.

The announcement came just weeks after Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa unveiled the country's 2021 budget, banking on a huge Chinese real-estate development in Colombo to attract more investment and revive the island's economy.

The Colombo Port City – a \$1.4 billion land reclamation project which started in 2014 – has doubled the size of Sri Lanka's current financial district.

When Mr. Rajapaksa was President between 2005-15, Colombo borrowed billions from China, accumulating a mountain of debt for a string of infrastructure projects – including an international airport dubbed "the world's emptiest" by media for its lack of flights.

Amid pandemic, Nobel Prize winners receive prizes at home

The ceremonies are traditionally held on December 10

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
STOCKHOLM

Adjusting to a world where travel is hampered by the pandemic, this year's Nobel laureates will receive their prizes at home this week following the cancellation of the traditional Stockholm and Oslo ceremonies.

The awards in the six categories were announced in nearly typical fashion in October, albeit with fewer reporters in physical attendance.

However, none of the winners will travel to Stockholm or Oslo to receive their diplomas and medals due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ceremonies are traditionally held on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of the prize's



Emmanuelle Charpentier

founder, Swedish entrepreneur and inventor of dynamite Alfred Nobel.

According to the Nobel Foundation's programme, France's Emmanuelle Charpentier, the co-laureate in chemistry, had been sche-

duled to be first out to receive her prize in a ceremony on Monday evening with the Swedish Ambassador in Berlin.

But on Monday the Foundation disclosed that literature laureate Louise Gluck had already been presented with her medal and diploma on Sunday at her home in Massachusetts.

Chemistry co-laureate Jennifer Doudna will receive her honours at a ceremony in Berkeley, California, on Tuesday.

The west coast U.S. state will also see economics winners Paul Milgrom and Robert Wilson pick up their awards in Palo Alto on Tuesday and physics laureate Andrea Ghez in Los Angeles on Wednesday.

Grandmother, 90, gets first jab of vaccine

Britain begins vaccinating population with Pfizer/BioNTech shot

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COVENTRY

Nurses cheered on Tuesday as a 90-year-old grandmother in Britain became the first person in the Western world to receive an approved vaccine against COVID-19, at the start of a marathon campaign health officials hope heralds a fight-back against the pandemic.

Margaret Keenan, who turns 91 next week, called the jab she received at a hospital in Coventry, central England, "the best early birthday present".

"My advice to anyone offered the vaccine is to take it. If I can have it at 90 then you can have it too," said the former jewellery shop worker who has two children and four grandchildren.

"I feel so privileged to be the first person vaccinated against COVID-19."

Regulators in Britain – one of the worst-affected countries with more than 61,000 deaths from 1.6 million cases – became the first



First step: Margaret Keenan, 90, is applauded after she got the COVID-19 vaccine in Coventry on Tuesday. AP

second jab is required after 21 days.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who spent days in intensive care with COVID-19 earlier this year, called it "a tremendous shot in the arm for the entire nation".

But with most people not expected to get vaccinated until early 2021, he said the public still needed to be careful to stop the spread of the virus.

"We can't afford to relax," Mr. Johnson said during a visit to a central London hospital.

The U.K. has ordered 40 million doses of the jab – enough to vaccinate 20 million people – with 8,00,000 in the first batch.

Up to four million doses are expected by the end of December.

Reports suggest Queen Elizabeth II, who at 94 is among those first in the line for the vaccination because of her age, could front a public awareness campaign urging compliance.

to approve the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for general use last week.

Ms. Keenan, wearing a Christmas T-shirt, received the jab in front of cameras at 0631 GMT, and received a guard of honour from clapping medics as she was wheeled back to her bed.

She was followed by a man called William Shakespeare who, like the world-famous playwright, is from Warwickshire.

May Parsons, a nurse originally from the Philippines who has worked for Britain's state-run National Health Service (NHS) for 23 years, called it a "huge honour" to administer the jab to Ms. Keenan.

Second jab

The over-80s, care home workers and at-risk health and social care staff are first in line to get the jab, on what has been dubbed "V-Day". A

ros Srovcovic said.

