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WINDOWS



People shop decorative items for the upcoming Christmas festival, in Kolkata on Thursday

SC upholds Allahabad HC order to release Kafeel Khan immediately

THE Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release, saying it is "a good judgement". "We will not interfere in the judgement. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings," said the bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the High Court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings. ▶P3

Will not release three IPS officers: TMC to Centre

THE Trinamool Congress on Thursday said that the West Bengal government will not release three Indian Police Service officers on deputation following the diktat of the Centre, and dared the BJP-led regime to impose President's Rule in the state. The Centre's order in this regard is "unconstitutional and unacceptable", Senior TMC leader and Rural Development Minister Subrata Mukherjee told a press conference here. "We will not send them on deputation. At most, the Centre can impose Presidents Rule. We welcome that. If the Centre has the power to do that, let it go ahead," he said. ▶P3

Oz take Day 1 honours as India reduced to 233/6

ADELAIDE: Australia bounced back on the first day of the first Test against India on Thursday by picking three late wickets, including those of captain Virat Kohli (74), Ajinkya Rahane (42) and Hanuma Vihari (16) in just over six overs for 18 runs to leave their opponents on 233 for six at stumps. The match is a day-night fixture played with a pink ball at the Adelaide Oval. ▶P8



Put farm laws on hold, SC tells Centre

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Thursday acknowledged the right of farmers to non-violent protests and mooted the idea of putting on hold the contentious farm laws to enable negotiations with agitating farmers which was opposed by the Centre saying agriculturists would then not come forward for the talks.

The apex court, which made it clear that the issue of farmers' protest and the right to move freely of others would be dealt on priority and not the validity of laws at the moment, also said it was thinking of setting up an "impartial and independent" panel of agriculture experts and farmer unions to resolve the impasse.

The top court said it was of the view that the farmers' right to protest should not infringe the fundamental rights of others to move freely and in getting essential food and other supplies as right to protest cannot mean blockade of the entire city.

The apex court, which said it was worried with the way things are going on, was told by both the Centre and one of the farmers' union that the negotiations are not happening at the moment. It also said farmers cannot keep on protesting without talking to the government. "You con-

tinue the protest. You have the right. But you have a purpose also and that purpose is served only if you talk, discuss and reach a conclusion," a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said but added that in a democracy, police and authorities have to be given power to prevent the protestors from infringing the rights of others.

The bench said it would pass order on constituting a committee only after hearing all the parties including the protesting farmer unions and putting on hold the implementation of new agri laws by the Centre would enable negotiations with farmers.

However, Attorney General K K Venugopal opposed the suggestion and said if the implementation of the farm laws were put on hold then farmers would not come forward for negotiations. The top court said it was not asking the Centre to stay the farm laws but only suggesting that its implementation be put on hold for the time being to enable the farmers to talk with the government.

"We are worried about the plight of farmers. We are also Indian but we are worried with the way things are going on," the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said and added "they (protesting farmers) are not a mob". (PTI)

BSF kills two Pakistani intruders on Punjab border

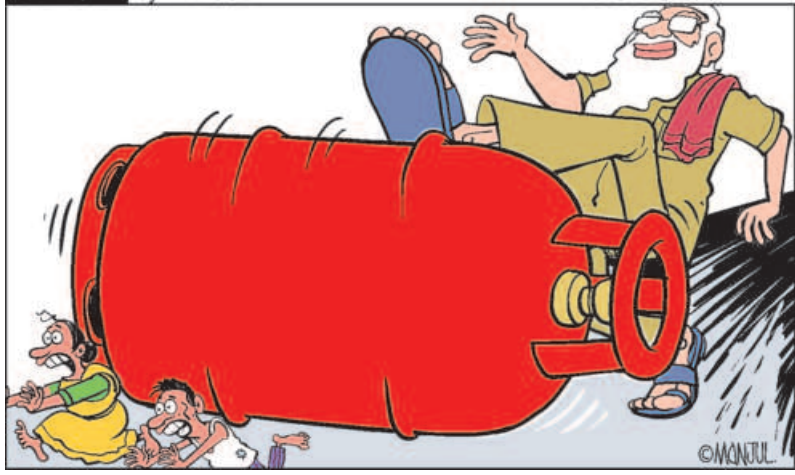
NEW DELHI/AMRITSAR

TWO Pakistani "armed intruders" were on Thursday shot dead by the Border Security Force along the International Border in Punjab as the force thwarted three bids of drugs smuggling at this front.

In the first interception, two men in their 30s were killed near the Rajatal border post in Amritsar around 2:20 am after the troops on guard detected suspicious movement ahead of the border fence in Indian territory, a BSF spokesperson said.

Continued on Page 5

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Centre looks to fuel gas-based economy

PETROLEUM Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said the government has planned a \$60 billion investment for creating gas infrastructure in the country till 2024, and gas' share in the energy mix is expected to rise to 15 per cent by 2030. Currently, gas accounts for 6 per cent in the country's total energy mix. Speaking at ASSOCHAM Foundation Day Week 2020, the Minister said, "On the investments front, we have envisaged to spend \$60 billion in creating gas infrastructure till 2024, including for pipelines, LNG terminals and CGD (city gas distribution) networks." He further told, "We are ushering a gas-based economy by increasing the share of natural gas in India's primary energy mix from 6.2 per cent to 15 per cent by year 2030." ▶P6

Ayodhya mosque stone to be laid on R-Day

AYODHYA

THE blueprint of the mosque to replace the Babri Masjid will be unveiled this Saturday and its foundation laid on Republic Day on the five-acre land allotted for it here, members of the Trust formed for its construction said.

"The Trust chose January 26, 2021 for laying the foundation stone of the Ayodhya mosque as on this day our Constitution came into effect over seven decades ago. Our Constitution is based on pluralism, which is the leitmotif of our mosque project," said Athar Husain, secretary of the Indo-Islamic

Cultural Foundation (IICF).

The IICF was set up by the Sunni Waqf Board six months ago to build the mosque. The blueprint of the mosque complex, which will include a multi-specialty hospital, a community kitchen and a library, will be unveiled by the IICF on December 19 as the plan for the project has been finalised by its chief architect, Professor S M Akhtar. "The mosque will have a capacity to hold 2,000 namazis at a time, and the structure will be round-shaped," Akhtar told PTI.

The Supreme Court on November 9 last year had paved the way for the construction of a Ram Temple

at the disputed Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid site at Ayodhya and directed the Centre to allot an alternative five-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a "prominent" place in the town in Uttar Pradesh. The state government allotted a five-acre land in Dhannipur village in Sohawal Tehsil of Ayodhya. "The new mosque will be bigger than Babri Masjid, but won't be a look-alike of the structure. The hospital will take centre stage in the complex. It will serve humanity in the true spirit of Islam as taught by the Prophet in his last sermon 1,400 years ago," Akhtar said. "The hos-

pital won't be a usual concrete structure but will be in sync with the architecture of the mosque, replete with calligraphy and Islamic symbols. It will house a 300-bed speciality unit, where doctors will work with missionary zeal to provide free treatment to the ailing," he said, adding that "the mosque will be self-efficient for power as it is designed based on solar energy and a natural temperature maintenance system." The community kitchen will serve good quality meals twice a day to cater to the needs of nourishment of the poor people living nearby, he added.

Continued on Page 5



Farmers raise slogans during a protest against the Centre's new farm laws at Singhu Border, in New Delhi on Thursday

PSLV lobs CMS-01 into orbit

SRIHARIKOTA

INDIA successfully launched its latest communication satellite CMS-01 on board its Polar rocket from the spaceport here on Thursday, the second and last launch this year amid the Covid-19 pan-

demic. ISRO's trusted polar satellite launch vehicle-- PSLV-C50--injected the satellite into the predefined orbit around 20 minutes after the lift-off from the second launch pad at the spaceport of Sriharikota. CMS-01 is the 42nd communication satellite of

the space agency and it is envisaged for providing services in Extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum covering India, Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands. The satellite is functioning "very well", ISRO Chairman K Sivan said. Continued on Page 5

French Prez Macron tests Covid +ve

PARIS

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron has tested positive for Covid-19, the presidential Elysee Palace announced on Thursday. It said the president took a test "as soon as the first symptoms appeared."

The brief statement did not say what symptoms Macron experienced. It said he would isolate himself for seven days. "He will continue to work and take care of his activities at a distance," it added.

It was not immediately clear what contact tracing efforts were in progress. Macron attended a European Union summit at the end of last week, where he notably had a bilateral meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

CM tears copies of Centre's farm laws

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre's three new agriculture laws with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tearing up their copies, saying he cannot betray the farmers of the country.

Addressing the Delhi Assembly, the chief minister alleged the laws have been made for "electoral funding of the BJP and not the farmers". "I am pained that I have to do this. I did not intend to, but I cannot betray the farmers of my country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold... when the temperature is just 2 degrees Celsius



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tears copies of new farm laws as he speaks at Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi on Thursday

I am pained that I have to do this. I did not intend to, but I cannot betray the farmers of my country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold... when the temperature is just 2 degrees Celsius

where in the country... But where should farmers go to sell their crop at minimum support price (MSP)?" the CM asked. He also claimed that due to the three new laws "big capitalists will sell produce at a higher price", which will lead to price rise. After the assembly passed the resolution by voice vote, AAP MLAs trooped into the well of the House, tore off copies of the laws and raised slogans demanding that the government repeal them. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel adjourned the House proceedings till 5:15 pm.

When the House reconvened, the AAP MLAs again gathered in its well, following which proceedings were adjourned till 11 am on Friday. Later, AAP legislators also burnt copies of the farm laws on the assembly premises. (PTI)

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The two leaders also underscored the need for an early conclusion of a framework of interim agreement on water sharing of six rivers -- Manu, Muhuri, Khawai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar, and issued direction to expeditiously conclude a joint study on having a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the statement said.

Continued on Page 5

Bangladesh 'key pillar' of 'neighbourhood first' policy: Modi

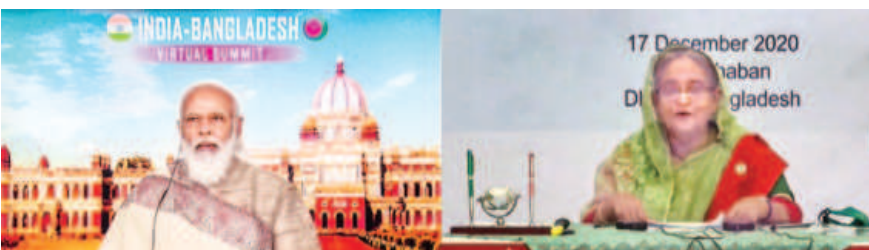
NEW DELHI

BANGLADESH is a 'key pillar' of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday during a summit with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina, who called India a 'true friend', as the two sides inked seven pacts to further broadbase cooperation in varied sectors, and restored a cross-border rail link, snapped during the 1965 India-Pakistan war.

During the summit,

held virtually, the two leaders deliberated on a range of issues including, threat of terrorism, challenges posed by coronavirus pandemic, management of Indo-Bangla border, regional connectivity, ways to boost trade and energy ties as well as matters relating to the displaced people from the Rakhine State of Myanmar. "It has been a challenging year due to the epidemic. But it is a mat-

Hasina calls India 'true friend': Two nations ink 7 pacts



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the India-Bangladesh virtual summit with PM Sheikh Hasina, in New Delhi on Thursday

ter of satisfaction that India and Bangladesh had good cooperation in this difficult time. We are also

having good cooperation in the field of vaccines. We will also take special care of your needs in this re-

gard," Modi told Hasina. Describing India as a "true friend", Hasina said both countries could play

a significant role in the global and regional value chains by further integrating their economies as well as boosting connectivity.

Modi and Hasina agreed to an early operationalisation of the BBIN motor vehicles agreement with a provision for Bhutan to join at a later date. Bhutan has been dillydallying on the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) pact that provides hassle-

free movement of people and goods among the four countries.

The two leaders also underscored the need for an early conclusion of a framework of interim agreement on water sharing of six rivers -- Manu, Muhuri, Khawai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar, and issued direction to expeditiously conclude a joint study on having a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the statement said.

Womenia

Beauty oils: The solution FOR DRY WINTER SKIN

Face oils have become a beauty cabinet staple, thanks to their natural ability to hydrate and nourish a variety of skin types. Facial oil is the ultimate luxury treat for winter skin and will leave it both smoother and softer



Shahnaz Husain

As the weather gets cooler and the pollution level rise, the windblown from reverse steals the natural oils present in the skin. The winter breeze may feel good and enjoyable for many ways but it can rob moisture off your skin and make it prone to dryness and damage making whitish patches appear on your face and limbs.

Face oils have become a beauty cabinet staple, thanks to their natural ability to hydrate and nourish a variety of skin types. Facial oil is the ultimate luxury treat for winter skin and will leave it both smoother and softer. But what makes facial oil so effective? Keep reading to find out some natural oils that will keep your hair and skin in the pink of their health even in the peak winter season.

