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NEARBY



Delhi govt. cuts RT-PCR test price to ₹800
NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Monday ordered all private laboratories to reduce the price of RT-PCR tests in the city from ₹2,400 to ₹800. Sample collection through home visit will cost ₹1,200.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Plea seeks redress over govt.'s failure to stop riots
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has taken cognisance of a petition by a family seeking compensation from the Delhi government for its failure to prevent the communal violence in north-east Delhi in February. The court directed the Delhi government to submit its counter affidavits within four weeks.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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Centre invites farmers' unions for talks

Protesters had earlier said PM must listen to their 'mann ki baat', and insisted on repeal of farm laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Farmer unions from Punjab, which have been protesting at key entry points to Delhi against the recent farm sector laws, have been invited for talks with the Centre on Tuesday afternoon, the Agriculture Ministry said late on Monday. Farmer leaders said they would meet on Tuesday morning to decide their response to the invitation.

The unconditional invitation for dialogue came after a day of hard talk from their leaders, who said it was time for the Prime Minister to listen to the "mann ki baat" of the farmers or pay a heavy price for not doing so. Their demand for the repeal of the Centre's three agricultural reform laws is non-negotiable, they insisted, on the fifth day of their protest.

Restricted number
Late on Monday, the Centre responded, issuing an invitation from Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar "to all the organisations who were invited to the last meeting". Only the 32 Punjab farmer unions had been invited to the previous meet-



Keeping up the pressure: Farmers protesting against the new farm laws at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ing on November 13.

The meeting has been scheduled for 3 p.m. at Vigyan Bhawan. A letter from Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal has also been sent to the 32 unions.

"In view of the cold and COVID, this dialogue has been kept early, so that the members of the farmers' organisations do not have any trouble. Earlier, this meeting was scheduled on December

3," the Agriculture Ministry statement said.

Tens of thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have gathered outside the Tikri and Singhu border crossings, and a crowd is now growing at the Ghazipur border point as well. Traffic into the city has been severely affected, and farmers have threatened to block five border points.

After the farmers rejected

Home Minister Amit Shah's invitation for talks on the condition that the protest be moved to the Burari grounds, there had been at least two meetings among senior Ministers and Cabinet officials, and several unofficial contacts between the government and the Punjab farmers' union leaders.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2 & 9

Opposition is misleading farmers: Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Amid the protests in and around the national capital, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday accused the Opposition parties of spreading propaganda that the new farm laws would bring adverse consequences for farmers.

Mr. Modi said the agricultural reforms introduced by his government would provide farmers with new options, and legal protection against fraud and cheating.

Speaking at an event in his Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi, Mr. Modi explained the measures taken by his government in the interests of farmers and assured "farmer families that still have some concerns" that the government was making every effort to resolve them.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



Boosting ties: Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu chairing the meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government. ■ PBI

Cross-border terror biggest challenge for SCO region: Venkaiah

Vice-President takes aim at Pakistan

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Cross-border terrorism is the biggest challenge for countries belonging to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, said Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu while chairing a meeting of the SCO heads of government, comprising India, Russia, China, Pakistan and four Central Asian states.

Without identifying Pakistan, he stated that India was concerned about state-sponsored terrorism.

"The most important challenge faced by us in the region is terrorism, particularly cross-border terrorism. Terrorism is truly the enemy of humanity. It is a scourge we need to collectively combat," said Mr. Naidu, who stood in for Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the PM-level conference.

"We remain concerned about threats emerging from ungoverned spaces and are particularly concerned about states that leverage terrorism as an instrument of state policy."

Imran skips meet
Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan also decided to skip the meet hosted by India.

dia, sending the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Andleeb Abbas, in his place. Condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including "state terrorism inflicted upon people living under foreign occupation in disputed territories", Mr. Abbas cautioned against the recent "rise in extremist and racist incidents, inspired by neo-Nazism and Islamophobia," in a veiled reference to the Kashmir dispute.

A joint communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, however, made no reference to terrorism.

Close cooperation

The SCO Council that focuses on trade and economic issues said all countries in the grouping were committed to cooperating on the "prevention and control of infectious and non-infectious diseases, responding to sanitary and epidemiological emergencies, eliminating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, countering the circulation of counterfeit medicines and developing medical tourism".

RLP threatens to quit NDA over farm laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR/GURUGRAM

The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, a constituent of the NDA in Rajasthan, on Monday expressed unhappiness over the Centre's farm laws and said it would "reconsider its alliance" with the BJP if the new legislations were not withdrawn.

In Haryana, Independent MLA Sombir Sangwan resigned as the chairman of the livestock development board in support of the farmers' agitation. He is the first MLA supporting the BJP-JJP coalition to resign.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 4

Health Ministry issues norms to curb virus spread in markets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Cautioning that shopkeepers, employees and visitors living in containment zones shall not be allowed entry into marketplaces, the Union Health Ministry on Monday released standard operating procedures on "preventive measures in markets to contain spread of COVID-19".

These include levying of fines/penalties on defaulters for not wearing mask/face cover, or for not following physical distancing norms,

exploring option of allowing markets/shops to open on alternate days and possible incentive/discounts for those who shop during non-peak hours.

Closure after spikes
The Ministry has advised closure of markets if a large number of cases are reported with epidemiological links to the market by the administration.

It added that there has to be effective crowd management in specific cases of lo-

All-party meet on Friday

The government has called an all-party meeting on December 4 to discuss the COVID-19 situation. Sources confirmed that floor leaders

cal Metro rail stoppages at stations directly feeding into markets and that provision for online booking of groceries/items and delivery at doorstep must be encouraged, where the staff should

be screened thermally by the vendors prior to allowing home deliveries.

The SOP added that vehicles may only be allowed to be parked in assigned parking lots and that proper

crowd management in the parking lots and outside the premises – duly following physical distancing norms – should be ensured. "CCTV monitoring may be considered to detect overcrowding and staggered time of opening of shops/utilities should be explored to allow them to remain open for longer duration," it noted.

"Amid the COVID pandemic, with gradual opening of economic activities, markets are witnessing high footfalls. Such large gatherings, without observance of COVID-19 appropriate behaviour have the potential to spread the disease," the Ministry warned.

It noted that there should be separate entry and exit, if feasible, with unidirectional flow of visitors.

"Roads within marketplaces may be made vehicle-free (including cycle/e-rickshaws)."

The Ministry added that strict penal action should be taken against illegal parking on market roads.

Depression puts T.N., Kerala on cyclone watch

Storm system in Bay likely to intensify; heavy rainfall warning across districts



IMD said.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall with isolated extremely heavy falls is likely in Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Tenkasi, Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga districts of Tamil Nadu (above 24 cm); and Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts of Kerala on Wednesday and Thursday.

These regions can also expect isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall on Tuesday and Friday, the IMD said. Should the system develop into a cyclonic storm, it may be named Burevi, a name suggested by Maldives.

24 hours. The cyclonic storm is expected to cross the Sri Lankan coast during Wednesday evening/night. By Thursday morning, it is expected to emerge into the Kanyakumari region, the

surge in COVID-19

Remembering the Guru



On the right path: Devotees lighting candles at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib in New Delhi on the occasion of the 551st birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Hit by pandemic restrictions, wedding industry faces the music in Uttar Pradesh

Surge in cases has taken a toll on the banquet hall business

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD
Instead of perfume, it is the smell of sanitiser that pervades the air. The groom is welcomed by a mustachioed guard holding a thermal device to test his temperature before the bride's sister brings the *aarti thali* (plate).

It is next to impossible to convince the female guests to put the masks on. After all, they have spent thousands of rupees on make-up. This wedding season, life in a banquet hall has been reduced to a long list of dos and don'ts and the

stakeholders are feeling the pinch.

As the guests come and go, the manager is busy reminding the parents of the groom and the bride to keep the number to 100, the prescribed limit by the government. The reference point is a Meerut case where the manager of the banquet hall, along with fathers of bride and groom, were booked for flouting COVID-19 norms. Nobody wants to be labelled a "super spreader". "Keep them floating", is the new mantra but is hard to practise. How would you ask the groom's friends jiving to

"Mere yaar ki shaadi hai" to maintain social distance.

Heavy losses

"We are running heavy losses. This is a business where commitment has to be kept and right now we are fulfilling just that," says Pradeep Sharma, general manager of Rudraksha banquet hall on Vaishali Metro premises in Ghaziabad. Rudraksha has put billboards reminding guests to follow COVID protocol, including downloading the Aarogya Setu app.

Giving a sense of the changed scenario, Mr.

Sharma says his banquet hall has a seating capacity on the ground floor for 270 people. "For maintaining social distancing, we reduced it to 200 but now we offer only 100, following the

cases after Deepavali, he says, has come as a double whammy for the wedding industry. "We were sinking after the April season was washed out. We expected to breathe easy this season but now we are choking again. After December 12, for the next four months, there is no work as there is no auspicious date for weddings. If we see a surge in April as well, the industry would be finished," he says.

"Aeroplanes and buses are running to full capacity but a banquet hall, which has a capacity to accommodate 1,000 guests, can host only 100." This many people, he says, could be seen outside a wine shop near his hall. "This is unjustified and I appeal to the government to relax the restrictions," says Vivek Mohan, who runs a wedding farm on NH-9 on lease.

He, however, agrees that the surge in COVID-19 numbers is real as many weddings are getting postponed or cancelled because somebody in the family has been hospitalised or died because of the infection. "The sudden cancellations are adding to our losses as there is no point in keeping the booking amount and harassing a family that is already grieving. Anyway, forfeiting

the advance amount of ₹50,000 for a booking of ₹5 lakh doesn't make any sense," he says.

Md. Aslam, the bandmaster of Punjab band, plays his trumpet to show how his lungs are in good shape. "An atmosphere of fear is being created, keeping us out of business. We are artists, we can't suddenly start lifting bricks," he avers. "Earlier, we had bookings for three shifts and up to 30 members used to play. Now we have only one and that too not on all the dates of the season and the number of members has come down to 15, including those holding the lights."