The deal fills in some of the blanks left by the January treaty, covering issues such as what export declarations are needed, supply rules for medicines and food to supermarkets, and the process for border checks on animals and plants.

Meanwhile, Mr. Johnson and the EU's Ursula von der Leyen will meet on Wednesday in Brussels to try to unlock Brexit trade deal talks over dinner, the British government said on Tuesday.

Britain, EU strike deal on Ireland border

U.K. agrees to drop clauses that breach Brexit withdrawal agreement

REUTERS
LONDON

Britain said on Tuesday it would drop clauses in draft domestic legislation that breached the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement after it clinched a deal with the European Union over how to manage the Ireland-Northern Ireland border.

Michael Gove, one of Prime Minister Boris John-

son's most senior Ministers, announced an "agreement in principle on all issues, in particular with regard to the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland".

Major breakthrough

The deal is separate to wider trade talks, which have yet to find a solution on how to manage nearly \$1 trillion of annual trade between Bri-

tain and the EU, despite having just weeks until temporary arrangements expire.

But the agreement removes what was a major point of contention between Britain and the EU, with Brussels warning that no wider trade deal would be possible if London went through with its threat to unpick the exit treaty.

"I hope this may also provide some of the positive momentum necessary to instil confidence and trust and allow progress in the wider



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ELSEWHERE



'Lapses ahead of New Zealand mosque attack'

WELLINGTON

There were no clear signs that an attack last year on two New Zealand mosques was imminent, but police should have done a better job vetting the lone gunman when he applied for a gun license, and intelligence agencies should have focused more on threats such as White supremacism, according to a new report. AP

Gunmen kill television cameraman in Pakistan

PESHAWAR

Unidentified gunmen shot and killed a journalist in the northwestern Pakistani city of Dera Ismail Khan. Gunmen riding on a motorcycle opened fire on Qais Javed near his home after midnight and fled from the scene. AP

CYK

THE HINDU

MARKET WATCH

	08-12-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	45,609	0.40
US Dollar	73.60	0.41
Gold	49,430	1.49
Brent oil	48.85	0.31

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	463.35	-8.15
Asian Paints	2438.90	-33.65
Axisc Bank	620.65	1.40
Bajaj Auto	3326.20	6.65
Bajaj Finserv	8969.40	-82.55
Bajaj Finance	4792.15	-37.30
Bharti Airtel	503.60	-5.35
BPCL	390.45	-4.55
Britannia Ind	3645.40	16.45
Cipla	766.00	-7.15
Coal India	134.25	-2.55
Divis Lab	3690.00	-27.55
Dr Reddys Lab	5015.20	-13.90
Eicher Motors	2548.20	-12.95
GAIL (India)	121.75	-0.65
Grasim Ind	925.80	-11.90
HCL Tech	863.80	8.50
HDFC	2309.75	5.95
HDFC Bank	1376.30	4.05
HDFC Life	651.50	1.95
Hero MotoCorp	3167.95	-6.10
Hindalco	245.70	-5.55
Hind Unilever	2260.00	3.85
ICICI Bank	508.40	-2.05
IndusInd Bank	916.70	-18.45
Infosys	1153.35	9.85
Indian Oil Corp	91.05	-0.65
ITC	202.45	-0.70
JSW Steel	362.65	-2.35
Kotak Bank	1833.80	13.25
L&T	1171.40	1.70
M&M	754.00	1.70
Maruti Suzuki	7762.70	19.30
Nestle India Ltd.	17519.45	-43.10
NTPC	98.20	-1.55
ONGC	90.75	-0.80
PowerGrid Corp	191.60	-1.90
Reliance Ind	1993.90	35.55
SBI Life	853.80	2.05
State Bank	271.90	2.30
Shree Cement	24775.75	-178.40
Sun Pharma	568.70	-13.60
Tata Motors	181.80	-1.75
Tata Steel	613.45	-1.10
TCS	2797.30	59.60
Tech Mahindra	932.30	-12.00
Titan	1427.85	2.55
UltraTech Cement	5217.75	161.25
UPL	472.80	-3.15
Wipro	363.70	-5.25