Sesame seed oil

According to Ayurveda, sesame seed (til) oil is said to be good during winters. Sesame seed oil is light, free of odour and is easily absorbed by the skin. It is rich in nutrients and has healing properties too. As far as the face is concerned, sesame seed oil can be massaged on the face to relieve dryness.

Olive oil

It is popularly called 'liquid gold' is the natural oil extracted from olives, the fruit of the olive tree. Pure olive oil particularly extra-virgin olive oil is fairly nutritious and is popular for body massage, mainly to soften the skin and provide nourishment.

Olive oil contains many vitamins and minerals, is an all-around natural moisturizer and recommended by dermatologists for dehydrated skin particularly in winters. Olive oil can be used as Moisturisers during Winters to treat the troublesome areas of our body as they get very dry and flaky

Almond oil

It is particularly beneficial for very dry skin and helps to relieve itching, soreness and dryness during winters. It is reported to be soothing, healing, lubricating, softening, revitalizing and nourishing. Almond oil contains fatty acids which help your skin retain moisture and can heal chapped and irritated skin during winters. It can be added to face packs for dry skin.

Coconut oil

A body-friendly foodstuff that is heart-healthy, great for oral health, and other health benefits is probably the most popular oil for the hair in India. It is said to strengthen the hair and make it thick and shiny. The application of oil with a light massage helps to stimulate blood circulation to the follicles and also softens hair texture. The hair should not be rubbed vigorously. Only the fingertips should be used, to actually move the scalp with small rotary movements. Hot oil therapy with coconut oil is said to be very beneficial.

Castor oil

This is used mainly for hair conditions such as dry, brittle and damaged hair. It is a thick and sticky oil, so after application of the oil, shampoo the hair and rinse well with water, so that oily residues do not remain on the scalp. In cases of excessive dryness, mix one part of castor oil with two parts coconut oil. Heat and apply.

Re -

member to apply on the ends too. Massage the scalp gently, using only the fingertips. Move the scalp in small circular movements. This helps to stimulate blood circulation to the follicles. Keep the oil on overnight and wash the hair the next day, using a mild herbal shampoo. Avoid very hot water.

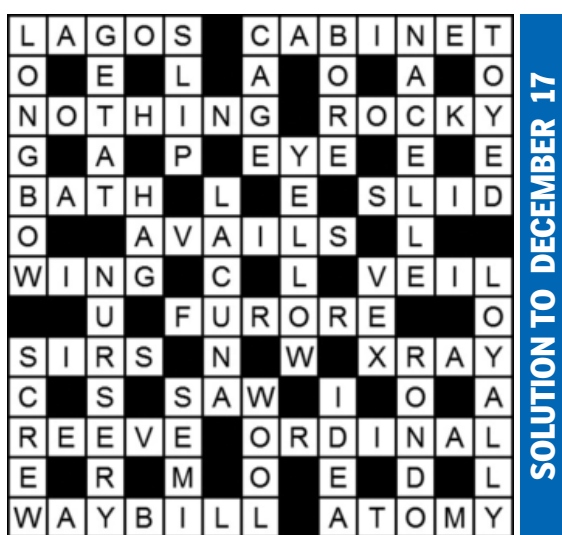
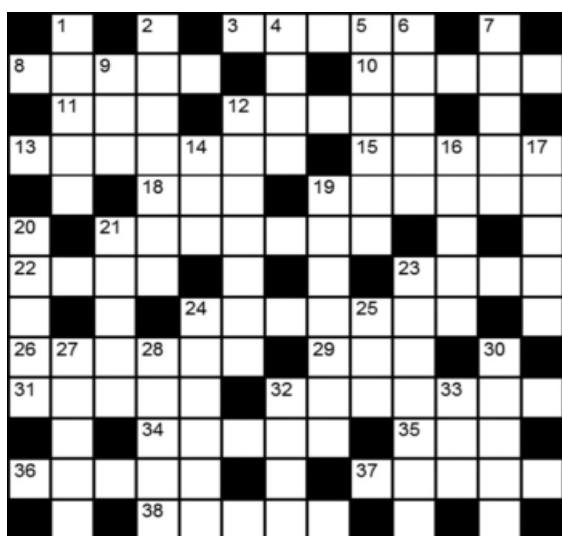
Apricot kernel oil

This can be used for skin care during winters. It is rich in Vitamins A, C and E. It also contains fatty acids and is a source of unsaturated fats. As it is easily absorbed by the skin, it is used in many cosmetic prod-

ucts and also indirect external applications on the skin. It is gentle on the skin and is easily absorbed. It helps to nourish and moisturize the skin and thus relieve dryness. It also helps the skin to retain moisture. It contains antioxidants, which delay ageing signs and degeneration, keeping the skin soft, smooth and youthful.

Jojoba Oil

It contains vitamins B complex and E which help in skin repair and damage control, minerals as zinc and copper, which help to strengthen and keep skin calm and comfortable. Its chemical structure is very similar to skin's natural oil so it is very easily absorbed in the skin which helps to tame chaffing and chapping, reduce redness caused by drying, ease the effects of eczema and rosacea



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 17

CROSSWORD

Across

- 3 Rigid (5)
- 8 Overturn (5)
- 10 Exclaimed in amazement, joy, or surprise (5)
- 11 Embrace (3)
- 12 Hazards or chances (5)
- 13 Having two feet (7)
- 15 Moral values (5)
- 18 Not, as a prefix ? (3)
- 19 Synthetic (6)
- 21 Overwhelming feeling of joy, rapture (7)
- 22 Playfully patsy (4)
- 23 Prophet (4)
- 24 Bony (7)
- 26 Enthusiastic (6)
- 29 Be unwell (3)
- 31 Nasal tone (5)
- 32 Purple flowered plants - "ropes in" anagram (7)
- 34 Mournful poem (5)
- 35 Needle feature (3)
- 36 Literary device (5)
- 37 Family member (5)
- 38 Attempts (5)

Down

- 1 Plant pest (5)
- 2 Period of king's incapacity (7)
- 4 Follow (4)
- 5 Fraudulence (6)
- 6 Takes no food (5)
- 7 Relinquish (5)
- 9 Drink by sips or spoonfuls (3)
- 12 Mouthing off (7)
- 14 Some parties (3)
- 16 Vacillate (5)
- 17 Russian monarchs (5)
- 19 Tidal river (7)
- 20 Spout (5)
- 21 Additional (5)
- 23 Prominent (7)
- 24 Fisherman (6)
- 25 Impudence (3)
- 27 Conscious (5)
- 28 Clumsy (5)
- 30 Flakes off (5)
- 32 Fearsome giant (4)
- 33 The Big Apple (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 17

NEWS ROUNDUP

5th edition of Lakmé Salon's 'Happy New You' campaign

After a turbulent 2020, everyone is looking forward to the new decade with optimism. Months of worry, staying indoors and social distancing have had an impact on our physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Keeping this in mind, Lakmé Salon, has launched the 5th edition of its year-end campaign Happy New You with the aim of helping customers discover their happiest selves! Going beyond core offerings of Happy Skin and Happy Hair, this campaign invites customers to achieve a Happy Body, a Happy Mind and also gives them a chance to give back to society and the environment.

The 'Happy New You' campaign invites customers to spin the Wheel of Happiness and win free services or avail exclusive discounts at their nearest salon. In addition, customers can get customized 30-day #HappyHair & #HappySkin routines created by the Lakmé Salon experts; stand a chance to be the face of

the next Lakmé Salon campaign with #HappyMind or win a health and nutrition package from wellness partner Fitsu Fitness to achieve #HappyBody. Extending their award-winning green bill initiative, Lakmé Salon will plant a tree on behalf of the customers as part of the #HappyEarth initiative. Also, to spread #HappySmiles, Lakmé Salon has collaborated with NGO Nanhli Kali to empower and transform the lives of underprivileged girls through the gift of education in the new year.

The activity was kicked off in an exclusive online event that took the attendees through the steps to get Happy Hair this winter (hint: it needs a touch of Garam Masala), a Happy Skin routine to release stress and reveal healthy, glowing skin and Happy Body by making your work buddy - your chair- your work'out' buddy. Participants also get a personalized hair and skin consultation from the National Creative Directors of Skin & Hair, Lakmé Salon.



BHUMI PEDNEKAR
@BHUMIPEDNEKAR

Protecting the environment has become one of my life missions and I'm thrilled to partner with Count Us In to raise more awareness towards climate change in India.
@CountUsInSOCIAL
#ClimateWarrior #CountUsIn
#climatewarriorXcountusin #Protect



Makeup application guide: The right way to layer your makeup

PUJA GUPTA

It's true when people say; there are no rules on how to apply makeup. Whether you like to do your foundation before or after your eyeshadow is totally up to you, but there are some general techniques that can help make your application effortless and long-lasting. With the innumerable varieties of products available in the market, you're sure to get confused with what products work for you and how to layer it the right way. Wouldn't we all want our makeup to look flawless and stay in place all day? Vineeta Singh, Co-founder & CEO of Sugar Cosmetics shares the ultimate 12 step guide to ace your makeup and become the makeup aficionado you've always dreamt of being.

- The real secret to get your makeup to go on smoothly and look seamless is to properly moisturize your skin prior. It will hydrate and smooth out your skin, giving you the ideal complexion and keep your skin healthy underneath the makeup.
- Once your moisturizer is absorbed into your skin put on some primer. It helps your makeup to go on smoothly by making your skin an ideal canvas to hold onto whatever makeup comes afterward and ensures that it stays in place. It also smooths over fine

With this quick and effortless makeup guide, take your look from ordinary to ultra-glam in no time



- lines and wrinkles, camouflages pores, and corrects skin issues.
- Wait a few minutes before moving on to let the primer nicely sink into your skin. Now go on and apply the foundation starting from the centre of your face and blend it out in a circular motion, gently pressing it into the skin to give you a flawless finish.
- How you apply your concealer is very important! Whether you're covering up your spots or trying to hide away those nasty dark circles, there's a specific way to make it look seamless. A concealer is best to cover up dark circles, redness around the nose and zits or pimples. However, it is essential that you use a flat tip applicator for a smooth application.

- Using the wrong kind of applicator might prevent the concealer from blending into your skin and make your makeup look cakey.
- After you're done with concealing your spots and under-eye, apply some powder to set your foundation and concealer. Use a brush to apply a translucent or pressed powder over your face, in areas that tend to get oily like the t-zone, under-eye and chin to get rid of excess oil from your face.
- For an ultra-natural look like you just returned from your morning walk, apply a small amount of blush onto the apples of your cheeks. To create a more defined look, apply your blush onto the cheekbones and just above to give your face that chiselled effect.

Fashion tips every woman should know

Here are some fashion tips every woman should know. When it comes to fashion, women of all ages and sizes can use lending hand. This is never more evident than when buying clothes for their wardrobe.

These tips will help you save you money and get the best looks that suit you. We all know that finding clothing that are the perfect fit is always a good start. Lining up your wardrobe with different styles and shapes that have universal use offers good value given they can be styled in many different ways.

You don't always need to stick to one particular look. By choosing clothes carefully and following the basic steps below can help your wardrobe work for you.

Save money on basic fashion items

Looking good does not always have to cost. Basic fashion items like tees and T-shirts are the best things to have in your wardrobe.

They are inexpensive and won't use up all of your fashion budget. Don't always choose the cheapest items either. Invest in quality and they will last.

Go for a range of different colours and styles that can be easily paired with your jeans or leggings. Invent a new casual look every day.

Clear out your wardrobe

Everyone has items of clothing

and accessories in their wardrobe that are preloved fashion. They clog up important space for new arrivals. Sell or swap old fashion goods and accessories for free at fashion exchange. This allows you to earn money from your old fashion items or swap fashion with others. This way you are supporting sustainable fashion.

Invest in classic fashion pieces

There is nothing better than having a few classic items as part of your fashion line-up. Things like little black dresses, a blazer or even neutral coloured tops are reliable fashion assets. They can be easily worn or paired with your other fashion favourites like jeans, trousers coats and tops. Classic fashion items are worth investing your money on. You will see the benefits for years to come.

Play to your assets

We all come in different sizes and shapes you should use this your best advantage. From having a great cleavage, stunning legs or that hourglass figure. Ensure you use them to maximise your look. Choose clothes that show off your best assets at all times. Good quality clothing will not only make you look good and downplay trouble spots of the body. Only wear what you like and feel comfortable wearing. This will instill confidence into you whole fashion look.



‘Udhta nahi, padta Punjab,’ books keeping farmers company during protest

NEW DELHI

PROTESTING farmers, who have been holding their fort at the Singhu border for over 20 days, are keeping monotony and boredom at bay by adding new books to their reading list -- day after day.

For many, it is a new found love.

Thirty-two-year-old Harbans Singh, for instance, who has been camping for past one week, said he can't recall the last time he picked a book for reading.

His reasons for doing it now:

"to keep tempers down" and "to get inspired by the greats".

"There are many like me who have started reading books during the protest only. Currently, I am reading 'Punjab Tera ki Banu' by novelist Jaswant Singh Kanwal. I look forward to finish this one and read another soon," said Singh, who hails from Barnala district in Punjab and has come with his friends to protest.

"Someone suggested me to read one on Fidel Castro. Kehnde hai bahut bada krantikari si woh (They say he was a great revolutionary)," he said.