Fine tune: A bandmaster ready with his team to lead a wedding procession in Ghaziabad. ■ PHOTO: ANUJ KUMAR

government guidelines. We can't survive with these numbers as our input costs on lighting, staff salary, maintenance and rent remain the same." The surge in COVID-19

From a teen to an elderly in debt, all unified in stir

While children are busy with online classes, women are concerned about the availability of washrooms at the protest site

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

A 15-year-old boy taking online classes, a 21-year-old farmer, an 80-year-old man with a debt of ₹4 lakh, and a 45-year-old woman who said she has come of her own will and "not for ₹100/day, are just some of the protesters who have gathered at the Singhu border – one of the main sites where agitating farmers are assembling.

Arshdeep Singh Saini, a Class 10 student of a government school, came to the protest site with his cousins and elders of his village on November 26. He came with his books and notebooks.

Arshdeep also owns a smartphone, which comes in handy for his online classes.

"I have brought my school bag here and have my classes daily from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., except Sunday," said Arshdeep. He keeps checking a WhatsApp group called *Class 10 boys* where his teachers post homework and share links to worksheets.

Full support

Arshdeep said that not only did he want to be a part of the protest, his parents had sent him willingly. His teachers have also supported his decision. "My parents asked me to come back only when our demands are met. My



Women protesting at the Singhu border on Monday; (top right) Gurdeep Singh Nihang and (below) Arshdeep Singh Saini. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

teachers know I am here and I keep posting stories on WhatsApp. They say I can stay here as long as I need to and continue to do my class-work from here," he said.

Arshdeep has an idea about why the farmers are protesting. We want the government to ensure that we get a minimum price on our produce, he said.

After classes, the 15-year-old spends his day recording videos. There are a handful like Arshdeep at the site.

Twenty-one-year-old Gurjant Singh, a BA graduate from Kurukshetra University and a resident of Haryana's Karnal, said his family owns 10 acres of farmland. I do not want a job at a private firm as we were taught when we were toddlers not to be slaves to anyone, he added.

Singh said the new farm laws will take away all the rights of produce, yield and price from the farmers and be given to the corporates.

"I am here because I am a

farmer and I cannot let myself and my father be exploited. For instance, I produced corn on two acres of land and sold 38 quintals for ₹1,100 to a firm and now it is being sold for ₹22/kg in the market. That is what the corporations will do to us," he said, adding: "My grandfather Kartar Singh was a freedom fighter."

Among the protesters was 45-year-old Mahinder Kaur, who has come with her group of seven-eight women

from Punjab's Sangrur district. She lost her husband seven years ago due to a cardiac arrest. She now lives with her son, daughter-in-law and grandson.

Here for our rights'

"There are people who say that women are called here at such protests for ₹100-₹500/day. I want to tell them that we are here for our rights," she said, adding that she will stay at the site till her health permits.



Gurdeep Singh Nihang and Arshdeep Singh Saini. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

FIR registered against farmers for hurting officers, rioting

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has lodged a case against farmers staging a protest at the Singhu border for allegedly damaging public property, rioting, and hurting on-duty policemen during a recent incident of violence, a senior officer said on Monday.

He added that on November 27, during the *Delhi Chalo* march, several farmers indulged in violence at the Singhu border protest site.

"We have registered an FIR under Indian Penal Code Sections 186, 353, 332, 323, 147, 148, 149, 279, 337, 188, 269, and Section 3 of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984, at Alipur police station," the senior officer added.

CCTV footage
He said they have obtained CCTV footage, drone images and other technical evidence to identify the accused.

'Protest affecting vegetable supply'

Borders shut, trucks taking other routes

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Farmers protesting at three major borders of the Capital have affected the supply of essential items such as vegetables, oxygen cylinders and fruits to the city from neighboring States.

Delhi receives supply of consumable items from neighboring States such as Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir majorly through the Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri borders – all three blocked due to the ongoing farmers' protest.

Prices hiked, says BJP
Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor urged the Delhi government to step in and ensure availability of vegetables and fruits at "affordable" prices.

He said common kitchen staples such as onions and potatoes were being sold at hiked prices across city markets due to shut routes.

"The supplies are arriving in the city from other alternative routes – Badarpur and Saharanpur – resulting in long queues of trucks on these borders and a delay. On Sunday and Monday, there were around 40% fewer trucks at Azadpur Mandi," said Sushil Kumar, a wholesale vegetable seller.

Number of trucks halved
According to Adil Khan, chairman of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) at the Azadpur Mandi, which is considered the largest wholesale market in Asia, the arrival of both vegetables and fruits has reduced by half due to the closed borders. The trucks have been reduced from daily 2,500 to just 1,000.

10 transport unions pledge support

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A section of transport unions on Monday said they have pledged support to farmers protesting against three agriculture laws.

Ten associations, including the Delhi Goods Transport Association and All Delhi Auto Taxi Transport

Congress Union were among the organisations that have lent support to the stir.

Most of the outfits are affiliated to the Indian National Congress, as per their counterparts in similar unions currently active in Delhi.

"We have pledged support and provided five vehicles to the leaders of the agi-

tation for any emergency, and to cater to their transportation needs in the city," said Kishan Verma, president of All Delhi Auto Taxi Transport Congress Union.

"Not only are we with the farmers, we are also trying to galvanise support from other unions like ours in other States," he added.

The passenger was taken out of the train but he fell unconscious on the platform. CISF constable Ratan Prasad Gupta immediately performed the CPR medical procedure on the passenger following which he came back to his senses, he said. He was then taken to a hospital in Saket.

The deceased has been identified as Dilsher Singh.

He was lodged in Tihar jail's central jail number three in connection with three different cases including murder, the police said. Further legal action is being taken, said Sandeep Goel, Director General (Delhi Prisons).

A CISF constable saved the life of a man, who fell unconscious at a metro station in south Delhi, by performing CPR medical procedure on him, said officials on Monday.

The CPR is an emergency lifesaving procedure that is performed when the heart stops beating. The incident took place at Ghitoria station. The daughter of the passenger, identified as Punjab resident Bharat Bhushan, informed the train driver that her father was not feeling well

and that they required help. The message was sent to the Ghitoria station controller who subsequently informed CISF in-charge Sub-Inspector S.K. Yadav about the emergency call, they said.

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A 23-year-old undertrial prisoner was killed after he was allegedly attacked with a sharp object by three other inmates in Tihar jail on Monday morning, officials said.

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Water cannons, 3,000 policemen to stop farmers

Move comes after police say they got input that protesters might attempt to enter Delhi via other routes

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has fortified Tiagrah, Singhu and Ghazipur borders by deploying around 3,000 security personnel, water cannons, putting up concrete jersey barriers, and fencing police barricades with barbed wires to stop farmers from entering the city.

A senior officer said they have got an input that protesters might attempt to enter Delhi via other routes.

"We have ordered strict checking at key points in the city. All districts have been alerted and ordered to intensify checking of random

vehicles," the officer said. At Tiagrah border, there are around 540 police personnel deployed under the supervision of three DCP-rank officers. Also, two DCPs are deployed during night. At Singhu border, more

security personnel are deployed under the supervision of Joint CP-rank officer.

There are around 1,800 police personnel along with three DCP-rank officers and one Joint CP-rank officer. At Nirankari ground in Burari, there are around 120 police personnel along with two DCP-rank police officers.

Personnel in civil dress

"Apart from regular security, we have also deployed police personnel in civil dress to keep watch on any anti-social elements. We are working in coordination with intelligence agencies.

The situation is peaceful till

now," added the officer.

He said several companies of paramilitary forces are also deployed at borders.

"We are constantly requesting farmers to shift to Burari [Nirankari ground] and not indulge in any kind of violence. We are also focusing on Delhi-Noida and Delhi-Gurugram border to ensure smooth traffic flow," added the officer.

On Monday morning, a minor scuffle broke out between the farmers and the police at Ghazipur border after a group of protesters tried to push the barricades. They were later pacified by their leaders.

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Timings

DELHI

TUESDAY, DEC. 01
RISE 06:57 SET 17:25
MORN 18:11 SET 07:35
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 02
RISE 06:58 SET 17:25
MORN 18:59 SET 08:31
THURSDAY, DEC. 03
RISE 06:58 SET 17:25
MORN 19:53 SET 09:25

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	27	07
Safdarjung	27	07
Palam	24	10

Delhi Ploom Today
26°C A cold morning with mist/smoke haze and sunny sky. Pollution level would remain severe.

Delhi Ploom Tomorrow
27°C Mist and smoke haze likely during morning. A comfortable day with mainly clear sky. No large change in pollution.

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THE HINDU

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Govt. cuts price of RT-PCR test to ₹800; city sees 3,726 cases

For home collection of sample, the government has capped the rate at ₹1,200

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed 3,726 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 5,70,374, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

Moreover, 108 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 9,174. Of the total cases, 5,28,315 have recovered and there are 32,885 active cases.

The total number of tests conducted in the past 24 hours was 50,670, which is fewer than several days last week. The number of tests is usually low on bulletins on Mondays as it reflects tests done on Sunday.

RT-PCR tests
The Delhi government has reduced the maximum rate that can be charged for RT-



A health worker takes a sample for testing at ISBT Kashmere Gate on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

PCR tests for COVID-19 in private facilities, according to an official order.

The maximum rate for one RT-PCR has been fixed at ₹800, when the sample is collected at a facility and ₹1,200 when it is collected from a person's home.

The rate before Mondays order was ₹2,400 per test, which was higher than many

other States. "I have directed that the rates of RT-PCR tests be reduced in Delhi. Whereas tests are being conducted free of cost in govt. establishments, this will help those who get their tests done in private labs," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in a tweet.

Also, out of the total 18,694 beds available for CO-

VID-19 treatment, 56.6% were vacant, as per the bulletin. About 77.01% of ICU beds with ventilators for CO-VID-19 treatment and 66.9% of the ICU beds without ventilators were occupied by Monday night, as per Delhi government data.

The positivity rate on Monday was 7.35% and the overall positivity till now is 9.07%, the bulletin says. The number of containment zones is 5,552.

Rai out of hospital

Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Gopal Rai, who was tested positive for COVID-19 last week, has been discharged from the hospital, according to the Minister's office. His condition is stable and he will be under home isolation and treatment will continue, but he is yet to test negative for the virus, an AAP source said.

Delhiites brave chill as Capital records coldest Nov. in 71 years

Minimum temperature settles at 6.9 degrees Celsius

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

With a mean minimum temperature of 10.2 degrees Celsius, this November has been the coldest in 71 years, according to data available with the India Meteorological Department.