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.32	73.64
Euro	88.83	89.25
British Pound	97.80	98.23
Japanese Yen (100)	70.45	70.75
Chinese Yuan	11.23	11.28
Swiss Franc	82.38	82.74
Singapore Dollar	54.82	55.07
Canadian Dollar	57.30	57.55
Malaysian Ringgit	18.00	18.09
Australian Dollar	54.44	54.68

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

Piramal Pharma to invest \$32 mn for expansion

MUMBAI

Piramal Pharma Solutions, a contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMO) of the Piramal Group, has announced plans to expand its facility in Michigan with additional capacity and new capabilities for the development and manufacturing of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) with an investment of \$32 million.

Biological E. in pact for COVID-19 vaccine tech

HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based pharma firm Biological E. (BE) and the Ohio State Innovation Foundation (OSIF), USA, have announced an exclusive COVID-19 vaccine technology license pact. Under this, OSIF is licensing novel live attenuated measles virus vectored vaccine candidates against SARS-CoV-2 developed by the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, exclusively to the company.

'Belgium ideal to partner with for vaccines'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

Belgium could emerge as the ideal partner for vaccine makers in India as they gear up to reach COVID-19 vaccines to different markets across the globe, said speakers at a webinar organised by the Consulate General of Belgium, Chennai, in partnership with CII and others.

Consul General of Belgium in Chennai Mark Van de Vreken said such partnerships would help diversify the bilateral trade between the two countries, which now is heavily oriented towards gems and jewellery.

Pankaj Bhatnagar, acting team lead – National Public Health Surveillance project, WHO Country Office for India, said with logistics related to vaccines and safety surveillance set to be big challenges, systems need to be geared up to address them.

Astra Zeneca MD Gagan Singh said India has lots to offer in a partnership with Belgium beyond vaccines.

CM YK

Telcos urge govt. to spell out 5G policy

Bharti Airtel's Vittal seeks uniform global standards, Ambani touts home-grown network technology

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Telecom industry leaders on Tuesday urged the Centre to spell out the policy framework and standards that would enable an expeditious roll-out of 5G technology in the country and help ensure the success of the 'Digital India' initiative.

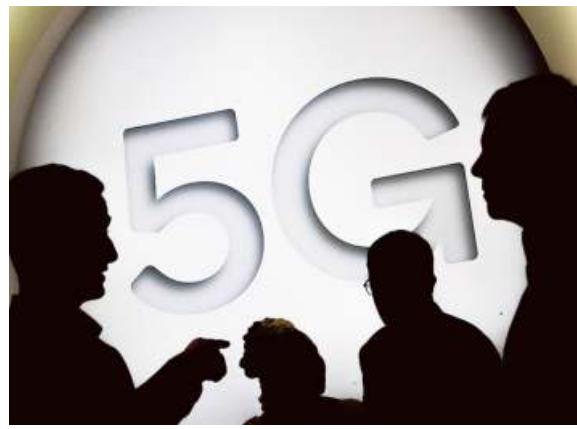
Cautioning against adopting India-specific standards on 5G, Bharti Airtel's India and South Asia CEO Gopal Vittal told participants at the India Mobile Congress 2020 that the country risked isolating itself from the larger world of communications.

'Existential threat'
"There is sometimes talk of India having its own 5G standards. This is an existential threat which could lock India out of a global ecosystem

and slow down the pace of innovation. We would have let our citizens down if you allow that to happen," Mr. Vittal asserted.

Jio's 5G launch
Speaking earlier at the inaugural session, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Communications and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani also pressed for policy measures to expedite the early roll-out of 5G and to ensure access to affordable smartphones to 300 million mobile subscribers "trapped in the 2G era".

Reliance Jio, he hinted, was eyeing introduction of its 5G services "powered by indigenously developed network, hardware and technology components" in the se-



Quality matters: Mr. Vittal asserted that when it concerned technology, standards determined an ecosystem. ■ REUTERS

cond half of 2021.