A make-shift library at the border, run by Phd students from Punjab, welcomes visitors with a telling banner reading: "Udhta

Nahi, Padhta Punjab".

Several books are seen at the protest site, including biographies of revolutionaries like Bha-

gat Singh, Che Guevara and Vladimir Lenin in English, Hindi and Punjabi as well.

There are also books on farmers distress, Punjab's rich history and on the teachings of Sikh Gurus who stood for national integration, peace, brotherhood and communal harmony.

Encashing on these new tribe of readers, some small time book stalls have also sprung up at the protest site.

Gargi, a Delhi-based publication house, is happily surprised to find some business for its books in a strange venue like this.

"They all are curious and have too many questions in their mind. Some of these books try to give them answers, others provide food for thought for more questions," said Kamal Joshi, a volunteer working at Gargi Publications.

"The fact they are at throw-away prices, and available in Hindi and Punjabi languages as well are also some of the reasons why protestors are keen on buying these books," he added.

Their books include a Hindi quarterly magazine "Kisaan", Hindi translation of Russian

writer Maxim Gorky novel "The Mother" -- which is a story about revolutionary factory workers -- and a 24-page booklet on the contentious three agri laws costing only Rs 5.

Gurmeet Sandhu, 55, who is a farmer from Karnal district of Haryana, said he has read the booklet on farm laws and plans to send "50 copies" of the booklet to his village and spread the word.

With over 900 books already issued from their total stock of 1,300, the organisers are overwhelmed by the response and plan to replenish the stocks soon.

Will not release three IPS officers: TMC to Centre

Mamata govt dares Modi govt to impose President's Rule in Bengal

KOLKATA

THE Trinamool Congress on Thursday said that the West Bengal government will not release three Indian Police Service officers on deputation following the diktat of the Centre, and dared the BJP-led regime to impose President's Rule in the state.

The Centre's order in this regard is "unconstitutional and unacceptable", Senior TMC leader and Rural Development Minister Subrata Mukherjee told a press conference here.

"We will not send them on deputation. At most, the Centre can impose Presidents Rule. We welcome that. If the Centre has the power to do that, let it go ahead," he said.

The three IPS officers of the West Bengal cadre, who were responsible for the security of BJP president J P Nadda during his recent visit to the state, have been called to serve in central deputation days after the saffron party leader's convoy was attacked on its way to Diamond Harbour on December 10.

The three officers are Rajib Mishra (ADG, South Bengal), Praveen Tripathi (DIG, Presidency Range) and Bholanath Pandey (SP, Diamond Harbour), have sent on deputation to ITBP, Seema Suraksha Bal and



Police Research Bureau respectively.

"This is unconstitutional and unacceptable. We will not allow interference by the Centre", Mukherjee said.

The senior TMC leader alleged that the Centre is attempting to misuse certain provisions of the IPS Cadre Rule of 1954 and trying to destroy the federal structure of the country.

Suvendu quits TMC, another MLA resigns

KOLKATA

SUVENDU Akhikari, the powerful rebel leader of Bengal's Trinamool Congress, quit the party on Thursday ending weeks of speculation on the issue. There is a buzz that he would join the BJP over the weekend when Union Home Minister Amit Shah visits the state. An induction of the leader -- who is said to have control over the local leaders in more than 50 seats in the western part of the state -- will be the highlight of the visit of Mr Shah, who has set his heart on forming the next government in the state next year. A second Trinamool leader, Asansol's disgruntled MLA Jitendra Tiwari quit the party shortly after Adhikari. Earlier Tiwari had resigned his post in the town's civic body after a meeting with Mr Adhikari. The meeting, where party MP Sunil Mondal was also present, took place last night. Without naming the young MP from Diamond Harbour, Mr Adhikari had spoken of leaders "arriving by parachute or lift" into the party, drawing retaliation from his target.

WB Assembly polls: JD(U) throws hat in the ring

PATNA

BIHAR Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) on Thursday asserted that it was looking forward to contesting a substantial number of seats in the West Bengal assembly elections, in which its ally BJP has high stakes. JD(U) National General Secretary Ghulam Rasool Baliyavi said the party's unit in West Bengal wants to contest at least 75 seats and the number could go up, subject to the approval of the leadership. Elections to the 294-strong West Bengal assembly are likely to be held in a few months and the BJP, which put up a stunning performance in the state in last year's Lok Sabha polls, is looking to unseat the ruling Trinamool Congress, headed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

'We have contested assembly elections in West Bengal in the past. We would like to do so this time also. Our party has carried out massive membership drives in districts such as Malda, Murshidabad, Purulia and Bankura,' Baliyavi said. The JD(U) has been maintaining that its alliance with the BJP was confined to Bihar. The party has fought in states like Karnataka and Gujarat without a tie-up with the BJP, which is in power. In BJP-rule Arunachal Pradesh, the JD(U) is the main opposition party.

Punjab farmer found dead near Tikri border

NEW DELHI

A 38-year-old farmer from Punjab was found dead at a protest site near the Tikri border on Thursday morning, police said.

Jai Singh, a resident of Tungwali village in Bathinda district, and his brother had been part of the farmers' protest at the Haryana-Delhi border against the Centre's three farm laws for the last several days, according to Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) leader Shingara Singh.

Jai Singh was found dead in the morning. The exact cause of the death could be ascertained after a post mortem, an official of the Bahadurgarh police in Haryana said.



10K farmers from Gujarat to reach Delhi

NEW DELHI

A confederation of around 17 farmers federations in Gujarat has decided to support the ongoing agitation by farmers on Delhi borders. As a part of the support, the micro level planning has been car-

ried out by the Gujarat Kisan Sangharsh Samiti to gather around 10,000 farmers from Gujarat to reach the national Capital during the next fortnight.

As the farmers agitation gains momentum at Delhi border, hundreds of farmers from Gujarat,

supporting the cause have reached the Jaipur-Delhi border and other borders of Delhi. Initially 150 farmers from the state reached the Capital, thereafter 60 more reached and on Wednesday 80 more farmers showing solidarity with the agitation joined.

24,000 new Covid infections in a day

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S Covid-19 caseload rose to 99.56 lakh with 24,010 new infections being reported in a day, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 94.89 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 99,56,557 and the death toll rose to 1,44,451 with 355 new fa-

talities, the data updated at 8 am showed. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 94,89,740 pushing the national recovery rate to 95.31 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The Covid-19 active caseload remained below 4 lakh for the eleventh consecutive day. There are 3,22,366 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 3.24 per cent

of the total caseload, the data stated. India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20. According to the ICMR, 15,78,05,240 samples have been tested up to December 16 with 11,58,960 samples being tested on Wednesday.

TRP scam: Ex-COO of rating agency BARC held

MUMBAI

MUMBAI Police on Thursday arrested former Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) in connection with the alleged TRP (Television Rating Points) rigging scam, an official said.

Romil Ramgarhia, former COO of the BARC, was arrested in the afternoon by a team of Mumbai crime branch, which is probing the TRP case, he said.

This is the 14th arrest in the case.

"During the probe, Ramgarhia's alleged involvement in the case came to light, following which he was placed under arrest today," the police official said.



Following the arrest, Ramgarhia was produced before a metropolitan magistrate court here, which remanded him in police custody till December 19.

Police sought his custody saying they needed to interrogate him in connection with the case. They also said that his custody was required in order to retrieve electronic evidence from him.

On Sunday, the police had arrested Republic Media Network's Chief Executive Officer Vikas Khanchandani in connection with the scam. However, he was granted bail by a court on Wednesday.

The police began a probe into the alleged scam after ratings agency BARC filed a complaint through Hansa Research Agency about rigging of TRP by some channels. TRP, measured by recording viewership data at sample households, is crucial for attracting advertisers.

The BARC engaged Hansa to install and maintain barometers which record TV viewership data at sample households. It was alleged that some of these families were being bribed to tune into certain channels to ramp up their TRP.

UP GOVT ORDER QUASHED UNDER THE NSA

SC upholds Allahabad HC order to release Kafeel Khan immediately

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release, saying it is "a good judgement".

"We will not interfere in the judgement. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings," said the bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the High Court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings.

"Criminal cases will be decided on their own merits," the bench observed. Khan had hit the headlines after the

2017 tragedy at Gorakhpur's Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College, in which several children died due to a lack of oxygen cylinders.

Initially, he was hailed as a saviour for arranging emergency oxygen cylinders but later faced action along with nine other doctors and staff members of the hospital, all of whom were released on bail later.

A state government probe cleared Khan of all major charges, prompting him to seek an apology from the state. Khan had alleged that an institutional failure had led to the deaths of the children.

In its September 1 verdict, the High Court had quashed Khan's detention under the NSA and ordered his immediate release, saying his speech at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests didn't promote hatred or

violence and gave a call for national integrity.

The High Court had said that the Aligarh district magistrate, who had passed the order for Khan's detention, did a "selective reading" of his speech, "ignoring its true intent".

Quashing Khan's detention order, the High Court had said, "A complete reading of the speech prima facie does not disclose any effort to promote hatred or violence. It also no where threatens peace and tranquility of the city of Aligarh. The address gives a call for national integrity and unity among the citizens. The speech also deprecates any kind of violence."

The Uttar Pradesh government had extended Khan's detention under the NSA by three months twice -- in May and August. In an order dated August 4, the Home Department had said the NSA was invoked against Khan on February 13, 2020, on the orders of Aligarh district magistrate.

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Political vendetta leaves Amaravati farmers high and dry

AMARAVATI farmers' agitation has completed its first anniversary. Men, women and youth from farm families of the erstwhile CRDA (Capital Region Development Authority), which donated 33,000 acres of land for the development of the State Capital, observed yet another protest day to mark the beginning of the second year of their agitation, seeking justice. The case of these farmers is a unique one in any sense and if the farmers are at a loss to understand what has turned their lush green fields into barren land today, it is understandable. These farmers were a happy lot with the rich and bountiful yield from their fields and enjoyed a respectable status in the society with their financial stature too being

reassuring. Most of these were not only exuberant but also selfless in parting ways with their costly lands in the fond hope of shaping up of the future capital of Andhra Pradesh, which was to be designed as resplendent as the mythical Amaravati, the abode of the 'Devas'. The designs developed for the capital city and displayed to the public by the erstwhile government were mind-blowing and the farmers themselves felt blessed for the turnabout of their fortunes. This also led to a boom in the land prices drawing investors from far and wide. These farmers who donated their land to the 'land pooling' process for the capital were supposed to get varied compensations in the form of annual payments depending on the ex-

tent of land and also house sites as future holdings for the 'sacrifice'. Came 2019 and the general elections turned the tide the other way with the YSRCP coming to power. The incumbent government smelt a rat in the Capital development and decided to investigate the alleged land scam claiming that the previous government deliberately manipulated the lands out of nepotism. Since then, the matter entered litigation and the case is dragging on in courts. Even these farmers do not say that wrong doings, if any, should be condoned. It is natural that the political opponents of the present regime try to make a political capital of the capital issue. But they are not wrong in asking "why are we to suffer? What wrong did

we do and what is our sin if we have donated our land for the purpose of our capital". These are not immaterial or illogical questions. These are genuine and painful utterances of the farmers. Land acquisition for any purpose always affects farmers. But, if it is for outright price that one parts with his or her land, it is another story. As far as they are concerned, they are at a loss to comprehend the reason for their misfortune. They are unable to fathom why they have become the new 'political opponents' of the powers that be that the latter does not even entertain them. Whenever there is an agitation - a peaceful and prolonged one - by any section of the society, the governments' break the ice by holding talks with them. This is not the case here. Amaravati is all about politics now. And politics shows no mercy!

Smell good, breathe bad: How scented products add to air pollution

Use of hair sprays, hand sanitisers etc emit the same amount of chemical vapours as petroleum from vehicles, even though 15 times more petroleum is burned as fuel

ANUJ BEHAL & DIMPLE BEHAL

AT least 298.7 million Americans used deodorants/anti-perspirants in 2020, according to the United States Census data and Simmons National Consumer Survey (NHCS) statistics. This figure is projected to increase to 306.04 million in 2024.

But where does the perfume go once it is sprayed on the body? Who is the end consumer of it?

Early perfume was made using natural materials such as bark, wood, roots, leaves, flowers and seeds. The first evidence of perfume making began in Egypt and Mesopotamia. It was later picked up by the Persians and the Romans.

Fragrance was of great importance in Egyptian high society. In fact, God Nefertem is also noted in Egyptian mythology as the lord of perfume. It is also portrayed carrying water lilies, which, in ancient perfumes, were a common ingredient. Egyptians made perfume by distilling natural ingredients with non-scented oils. The most famous scents were derived from local flowers, fruits and aromatic woods. The Indus civilization (from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE) also had perfume and perfumery. One of the earliest Ittar distillations was stated in Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita in the Hindu Ayurvedic text.

But the chemistry of perfume is constantly changing, and so are the methods used to create it.

Starting with the practice of carrying scented materials deriving from complete matters of nature, the practice has evolved: Perfumes are now filled with chemicals that are usually volatile organic compounds.