The month finished off on a cold note with the minimum temperature on Monday settling at 6.9 degrees Celsius, which was three degrees below average for the season. Apart from one day on November 16, the minimum temperature has stayed colder than normal with cold wave-like conditions on November 2, 20, 23 and 24.

Mean minimum

The average mean minimum temperature for November is 12.9 degrees Celsius. Last year, the mean minimum temperature in November was 15 degrees



Apart from November 16, the minimum temperature has stayed colder than normal this month. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

C Delhi last recorded a mean minimum temperature of 10.2 degrees Celsius in November 1949

INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

in November 1949 and the other cold Novembers have been in 1938 when it was 9.6 degrees Celsius; in 1931, when it was 9 degrees Celsius; and in 1930 when it was 8.9 degrees Celsius.

The cold November follows the coldest October in 58 years which had a mean minimum temperature of 17.2 degrees Celsius, the lowest since 1962, when it was 16.9 degrees Celsius.

Air quality in November worse than last year

'Farm fires behind rise in pollution'

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi in November this year was worse than in 2019, as per an analysis of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. This year had more days in the 'severe' category compared to the last two years, CPCB's studies observed.

In November this year, there were nine days when the air quality was in the 'severe' category, but the same was only seven days in 2019 and five days in 2018.

"In the case of petitioners, the policy if followed, allows only ₹1 lakh to be paid to the petitioners and their family as the house they were staying was a rented accommodation," it added.

Less compensation

Advocate Kawalpreet Kaur,

representing the family, stat-

ed that Delhi government's

assistance scheme for the

victims of communal vio-

lence is arbitrary and dis-

criminatory. "The amount

of compensation is too little

and inadequate when as-

sessed on the basis of the fi-

nancial losses and trauma

suffered by the victims of the

communal violence," the

plea said.

"Mobs comprising hun-

dreds of people were activ-

ely looking for Muslim houses,

properties and means of

livelihood to loot, burn and

destroy. The petitioners'

house also fell victim to this

lawlessness, chaos and utter

destruction," the plea said.

The petition claimed that

the "complete collapse of

the rule of law" reflected the

inefficiency of Delhi Police

and the government. It con-

tended that "Delhi Police failed to take control of the

heinous mobs and at some

places, actively supported the

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BJP MLA dies of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Rajasmand MLA Kiran Maheshwari, who had tested positive for COVID-19, died at a private hospital in Gurugram late on Sunday night. Maheshwari, a three-time MLA, former MP and former State Minister, was 59.

She was undergoing treatment at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram for the last three weeks. Maheshwari was shifted to life support system last week, when her condition deteriorated. She had reportedly contracted the virus infection during the campaign for municipal elections in Kota earlier this month.

Maheshwari's body, being taken to her hometown Udaipur, will be kept for some time at her Amba Mata Scheme residence here to enable the people to pay homage. The funeral will be conducted at Rani Road crematorium in Udaipur on Tuesday.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform you that Shri Mukesh S/o Shri Ram Babu is willing to Sale his Flat No.C, DDA/LIC Flats, Pimpamra, Delhi-110034 to Smt Usha Beniwal/W/o Late Shri Satish Beniwal. Any person's having any right, title, interest, claim or demand in respect of the above mentioned property is requested to lodge his/her claim to the undersigned at A-2/4, 1nd Floor, Sector-4, Rohini, Delhi-110085, along with documentary evidence in writing within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of the notice, failing which it will be presumed undisputed and any objection/claim towards the sale shall not be entertained thereafter.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice: This is notice for general public that a political party has registered under the name of Sanatan Sahi Samaj Party. The head office of the party is located at 16/94, A-Block, Baba Colony, Burari, Delhi-110084. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India for Registration of party as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951>Name/address of the office bearers of the Party are as follows : National President : Satyanarayan R/o Narayan Urphar, Jalandhar, 247001, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh Vice-President : Dinesh Kumar R/o Karan, Koidur, Kathar, Kab. Simri, Buxar-802120. National General Secretary : Sunil Kumar Maurya R/o 117, Buddhi Bihari Chhatra Ashram, Budhia Vihar, Chanhat, Lucknow, U. P. National Treasurer : Amar Singh R/o 117, Kal Naujawan Saman Vihar, Wazirabad, Delhi. If any one has any objection to the registration of (Name of the proposed party) they may send their Objection with copy to the Secretary (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Flat No. G-007, Kingston,
Plot E-12, Royal Garden Estate,
Sector-61, Noida

Public at large is hereby informed that, captioned property at present is owned by my client Ms. Meenu Singh by virtue of gift deed duly registered vide Book No. 1, Volume No. 7557, Page No. 1 to 32, Serial Registration No. 6168 dated November 30, 2019. Further original Allotment letter, Possession letter and Builder Buyer Agreement in respect of captioned property is reported as lost and online lost report vide LAR No. 508001/2020 dated November 7, 2020 filed with Uttar Pradesh Police.

It is hereby notified that any person or entity, firm/company, Bank (except mentioned above), financial institution having any claim any charge, interest or lien or claim on the basis of documents mentioned above or otherwise and/or objection thereof, he/she may lodge notify the same to be undersigned with documentary proof within 15 days from the date of publication, failing which the title shall be deemed to be clear and marketable without any defect, encumbrance, flaw and impediment and my client is free to create Equitable/Registered Mortgage in respect of the captioned property with any financial institution.

Aditya Singh, Advocate
Enrol No. D/1709/2012

N-266, GK-1, New Delhi-110048

Mob.: 9873734646

Email: aditya@anslaw.in

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY
IN FOND MEMORY

02.01.1972 01.12.2012

V. MARAGATHAVALLI

AR. Viswanathan (Husband)

V. Meenakshi (Daughter)

L. Vellayan

V. Vijaya Vellayan

V. Anush Lakshmanan

V. Kannathal

RELATIVES, FRIENDS
and

Employees of SREE VISALAM CHIT FUND LTD.

DEATH

With profound sorrow, we announce the sad demise of

K. VISWANATHAN

06 Jan 1936 - 29 Nov 2020

Mourned by Family

Wife: Padmaja, Son: Rajiv,

Daughter-in-law: Radhika,

Granddaughter: Parajita

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DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

NDA constituent RLP threatens to quit alliance over farm laws

Take immediate action to withdraw these legislations, party chief tells Amit Shah

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP), a constituent of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) from Rajasthan, on Monday expressed unhappiness over the Centre's agriculture sector laws and said it would "reconsider its alliance" with the Bharatiya Janata Party if the new legislations were not withdrawn.

In an apparent attempt to put pressure on the BJP after the Shiromani Akali Dal broke off ties with the ruling party at the Centre, RLP chief and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal took exception to the Centre's stand on farm laws in a letter addressed to Home Minister Amit Shah. He said the Acts were clearly not in the interest of farmers.

"Your attention is drawn



to the farmers' protest against the three laws... I would request you to take immediate action to withdraw these legislations. The 'Anna da' [food providers] of the country are agitating in this extreme cold amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which does not reflect well on the government," Mr. Beniwal said, while addressing Mr.

Shah as the NDA chairperson.

The RLP chief also demanded that the NDA government implement all recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission and hold a dialogue with the farmers in Delhi in the right spirit.

The party, which enjoys considerable support in Rajasthan's Jat-dominated areas, has one seat in the Lok Sabha and three members in the State Assembly.

"Though the RLP is a constituent party of the NDA, its strength lies in Kisan [farmers] and Jawan [soldiers]. If a prompt action is not taken in this matter, we will have to rethink about our alliance in the interest of farmers," Mr. Beniwal said.

Mr. Beniwal, who has been

making strong remarks on the subject through social media during the last few days, said on Monday that he had given his "last warning" to the BJP through his letter.

He had formed the RLP in 2018 with the support of Jats, who constitute a politically powerful community in more than a dozen Lok Sabha constituencies in the State.

The party, which enjoys considerable support in Rajasthan's Jat-dominated areas, has one seat in the Lok Sabha and three members in the State Assembly.

"We are with the farmers and [will] march to Delhi, if required. The Prime Minister and Mr. Shah should hold talks with the farmers and provide them space to hold dharna in the Capital. If any kind of ill-treatment is done with them, the farmers of the entire country will be on streets and will lay siege to Delhi," he said.

Haryana MLA quits as livestock board chief

He extends full support to farmers' stir

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Independent Dadri MLA Sombir Sangwan on Monday resigned as the Chairman of Haryana Livestock Development Board to support the ongoing farmers' agitation in Delhi seeking withdrawal of three controversial farm legislations. He is the first legislator supporting the BJP-JPP coalition in the State to resign in the wake of the agitation.

Of the seven Independent MLAs in Haryana Assembly, Meham MLA Balraj Kundu has also been at loggerheads with the coalition government.

Commenting on the resignation of Mr. Sangwan, Head of Political Science Department, Maharishi Dayanand University, Prof. Rajendra Sharma said more leaders from the ruling dispensation with rural vote bank would be compelled to come out in support of the agitation in case it lingers on.

No separate flag, constitution for Nagaland, says Governor

National flag, Constitution are the pride of the people of India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOHIMA Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi on Monday made it clear that there would be no separate flag and constitution, amid persistent demand for these by the NSCN(M)-I.

Anyone talking anything contrary is peddling preposterous lies, Mr. Ravi said. "They are trying to confuse and mislead the people," he added.

The territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Union of India are supreme. The Government of India has

diversity, on the demand for integration of Naga inhabited areas in other States, especially Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

"The Indian national flag and Constitution are the pride of the people of India. The Government of India is absolutely clear that there is and there shall be only one national flag and Constitution in India," he asserted.

Maintaining that Nagaland currently stands at the crossroads of history, Mr. Ravi said the right decision taken will determine the future and the destiny of the coming generations.

With common understanding having been reached on all the issues and conclusion of talks on October 31, 2019, the people of Nagaland are anxiously waiting for the new dawn, he said.

Winter is here

A fisherman rides a Shikara on a foggy morning in Srinagar on Monday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Odisha BJP steps up campaign for ouster of Agriculture Minister

'Main accused in child murder case a close confidante of his

circumstances in her village on July 14.

"The administration is under tremendous pressure from the ruling party. A child was brutally killed and there were allegations of involvement of a big organ trade racket in the incident. But, the police did not show any urgency to nab the culprit," alleged Mr. Naik.