In his address, Mr. Vittal asserted that when it concerned technology, standards determined an ecosystem. Citing the case of GSM and CDMA technologies, he said while CDMA was a bet-

ter technology, GSM had won as it had gained wider acceptance with more companies in the world embracing it. "So, GSM won because it became part of the global ecosystem, and CDMA died," he added.

pter technology, GSM had won as it had gained wider acceptance with more companies in the world embracing it. "So, GSM won because it became part of the global ecosystem, and CDMA died," he added.

"We have to set aside our differences and be part of one: the private sector – telcos, equipment players, device players, manufacturing companies, IT companies, everyone can benefit as the growth of technology makes us all more productive. So, we should collectively sign on to create a 5G ecosystem," Mr. Vittal said.

Also, to deliver the vision of Digital India, there was a need for enabling policies that kept the access to technology affordable, he said. "If we as a country can embrace global standards, create an open ecosystem for India and leverage this to re-imagine our businesses by having a single and predictable policy environment, the entrepreneurial energy of India will develop digital India," Mr. Vittal added.

Stakeholders must unite for timely 5G roll-out, says Modi

PM calls for better handling of e-waste

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told telecom sector leaders that all stakeholders need to work together to ensure timely roll-out of 5G technology as well as make India a global hub for telecom equipment, design, development and manufacturing.



Narendra Modi

capital is welcome, foreign innovation is welcome, but we are equally keen that safety and security of the country are also important," said Mr. Prasad.

He added that digital technology had to be secure so that vested interests and extremists were not able to abuse it.

"We are all open for new technology, new innovation, be it artificial intelligence, IoT, machine learning, all have enough opportunity in India," the Minister said.

Centre for AI
"We are very particular that India should become a big centre for artificial intelligence. But new technology should lead to empowerment of common people," he added.

And, most important, AI should not become the monopoly of a few and should not become an instrument of weaponisation," Mr. Prasad stressed.

He added, "We are also very keen that India must be 5G-ready and for that, test beds have been created, those provisions will also be unfolded further."

Retail vehicle sales fell 19.3% in Nov.

CVs, 2-wheelers extended slump; PVs bucked trend buoyed by festival demand

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Total retail vehicle sales in November fell 19.3% from a year earlier to just over 18.27 lakh vehicles, data from the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) showed on Tuesday.

Two-wheeler and commercial vehicle sales nosedived 21.4% and 31.2%, respectively, last month.

Passenger vehicles (PVs), however, bucked the trend rising 4.1% to 2.91 lakh units on the back of festival season purchases.

FADA also released separate data for comparative 42-day festive period sales between 2020 and 2019. In this set of figures, passenger vehicle sales grew 13.6% to more than 4.31 lakh vehicles, com-



Fingers crossed: Demand revival would depend only on exciting year-end schemes, says FADA. ■ SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

pared with the festive period sales last year, while two-wheeler festive sales declined 6.31% to about 19 lakh units in the same month in 2019.

Sales of two-wheelers last month fell to just over 14.13 lakh units from 17.98 lakh units. Commercial vehicle sales stood at 50,113 units as against 72,863 units in the year-earlier month.

On the outlook for the future, FADA said that with the festive season now over and heavy rains in certain parts of the country leading to crop damage, demand revival would depend only on exciting year-end schemes.

Supply chain issues

"If the supply-chain issues in the PV segment are controlled, we may see continued growth in December," the association said.

FADA President Vinkesh Gulati said while registrations during Navratri were tepid, people came out in good numbers to purchase vehicles in the Dhanteras-Diwali period. "New launches and especially compact SUVs continued to show good demand," he added.

The company, which had already raised ₹4,361.4 crore under the package on October 12, will seek shareholders' nod at its annual general meeting scheduled for December 31.

MTNL will also seek shareholders' approval for the appointment of P. K. Purwar as CMD.