The use of scented goods (including things such as perfumes, hair sprays, air fresheners, and paints) emit the same amount of chemical vapours as petroleum from vehicles, even though 15 times more petroleum is burned as fuel, according to a report in the journal Science by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Each spritz of perfume contains volatile organic compounds (VOCs), according to NOAA.

"Once you spray it, the VOCs respond to ozone contamination while reacting with sunlight and other chemicals in the atmosphere. Even though drivers can use gallons of gasoline each week, it's stored in an airtight tank. It is burned for energy and converted mostly to carbon dioxide," said Jessica B Gilman, a research chemist at the NOAA.

The carbon dioxide emissions are not smog-forming VOCs, though they are a major driver of human-induced climate change.

"But these VOCs that you use in everyday products — it may just be a teaspoon or a squirt or a spray — will ultimately end up in the atmosphere where they can react and contribute to ozone and small-particle formation," Dr Gilman said. At least 40 per cent of chemicals added to consumer products wind up in the air, the researchers found.

Another research at Prude University in the US found that the chemistry of indoor air was constantly changing and that people may be the main source of volatile organic compounds in a modern office environment.

Fragrances have been under fire for their toxicity lately; the evidence is mounting that wearing deodorant and other simple acts of human existence — including breathing — may be the biggest source of air pollution in offices.

Another key finding was the greater the number of people in the room, greater the VOCs were found in the air. Without appropriate ventilation, which can dilute the concentration of indoor pollutants, the levels of many compounds were found to be 10 to 20 times higher indoors than outdoors.

This is complicated by the level of pollutants in the outdoor environment, which people also have an effect on. Researchers believe that chemicals from self-care products such as deodorant, makeup and hair spray may raise the air pollution levels outdoors as they are dispelled outside through the ventilation system.

What are volatile organic compounds?

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids. VOCs include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short- and long-term adverse health effects.

Concentrations of many VOCs are consistently higher indoors (up to 10 times higher) than outdoors. VOCs are emitted by a wide array of products numbering in the thousands. These chemical vapours, known as volatile organic compounds, react with sunlight to form ozone pollution, and, as this study found, react with other chemicals in the atmosphere to form fine particulates in the air.

Organic chemicals are widely used as ingredients in household products. Paints, varnishes and wax all contain organic solvents, as do many cleaning, disinfecting, cosmetic, degreasing and hobby products. Fuels are made up of organic chemicals. All these products can release organic compounds while you are using them, and to some degree, when they are stored.

Sanitisers, the new carriers of VOCs?

The year 2020 introduced the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) to the world. It prompted a surge in the use of disinfectants, air sprays and cleaners. The global hand sanitizer market size was valued at \$2.7 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.6 per cent from 2020 to 2027.

Shifting consumer preference towards convenient hygiene products is expected to drive the market. Sadly, these products are also a new home to the volatile organic compounds. This new increased share of the usage of these products could make our surrounding air more unfit to breathe.

Air pollution affects around the 90 per cent of the world, according to the World Health Organization. This burdens the consumer with a huge responsibility in choosing the best for themselves as well as the environment. Products emitting the least amount of VOCs are a need of the hour. Its effect could be severely reduced by using indoor and outdoor plants.

We can't get rid of these products, but we can surely try to reduce their impact by adopting a healthy lifestyle.

(Courtesy: Down To Earth)



Fragrances have been under fire for their toxicity lately; the evidence is mounting that wearing deodorant and other simple acts of human existence — including breathing — may be the biggest source of air pollution in offices. Another key finding was the greater the number of people in the room, greater the VOCs were found in the air. Without appropriate ventilation, which can dilute the concentration of indoor pollutants, the levels of many compounds were found to be 10 to 20 times higher indoors than outdoors. This is complicated by the level of pollutants in the outdoor environment, which people also have an effect on. Researchers believe that chemicals from self-care products such as deodorant, makeup and hair spray may raise the air pollution levels outdoors as they are dispelled outside through the ventilation system

2020, the year of conspiracy theories

SAMRAT

THE happiest event of 2020, its end, is now only 13 days away — and what an extraordinary year it's been. Lockdowns in countries around the world, 1.62 million dead and counting, economies shattered, the meaning of everyday activities such as "going to school" and "going to office" changed. There's no doubt that this was the Year of the Pandemic. It dominated the lives of people in countries around the world, and it will probably continue to do so for at least the year to come. The first doses of the first successful vaccine are now being administered in the United States and United Kingdom, and the action is now shifting to the next stage of containing the disease. Naturally, excitement and fear among anti-vaxxers who believe the whole thing is a plot for world domination by Microsoft founder Bill Gates, is reaching a fever pitch.

Right from the beginning of the pandemic, this kind of magical thinking has been a steady accompaniment to the spread of Covid-19. In India, it started with the initial reactions encapsulated in the famous slogan "go corona, corona go", which was accompanied, in one memorable instance, by a vigorous beating of metal plates around the country. The theory that got millions of people banging pots and pans was popularised in a WhatsApp forward which claimed that the vibrations produced by the sound would destroy the coronavirus. Versions of this theory found many backers among educated and rich people, including superstar Amitabh Bachchan, who on 22 March tweeted to his 40.5 million followers that clapping and "shankh vibrations", meaning vibrations produced by blowing a conch shell, would "reduce/destroy virus potency".

A string of cow urine drinking parties was also organised around the country by those who believe in the magical powers of that cola to cure all ills. In Kolkata, the party ended when one of the organisers, a political party worker, was arrested after some of the consumers of the magic potion sadly fell ill. Perhaps realising that the virus would not be beaten so easily, the big boys now got into the act. A government organisation funded by taxpayer money touted "panchagavya" as the next wonder-drug against

Covid-19. This substance, which is made from the unbeatable combination of cow urine, cow dung, cow milk, cow butter and cow ghee, was readied for "clinical trials" in ten hospitals starting with the state-run Civil Hospital in Rajkot, Gujarat. The results of those "clinical trials" are unknown.

One miraculous invention from the brilliant scientific minds at Baba Ramdev's company Patanjali however made headlines. This was the reported success, in clinical trials held in Jaipur and at the company's own facilities in Haridwar, of the wonder drug "coronil". Patanjali initially claimed "100% recovery from coronavirus infection within 7 days" for patients treated with coronil. When questions rose over this rather astounding claim, the company simply rebranded the drug as an immunity-booster and released it into the market, where in four months it sold a healthy 85 lakh units worth over Rs 240 crore.

This series of "atma nirbhar" or self-dependent efforts sadly could not prevent India from reaching second rank globally in the Covid tally with a total of 9.91 million cases and 1,44,000 deaths recorded so far. The accuracy of those numbers is anyone's guess. However, taking them at face value, we will have to conclude that despite everything, including a population more than four times bigger and considerably poorer, we have not done as badly as Donald Trump's America. Under his leadership, that superpower and erstwhile leader of the free world has managed to have 16.6 million cases of Covid so far in which 3,01,000 people have died.

2020 the year of conspiracy theories As Covid-19 gripped the world so did the desire for easy answers.

That achievement might not have been possible without the unflinching faith of Trump supporters who refused to wear masks or observe social distancing because they had been told that there was no such thing as Covid — the President himself having proclaimed that the whole thing was a "hoax". The disease, as far as they were concerned, simply did not exist. Many of them went to their graves secure in that belief, gasping for breath and probably wondering what mysterious ailment had gotten to them.

The belief in mysterious forces working in conspiratorial ways was popular in 2020 even



A string of cow urine drinking parties was also organised around the country by those who believe in the magical powers of that cola to cure all ills. In Kolkata, the party ended when one of the organisers, a political party worker, was arrested after some of the consumers of the magic potion sadly fell ill. Perhaps realising that the virus would not be beaten so easily, the big boys now got into the act. A government organisation funded by taxpayer money touted "panchagavya" as the next wonder-drug against Covid-19. This substance, which is made from the unbeatable combination of cow urine, cow dung, cow milk, cow butter and cow ghee, was readied for "clinical trials" in ten hospitals starting with the state-run Civil Hospital in Rajkot, Gujarat. The results of those "clinical trials" are unknown

in fields outside of medicine. We saw it in India over three months of ceaseless and breathless "investigations" into the sudden death of film star Sushant Singh Rajput by what appeared to be a clear case of suicide. However, this explanation did not satisfy a lot of people, who were convinced it was murder, despite the lack of any evidence to support such a notion.

Folks in America with similar mindsets are now clinging to the notion that the US Presidential elections were rigged in favour of Democrat candidate Joe Biden who defeated Trump in the polls. Normally, the person and party in power are suspected of rigging, since they hold the controls on the levers of power. Trump is the sitting pres-

ident, and the elections were held under his watch. Most US states still use hand-marked paper ballots — the only unhackable method — so the chances of the opposition managing a massive rigging exercise against him without being detected appear negligible. There is zero evidence that massive rigging has taken place. This lack of evidence, as usual, has failed to convince the believers.

Ultimately, belief is not about evidence at all. It is not primarily a matter of logic for most people. Billions of humans for thousands of years have continued to believe passionately in gods none of them has ever seen; all manner of things have been taken as signs from an invisible, omnipresent and omnipotent deity. The human mind proba-

bly craves emotional satisfaction over the intellectual. Logic is typically applied in defence of beliefs after the mind has already been made up. Arguments are then constructed to support cherished beliefs.

Sometimes these arguments take the form of conspiracy theories. The anxieties and uncertainties of the world are too many, and its workings too complex. A conspiracy theory is an emotionally and intellectually satisfying explanation of things for many. In times of stress, such as the kind brought about by the pandemic, it is natural that these theories will gain in popularity. They offer simple, understandable explanations of events and help us regain a belief in human control over situations. It is easier, in our modern world, to believe that Covid happened because evil people did it than to believe, as our ancestors would, that it was "an act of god". And it is easier, certainly, to bang pots and pans as a way of doing something about it, than it is to invent a vaccine, or wait patiently and helplessly for months or years for one.

At the level of events, 2020 was the Year of the Pandemic, but the ideas that flowed through our phones and social media feeds this year would suggest another name might be more apt: it was also the Year of the Conspiracy Theory.

Buckle up. A full blossoming of some of these theories awaits the world in 2021.

(Courtesy: www.firstpost.com)

Wuhan residents say, 'We are not afraid'

EMILY CHOW

WITH investigators from the World Health Organization (WHO) set to visit China next year, residents of Wuhan are saying they want the team to come to the central city, hoping they could prove the virus did not originate there. An international team of investigators is expected to travel to China in January, the WHO said on Thursday, more than a year after the first identified cluster of COVID-19 infections was linked to the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan.

"I welcome them to come. We also want to know how it developed, specifically where it came from, if the source of the virus is here," said a Wuhan resident named Wan, as he walked to work on Thursday morning. "My feeling is that it is not from there," he added, referring to the seafood market.

The WHO did not confirm whether its team will go to Wuhan, saying that discussions on the itinerary were ongoing. A two-member WHO team visited China in July but did not visit Wuhan. A team of 12-15 international experts will visit Wuhan to examine evidence, including



human and animal samples collected by Chinese researchers, and to build on their initial studies.

Beijing has strongly opposed calls for an international inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus but said it has been open to a WHO-led investigation.

China's Foreign Ministry did not directly comment on the WHO visit during a daily media briefing on Thursday. "China stands ready to enhance its cooperation with

WHO to advance the global tracing efforts and contribute our share in our early victory against the pandemic," spokesman Wang Wenbin said. Many questions remain about the origins of COVID-19 and the role Wuhan's exotic wildlife trade may have played in it.

Although authorities closed the Huanan market in January, there is a growing scientific consensus that the virus did not originate there. Some studies suggest it was

already in circulation by the time it reached the market, with more than one transmission route.

China still tightly restricts access to locations such as the Huanan market, which stands empty and locked even though normal life has largely resumed in Wuhan and throughout China.

Beijing has also been pushing a narrative that the virus existed abroad before it was found in Wuhan, and unlike other countries cites frozen food packaging as a risk of spreading COVID-19.

"There is a strong possibility it was brought in via wholesale seafood from elsewhere. Wuhan has no seafood," said 20-year-old Wuhan student Jiang Yongcheng.

Others said a WHO visit is an opportunity to show how well the city had done battling the virus. Wuhan has not reported a locally transmitted case since May 10, after a 76-day lockdown that was one of the strictest worldwide.

"We are not afraid of their investigation," said Liu Qin, who works in real estate. "Because you can see from the epidemic this year, in Wuhan things were done well, if not the epidemic would not have been controlled quickly."

Naidu's fight is only to keep up value of his lands: AP CM

► Referring to Amaravati agitation, Jagan says during BC Sankranti meet that Naidu is fighting for the lands he acquired through nefarious means and insider trading

► Narrates a slew of welfare schemes aimed at benefiting Backward Classes, which he says, are Backbone Classes

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

TAKING a dig at TDP chief and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said while the empowerment of BCs was going on here, a parallel meeting was being organised by the "rejected Chief Minister" with a narrow mind to safeguard his interests and that of his coterie to keep up the value of land, acquired by "nefarious means" including insider trading. He was referring to the meeting of Amaravati Joint Action Committee held in the capital region marking one year of agitation against the capital shifting.