Police not acting'

He said, "The police did not act because the main accused was a close confidante of the Minister who hailed from Nayagarh district. Instead of giving protection to child's parents, the government is shielding the accused."

The BJP has been highlighting the issue of the child's death and alleged police

inaction, in the Assembly as well as outside. The party has demanded the ouster of the Minister.

It also accused the ruling Biju Janata Dal government of abruptly ending the winter session of the Assembly on Sunday as it found itself cornered over the issue.

Although the State government has constituted a Special Investigation Team to probe into the incident, the main Opposition party has been insisting for an CBI probe.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra has also moved the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights seeking its intervention in the matter. The party also staged a demonstration in front of Odisha Bhawan in New Delhi.

CM Deb flays Left govt. for 'mixing politics with sports'

He opens renovated coaching campus

SYED SAJJAD ALI
AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb on Monday slammed erstwhile CPI(M)-led left front government for mixing politics with sports. He claimed the present BJP-led coalition government created a constructive environment in fields of sports.

"There were lots of politics in sports during the past regime. Party cadres used to sneak in sporting teams, thus destroying merits," Mr. Deb said after inaugurating the renovated campus of the Netaji Subhas Regional Coaching Centre here.

He went on to say that the incumbent BJP-led alliance government stopped the old practice and created a positive atmosphere in sports.

The CM also unveiled a half-bust statue of India's independence hero, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in the complex. Hitting hard at the previous government he said, 'they' installed statues of different foreign leaders (hinting at statues of Lenin and Marx), but never bothered to have a statue of 'our own Netaji'.

Deputy Chief Minister Jishnu Debbarmar and Olympian Dipa Karmakar graced the occasion.

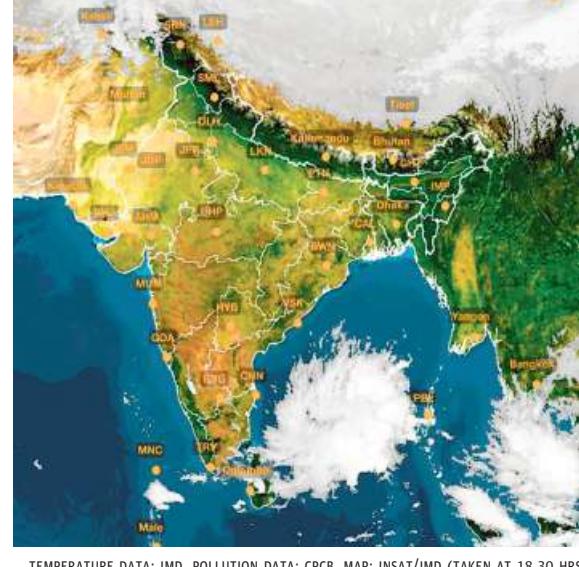
dependence hero, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in the complex. Hitting hard at the previous government he said, 'they' installed statues of different foreign leaders (hinting at statues of Lenin and Marx), but never bothered to have a statue of 'our own Netaji'.

Last year, a senior official of the Union government said that there were plans to upgrade 2.5 lakh out of the total 14 lakh anganwadis in the country. As per the government data presented in Parliament, 3.6 lakh anganwadi centres don't have toilet facilities and 1.6 lakh don't have drinking water facilities.

As of June 2019, as many as 12% anganwadi centres also operated out of kutch buildings, including all centres in Arunachal Pradesh, 95% centres in Nagaland, 86% in Manipur

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 30.8	14.9	...	Kozhikode	... 34.0	25.9	...
Ahmedabad	... 34.0	19.7	...	Kurnool	... 32.3	20.6	...
Aizawl	... 22.3	12.3	...	Lucknow	... 26.6	9.5	...
Allahabad	... 27.5	11.0	...	Madurai	... 31.2	23.1	...
Bengaluru	... 27.0	19.4	...	Mangaluru	... 37.0	23.6	...
Bhopal	... 29.3	12.6	...	Mumbai	... 34.6	22.2	...
Bhubaneswar	... 30.9	16.0	...	Mysuru	... 29.1	20.0	...
Chandigarh	... 25.1	9.9	...	New Delhi	... 26.8	6.9	...
Chennai	... 2.8	30.6	22.5	Patna	... 26.8	11.0	...
Coimbatore	... 0.5	30.2	22.6	Port Blair	... 11.8	30.5	26.7
Dehradun	... 26.0	9.4	...	Puducherry	... 31.0	22.8	...
Gangtok	... 17.6	9.3	...	Pune	... 32.1	17.8	...
Goa	... 34.2	23.9	...	Raipur	... 31.0	17.2	...
Guwahati	... 28.6	14.0	...	Ranchi	... 26.7	11.2	...
Hubballi	... 29.0	20.0	...	Shillong	... 23.2	11.5	...
Hyderabad	... 30.1	18.0	...	Shimla	... 21.4	10.4	...
Imphal	... 26.4	8.1	...	Srinagar	... 10.7	0.8	...
Jaipur	... 28.8	11.3	...	Thiruvananthapuram	... 33.0	25.5	...
Kochi	... 32.0	24.8	...	Tiruchi	... 0.8	31.9	23.6
Kohima	... 24.2	6.0	...	Vijayawada	... 30.6	21.0	...
Kolkata	... 28.7	16.1	...	Visakhapatnam	... 29.8	21.0	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Adambad	39	113	64	127	141	...
Bengaluru	13	36	40	57	79	...
Chennai	10	3	35	37
Delhi	12	103	163	395	341	...
Hyderabad	5	38	12	112	107	...
Kolkata	22	30	8.8	272	173	...
Lucknow	10	89	150	289	243	...
Mumbai	.8	13	37	180	101	...
Pune	...	45	30	117	98	...
Visakhapatnam	23	23	40	129	124	...

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Inhuman to use water cannons on farmers amid cold wave: Sena

'BJP-led Central government playing with fire by terming protesters Khalistanis'

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Monday slammed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government over the treatment meted out to protesting farmers and warned the party that it was playing with fire by terming the farmers 'Khalistanis'. The Sena added it was inhuman to use water cannons on farmers amid the cold wave sweeping parts of north India.

The farmers have been protesting at Delhi's borders for the past five days against the contentious new farm laws. They have refused to accept any conditional dialogue and threatened to block all five entry points to the national capital.

Referring to the giant Statue of Unity of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel "erected by PM Narendra Modi and Amit Shah" in Gujarat, the editorial said Patel was also a leader of farmers and led many farmers' agitation against the British. "Sardar Patel would have cried had he seen the treatment meted out to farmers protesting on Delhi's border. The farmers were beaten, showered with cold water, and tear gassed. Using water cannon during the cold is inhuman," said an editorial in the Sena mouthpiece *Saamana*.

"Our farmers are being treated as terrorists and attacked on Delhi's borders while terrorists are killing our soldiers on the border in Kashmir," it said.

The Sena singled out Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar for claiming a Khalistani link to the protesters. "BJP wants to create anarchy. Khalistan is a



Pressure tactics: Police personnel use water cannons to prevent protesting farmers from moving towards Delhi, at the border between Delhi and Haryana. ■ FILE PHOTO

Row erupts over azan competition

BJP claims Sena deviating from its Hindutva ideology

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has questioned the Shiv Sena's commitment to its Hindutva ideology after a party leader extended best wishes for conducting an azan competition.

Pandurang Sakpal, the Sena's south Mumbai zonal head, said on Monday that the members of Foundation

For You from Mumbai-devi constituency met him to seek permission to hold an open-air azan competition.

"Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, I objected and suggested that they conduct an online contest. I also extended my good wishes for organising the competition. Nobody should indulge in politics

over this," Mr. Sakpal said.

Pravin Darekar, Leader of Opposition in the Council, said this was a clear deviation from the party's Hindutva ideology. "The Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray had taken a stern position over speakers being installed in mosques. Now, the Sena wants to organise an azan competition," he said.

closed chapter for which Indira Gandhi and General Arunkumar Vaidya laid down their lives. The BJP is not only mentioning Khalistan but also wants to push its own politics in Punjab," the editorial said.

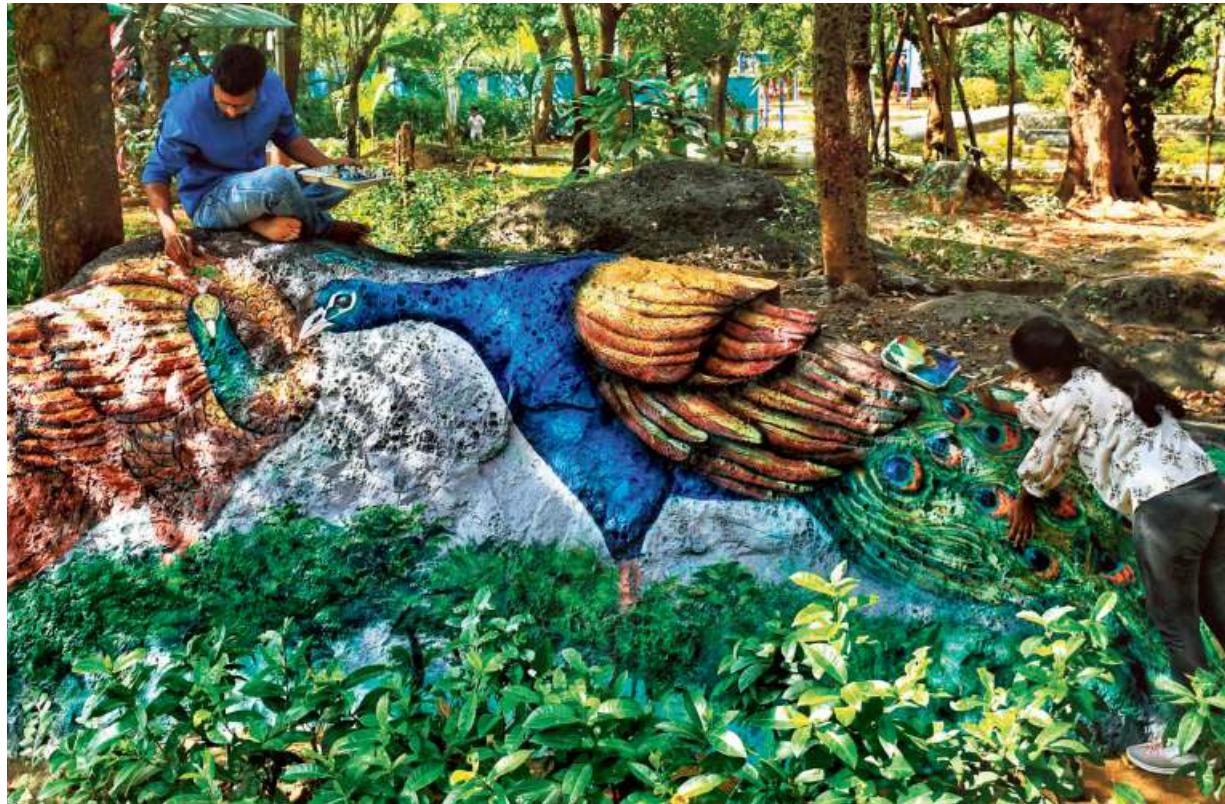
The Sena added that once

the BJP runs out of issues to raise, then it digs up the Hindustan-Pakistan issue. "The party had claimed pro-Pakistan and *azaadi* slogans were raised in Jawaharlal Nehru University. All the evidence proved that these claims were fake. They placed their

own men on the campus in disguise to create such incidents," said the editorial.