MTNL plans ₹2,138 cr. bond issuance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

State-owned MTNL on Tuesday said it will seek shareholders' nod to raise ₹2,138.6 crore via sovereign guarantee bonds.

The Centre allowed MTNL to raise up to ₹6,500 crore for a tenure of 10 years through sovereign guarantee bonds as part of its revival package.

The company, which had already raised ₹4,361.4 crore under the package on October 12, will seek shareholders' nod at its annual general meeting scheduled for December 31.

MTNL will also seek shareholders' approval for the appointment of P. K. Purwar as CMD.

ing November, the business activity index showed persistent modest improvement in economic momentum," he added.

Weekly food arrival data for November showed an increase in the arrival of cereals and vegetables to some extent but pulses and fruits saw declines after recording a modest improvement in October.

In November, GST revenue was 1.4% higher than the year-earlier period. "The positive trend, which started from September, has sustained," it said.

Manufacturing had minimised its losses by 91% from Q1, the services sector by

43% and the trade sub-segment by 80%, it said.

"This is quite obvious given the movement of freight traffic in Q2," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser, SBI. "Dur-

ing November, States' market borrowings had risen 46%

compared with the year-earlier period, indicating the persisting stress in their revenue, it said.

"India's agri and metal exports have bucked the trend and stayed upbeat. Pharma exports have also stayed positive. Meanwhile, imports have shown a broad-based decline," it added.

Australia holds off Kohli, prevents clean sweep

Wade and Maxwell power host to a big total, Swepson steps in to check the Indian chase; Men in Blue clinch series 2-1



T20I kings: Kohli's men, after losing the ODI series, roared back to win the shortest format. •REUTERS

INDIA IN AUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

The Australian bowlers held their nerve to come up trumps against the genius of Virat Kohli, stalling an Indian clean sweep with a 12-run victory in the third and final T20I here on Tuesday.

End of winning streak
While India won the T20I series 2-1, Tuesday's loss ended its 10-match winning streak in the format.

Kohli cashed in on four reprieves to smash his way to 85 off 61 balls, but India

could only reach 174 for seven in pursuit of 187.

Kohli's effort ended when a slash-drive off Andrew Tye in the penultimate over was plucked inches off the ground by Daniel Sams. In

the previous over, Hardik Pandya had fallen to Adam Zampa, trying to hit against the turn and spooning a catch to short third-man. Hardik was adjudged Player-of-the-Series for his heroics with the bat.

While he hit four fours and three sixes, Kohli did lead a charmed life as Steve Smith missed a dolly at deep mid-wicket fence when he gave Maxwell the charge.

Then Sean Abbott failed to get his hands on a tough return catch while another slipped through Tye's palms. Towards the fag end, Matthew Wade missed an easy stumping.

The India captain scored his third half-century of the tour and an effortless six off Abbott after the completion of the milestone brought much-needed relief to the Indian dug-out. This was after Man-of-the-Match Mitchell Swepson's (3/23) innocuous leg-breaks had reduced India to 100 for four.

Swepson would be the first to admit that he was lucky to dismiss Shikhar Dhawan (28 off 21 balls) with a half-tracker and Sanju Samson (10) with a low full-toss. The only wicket-taking delivery he bowled was the one that got Shreyas Iyer out for a first-ball duck.

Earlier, Wade's second consecutive half-century was complemented by Glenn Maxwell's blazing strokeplay. Wade smashed his way to 80 off 53 balls with seven fours and two sixes.

Maxwell, who struggled with his timing initially, also got into the act during the last six overs with a 36-ball-54 and a third-wicket stand of 90 in 8.4 overs with Wade.

Shreyas Iyer (10) and Daniel Sams (not out) 4 (2b, 1x4); Extras (lb-1, nb-1); Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 174.