He said the broad-mindedness of their government in empowering BCs, whom they consider as Backbone Classes, stands in contrast to the meeting of Chandrababu Naidu, he said in a passing remark while speaking at the swearing ceremony of newly appointed chairpersons of BC corporations here on Thursday.

Listing out the number of schemes one by one with full data



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy pays tributes to his father and former Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy at the BC Sankranti programme in Vijayawada on Thursday

like total amount spent, total beneficiaries and sub-total of BC beneficiaries and the amount spent on them, the Chief Minister said in a lighter vein that the list of schemes is so long that no one else can remember all the names drawing peals of laughter.

Listing out the welfare schemes, he said, towards Amma Vodi, the government had spent Rs 6,500 crore to benefit 82 lakh students and 43 lakh mothers, of which 19.66 lakh are BCs. Similarly, under Rythu Bharosa, Rs 13,500 is being given to 50 lakh farmer families by spending Rs 6,750 crore and of them, 23.69 lakh are of BC community. Under housing for the poor, the govern-

ment will be distributing over 31 lakh house site pattas on December 25, of which 15.92 lakh women beneficiaries are from BC community and of the total 2.62 lakh TIDCO houses, 1.53 lakh houses are going to be given for BCs. Under YSR Nethanna Nestham, nearly 81,000 families were benefited by receiving Rs 384 crore and all are BCs.

Through YSR Matsyakara Bharosa 1.07 lakh BC families, Jagananna Chedhodu 2.27 lakh BC families, Aarogyasri 5.24 lakh BCs, Aarogya Asara 1.38 lakh BCs, Pension Kanuka 30.27 lakh BCs and Aasara 42.60 lakh BC women have been benefited.

Deputy Chief Minister Dhar-

mana Krishnadas, Amzath Basha, ministers Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, Chelloboyina Venu-gopala Krishna, Botcha Satyanarayana, Gummanuru Jayaram, P Anil Kumar Yadav, M Sankara Narayana, Muttamsetti Srinivas, Vellampalli Srinivas, Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao, Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani, Kurasala Kannababu, Audimulapu Suresh, Seediri Appalaraju, MPs Pilli Subhash Chandra Bose, Mopidevi Venkataramana, Gorantla Madhav, Margani Bharat, MLA Janga Krishna Murthy, Pondicherry minister Malladi Krishna Rao, and other leaders and party members were present at the event

Police Officers Association objects to Naidu outbursts

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

TAKING strong exception to the comments of former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, honorary president of AP Police Officers Association Narreddi Chandrasekhar Reddy said here on Thursday that it was nothing but encouraging people to disobey and misuse of laws to prod people to file criminal cases against the police.

He said that it was highly deplorable that Chandrababu Naidu who was three times chief minister should talk like that through video conference.

It is unbecoming of the former chief minister to cast aspersions on the police who have been extending exemplary service to the people. The former chief minister is aware that whoever supports crimes is also a criminal, Chandrasekhar Reddy said.

The police department has been using the latest technology in the service of the common people and weaker sections, he pointed out.

When the police department has won laurels at the national level, it is not proper to accuse the director general of police in particular and the police department in general, he said. The honorary president said that the police were not afraid of such threats but the comments betrayed the irresponsibility of the former chief minister.

Teacher transfer web options extended one more time

► Education Minister says they can be made till midnight today

► Repeats that if some teacher posts are not blocked in web options, posts in remote areas will remain vacant permanently

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

DEFENDING the decision of blocking some teacher posts in the web options, minister for education Audimulapu Suresh said here on Thursday that if there was no blocking the teacher posts in the remote areas would remain vacant forever.

He announced that the web options would be available till the midnight of Friday. Anyway, the web options were one hundred per cent success, he said congratulating the teachers for choosing the web option.

The transfer orders would be issued after December 19 once the web options work was completed.

The minister hoped that the rest of the teachers who are yet to use the option would utilise it by the midnight of Friday.

Referring to the blocking of some posts, he said



Audimulapu Suresh

that the 10,918 posts in the 5,725 schools in the remote areas throughout the state would remain vacant if the posts were not blocked which would result in closure of those schools. Keeping in view the problem, 16,000 posts were blocked, he pointed out.

The minister said that the dates for the conduct of EAMCET would be announced soon. He also said that the fee structure for engineering colleges would be decided soon.

He warned the engineering colleges that their recognition would be cancelled if they did not follow the regulations.

Covid tally reaches 8.77 lakh in AP

AMARAVATI

STATE'S Covid-19 tally increased to 8.77 lakh on Thursday as 534 cases were reported a new. In 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday, 498 patients had recovered, taking the total recoveries to 8,65,825.

The overall toll rose to 7,069 as two more fatalities were reported in a day, the latest bulletin said.

BSF kills two Pakistani intruders on Punjab border

Continued from P1

"The BSF sentry on duty heard some crawling sound near the fence. He challenged the approaching people in dense fog but he instead heard the sound of cocking the gun by the intruders. "The BSF jawan fired in self defence and later we recovered two bodies of the armed intruders from the spot," BSF Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Bhupinder Singh told reporters in Amritsar.

An AK-56 rifle, semi-automatic rifle, pistol, 90 bullets, five magazines and two PVC pipes, usually used to push drug packets across the border, of about

ten feet each, have been seized after a search was conducted of the incident site, the DIG said. No drugs were found in this spot, he added.

The officer said the force is "lodging a protest" with the Pakistan Rangers to inform them that the intruders were using their territory to push narcotics on the Indian side.

He said two more attempts to smuggle drugs were thwarted in the same region, one being near its Ramkot border post, and over 5 kgs of heroin in total was recovered from two different spots along the Amritsar sector. (PTI)

Ayodhya mosque stone to be laid on R-Day

Continued from P1

"We can establish a nursing and paramedic college to provide human resources to the hospital.

We can manage doctors from local resources from Faizabad, and for specialised needs in terms of critical surgeries, we have a group of doctor friends in prominent government and private institutions who want to offer their services," he said.

"We are looking forward to corporate funding for the hospital. There are many donors who are willing to contribute when we have 80 G approval.

After that, we will go for FCRA and seek foreign funds from Muslims of Indian origin," the IICF secretary added.

The Babri Masjid was demolished in December 1992 by "kar sevaks" who claimed that the mosque in Ayodhya was built on the site of an ancient Ram temple. (PTI)

Bangladesh 'key pillar' of 'neighbourhood first' policy: Modi

Continued from P1

In another significant move, the leaders agreed to facilitate completion of border fencing at all pending sectors at the earliest beginning from the frontier along Tripura, besides stressing on full implementation of the ongoing coordinated border management plan. "Both leaders also agreed that loss of civilian lives at the border is a matter of concern and directed the border forces concerned to enhance coordinate measures to work towards bringing such border incidents to zero," the statement said.

In his comments, Modi said that holding of the virtual summit immediately after celebration of the 'Vijay Diwas' (Victory Day) assumed "special significance". On Wednesday, India celebrated 'Vijay Diwas' that marks the surrender of around 93,000 Pakistani troops before the joint forces of the Indian Army and the "Mukti Bahini" on December 16, 1971 that led to the birth of Bangladesh, which celebrates the day as 'Bijoy Dibosh' "It is a matter of pride for us to celebrate the historic victory of Bangladesh over the anti-liberation forces. Today, when Bangladesh is celebrating 49 years of independence, I pay homage to the armed forces personnel of both the countries who laid down their lives," Modi said.

The two Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated a Bangabandhu-Bapu digital exhibition on the life and legacies of the two iconic leaders --Bangladesh's founder Mujibur Rahman and Mahatma Gandhi. In the talks, Hasina expressed keen interest on the India Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway project and sought support of New Delhi for enabling Bangladesh to connect with the project. The inauguration of the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link is expected to enhance connectivity to Assam and West Bengal from Bangladesh. It was part of the broadgauge main route from Kolkata to Siliguri till 1965. However, the war of 1965 effectively cut off all the railway links.

Both sides have already restored four other rail links that were suspended in 1965. Initially, the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link will facilitate the movement of goods and cargo. Passenger movement will also commence after the development of required infrastructure on both sides. (PTI)

NATIONAL ANIMAL: SHOULD COW REPLACE TIGER?

Cow is a sacred animal for Hindus for ages. India's neighbour Nepal declared cow as a national animal. This has also led to an intense debate in the country on whether the Indian government should also follow suit. *The Hans India* spoke to a cross section of people on the issue. A majority backed making cow the national animal. They said whether it is a house-warming ceremony or initiating a new venture, ushering in a cow is considered a good omen and a sign of lucky charm. However, a few said what benefit does a common man derive by enacting a legislation making cow the national animal. They pointed out that as per the Constitution, all religions are equal in the nation.



India should emulate our neighbour Nepal in declaring cow the National Capital, no recognition to cow. No need to say that 90 per cent population of the country worship the cow. At this juncture, it is the right time to exert pressure on the Central government for declaring cow as National Animal. Political parties which support the demand will have people behind them in elections.

Dr P Jagannadham Reddy, children's specialist, Balaji Clinic, K R Palai, Chittoor



The suggestion to make the cow the National Animal is a good one. We are an agriculture-based country and known to be peace loving people. Cow as the national animal represents both qualities and of course it reduces the slaughter of the innocent animal.

T Rajyalakshmi, small businesswoman, Ongole



Whatever be the National Animal, be it the tiger or the cow, it would not make any difference to the common man's life. Crores of poor children are short of a glass of milk even after seven decades of independence. I suggest to the government and people to discuss how to provide nutrition to those children and nurture them to be an asset to the country rather than a liability in the future.

N Sai, private employee, Ongole



We have been fighting to get cow declared as National Animal for more than 10 years because cows are very important to the Indians for many centuries. Cow is worshipped as it is a holy animal. I don't understand why the government is not declaring it as National Animal. Cow milk and urine are also promoted in Ayurveda because they have many benefits and medicinal values.

Suresh Raj Purohit, trader, Vijayawada.



Stopping cow slaughter is very important than giving National Animal status to it. Cow is a multipurpose animal which Hindus worship from ancient times. Even in mythological period cow has highly considered spiritually. Cow deserves National Animal status

Gorripati Chinnu Babu, businessman, Rajamahendravaram



Cow is called Gomatha and Kamadhenu which, as legend says, evolved from churning of ocean. It is a precious and divine animal. Without its presence, Hindus cannot perform any festival or auspicious programmes. It is the time to declare it National Animal.

Badireddi Naga Surya Satyanarayana, retired co-operative central bank employee, Rajamahendravaram



It is the time to start an agitation demanding declaration of cow as National Animal in the place of tiger, which is a long pending demand. National Animal status protects cow from slaughter houses. Even in housewarming also cow is sent into the house first, which is considered auspicious.

N Dharma Rao, advocate, Rajamahendravaram



I support the idea of declaring cow as National Animal because people get multiple benefits with cow. I know India is a secular country. But, declaring cow as National Animal has nothing to do with religion. Everyone can be benefitted from the cows whose products have immense economic benefits.

B N A Murthy, lecturer, Nalanda college, Vijayawada.



A cow has motherly qualities and worshipping it ushers in prosperity and health. Every product of the cow is useful to mankind one way or the other. Without utilising its products, a day remains incomplete in our life. According to me, cow has all the qualifications to become a national animal.

P Swamy Venkata Narasimha Gopal, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant employee, Visakhapatnam



A national animal is a symbol of pride and it should be people-friendly. We should consider it as a part of our family and not runaway from getting scared of it. Cow is not only worshipped as God across the country but it also enhances our livelihood in multiple ways. Hence cows are more suitable to earn the national animal tag and replace the ferocious tiger.

L Ganesh Naidu, veterinary doctor, Visakhapatnam

Empty coffers greet new BC chiefs as funds diverted for govt schemes

M V SYAM SUNDAR
AMARAVATI

AMID pomp and gaiety the office-bearers of 56 corporations took oath at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation here on Thursday. However, little did they realise that there would hardly be any funds for any of these corporations.

A number of such corporations earlier formed for the welfare of various sections of the society are languishing due to lack of funds. The funds earlier allocated to these corporations were already diverted to fulfill the promises made by the Chief Minister in the election manifesto.

Since January 2020, the YSRCP government has diverted more than Rs 14,055 crore from the social welfare and endowments departments to finance welfare schemes like Amma Vodi, YSR Cheyutha, Jagananna Chethodu among others by issuing more than 50 government orders. In 2020, the research shows, over Rs 11,300 crore was diverted from Backward Classes Welfare Corporation towards implementation of welfare schemes in the state.

Additionally, at least Rs 56.36 crore was drawn from the endowments department to fund the Amma Vodi and other schemes since January this year.

For instance, GO No 5 issued on January 4, 2020, transferring Rs 568.54 crore from the AP State Kapu Welfare and Development Corporation for implementation of Jagananna Amma Vodi scheme.