"The government is using all its might to crush political opponents, but why is this determination not seen while dealing with the country's enemies?" it asked.

Resplendent



Life-like: Artists Jayant Savant and Nidhi Pawaskar paint a peacock on a 22ftx5.5ft rock, at Zen Garden in Dahisar. ■ AADESH CHOURHARI

Police rescue woman who fell into Vashi creek

She slipped while dropping flowers into the creek from Vashi bridge

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Vashi police saved the life of a 45-year-old woman who accidentally fell into Vashi creek while throwing flowers into it at 12.30 p.m. on Sunday. Passers-by who noticed the woman fall into the creek informed the Navi Mumbai Police's control room about the incident.

A team of personnel from the Vashi police patrolling near the bridge heard the cries for help and reached the spot within 15 minutes. The team was also alerted by the control room.

The patrolling team then alerted local fishermen Mahesh Sutar and Babu Sutar, who jumped into the creek

No renting properties in MBVV without police nod

Information should be given within 24 hours of sealing the deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
THANE/PALGHAR

Prohibitory orders against renting out of properties have been imposed in the Mira-Bhayander Vasai-Virar (MBVV) police commissionate limits in Maharashtra, officials said on Monday.

The objective of the orders is that the police can rush to help people when required, and nab offenders in case of a crime.

People in large numbers from across Maharashtra, other parts of the country and abroad come to stay and indulge in business activities in MBVV, which is a fast-growing city, and their details are required to be with the police, the officials

said. Hence, prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) have been imposed in the MBVV area with effect from November 27, a release issued by the commissionerate said.

As per the order, those who give or take a property on rent, including agents, should provide their information to the police within 24 hours of the deal or agreement. Those who have already rented their properties should also give their details to the police immediately, the release said.

The MBVV commissionerate, carved out of Thane and Palghar districts, began its operations from October 1 this year. Before its formation, Mira-Bhayander fell under the Thane (rural) district police, while Vasai-Virar was under the jurisdiction of the Palghar police.

Recoveries outpace cases in Maharashtra

4,196 patients discharged; 3,837 new cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Monday reported 3,837 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the total case tally to 18,23,896, the State Health Department said.

With 80 more patients succumbing to the viral infection, including 35 fatalities in the last 48 hours, the overall death toll has mounted to 47,151.

A total of 4,196 patients were discharged during the day, taking the count of recoveries to 16,85,122. The State is now left with 90,557 active cases after conducting 1,08,56,384 tests so far. The recovery rate now stands at 92.39% and the fatality rate is 2.59%.

646 cases in Mumbai

Mumbai reported 646 fresh cases and 19 deaths, taking the case load to 195 days, while the average growth rose to 0.35%.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region, including Mumbai, added 1,263 new cases and 26 deaths, taking the overall tally to 6,32,660 and death toll to 18,522.

Nashik city reported 170 new cases, Pune city 179, Pimpri-Chinchwad 159, and Nagpur city 178 infections, the Health Department said.

With 19 more patients succumbing to the viral infection, the number of new cases has been dropping over the last five days, with the city recording 940 infections on Sunday, after adding more than 1,000 cases for four days in a row between November 25 and 28.

With 19 more patients succumbing to the viral infection, the number of new cases has been dropping over the last five days, with the city recording 940 infections on Sunday, after adding more than 1,000 cases for four days in a row between November 25 and 28.

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With utmost care: A healthcare worker collects a swab sample at Borivali station on Monday. ■ AADESH CHOURHARI

ACB books 29 employees of Gujarat govt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has registered cases of possessing disproportionate assets (DA) against 29 employees of the Gujarat government in the last 11 months. Three are class-I officers, eight class-II officers, and 18 are class-III employees.

The market value of the alleged DA, including land and residential properties, is ₹40.47 crore, the ACB said, adding that it has launched a special drive to unearth benami and ill-gotten properties.

The ACB on Monday also booked Kalubhai Ram, a retired class-3 engineer of Irrigation Department, for allegedly possessing disproportionate assets worth ₹1.38 crore.

WESTERN RAILWAY TO EXTEND RUN OF 2 PAIRS OF FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS WITH 20 MORE TRIPS

Western Railway will extend the run of following festival special trains as per details given below:

TRAIN NO.	ORIGINATING STATION & DESTINATION	EXTENSION (FROM -TO)	DAYS OF SERVICE	TR



Closer to punishment

More details emerge about Tahawwur Rana's role in the 26/11 attacks

More than 12 years since the dastardly attacks across prominent locations in Mumbai, its key conspirators have continued to evade justice in India. While nine of the attackers were shot dead by the police between November 26-29, 2008, one of them, Ajmal Kasab, was apprehended and sentenced to death after a trial that revealed the conspiracy and planning by LeT operatives among others responsible for the attacks. One among the foreign collaborators is Tahawwur Rana, who conspired with former FBI agent David Headley to assist the LeT in the planning and execution. Rana, a Pakistani-Canadian citizen, was found guilty by a U.S. court in 2011 of providing material support to the LeT and planning an attack on the offices of the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, and was later sentenced to 14 years in prison. Unlike Headley, who escaped extradition after entering into a plea bargain with the U.S. prosecutors and was sentenced to 35 years in prison, Rana was acquitted in the U.S. of charges of involvement in the 2008 terror attacks. An Illinois court commuted his jail sentence that was scheduled to end in September 2021, after he tested positive for COVID-19; this has opened the window for his extradition to India. Rana, according to Headley, had helped him to open an immigration firm in Mumbai, which was used by Headley to survey targets chosen by the LeT. An extradition memorandum filed by U.S. prosecutors in a California district court has reaffirmed Rana's role and provides more detail into the conspiracy and the knowledge shared with him by Headley about the attacks. This should provide the U.S. court enough reason for Rana's extradition to India to face punishment.

The trial of Ajmal Kasab exposed the collusion of the Pakistan deep state with terrorist organisations. Arguably, this has helped in a dramatic reduction in terror targeting civilians in India. Groups such as the LeT and JeM have changed their *modus operandi* to target security forces since then. The scrutiny over Pakistan has been accentuated by the FATF's decision to retain Pakistan on its greylist. Yet, Pakistan has done little to bring the culprits of the 26/11 attacks to book – a case in point being LeT chief Hafiz Saeed who has been sentenced to prison for terror financing but has eluded justice for his role in the 2008 attacks by never being charged despite being identified by Ajmal Kasab and Headley as a mentor with knowledge of the attacks. Rana's extradition would go a long way in bringing justice to the nearly 160 victims of the Mumbai attacks and shed further light on cross-border terror.

Winter worries

Targeted containment of COVID-19 can work, but there is no room for complacency

New Home Ministry guidelines to check further spread of COVID-19 during the winter months starting with December reflect the government's concern that the gradually reviving economic activity should remain unaffected by ongoing containment measures. The Centre has mandated that States declare containment zones online, identifying them with micro targeting to minimise the impact. It has also prohibited any lockdowns at State and city levels without prior consultation with the Ministry. Such advice might appear redundant, coming as it does after a long unlock phase that permitted the relaxation of restrictions on almost all public activities, barring regular flights and trains, and the onus having shifted to the citizen to avoid getting infected. Several States with a perceived decline in new infections have opened up even more; in Tamil Nadu, for instance, final year in-person college classes and medical courses except for fresh entrants are set to reopen on December 7. This is a time to reiterate proven safety norms, considering that India has about 4.48 lakh active cases out of a total of 94.31 lakh cases recorded thus far, and where almost three-fourths of new infections are concentrated in eight States and Union Territories including Delhi. Encouraging results from vaccine trials and the likelihood of early emergency use authorisation have weakened voluntary caution, and citizens are yielding to pandemic fatigue. Health authorities must reinforce the message that low-cost interventions such as masks, good ventilation and distancing norms cannot be abandoned.

Evidence from the lockdown in India shows that the reproductive number for COVID-19, representing the number of fresh infections caused by an individual, was indeed reduced by the severe curbs, although the outcome varied by location. At the end of April, as the lockdown rigour eased, India had over 30,000 cases and 1,153 deaths in all. But seven months later, there were 39,806 infections and 433 deaths in a single day, November 29, underscoring the continuing challenge. The prime task before health administrators is to convince the average citizen that there is much to be gained through inexpensive lifestyle modification. A study of 131 countries published in *The Lancet* estimated the benefits of restricting group gatherings to 10 people, and how reducing physical attendance at workplaces could bring down the reproductive number by 38% in one month. Universal masking, with 95% compliance, is projected to reduce deaths dramatically, in another University of Washington study. Evidently, the entire economy stands to benefit from such painless interventions, while sparing doctors and frontline health workers of deadly risk. The Central government has rightly prioritised targeted containment, but it should standardise testing protocols across States, and not dilute the message of safe behaviour by labouring over the point of recoveries and low per-million fatalities.