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA

Matthew Wade lbw b Shardul 80 (53b, 7x4, 2x6), Aaron Finch c Hardik b Washington 0 (2b), Steve Smith b Washington 24 (23b, 1x4), Glenn Maxwell b Natarajan 54 (36b, 3x4, 3x6), Moises Henriques (not out) 5 (2b, 1x4), D'Arcy Short run out 7 (3b, 1x4), Daniel Sams (not out) 4 (2b, 1x4); Extras (lb-1, w-10, nb-1); Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 174.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-14 (Finch, 1.4 overs), 2-79 (Smith, 9.4), 3-169 (Wade, 18.2), 4-175 (Maxwell, 19.1), 5-182 (Short, 19.4).

INDIA BOWLING

Deepak Chahar 4-0-34-0, Washington 4-0-34-2, Natarajan 4-0-33-1, Chahal 4-0-41-0, Shardul 4-0-43-1.

INDIA

K.L. Rahul c Smith b Maxwell 0 (2b), Shikhar Dhawan c Sams b Swepson 28 (21b, 3x4), Virat Kohli c Sams b Tye 85 (61b, 3x6), Sanju Samson c Smith b

Swepson 10 (9b), Shreyas Iyer lbw b Swepson 0 (7b), Hardik Pandya c Finch b Zampa 20 (13b, 1x4, 2x6), Washington Sundar c Tye b Abbott 7 (6b, 1x4), Shardul Thakur (not out) 17 (7b, 2x6), Deepak Chahar (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (b-1, w-6); 7; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 174.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Rahul, 0.2), 2-74 (Dhawan, 8.5), 3-97 (Samson, 12.3), 4-100 (Shreyas, 12.6), 5-144 (Hardik, 17.1), 6-151 (Kohli, 18.1), 7-164 (Washington, 19.2).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Maxwell 3-0-20-1, Abbott 4-0-49-1, Sams 2-0-29-0, Tye 4-0-31-1, Swepson 4-0-23-3, Zampa 3-0-21-1.

Toss:

India. **Man-of-the-Match:** Swepson. **Man-of-the-Series:** Hardik. *Australia won by 12 runs, India clinched series 2-1.*

First Test: December 17-21, Adelaide (Day-Night), 9.30 a.m. IST.

STAT SPHERE

2 du Plessis and Kohli are the only visiting captains to have secured series wins in all three formats in Australia

25 The previous time Rahul was dismissed for a single-digit score in a T20I was 25 innnings ago (6 vs England, Cardiff, July 2018)

■ Natarajan returned an impressive six for 83 in 12 overs in his debut T20I series

After being caught behind off a Chahal no-ball in the 13th over, Maxwell went on the rampage in the 15th over. He deposited Chahal for a straight six and followed it up with another into the mid-wicket stands as Australia ended up with a total that proved enough.

Innings Scan

Australia	India
34	Dots 26
14	Fours 9
5	Sixes 7
51/1	PP 55/1
9.30	RR 8.70



"That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down [the leg-side], and within the 15-second [window], they showed the replay on the screen. We decided to go for the review but the umpire said they have already shown the replay on the screen," Kohli said.

"I had a chat with Rod [Tucker, the umpire] and said, 'What do we do in this situation?' and he said, 'Nothing can be done. It's a mistake from TV.'

"I thought from a management perspective, a message has to be passed on that this can't be done at the highest level because in a very important game, it can be very costly. It was a little bit of a miss from the TV guys upstairs and I am sure it won't be repeated."

Was confident about my ability at the death, says Natarajan

S. DIPAK RAGAV

After an impressive IPL, T. Natarajan was fast-tracked into the national team and the 29-year-old has proven to be the find of the Australian tour so far with his impressive performances in the T20I series.

The left-arm pacer was a last-minute addition to the T20 squad, replacing Varun Chakravarthy. He even made his one-day debut in the third ODI after being included as cover for Navdeep Saini.

The Tamil Nadu bowler picked up six wickets with an economy rate of just 6.91 per over in the three-match T20 series.

Speaking to Sony TV after the third T20I on Tuesday, Natarajan shared his thoughts about the tour and his approach.

Feels extraordinary
"I was not expecting anything as I just came as a net bowler. I got an opportunity and wanted to utilise it well,"

said Natarajan. "Just to do well in Australia against such a good team feels extraordinary.