Another GO, No 6, issued on the same date transferred Rs 395.23 crore from the social welfare department for the same scheme. Another GO of the same date transferred Rs 3,432 crore from BC Cooperative and Finance Corporation for the



► The YSRCP govt diverted more than Rs 11,300 cr from the Social Welfare and Endowments Depts to schemes like Amma Vodi, YSR Cheyutha since Jan 2020

same scheme. The state government has routinely come under the scanner for diverting funds. Due to financial crises and massive borrowing, the Chief Minister has to use different tactics to keep his promise of implementing welfare programmes.

However, the fulfillment of his promises comes at the cost of development of backward classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities. In January, TDP leader Nara Lokesh questioned the Jagan Mohan Reddy government regarding sanctioning of funds from welfare corporations meant for specific communities to implement the Amma Vodi scheme. The government has, nonetheless, continued taking away funds from the social welfare department and endowments department for schemes. The government has tapped every source of additional funding that it can to use for such schemes. There has been vociferous opposition from various sections of people of the state to the reforms that the state government is implementing.

PSLV lobs CMS-01 into orbit

Continued from P1

The solar panels of the satellite, a crucial operation, have been deployed, he said, addressing scientists from the Mission Control Centre. "I am extremely happy to declare that the PSLV-C50 successfully injected CMS-01 communication satellite precisely into the predefined sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit. In another four days from now, the satellite will be placed into the specified slot into the GTO," he said.

TODAY'S QUOTE

No amount of stimulus will be adequate

“The government has taken several of measures to support the economy, but no amount of intervention will be adequate to deal with the crisis triggered by Covid-19 pandemic. The government has taken steps for interventions by consulting several chambers of commerce


— **Nirmala Sitharaman**, Finance Minister



TAX

CBIC instructs officers to credit Drawbacks

Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has instructed all zones under its jurisdiction to immediately take necessary action that will facilitate credit of drawback claims within a period of three days. The board has estimated that at least 90 per cent of drawback could be credited

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	78.01	South	
Euro	94.49	African Rand	5.74
UAE Dirham	22.04	Hong Kong Dollar	10.92
Thai Baht	2.83	Japanese Yen	0.82
British Pound	103.97	New Zealand Dollar	55.32
Australian Dollar	58.98	Saudi Riyal	21.57
Canadian Dollar	60.82	Swedish Krona	10.18
Swiss Franc	86.64	Singapore Dollar	58.27

DELHI FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 2020

BIZ BRIEFS

Vivo rolls out campaign

Smartphone brand vivo launched the #SwitchOff campaign, urging smartphone users to choose to take a break from their smartphones and spend quality time with their dear ones. The campaign is founded on the observation from ‘vivoSmartphones and their impact on human relationships 2020’ study which brought out that the increased screen time could have an impact on the wellbeing of a person. Nipun Marya, Director Brand Strategy, vivo India, said, “The year of social distancing allowed us to stay connected and updated with the help of a smartphone. We commissioned this campaign to sensitize people about the benefits of mindful use of smartphones and spread the message of why there is a need to #SwitchOff your phones once in a while for healthier minds and stronger relationships - leading to happier lives”.

QurHealth's new service

QurHealth Solutions India launched ‘Sheela G’, a voice-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled personal health assistant in 11 languages for breast cancer chemotherapy patients which records patient’s vitals from home health devices such as glucometer, blood pressure monitor, pulse oximeter, weighing scale, and thermometer remotely using voice, text, and IoT devices. Its AI models recognize digital signature of patients and proactively assist in managing their disease conditions. Sheela G is now available for free from the Android and iOS stores. Ravi Kunduru, founder and CEO, Ventech Solutions, the parent company of QurHealth, said, “We are a provider 1st company with a single goal ‘Saving Life, Super Proactive’. We are humbled to serve patients of all ages enabling safe, secured, and compliant access with their own caregivers, doctors, and hospitals.”

CAE launches new initiative

Cambridge Assessment English (CAE), a department of the University of Cambridge, has launched Upskill, a new mobile based English test for employability in India. This test will help students and professionals at the start of their career in India to demonstrate their English language skills quickly and affordably, backed by the reputation of one of the world’s top universities. Upskill is the result of collaboration between the assessment specialists behind world-leading tests like IELTS and BEC, and experts in AI from the university.TK Arunachalam, Regional Director - South Asia, CAE explained: “We’ve developed Upskill as a quick, flexible, easily accessible, mobile based test which will boost the employability of graduates.”

Open Text's donation

OpenText offered a combined donation of \$1 million \$ to food banks in OpenText communities around the world. The company announced a donation of \$55,000 to the Hyderabad and Bengaluru chapters of United Way, an NGO affiliated to United Way Worldwide. Over and above the funds, OpenText already contributes to good causes in India through its CSR programme. “The demand for food banks has never been greater, and we wanted to do our part to meet this heightened and historic need. This holiday season, OpenText teams in 58 communities around the world are supporting local food banks to help ensure everyone has enough to eat. These communities support OpenText every day,” said OpenText CEO & CTO Mark J Barrenechea.

Centre looks to fuel gas-based economy

Plans \$60 bn investment in gas infra by 2024, says Minister Pradhan

NEW DELHI

PETROLEUM Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said the government has planned a \$60 billion investment for creating gas infrastructure in the country till 2024, and gas’ share in the energy mix is expected to rise to 15 per cent by 2030.

Currently, gas accounts for 6 per cent in the country’s total energy mix. Speaking at ASSOCHAM Foundation Day Week 2020, the Minister said, “On the investments front, we have envisaged to spend \$60 billion in creating gas infrastructure till 2024, including for pipelines, LNG terminals and CGD (city gas distribution) networks.” He further told, “We are ushering a gas-based economy by increasing the share of natural gas in India’s primary energy mix from 6.2 per cent to 15 per cent by year 2030.”

India’s first automated national-level gas trading platform was launched in June this year to promote and sustain an efficient and robust gas market and foster gas trading in the country. Coverage of CGD projects are being expanded to 232 geographical areas spread over 400 districts, with potential to cover about 53 per cent of the country’s geography and 70 per cent of population, he added. He also said,



“We are adopting clean mobility solutions with greater use of LNG (liquefied natural gas) as a transportation fuel, including long haul trucking. We plan to have 1,000 LNG fuel stations across the country.

Last month, foundation stone was laid for the nation’s first 50 LNG fuel stations.” This year, India has achieved the milestone of completely filling all the strategic petroleum reserves with a total capacity of 5.33 MT (million tonnes) constructed at Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru and

Padur. “We have initiated the process of establishing another 6.5 MT commercial-cum-strategic petroleum storage facilities at two locations, Chandikol and Padur, under the public-private partnership model,” he added.

About the pandemic, he noted that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to inhibit conduct of normal activity. He said, “We also have clear indications of improvements and a gradual increase in activity across all states and sectors of our economy. You are al-

India's first automated national-level gas trading platform was launched in June this year to promote and sustain an efficient and robust gas market and foster gas trading in the country

HFCL starts production of FTTH cables at Hyd plant

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

HFCL on Thursday said it has begun the commercial production of fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) cables from its new facility in Hyderabad, involving a fresh outlay of Rs 40 crore.

HFCL further said, Rs 300 crore has so far been invested in the Hyderabad facility as part of the company’s expansion roadmap. The company said in a statement that it has become the largest manufacturer of FTTH cables in India with a capacity of 6 lakh kms/annum.

“HFCL’s new FTTH cable manufacturing facility at Hyderabad, Telangana, has commenced commercial production of optical fiber cables for fiber-to-home applications, with effect from December 16, 2020,” according to the statement. With this new facility, HFCL, along with its subsidiary company HTL Limited, has become the largest manufacturer of FTTH cables in In-



Becomes India's largest FTTH maker with 6L-km annual capacity

dia with a capacity of 6 lakh kms per annum.

The company had earlier invested Rs 260 crore in the Hyderabad plant for the manufacturing of optical fiber that was commissioned in January 2020. “This new, automated high-speed FTTH cable facility has come up with a fresh outlay of Rs 40 crore to ensure high throughput, economies of scale and highest quality standards,” it said. So far, Rs 300 crore has been infused in Hyderabad facility as part of the expansion roadmap. Mahendra Nahata, Managing Director, HFCL said, “India is seeing buoyant FTTH activity driven by private telcos and government’s thrust on rural network deployment. Expanding FTTH roll-outs will not only boost our

country’s 4G connectivity but it will also enhance our readiness for 5G”.

The FTTH cable plant has backward integration for supplies of major raw materials including optical fiber from the company’s existing manufacturing facilities, further strengthening the supply chain.

“Apart from supplying FTTH cables to telecom service providers in India, HFCL will also be exporting them to more than 30 countries where the company is already having its presence. The company will be marketing the FTTH cables under its brand name of HFCL,” the statement said. It added that the company’s research and development facilities are developing different variants of new cables which would also be manufactured from the newly set up facility at Hyderabad.

Mrs BECTORS IPO A BUMPER HIT

It has been subscribed 197.34 times

NEW DELHI

MIRRORING massive investor response, Mrs Bectors Food Specialities initial public offer was subscribed a whopping 197.34 times so far on the last day of subscription on Thursday.

The initial share sale of Mrs Bectors Food Specialities got oversubscribed within a few hours of opening for subscription on Tuesday. After Burger King India, this is the second Initial Public Offer (IPO) this month to have received oversubscription in a few hours of opening for public subscription. Mrs Bectors Food’s IPO received bids for 2,61,20,63,200 shares against 1,32,36,211 shares on offer, as per data available with the NSE till 15:45 hrs.

The offer comprises a fresh is-



sue of Rs 40.54 crore and an offer-for-sale of up to Rs 500 crore. The price band for the share sale has been fixed at Rs 286-288 apiece. On Monday, Mrs Bectors Food raised Rs 162 crore from anchor investors.

SBI Capital Markets, ICICI Securities and IIFL Securities are the managers to the offer. Mrs Bectors Food manufactures and markets a range of products such as biscuits, breads and buns. It markets a wide variety of biscuits and breads under the flagship brand ‘Mrs Bector’s Creamica’ and the ‘English Oven’, respectively.

Q3 advance corp tax collection up 49% in to ₹1.09L cr

MUMBAI

FURTHER adding to the recovery signals, advance tax payment by companies has shown a massive 49 per cent growth to Rs 1,09,506 crore in the third quarter this fiscal, a CBDT source said. The increase can primarily be attributed to the low-base last fiscal when the government had slashed the corporation tax rates to a record low of 25 per cent in the third quarter, leading to lower tax payout. During the same quarter last fiscal, the corporate advance tax stood at Rs 73,126 crore. The gross tax collection stood at Rs 7,33,715 crore, while net mop-up was Rs 5,87,605 crore in the quarter, the source said. During the quarter, the department has refunded Rs 1,46,109 crore, which is less than 8.1 per cent from Rs 1,58,988 crore in Q3 of FY20. Overall, the advance corporate tax stood at Rs 2,39,125 crore so far this year, down 4.9 per cent from Rs 2,51,382 crore as the first two quarters bore burnt of Covid lockdown. (PTI)

Tide opens tech centre in Hyd

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

TIDE, UK’s leading digital business financial platform, opened its global development centre in Hyderabad. The centre will drive and support all the technology needs of the fast growing venture, which aims to become the world’s leading digital challenger in business financial services. Spread over 15,000 sq ft, the center already has over 70 experienced and highly talented technology professionals working on cutting edge technologies. Guy Duncan, Chief Technology Officer, Tide, said, “With Tide witnessing exponential growth, we needed to look beyond as it was proving to be difficult to hire quality talent at the required pace in the UK and Bulgaria, where we have a technology and support centre.

Our senior leadership has extensive and positive experience in setting up offices and technology centers in India.

Tax burden on cigarettes in India far below global best

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

A global study on taxation on tobacco products revealed that tax burden on cigarettes in India is far below the global standards.

Tobacconomics, which is based at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Institute for Health Research and Policy, carried out the global study. It released the first edition of the International Cigarette Tax Scorecard, assessing the performance of cigarette tax policies in over 170 countries, including India.

In the study, India got an overall score of 1.88 out of five possible points, which is slightly better than the South-East Asia average (1.82), but lower than the global average (2.07) and scores of top performing countries (4.63).

The top performing countries are Australia and New Zealand, which reflects their high, uniform specific cigarette excise



taxes with regular increases that have significantly reduced the affordability of cigarettes.

The Tobacconomics Scorecard assesses countries’ cigarette tax policies based on international best practice using data from the World Health Organization from 2014-2018. Nearly half the countries scored less than two out of the five-point maximum. There has been little improvement from 2014-2018. The global average score rose only slightly from 1.85 in 2014 to 2.07 in 2018.

India had significantly improved its score on cigarette tax-

ation policy from 1.38 in 2014 to 2.38 in 2016 after which it declined to 1.88 in 2018 due to the lack of tax increases on tobacco and increasing affordability of cigarettes. Overall scores, however, improved in 89 countries. Introduction of significant cigarette excise taxes, simplification of previously complicated tiered cigarette excise tax structure and large tax increases are the reasons why some countries improved their scores.

“The Scorecard shows considerable untapped potential for cigarette tax increases to raise revenue for a Covid-19 recovery and importantly, prevent premature deaths and promote a healthy and productive workforce,” said Tobacconomics Director and lead author of the scorecard, Frank J. Chaloupka.