The perils of deregulated imperfect agrimarkets

The Farm Acts were legislative misadventures, while much more is needed to address the genuine fears of farmers



R. RAMAKUMAR

The eruption of massive farmers' protests across India against the Farm Acts has shocked those in the seat of power in Delhi. According to the government, many private markets will be established, middlemen would disappear, farmers would be free to sell to any buyer and farmgate prices would rise. But the protesting farmers do not accept these claims. They believe that farmgate prices would fall with the intensification of a corporate presence in agricultural markets. They also believe that the government, ultimately, wants to phase out the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system.

Let us look at the major claims and their merits. Due to space constraints, the focus here will only be on the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 (FPTC Act).

More mandis needed

An important assumption behind the FPTC Act is that *mandis* controlled by Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) are monopsonies in rural areas. This assumption itself is specious. First, official data show that even for paddy and wheat, respectively, only 29% and 44% of the harvest is sold in a *mandi*, while 49% and 36% is sold to either a local private trader or an input dealer. In other words, *de facto*, a large proportion of Indian harvest is not directly sold in a *mandi*.

Farmers are forced to sell outside the *mandis* for two reasons. The first is that there are not enough *mandis*. In 1976, there were 4,145 large markets in India,

with the average area served at 775 km². The National Commission on Agriculture (NCA) had recommended that every Indian farmer should be able to reach a *mandi* in one hour by a cart. Thus, the average area served by a *mandi* was to be reduced to 80 km². For this, the number of *mandis* was to increase to at least 41,000. But there were only 6,630 *mandis* in 2019 with an average area served of 463 km². Using another set of criteria, a government committee in 2017 had recommended that India should have at least 10,130 *mandis*. So, by all counts, India needs not less but more *mandis*.

The second reason is that most small and marginal farmers, given their small marketable surplus, do not find it economical to bear the transport costs to take their harvests to *mandis*. Thus, they end up selling their harvest to a village trader even if at a lower price. Even if private markets replace *mandis*, small and marginal farmers will continue to sell to traders in the village itself. The situation will change only if economies of scale rise substantially at the farm-level.

Second, *de jure* too, the freedom to sell outside *mandis* already exists in many States. Already, 18 States have allowed the establishment of private markets outside the APMC; 19 States have allowed the direct purchase of agricultural produce from farmers; and 13 States have allowed the establishment of farmer's markets outside the APMC. Despite such legislative changes, no significant private investment has flowed in to establish private markets in these States. Private markets have emerged in some pockets for some crops, but these are by no means widespread.

The reason for poor private investment in markets is the presence of high transaction costs in produce collection and aggregation. When private players try to



take over the role of *mandis* and the village trader, they incur considerable costs in opening collection centres and for salaries, grading, storage and transport. The more the number of small and marginal farmers are, the higher will these costs be. Corporate retail chains face additional costs in urban sales and storage, as well as the risk of perishability. This is why many retail chains prefer purchasing bulk quantities of fruits and vegetables from *mandis* rather than directly from farmers.

Transaction costs

Even if private markets emerge, the size of transaction costs are likely to offset any decline in *mandi* taxes. As a result, there is no assurance that farmers would receive a higher price in private markets. In the existing private markets too, there is no evidence of farmers receiving higher prices than in the *mandis*. In fact, if transaction costs exceed *mandi* taxes, the costs would be transferred to the farmers as a lower price. This, then, would imply a stronger squeeze on the farmer than at present.

Many commentaries treat taxes in *mandis* as wasteful. This assertion is not fully true. First, much of the *mandi* taxes are reinvested by APMCs to improve market infrastructure. A fall in *mandi* taxes would reduce the surplus available to APMCs for such investment.

Second, in States such as Punjab, the government charges a market committee fee and a rural

development fee. The Punjab Mandi Board uses these revenues to construct rural roads, run medical and veterinary dispensaries, supply drinking water, improve sanitation, expand rural electrification and provide relief to farmers during calamities. Such rural investments will also be adversely affected if *mandis* are weakened.

The fate of MSPs

Without doubt, MSPs would continue to survive on paper as the government will have to procure to maintain a minimum buffer stock. However, many policy signals point to a strategic design to weaken the MSPs.

First, input and labour costs are rising sharply in agriculture. This necessitates a regular upward revision of MSPs to keep pace with costs of living. However, MSPs are rising at a far slower rate over the past five to six years than in the past. Second, the government has not yet agreed to fix MSPs at 50% above the C2 cost of production. As a result, farmers continue to suffer a price loss of ₹200 to ₹500 per quintal in many crops. Third, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has been recommending to the government that open-ended procurement of food grains should end. These policy stances have set alarm bells ringing among farmers.

In Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, most crop sales are at the MSP through procurement centres including the *mandis*. The farmers in these regions legitimately feel that they have been dealt a double whammy. If *mandis* weaken and private markets with no commitment to MSPs expand, they fear a gradual erosion of their entitlement to a remunerative price. If *mandis* weaken and private markets do not sufficiently replace them, they fear that the void would be filled by unscrupulous and unregulated traders. As Barbara Harriss-White, a scholar of In-

dia's agricultural markets once observed, "deregulated imperfect markets may become more, not less, imperfect than regulated imperfect markets".

Steps to be taken

Discussions between the government and the farmers can be structured using a broad framework based on two focus points.

First, India needs an increase in the density of *mandis*, expansion of investment in *mandi* infrastructure and a spread of the MSP system to more regions and crops. This should happen hand-in-hand with a universalisation of the Public Distribution System as an affordable source of food for the poor.

Second, we need not just more *mandis*, but also better *mandis*. APMCs need internal reform to ease the entry of new players, reduce trader collusion and link them up with national e-trading platforms. The introduction of unified national licences for traders and a single point levy of market fees are also steps in the right direction.

However, if we go by the Union Finance Minister's statement in November 2019, the government thinks that the APMC system has "served its purpose" and the States should "reject" and "dismantle" *mandis*. Such statements betray the real intent of the government, which has not missed the attention of the protesting farmers. Further, the branding of protesters as "anti-national" and "Khalistanis" has only helped to further alienate the farmers from the government. The government's legislative adventurism with the Farm Bills was misplaced to begin with. But it is never too late to rethink. Unconditional talks with farmers would be an appropriate starting point.

R. Ramakumar is a Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

A misguided policy that cuts deep into patient safety

It is impossible for Ayurveda to incorporate surgical techniques while ignoring the other domains of modern medicine



GEORGE THOMAS

The basic requirement of medical practice is the safety of the patient. Surgery is a branch of medicine in which poor training can have dramatic and disastrous results. This is the strongest argument against the ill-advised move of the government of India to allow graduates in Ayurveda to practise surgery.

Apprenticeship is key

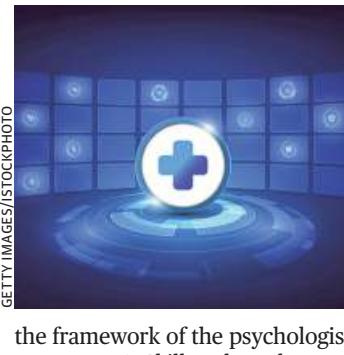
Surgery in the present era is an interdisciplinary endeavour. A well-trained anaesthesiologist keeps the patient free of pain. Other specialist doctors address any other illnesses that the patient has before surgery can be safely performed. The well-trained surgeon must have a good knowledge of the structure of the human body in health and disease. This is one branch of medicine where knowledge can only be acquired through apprenticeship – that is, the learner needs to be guided by an expert. It takes many years and much exposure before a graduate

in medicine can safely perform surgery. It is an aphorism in modern medicine that a surgeon needs to know not only how to perform surgery, but when. Importantly, the surgeon needs to know when not to perform surgery, a skill commonly called clinical judgement. These skills are difficult to teach and difficult to master.

Errors in surgery can be devastating. Data from the United States suggests that up to 4,000 surgical errors occur each year despite well-considered controls on who can perform surgery. Efforts to reduce this rate focus on better training. Besides professional codes, legal mechanisms have been developed to ensure safe medical practice.

In India, the Consumer Protection Act serves as an incentive to modern medical practitioners to provide high quality health care. Even this legal mechanism is not accessible to the poor. It is quite clear that there is no shortcut to safe surgical outcomes. One simply cannot get away from it – safe surgery requires years of training.

The idea of competence without comprehension should not bequeath us into believing that surgery is a suitable subject for its application. Anecdotes of people not educated, but able to perform complex tasks should be understood in



the framework of the psychologist Rasmussen's Skill, Rule and Knowledge-based Error model. Some complex tasks are a set of repetitive steps where the person acquires proficiency merely by practice, for example, using a complex machine without knowing how it works. This is not applicable in surgery where novel situations are often encountered and a good knowledge base is essential to solve problems which may not have been previously encountered.

What constitutes safe surgery

Modern medicine is an integrated whole in which specialties have developed from the understanding that the knowledge base is so vast that a single human can only ever hope to master a few of the domains required in order to provide the best possible outcomes to patients. Modern medical training

consists of a basic degree during which the fundamentals of the functioning of humans in health and disease, and techniques to diagnose illnesses are taught. Increased knowledge in various domains is obtained through post-graduate training. All these domains work together in order to ensure safe surgery. It is impossible for Ayurveda to incorporate surgical techniques while ignoring all the other domains of modern medicine safely and effectively.

What is scientific knowledge? How is it to be transmitted? Is there any sound basis for different scientific systems in the modern world? More specifically, can there be fundamentally different explanations of how the human body is structured and functions? These are all important questions and have implications for policy in health care. Important decisions with potential to seriously harm thousands of people should not be casually made without clear answers.

Safe and effective health care should not become a casualty of a misguided desire to protect indigenous systems. Traditional knowledge in India has become the victim of self-serving apparatus who have fossilised it, preventing its development and growth. Hu-

man knowledge is a universal resource, ever growing. The way forward is to incorporate traditional medical systems into modern medicine.

Could deepen inequity

The quality of medical care received in India is highly dependent on personal resources. Surgical facilities manned by graduates of Ayurveda will be patronised only by the very poor who do not have the resources to access modern medical care. This will further entrench the existing grossly unequal access to health care. An epidemic of catastrophic complications, disproportionately affecting the poor can be expected if surgical procedures are performed by the poorly trained.

There is a shortage of trained medical personnel in rural areas. The only way to address this is to greatly increase the number of government medical colleges. This will take a few years, but it is a safe and effective policy. Safety of patients should not become a victim of misguided policies based on poor understanding of what safe surgery requires.