"Everyone in the team helped me a lot and the fact that I was in good form during the IPL also helped," he added.

The pacer's strength has always been his yorker, right from the time he came into the limelight during the TNPL's inaugural edition in 2016, and he said he just focused on backing his strengths.

"My strength has always been my ability to bowl those yorkers and cutters. I took advice from the wicket-keeper and captain to find the nature of the wicket and adapted accordingly.

"So I was confident with my yorkers and slower ones in the death overs. I wanted to do what I did in IPL and just focused on executing it clearly," he explained

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"So I was confident with my yorkers

IN BRIEF

Ben Stokes' father passes away

LONDON
Ged Stokes, father of England all-rounder Ben Stokes and a former rugby player with Workington Town, has passed away after a year-long battle with brain cancer. ANI

Pranjala beats Ellen Perez

MELBOURNE
Y. Pranjala beat 234th-ranked Ellen Perez of Australia 6-4, 7-5 in a league match of the UTR Pro tennis tournament here on Tuesday.

Pranjala will next take on Storm Sanders, who had beaten the Indian in the final of the last tournament.

Ankita bows out in first round

NEW DELHI
Fifth seed Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic recovered from a slow start to beat wild card entrant Ankita Raina 1-6, 6-2, 6-2 in the first round of the \$100,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Dubai on Tuesday.

Prachi Malik in under-14 final

SONEPAT
Prachi Malik beat Alia Dahiya 9-1 to reach the under-14 girls final of the AITA Championship series tennis tournament at the Shantima Tennis Academy. The tournament will resume on Wednesday, after play was cancelled on Tuesday owing to a Bharat Bandh.

Other results:

Under-14 boys (pre-quarterfinals): Aaditya Sansanal bt Naman 9-2; Tejas Dabas bt Arjun Pandit 9-4; Purman Yadav bt Aryan Siwach 9-1; Shubham sehwari bt Aryan Sejawal 9-0; Prem Zaveri bt Aarav Gupta 9-2; Karik Verma bt Aryan Dalal 9-2; Dhruveer Grover bt Mahtav Dhamija 9-8(2); Pratyushraj Goel bt Ritam Chawla 9-3.

Under-14 girls (quarterfinals): Vaishnavi Singh bt Saumitra Jagatdeo 9-7; Akshita Antil bt Neelakshi Lather 9-2; Alia bt Varnika Dixit 9-4; Prachi bt Avni 9-2.

Team Hero to take on the sands of Arabia

Santosh, Buhler and Rodrigues will be on a new 450 rally bike

DAKAR RALLY

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

Riders taking part in Dakar Rally 2021 have a tough challenge ahead of them what with COVID-19 continuing to pose a threat. But, the bravehearts of the Hero MotoSports Team Rally sounded confident of doing well in the greatest rally raid in the world.

In an exclusive online chat with *The Hindu*, the team, represented by 2020 FIM cross-country BAJA World Cup winner Sebastian Buhler, 2019 Pan Africa Rally winner Joaquim Rodrigues and ace Indian rider C.S. Santosh, spoke about the challenges and how it plans to storm the sands of Saudi Arabia.



Bravehearts: C.S. Santosh is flanked by Sebastian Buhler and Joaquim Rodrigues.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Dakar is big for all of us and there's so much to learn from it every year. I have always been somebody who wants to do well. I have also come close to achieving my goals," said Santosh.

It was a good last year for

the experienced star. "I enjoyed my journey very much. But this year, we will be on a new Hero 450 rally bike (featuring a new 450cc engine and evolved chassis) and that's something I am eagerly looking forward to," he

said.

He is quite clear with his plan – go out with the same attitude and spirit and also be optimistic. "It's a unique opportunity for all of us and I am proud to represent my country," he said.

Rodrigues, meanwhile, is prepared for a tough rally. "Shorter the race the tougher it's going to be. It will be a huge task not just for me but for all the riders. It's going to be technical and, only the smartest will win," he said.