The current tax burden on cigarettes in India is 52 per cent and is far below the standard of international best practice, he said

Govt extends relaxed norms for onion imports till Jan 31

NEW DELHI

THE central government on Thursday extended relaxed norms for onion imports for one and a half months till January 31 next year, to boost domestic supply and check the retail prices of the key kitchen staple. To facilitate import of onion, the government had on October 21 relaxed the conditions for fumigation and additional declaration on the Phytosanitary Certificate (PSC) under the Plant Quarantine Order (PQ), 2003 for import up to December 15, 2020.

In an official statement, the Agriculture Ministry said it has decided to extend the relaxation for imports up to January 31, 2021, in the light of public concern over high prices of onion in the market. Stating that the relaxation will be subject to certain conditions, the ministry said the consignments of imported onions, which arrive in Indian port without fumigation and such endorsement on the PSC, would be fumigated in India by the importer through an accredited treatment provider.



The consignment would be inspected thoroughly by quarantine officials and released only if found free from pests and diseases of concern to India. Further, if smut or dry rot is intercepted during the inspection, the particular container will be rejected and deported. In case of pests like stem and bulbs nematode or onion maggot being detected, these should be eliminated through fumigation and the consignment released without additional inspection fee, it added.

The ministry said that the conditions also stipulate that an undertaking should be obtained from importers that the onions will be used only for consumption and not for propagation.

Gadkari to lay stone for road works in TS

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

UNION Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to lay the foundation stone and take part in the groundbreaking ceremony of eight road development projects on December 21. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, MPs, MLAs and MLCs from Telangana will take part in the event via virtual platform.

Informing further, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy said that Gadkari would be laying the foundation stone for 396 km of road projects to be taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 9,440 crore in the State and 370 km roads to be taken up with Rs 3,717 crore.



❖ Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, MPs, MLAs and others to participate in the event in virtual mode

❖ Road works to be taken up under Bharat Mala scheme

Kishan Reddy said the Chief Minister, MPs, MLAs and MLCs would participate in the event via a virtual platform,

along with Nitin Gadkari. He said that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has taken up seven out

of 14 projects estimated to cost about Rs 13,157 crore. Nitin Gadkari would be dedicating one project to the nation and perform the groundbreaking ceremony, Kishan Reddy said.

Further, in Telangana, the Public Works Department is implementing seven projects. Out of this, five will be dedicated to the nation and the Union Roads and Transport Minister will perform the groundbreaking ceremony for the two projects, Kishan Reddy said, adding that the Centre has taken up development of basic infrastructure under Bharat Mala,

in an extent of 35,000 km of national highways. Out of this, 1,400 km national highways falling in Telangana are being taken under Bharat Mala Scheme -I/NH(O). That apart, under phase-II of the Bharat Mala, it has also been decided to develop 750 km of expressways.

The Secunderabad MP said that the extent of national highways in Telangana till May 2014 was 2,511 km. However, the same has gone up to 3,910 km registering the highest growth rate of 55.71 per cent (1,399 km). He said that the development activity reflects the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foresight and commitment to ensure the development and basic road infrastructure in the country.

TRS govt kept its promise by completing Bornapalli bridge: MLC Kavitha



MLC K Kavitha along with MLA Dr Sanjay Kumar inspecting Bornapalli bridge on Thursday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAGTIAL

THE TRS government, which promised of constructing Bornapalli bridge in 2014, has fulfilled and the bridge is ready for use, said MLC K Kavitha. Along with MLA Dr Sanjay Kumar, she inspected the bridge on Thursday, constructed with an investment of Rs 70 crore.

MLC Kavitha said that it is the long-lasting dream of Jagtial people to have the Bornapalli bridge, which became reality today. She said that during 2014 election campaigning, people brought the issue to her notice that they were facing lot of problems without proper

road and bridge over Godavari River, which flows between Bornapalli village of Raikal mandal and Chinnabellala and Peddabellala villages of Nirmal district.

"I took the issue to the notice of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and he sanctioned Rs 70 crore for the construction of Bornapalli bridge along with laying of two-lane road covering 18 km from Bornapalli to Raikal mandal," she added. The bridge construction was completed in a record time and problems of the people of Jagtial, Karimnagar, Nirmal and Adilabad districts will end with better transport facilities, she added.

Farmers demand govt to close Srikrishna Drugs Company



HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGA REDDY

FARMERS of Pedda Golconda and Bahadurguda demanded the government to order for the closure of Srikrishna Drugs Company. The farmers alleged that the underground water in Pedda Golconda and Bahadurguda villages has been contaminated due to pollutants released by the Srikrishna Drugs Company. They also alleged

that the crops were being damaged due to contaminated water and people were facing health issues too. The company earlier paid compensation for crop damage and now they were least bothered to pay any compensation, the farmers said, adding that the government was not supplying Krishna water to their villages but has laid a special pipeline to supply water to the drug-manufacturing company.

KCR congratulates ISRO

HYDERABAD

CHIEF Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has congratulated Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for successful launch of PSLV-C50, India's communication satellite CMS-01 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR, Sriharikota on Thursday. The CM congratulated the scientists, engineers, technical staff and employees of the ISRO for the successful launch.

Farmers stage rasta roko

RANGA REDDY

FARMERS of Kondurg held a rasta roko on Shadnagar-Pargi road on Thursday and demanded the government to purchase their crops. The farmers said that the government was not purchasing paddy and corn crops this season. They lamented that the government had earlier assured to purchase the crops, but was now refusing to do so.



New farm laws will increase the income of farmer: Sanjay Kumar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HALIA (NAGARJUNA SAGAR)

CENTRAL Deputy Agriculture Minister Sanjay Kumar Balia stated that the farmer friendly Central government designed the new agricultural laws to benefit the farmers in all aspects. On Thursday, he took part in awareness creating meeting on new farm laws among the farmers held at a private function hall in Halia of Nagarjuna Sagar Constituency. Addressing the farmers, the Minister stated that the new farm laws brought by Modi government will definitely increase the income of the farmer.



Leaders of opposition parties and associate farmer wings, who are ignorant of the laws are spreading false propaganda among the

farming community. All welfare schemes introduced by the State government are being funded by the Centre,

he asserted. Farmers of the villages are not getting benefits under 'Fasal Bheema Yojana' as State government is not taking village as unit and added that only farmers of Punjab and Haryana are opposing the new farm laws.

He said, BJP led Central government will educate all the farmers on new farm laws by conducting awareness meetings at village level.

Party District President Kankana Sridhar Reddy, Party leaders Kankana Niveditha Reddy, Kadari Anjaiah Yadav, Venkat Naryana Reddy and others were present.

Man held for stalking woman on Facebook

RANGA REDDY:

THE Rachakonda Cybercrime Police have arrested a cyber stalker for creating a fake Facebook account and stalking a woman, and seized two cell phones from him on Thursday.



According to police, the accused, Varakala Ramesh, a resident of Hayathnagar, completed journalism and worked for an year as sub-editor in a media channel. In the year 2018, he created a fake Facebook profile of himself as a woman and used to send friend requests to girls and women.

The victim, who has received the request, accepted it by believing that the request came from a woman. Since then, the accused used to chat with her pretending as a woman and collected the victim's personal mobile number and her residential address during the chat. Further, he contacted the victim over her phone and blackmailed her to send her nude pictures. Soon, the victim realised that the accused is a male person and immediately blocked him and his phone number. However, he continued to harass her. Unable to take this, the victim lodged a complaint with the police. On the basis of technical evidence collected, the police arrested the accused and sent him to judicial remand. The case was investigated by cybercrime Inspector B Prakash.

MLC polls: Kapilavai supports Cheruku Sudhakar

The ex-MLC says Sudhakar is the right person to contest the MLC election as he went to jail during the Statehood movement

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KHAMMAM

EX-MLC Kapilavai Dilip Kumar supported Dr Cheruku Sudhakar, the leader of Telangana movement. Speaking at the meeting of Graduates Association on Thursday at Khammam District Centre, Dilip said that Sudhakar was right person to contest MLC elections as he went to jail under Preventive Detention Act during the Statehood movement. Further, he added that Telangana Jana Samithi chief Professor Kodandaram should quit as MLC and honour Cheruku Sudhakar, and added that Sudhakar's election would become the foundation for future social movements.

Minor health cases should be treated within districts: Eatala

Only emergency and critical cases should be referred to major state hospitals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

HEALTH Minister Eatala Rajender has stated that they were taking steps so that minor health cases could be taken care of in Primary Health Centres (PHCs), and in area and district Hospitals or medical colleges in districts if more healthcare was needed. Only critical and emergency cases have to be referred to major state hospitals and not all cases as was the way State hospitals have been functioning all these years. He wanted PHCs, Community Health Centres, Area and District hospitals and teaching hospitals to work in a chain with proper coordination among them. He directed the senior officials to improve the infrastructure in the hospitals.

CMRF, a massive help to needy: Chief Whip

WARANGAL

THE State government is giving utmost priority to the healthcare of the poor, Chief Whip D Vinay Bhaskar said. Distributing financial assistance to the poor under Chief Minister Relief Fund (CMRF) at his camp office in Balasamudram here on Thursday, along with Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao and Rajya Sabha member Joginapally Santosh Kumar, he said that the assistance provided under the CMRF is of a massive help to the distressed sections. The leaders distributed cheques worth around Rs 45 lakh to 62 beneficiaries belonging to Warangal West constituency. Even though the State was facing a financial crisis due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao was providing assistance to the poor, the Chief Whip said. Later speak-



Chief Whip D Vinay Bhaskar giving away CMRF cheque to a poor woman while MP J Santosh Kumar giving a sapling at a programme at Balasamudram in Warangal on Thursday

ing to media persons, Vinay lauded MP Santhosh Kumar for his efforts to protect the environment. It may be mentioned here that Santhosh Kumar is instrumental behind the Green India Challenge, an initiative to plant saplings to make the country green. As part of Chettu - Cheque launched by

the Chief Whip, Santosh Kumar distributed saplings to the healthcare beneficiaries along with cheques, on the occasion. Vinay Bhaskar said that he had initiated the Chettu - Cheque programme to create awareness among the people towards the protection of the environment by raising the trees.

'DELETE AADHAAR COLUMN FROM REGISTRATION MANUAL ON DHARANI'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

THE High Court directed the Telangana State government to delete all the references of Aadhaar card numbers in the entire manuals, whether it be registrations, PTIN (Property Tax Identification Number) or for any other manual dealing with the registration of non-agricultural properties.

Further, the court clarified that till these manuals were modified and the new ones were made, people should not be allotted any slot numbers.

The High Court bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bollam Vijayesen Reddy on Thursday heard a batch of eight Public Interest Litigations opposing the data collection for Dharani portal. The High Court directed the State government that in the

- High court says State government is behaving cleverly by introducing Aadhaar column in the slot bookings application form
- Directs it not to seek Aadhaar, caste details from buyers, sellers, their family members and the witnesses
- Orders the Advocate General to file a copy of revised manual issued by the government

user manual and in software, the column of Aadhaar card must be deleted immediately. Aggrieved over the State government's attitude, the Chief Justice bench pointed out that the government was cleverly behaving by introducing Aadhaar column in the slot book-



LEGAL NOTES

ings application form. Earlier, the State government had made it clear to the court that it would not ask for Aadhaar details in the application forms for registrations. The court questioned as to what made the government to retain the Aadhaar column in the slot booking

form. The court stated that the registering authority will not insist on revealing Aadhaar details even while registering the non-agricultural lands. In case of identification of persons to be established, the registering authority might insist upon any

other official identification, but not Aadhaar, clarified the court.

The court also directed the Advocate General Banda Shivananda Prasad to file a copy of revised manual issued by the government to clearly prove the fact that all references to Aadhaar were deleted from the user manual and from the software.

Advocate General Banda Shivananda Prasad sought a week's time to upgrade the software. The High Court directed the State that till next hearing, the registration of non-agricultural properties must be continued without seeking Aadhaar details from buyers, sellers and their family members and from witnesses.

Moreover, the government should not insist on caste and social category from the registration parties, the court said, adjourning the matter to December 28.

Govt files report on Covid-19 curtailing steps taken in State

HYDERABAD

THE High Court division bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bollam Vijayesen Reddy heard the batch of 26 pleas on Covid-19 matters in the State and took on record the 279-page voluminous report filed by the State government enumerating the steps it has taken in curtailing and containing the prevalence of Covid-19 in the State.

Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan, while addressing all the counsels representing the petitioners in the batch of 26 petitions, said that he cannot adjudicate the batch of petitions at this stage in view of his transfer to Uttarakhand High Court as its Chief Justice.

When Chikkudu Prab-

hakar, counsel for one of the petitioners, insisted the Chief Justice to hear the batch in view of the 2nd wave of coronavirus hitting the State and in view of the increase in deaths due to the virus, the CJ responded by saying that the new incumbent CJ for the High Court of Telangana Justice Hima Kohli, has monitored the entire Covid 19 cases in Delhi and expected the same to happen here in the Telangana High Court. Further, the CJ bench adjourned the contempt case against the Director, Public Health and Family Welfare, G Srinivas Rao "Sine Die" in view of the stay orders passed by the Supreme Court on the contempt proceedings, issued by the Telangana High Court. The matter is adjourned to December 31.