Dr. George Thomas, an orthopaedic surgeon practising in Chennai, is the former editor of the *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Protesting farmers

The farmers' protests against the Farm Acts continue to simmer yet the government seems to be nonchalant to their demands. The high-handedness in dealing with their protests speaks volumes of the government's response and follows a familiar thread as seen during demonetisation, introduction of the GST regime, inept handling of the health pandemic, the poor handling of the migrant labour crisis or the rushing through of important pieces of legislation such as the labour Bills. It appears that the country is being led to a future where authoritarianism only would prevail and citizens will have no voice.

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

■ The hallmark of the present regime at the Centre is the arbitrary way of taking decisions and formulating laws, whether it is concerned with the economy (demonetisation), the environment (the EIA draft notification) or farmers (the ordinances that have been made into law). The ruling dispensation does not feel it necessary to discuss such vital matters with the people whom these decisions affect.

We are the largest democracy in the world, but the rulers who are democratically elected have created the perception of behaving autocratically. Instead of saving farmers, on whose soil the nation runs, from the usurping hands of the free market which is controlled by the corporate giants, every ruling dispensation seems to be wanting to push them further and further into the

traps of the corporate economy. It is better the rulers learn, as Jawaharlal Nehru says in his *Glimpses of World History*, that "there is a limit to human endurance".

SUKUMARAN C.V.,
Palakkad, Kerala

■ It is not just the guaranteed MSP but the weak regulation of alternative market mechanisms created by the newly enacted agrarian laws that is the serious cause of concern. Placing farmers in a complex web of bureaucratic and legal mechanisms to settle disputes is going to enhance farmer distress especially for the marginal, small and medium farmers. The intentions behind the Acts seem to be good; however a robust implementation mechanism with the necessary checks and balances will go a long way in addressing the issues

of farmers. Structural bottlenecks such as removing the hurdles in institutional credit system and enhancing infrastructure and logistical support in rural areas are essential for the effective implementation of the agrarian reform laws.

NAYAKARA VEERESHA,
Bengaluru

■ The agitation has highlighted two issues: the protest seems to be centred around farmers of certain States, reflecting the uneven lines in the farming community. The reticence of farmers from the rest of India could be due to their tacit acquiescence of the new Acts or that they are too unequipped to devote time and the resources in such demonstrations. Even after decades following Independence, it is unfortunate that the voice of a tribal farmer does not find

resonance in the mainstream media. Second, when reforms are not undertaken frequently, people get used to the old ways. Poverty of reform in agriculture could be the reason for the relevance and longevity of the MSP regime.

LALIT KUMAR BHARDWAJ,
Vadodara, Gujarat

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Vaccine trials

A report on the allegation by a 'Covishield' vaccine volunteer, of serious side-effects, needs scientific rebuttal with data rather than a dismissal and threat of counter-suing. The side-effects have not been studied completely yet, partially due to the breakneck speed at which the vaccine is being brought to the market.

Is a person's address public information?

Only information bearing a nexus to public activity should be available to the public



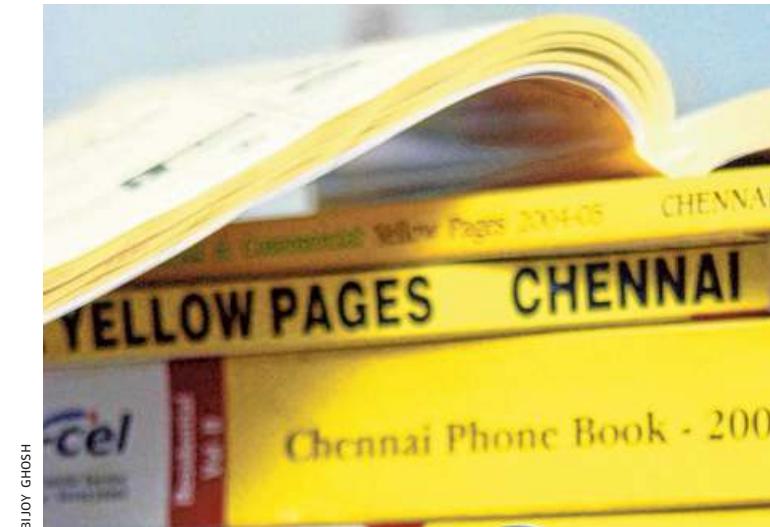
SHAILESH GANDHI
& PRASHANT REDDY T.

Recently, in a case involving activist Saket Gokhale, the Bombay High Court ordered the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to remove Mr. Gokhale's contact details from its website. His address was revealed to the general public when the Right to Information application filed by him was displayed on the Ministry's website. According to Mr. Gokhale, once his phone number and address were displayed, he began receiving threats on the phone. A mob gathered outside his house chanting slogans against him because of his activism against the ruling party. What happened to Mr. Gokhale is unacceptable and the state must take all possible steps to prosecute those who threatened him and his family.

The larger question here is whether a person's address is public or private information. The answer to this will have significant implications for transparency in governance and the fight against corruption in India.

Addresses in public records

The instinctive reaction of most people is to consider their address private information and this is entirely understandable. However, it is also important to note that the address of people's residence or office has never been considered private under Indian law. Back in the day, government telecom service providers used to supply telephone directories to everyone containing the names, telephone numbers and addresses of every subscriber in the city. Similarly, electoral voter lists include the addresses of all voters in each and every ward. These lists are now available online in a digital format on the website of the Election Commission. Land records, containing details of ownership, are open for public inspection across the country and play a crucial part in ensuring confidence in the volatile land markets in India. Similarly, all FIRs in cognisable cases must be displayed on the website, according to a Supreme Court judg-



BIJU GHOSH

ment. These would display the names and addresses of the complainants and the accused. Ironically, even the courts, including in Mr. Gokhale's case, disclose the addresses of litigants in their judgments as a regular practice. Many of the new transparency initiatives such as the Jan Soochna Portal in Rajasthan make available the details of all beneficiaries of all welfare schemes administered by the State government.

The rationale for such disclosures is quite simple. As has been demonstrated repeatedly by grassroots activists working on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Public Distribution Scheme, access to information about beneficiaries, including addresses, is critical to weeding out 'ghost beneficiaries' created by officials looking to pilfer funds or rations. In all of these cases, the disclosure of addresses of citizens in the public domain plays a crucial role in boosting public confidence in governance systems and ensuring efficiency while also combating corruption in its various forms.

Privacy and information

Questions such as privacy, which involve fundamental rights, must be dealt with not just on the basis of the consequences that may follow from the disclosure of their addresses but also first principles of the law and this is where the judgment of the Bombay High Court is on thin ice.

In its order in Mr. Gokhale's case, the Bombay High Court relies heavily on a brief order of the Calcutta High

Court in the case of *Avishek Goenka v. Ashish Kumar Roy* (2013). In the Goenka case, an RTI activist wanted to provide P.O. Box number as his address while filing a RTI application in order to not disclose his residential address and thereby protect himself from possible reprisals. However, the public authority insisted that he disclose his residential address. The Calcutta High Court ruled in favour of the RTI applicant because the RTI Act does not require information seekers to disclose personal details except those which may be required for contacting him. At the same time, the Calcutta High Court, confounding, also permitted authorities to disallow P.O. boxes and insist on personal details in cases where the Public Information Officers faced "difficulty". This was followed with the caveat that in all such cases, personal details should be hidden by the government from public disclosure in order to prevent harassment of the RTI activist. This part of the Calcutta High Court's order formed the basis of the Bombay High Court's order in Mr. Gokhale's case.

Both the Calcutta High Court and the Bombay High Court followed a consequential line of reasoning i.e., the information in question should be treated as private because its disclosure may lead to threats against the RTI applicant. With all due respect to the honourable High Courts, this is the wrong approach and will lead to inconsistent outcomes as visible in Mr. Gokhale's case, where the government was upbraided for disclosing his address while the High

Court did not think twice about disclosing his address in its own judgment that is published on the Internet for all to access.

RTI v. Privacy

Thus, the correct question to ask in such cases is, which law or principle of law prevents the state from disclosing such information about the addresses of citizens?

The RTI Act clearly lays down that all information held by the government must be shared with citizens unless it is exempted under Section 8 or 9 of the Act. The exemption relating to privacy is given under Section 8 (1)(j) which exempts "information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual unless the Central Public Information Officer or the State Public Information Officer or the appellate authority, as the case may be, is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure of such information: Provided that the information, which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person."

While this provision protects the privacy of citizens, it requires disclosure of information bearing a nexus to public activity. Generally, most of the information in public records arises from a public activity. Applications for a government job, ration card, caste certificates are some examples of public activity. However, there may be some personal information which may be with public authorities which is not a consequence of a public activity, e.g. medical records, or transactions with a public sector bank. Similarly, a public authority may come into possession of some information during a raid or seizure which may have no relationship to any public activity. These would be exempt. Everything else should be published in the public domain.

In the meanwhile, RTI activists looking to protect themselves should be urged to use P.O. boxes as a means to preserve the anonymity of their addresses.

Shailesh Gandhi was a former Central Information Commissioner and Prashant Reddy T. is a lawyer

Recalibrating India-Nepal ties

The relationship has never been free of controversy as both countries have not changed their perspectives of each other



SUJEEV SHAKYA

When Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla arrived in Kathmandu on November 26 and spoke in fluent Nepali to the media, there was some hope that the visit would go beyond the traditional exchange of pleasantries. When he departed, the hope was that his visit would be the beginning of a continued dialogue between the two countries that have had a strained relationship since the imposition of a five-month-long blockade in 2015 in Nepal just as the country was recovering from a devastating earthquake.

In the past five years, the only glimmer of hope to work on the relationship was the constitution of an Eminent Persons Group. The Group was disbanded after submitting its report, the outcome of which is still not known. Nepal thought that the Eminent Persons Group would be the foundation for reworking the relationship between the two countries, but for India, as a former diplomat put it, it was just one of the hundreds of initiatives or administrative mechanisms. The Foreign Secretary did not touch upon the issue of the Eminent Persons Group in his latest address. His speech was not different from speeches made in the past, and the joint statement from both the governments was a usual nicety.