While it will be the fifth appearance for Santosh and Rodrigues, for Sebastian it will be the second official appearance in Hero colours.

New livery

The team will also be seen in a new livery, sporting a futuristic Barcode-inspired design aesthetic, to showcase its technical edge.

Team manager Wolfgang Fischer said it would be an emotional return after the tragic event earlier this year. "But, we are determined to put up a good show."

NEUFC shares honours with BFC

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU



No stopping that! Machado shoots past Gurpreet to make it 2-2. • ISL/SPORTZPICTURES

Bengaluru FC was left to brieue a host of missed chances as NorthEast United FC held the 2018-19 ISL champion to a 2-2 draw at the Fatorda Stadium on Tuesday. Substitute Udanta Singh ended a barren 20-match goalless run dating back to last year to give BFC what seemed like a decisive lead in the 70th minute only for Luis Machado to score his second of the night eight minutes later and save his side the blushes.

The result ensured that both sides maintained their unbeaten runs, but NorthEast will clearly be the happier of the two, rising up to second place.

It took the lead as early as the fourth minute when Rochharzela's left-footed shot went in after taking a wicked deflection off Macha-

do, who had initiated the move with his fleet-footed brilliance in the centre of the park.

BFC's 13th-minute equaliser from Juanan was scrap. Centre-back Dylan Fox couldn't clear Rahul Bheke's long throw-in and the Spaniard's fierce shot from close in off goalie Gurmeet.

From then, until Udanta's goal, BFC came close multiple times.

Just after the break, Gur-

Southampton rallies to beat Brighton

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS

LONDON

Southampton beat Brighton 2-1 in the Premier League on Monday.

The results: Premier League: Brighton 1 (Pascal Gross 26-pen) lost to Southampton 2

(Vestergaard 45, Ings 81-pen).

Serie A: Fiorentina 1 (Milenkovic 90+8) drew with Genoa 1 (Pjaca 89).

LaLiga: Eibar 0 drew with Valencia 0.

Bundesliga: Hoffenheim 3 (Grillitsch 17, 46, Bebou 50) bt Augsburg 1 (Caligiuri 31).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Wednesday's schedule

- Midtjylland vs Liverpool; Ajax vs Atalanta (both at 11.25 p.m.)
- Bayern Munich vs Lokomotiv Moscow
- RB Salzburg vs Atletico Madrid
- Real Madrid vs Borussia Monchengladbach
- Inter Milan vs Shakhtar Donetsk
- Manchester City vs Marseille
- Olympiacos vs Porto (all at 1.30 a.m., IST, Thursday)

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DELHI CRICKET ROUND-UP

Rohan, Bharat take Sporting Club to final

Bharat Sindhwani (94), Rohan Rath (91 not out) and Pawan Suyal (4/46) helped Sporting Club beat Sahgal & Chaudhary by wickets and enter the final of the Eventeneurs Cup cricket tournament at Sports Maidan ground.

The scores: Sahgal & Chaudhary 250/8 in 50 overs (Anmol Sharma 121, Surender Dahiya 53, Pawan Suyal 4/46) lost to Sporting Club 252/5 in 45.2 overs (Bharat Sindhwani 94, Rohan Rath 91 n.o.).

Saksham and Shivam excel

Saksham Sharma (73) and Shivam Kumar (3/15) contributed the most in Sant Kabir Academy's 92 run-victory over Titiksha Academy in the semifinals of the Triveni (under-11) cricket tournament at the MCG ground here.

The scores: Sant Kabir Academy 206/6 in 40 overs (Saksham Sharma 73, Daksh Drall 46, Divesh Kumar 46) bt Titiksha Academy 114 in 31.5 overs (Shaurya Sandhu 25, Shivam Kumar 3/15).

Dalal and Akhil catch the eye for Niz Sports

Rahul Dalal (60, 39b, 4x4, 5x6) and Akhil Kumar (48) enabled Niz Sports beat Rann Star by four wickets in the first all India Choudhary Shyam Singh memorial cricket tournament at the Hiranki Cricket ground.