Oz take Day 1 honours as India reduced to 233/6

ADELAIDE

Australia bounced back on the first day of the first Test against India on Thursday by picking three late wickets, including those of captain Virat Kohli (74), Ajinkya Rahane (42) and Hanuma Vihari (16) in just over six overs for 18 runs to leave their opponents on 233 for six at stumps.

The match is a day-night fixture played with a pink ball at the Adelaide Oval.

The Aussies were fortunate to get a run-out with Kohli caught out of crease at the non-striker's end after Rahane pulled back an erroneous call for a run. Josh Hazlewood swooped on the ball at cover and sent it back to off-spinner Nathan Lyon who whipped the bails off to send Kohli back. The captain's dismissal was a big jolt in the 77th over as with new pink ball just three overs away. Kohli and his deputy Rahane added 88 for the fourth wicket and taken the team to 188.

Soon after Kohli's dismissal, Australia called for the second new ball and got rid of Rahane, leg-before to Mitchell Starc, and Hanuma Vihari who was leg-before to Hazelwood.

India, at 206 for six looked like

getting bowled out before stumps. However, R Ashwin and Wriddhiman Saha added 27 in 34 balls for the seventh wicket and remained unbeaten at the end of the day.

Earlier, India had lost ace batsman Cheteshwar Pujara in the second session after he had revived the innings alongside Kohli.

With India losing both their openers cheaply, Pujara and Kohli shared a 68-run partnership to help the visitors reach the 100-run mark. However, just when the situation seemed to be easing for India, Pujara was caught at leg-slip by Marnus Labuschagne off Lyon and went back to the dressing room after scoring 43 runs off 160 balls.

At the end of second session on Thursday, India had scored 107/3 after batting for 55 overs -- scoring 66 runs in 30 overs in the second session.

India didn't get off to a good start in their innings after Kohli won the toss and elected to bat. Opener Prithvi Shaw, who has been picked in

SCOREBOARD

India 1st Innings	
Prithvi Shaw b Starc	0
Mayank Agarwal b Cummins	17
Cheteshwar Pujara c Labuschagne b Lyon	43
Virat Kohli run out	74
Ajinkya Rahane lbw Starc	42
Hanuma Vihari lbw Hazlewood	16
Wriddhiman Saha not out	9
Ravichandran Ashwin not out	15
Extras: (B-2, LB-7 NB-7, WD-1)	17
Total: (For 6 wickets in 89 overs)	233
Fall of Wickets: 1-0 2-3, 3-100, 4-188, 5-196, 6-206.	
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 19-4-49-2, Josh Hazlewood 20-6-47-1, Pat Cummins 19-7-42-1, Cameron Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.	

the playing XI despite his poor form in the warm-up games, got out on the second delivery of the first over bowled by left-arm quick Mitchell Starc for a duck. Starc's swinging delivery got the inside edge of Shaw's bat and hit the stumps.

Pujara and Mayank Agarwal then tried to steady the ship and made sure the visitors didn't lose any further wickets in the initial overs. Both played cautiously

and scored runs rather slowly as the Australia pacers bowled tight lines and lengths.

It was in the 19th over that Cummins got the second breakthrough for the hosts as Agarwal got bowled after scoring 17 runs in the 40 deliveries he faced during his stay.

Skipper Kohli, who came in next, then took the Indian innings forward. (IANS)

How Ponting 'exactly' predicted Shaw's dismissal

ADELAIDE

FORMER Australia captain Ricky Ponting on Thursday predicted the exact way Prithvi Shaw would be dismissed, just seconds before the Indian opener got out for a duck in the first session of the first Test against Australia at the Adelaide Oval.

Ponting, who was in the commentary box for 7 cricket when play began in the pink-ball Test, explained how Shaw has a tendency to leave a gap between his bat and pad while playing in-coming deliveries.

"If he (Shaw) does have a chink in his armour it's the ball which does come back into him," Ponting, who has been working with Shaw at Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Delhi Capitals, said after Shaw defended left-arm Mitchell Starc's first ball.

"He's very comfortable playing the ball away from his body. He does get his head in line with the ball but he doesn't commit his front foot to the line of the ball and quite often leaves a big gap between bat and pad and that's where the Aussies will target. Starc will try and swing one back in the gate," he added as Starc started his run-up for the second ball.

The left-arm quick bowled a full in-swinging delivery outside the off stump and Shaw went for a drive. The ball, however, got an

inside edge and went on to hit the stumps, thus sending the Indian opener back to the dressing room for a golden duck.

The 21-year-old has been in poor form in the recent times. In IPL 2020, he scored



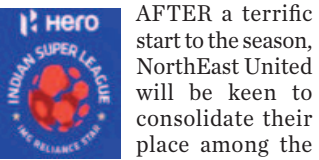
228 runs in 13 matches he played for Delhi Capitals. In the two warm-up games leading to the four-match Test series against Australia, he returned with scores of 0, 19, 40 and 3. Despite that, he was picked ahead of Shubman Gill who had a better outing in the practice matches against Australia A by playing knocks of 0, 29, 43 and 65. (IANS)



India's Ajinkya Rahane dives to make his ground and avoid being run-out by Australia during their Test match at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia on Thursday

NorthEast look to extend unbeaten run

BAMBOLIM (GOA)



AFTER a terrific start to the season, NorthEast United will be keen to consolidate their place among the Indian Super

League's (ISL) front-runners and extend their unbeaten streak when they lock horns with Jamshedpur FC at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here on Friday.

NorthEast will be pleased with the start they've had this campaign after six games. A victory on Friday will put them level on points with table-toppers FC Mumbai City and second-placed ATK Mohan Bagan.

NEUFC found themselves in a similar position the previous season, re-



NEUFC's Khassa Camara will be key in midfield against JFC in Hero ISL 7 match at the Tilak Maidan Stadium on Friday

Match Result

Bengaluru FC beat Odisha FC 2 - 1

have to be wary of Jamshedpur striker Nerijus Valskis, who is currently the joint top-scorer alongside FC Goa's Igor Angulo. The Red Miners have been dependent on the Lithuanian up-front, and he has scored six of his team's sevens goals so far.

Like NorthEast, Jamshedpur are heading into the game after successive draws. A win for Owen Coyle's men, placed seventh, could enhance their chances of making it into the top four.

Jamshedpur will miss the presence of the suspended midfielder Aitor Monroy, who picked up a red card in the previous game against Mumbai. They will have to ensure they control the midfield and stop NorthEast United's forwards from getting the service they want. (IANS)

Today's Fixture

NorthEast United FC vs Jamshedpur FC at Tilak Maidan Stadium 7.30pm

Lewandowski breaks 250-goal barrier in Bundesliga

MUNICH

BAYERN Munich striker Robert Lewandowski has become the third player in Bundesliga history to score 250 goals.

He achieved the feat on Wednesday evening when Bayern Munich ended Wolfsburg's unbeaten start to the Bundesliga season in a come-from-behind 2-1 win at the Allianz Arena. Lewandowski has scored 23 goals in 20 Bundesliga appearances against Wolfsburg.

Apart from Lewandowski, Gerd Muller and Klaus Fischer have broken the 250-goal barrier. The Pole has 177 goals in 201 Bundesliga appearances for Bayern.

Lewandowski has taken 332 games to go past the 250-goal mark, while Fischer took 460 matches and Muller 284.

The Poland striker had moved to Bayern Munich from Borussia Dortmund in 2014. His 55 goals helped Bayern lift the Bundesliga, German Cup and Champions League trophies in 2019/20 and he emerged as top-scorer in all three competitions. (IANS)

Pak pacer Amir retires from int'l cricket

LAHORE



LEFT-arm Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir has announced his retirement from international cricket, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed on Thursday.

Earlier, in a video apparently recorded in Sri Lanka where he had been playing in Lanka Premier League (LPL), Amir said that he had been "mentally tortured" and didn't want to continue playing under the current PCB management.

"PCB chief executive Wasim Khan spoke with Mohammad Amir this afternoon following reports that the fast bowler had announced his retirement from international cricket," said a PCB statement.

"The 28-year-old confirmed to the PCB chief executive that he has no desires or intentions of playing international cricket and as such, he should not be considered for future international matches (sic). This is a personal decision of Mohammad Amir, which the PCB respects, and as such, will not make any further comment on this matter at this stage," it said.

The left-arm, who played 36 Tests, 61 ODIs, and 50 T20Is

in which he scalped a total of 259 wickets, had earlier said in the video that he would be reaching Pakistan in a few days from Sri Lanka, where he played in the inaugural edition of the LPL for Galle Gladiators. He said he would release a more detailed note stating his reasons for retirement.

"I don't think I can play cricket under this management. I am leaving cricket, for now. I am being mentally tortured. I cannot handle it. I have seen it enough from 2010-2015. I have to repeatedly hear that PCB invested a lot in me. However it is not the case. I am thankful to Shahid Afridi as he gave me chances when I came back after the ban and will also thank Najam Sethi (former PCB chairman)," said Amir in the video making the rounds on social media.

"Everyone wants to play for their country. They (PCB) just keep saying that I left Test cricket for other leagues around the world. However, the fact is that I made the comeback through BPL. If I was dying (to play) for leagues then I could have said I don't want to play for Pakistan. Every month there is someone who is saying Amir ditched us. In two days, I will reach Pakistan and then I will release a statement," he said.

Amir was part of the Pakistan squad that won the T20 World Cup in 2009 and was also part of the squad that won the Champions Trophy in 2017. However, his career faced a downward spiral when he was banned for five years for his involvement in the 2010 spot-fixing scandal during the tour of England. After serving his five-year ban, he returned to international cricket in 2015 and made his Test return in 2016. Amir, in 2018, called time on his Test career to focus entirely on white-ball cricket. (IANS)

India contributes \$1 million to WADA to support Clean Sport

NEW DELHI

INDIA has pledged a sum of \$1 million to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) towards its scientific research budget to ensure an atmosphere of Clean Sport globally, which will allow the global agency to develop innovative anti-doping testing and detection methods.

The money will also be used to further strengthen WADA's independent investigations and intelligence department, a statement from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) read.

India's contribution of \$1 million is the highest among contributions made by other world governments, including China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The total contribution of all member nations will be matched by an equal sum by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to create a corpus of \$10 million. The decision to build this corpus was made at WADA's Fifth World Conference on Doping in Sport held in Katowice, Poland in 2019. This contribution is over and above the annual contribution made to WADA's core budget by India.

Writing to WADA president Witold Banka of the contribution, Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "I am happy to share with you that the government of India is pledging a "one-off" financial support of \$1 million to this WADA Fund for scientific R&D and (I&I) with the hope that this contribution from India will boost the efforts to achieve the target of \$10 million for this fund."

In a previous meeting with the WADA president, held on September 8 through video conference, Rijiju had stressed on the need for clean sport and the Indian government's commitment to strengthen the anti-doping program globally. He had also assured India's support to WADA in the form of scientific expertise and resources.

"This is a massive boost for WADA and for clean sport. The agency is grateful to the government of China, Egypt, India and Saudi Arabia for supporting the protection of sport in this way," Banka said as per a press release. (IANS)

Gill wins round 1 of National Rally C'ship

Itanagar: Ace Indian rally car driver Gaurav Gill began his FM-SCI Indian National Rally Championship 2020 with a win, taking the Rally of Arunachal in style here on Thursday. Gill took a total of 56:55.200 minutes to complete eight special stages and record a victory by a margin of an impressive 4:25.700 minutes over Karna Kadur. Dean Mascarenhas finished third overall with a time of 1:02:30.500 minutes. Gill was at his best and even a flat tyre in the final stage could not stop him from underlining his supremacy in the opening round. The three-time APRC champion, along with co-driver Musa Sherif, got off to a thrilling start and after opening up a considerable lead on the opening day (IANS)

St Johns CA lift SCRAPQ Phoenix Cup

HYDERABAD

ST.Johns C.A clinched the SCRAPQ Phoenix Cup-2020 with a 17-run win over Phoenix C.A in the finals of U/12 category here on Thursday. Thanks to an unbeaten 51 runs by G.Ishanthy Reddy and another 53 runs by Aditya which took the side's total to 170/3.

Chasing 171-run victory target, Phoenix C.A could manage only 153 for the loss of eight wickets in the stipulated 20 overs. Vinayaka and Shourya who remained unbeaten on 46 and 28 respectively were the top scorers for the team.

Chief Guest: The Chief guest Swarnaraj Dhivamani gave away the trophy and awards to the players while Jihn Manoj, vice-president HCA was the guest of honour. Man of the Match & Series went to Aditya of St. Johns



and the Best Bowler was awarded to. Mithul also from St. Johns.. **Brief scores (Final)** St.Johns C.A. 170/3 in 20 overs

(* G.Ishanthy Reddy 51; Aditya 53; Vinayak 2/24) beat Phoenix C.A. 153/8 in 20 overs (*Vinayaka 46; *Shourya 28; *Smaran 2/24).