Unchanging perspectives

The Nepal-India relationship has never been free of controversy as the perspectives of both sides are yet to change. Many in Nepal continue to equate being anti-India with being nationalistic. Politicians and political parties whip up such sentiment and compete with each other on who can be more extreme, especially before an election. Prime Minister K.P. Oli won the 2017 election partly because he projected himself as someone who stood up to India during the blockade. He again whipped up nationalistic sentiments when he got the Nepal map amended to add new territory. This was a good way to deflect attention from the poor management of the COVID-19 pandemic by his government. His government's excuse was that after India released its new map in November 2019, Nepal wanted to discuss the map with India but the latter did not provide any time for a discussion.

India continues to think that by providing largesse to Nepal in the form of aid and deve-

lopment projects, it can win Nepali hearts. But despite pouring billions of rupees into Nepal over decades, it has still not been able to do so. Therefore, it needs to reflect on what it is not doing right. Two issues are important to understand here. First, all aid to Nepal from countries other than India and China go through the Plans of the Government of Nepal. Indian aid is seen in Nepal as a favour bestowed on a constituency it wants to garner support from rather than a contribution to Nepal's planned development. Second, India competes with China in providing aid outside government budgets. And China picks up projects of visibility and strategic location. Chinese involvement in Nepal has increased since the April 2015 earthquake and Nepal is surely an area of strategic influence in China's Belt and Road Initiative.

People-to-people ties

The Foreign Secretary raised the issue of people-to-people exchanges between the countries, a welcome development. In the past two decades, two significant changes have happened in this area. First, Indian workers in Nepal constitute a big part of the workforce and send about \$3 billion to India every year. In terms of remittances to India, Nepal ranks eighth. So, the Government of India needs to keep in mind that many households in India are being run with remittances from Nepal. Second, Nepalis have migrated in the past 20 years to more than a hundred countries; India is not the only country that Nepalis rely on for jobs or education. This is a new Nepal comprising young people with global aspirations. Nearly three-fourths of the population of Nepal is under 35 years of age. India needs to engage beyond its current constituency, the minuscule proportion of the population who are above 65. Meanwhile, Nepal needs to plan how it engages with the youth in mainland India for whom Nepal is just like Bangladesh or Myanmar, areas they study about in geography in school but know little about.

There are some fundamentals that we simply cannot forget: geography will not change, the border will remain open as millions of livelihoods on both sides depend on it, and China is going to be a big global player with varied interests in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the India-Nepal relationship has to be recalibrated. The hope is that the Nepali-speaking Foreign Secretary who has Sikkimese ancestry will be able to rethink the dynamics of the relationship as he reflects on his visit to Nepal.

Sujeev Shakya is the author of 'Unleashing the Vajra: Nepal's Journey Between India and China' and 'Unleashing Nepal'

Moving forward in base areas

There are many advantages in deploying additional security forces in Chhattisgarh to tackle the Maoists

R.K. VIJ

The Union government is in the process of deploying five more battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to Chhattisgarh to scale up anti-Maoist operations, particularly in the south Bastar region.

More than 45 Central Armed Police Force battalions are already deployed in Chhattisgarh, where 14 districts are Maoist affected. Of them, eight are severely affected. Most of the 22 State armed battalions are also deployed in these districts. In addition, the CRPF's specially trained 'Cobra' units and the State's Special Task Force and District Reserve Guards are also engaged in operations in the forward areas. Though the proposed deployment is in line with the 'National Policy and Action Plan' of the Central government on Left Wing Extremism, its impact may have wider implications on the ground.

Despite the present deployment, Bastar still has a security vacuum in many pockets, particularly in the south Bastar and Abujhmarad areas. These pockets, called base areas by the Maoists, not only provide them occasion to wage 'mobile war' against the security forces, but also enable their military formations, including the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army battalion, to move about freely. Though their movement is regularly checked by the security forces, the Maoists still enjoy sufficient control over the tribal populace.

Benefits of more forces

The newly induced battalions could have multiple advantages for the State. First, as more area will now be dominated by the security forces, the Maoists' movement will be restricted to a comparatively smaller area. In case of any attack on the security forces, the Maoists will not be able to retreat unchallenged. Consequently, the intensity of war will be reduced and the 'mobile war' will come down to its basics, i.e., the 'guerrilla war'. Similarly, the Maoists' battalion, being large in size, will become more vulnerable and in all likelihood, would be cut back over time due to continuous pressure from the security forces. Also, additional deployment and frequent movement of the

security forces would improve the intelligence network.

Second, establishment of new security camps always brings immediate benefits for the nearby villages. New borewells are dug and health services are also extended by the medical staff of security camps. Once these services are initiated by the forces, the district administration scales them up by providing the required funds. The displaced fair price shops (PDS) are restored to their original locations and villagers are not required to walk long distances to fetch their rations. All other schemes of the governments are also implemented better through these newly established security camps-development centres.

Third, once the security environment improves, more roads can be laid and mobile towers and electricity poles installed for better transportation, communication and electricity supply. Financial inclusion can be improved and the MNREGA works started to give impetus to economic activities. More schools, primary health centres and anganwadis can be opened up to provide basic amenities to the villagers.

Fourth, democratic institutions like panchayats may get revived and political activities could increase with the improved security scenario. This may further lead to better grievance redressal in the existing inaccessible areas.

Being alert on tactics

However, the security forces need to be more alert to thwart any untoward incident while moving in base areas. They need to be more watchful of their tactics knowing well that IEDs and iron spikes have been laid all over by the Maoists. The collateral damage must be reduced to its minimal. The Maoists usually oppose establishment of new security camps and use villagers as their cover. A lot of violence has been witnessed in the past at the behest of the Maoists. Therefore, the villagers must be taken into confidence and told that the new security camps will act for their welfare as centres of development.

R.K. Vij is a senior IPS officer in Chhattisgarh. Views are personal



DATA POINT

State of corruption

The share of Indians who gave a bribe to avail themselves of a public service in the 12 months before a survey (the bribery rate) by Transparency International was conducted was the highest among the Asian nations surveyed. Nearly half the Indians surveyed said that corruption had been rising in the country over the past year. Between March 2019 and September 2020, 20,000 adults were surveyed in 17 Asian countries. By Sumant Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

1. UNDER THE TABLE | The chart plots the bribery rate against the share of people who felt that corruption in the government was a significant problem. In India, 39% of those surveyed gave a bribe to use a public service, the highest such share among the Asian nations surveyed. About 89% of Indians surveyed felt that government corruption was a significant issue in the country.

2. A GROWING CONCERN | The chart plots the bribery rate against the share of people who felt that corruption had increased over the past year. About 47% of the Indians surveyed said that corruption had increased over the last 12 months, the sixth highest among the Asian nations surveyed.

3. SERVICES DISRUPTED | The charts show the bribery rate (BR) in essential public services and India's position in each of them. Among the Asian nations surveyed, the bribery rate was the highest in India when people applied for identity documents and availed themselves of utility services, and the second highest when they availed themselves of public health services.

4. BRIBE FOR VOTES | As many as 18% in India said they had been offered bribes or special favours to vote for a party in national, regional, or local elections in the past five years. The share of such people was the highest in Thailand and the fourth highest in India among the Asian nations surveyed.

DATA POINT

Service	India's Position	Bribery Rate (%)
Identity documents	1st	39%
Utility services	2nd	39%
Public health services	2nd	24%
Public school	3rd	22%

Nation	Bribe for Votes (%)
Thailand	18%
Philippines	18%
Indonesia	18%
India	18%
Maldives	16%
Taiwan	14%
Mongolia	12%
Nepal	10%
S. Korea	8%
Bangladesh	7%
Malaysia	6%
China	5%
Cambodia	5%
Japan	4%
Myanmar	4%

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 1, 1970

Fire in Guruvayur temple

A disastrous fire broke out in the famous Sri Krishna temple here [Guruvayur] in the early hours of this morning [November 30] reducing three sides of the Chitrambalam surrounding the sanctum sanctorum to cinders. The sanctum sanctorum and the presiding deity were not affected by the fire which was stated to have started at about 1:20 a.m. The fire, it was stated, originated near the Vinayaka shrine on the western side of the Chitrambalam and soon spread to the "mystery room". (This room is never opened.) It engulfed the whole of the western Chitrambalam and destroyed it completely. The fire spread to the southern and northern enclosures and destroyed most of them. The copper plate roofing of the Chitrambalam melted and what little remained on the roofing was all twisted out of shape. Three-fourths of the Chitrambalam were reduced to a shambles. The Chief Priest of the temple removed the idol of Sri Krishna from the sanctum sanctorum fearing that the fire might also engulf it. He kept the idol under safe custody in his residence adjoining the temple until the fire was brought under control.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 1, 1920

University lectures

Professor Mackenale concluded his series of lectures on "Social Philosophy" on Monday evening. The subject of the evening was "social ideals." There were three sets of ideals, began the Professor, the aristocratic and the democratic, the socialistic and the individualistic, the national and the international. The items of each of these sets were commonly supposed to be antagonistic. The fact was not so. A harmony underlay the seemingly opposites. In aristocracy, the rulers had need to be statesmen with practical wisdom, knowledge of men, men who had the confidence of the people. That meant some sort of selection by people. The democratic 'fraternity' was the basis of citizenship and equality and liberty had ultimately to be interpreted in terms of fitness and opportunity which subserved the aristocratic ideal. He had already dealt with the socialistic and individualistic ideal in his previous lectures; and as regards the national and international ideals, the trend was towards the international. But the international ideal itself contained an element of nationalism in that it allowed local self-government and so forth.

FROM PAGE ONE

Centre invites farmers' unions for talks

Mr. Shah and Mr. Tomar met BJP President J.P. Nadda late on Sunday. Mr. Tomar was seen leaving Mr. Shah's residence again on Monday afternoon.

Speaking at a joint press conference of protest leaders at the Singhu border, Bharatiya Kisan Union-Dakaunda chief Jagmohan Singh slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attitude.

"We have been listening to him for many years; now it is time for him to listen to the *mann ki baat* of the farmers," he said, in what seemed to be a response to the PM's Sunday address to the nation defending the agricultural reforms and claiming that farmers have been misled.

Mr. Modi repeated those statements at Varanasi this afternoon during his visit to his constituency on the occasion of Dev Diwali.

Mr. Singh accused the government of "doublespeak", and an "authoritarian and fascist" attitude, and warned that Mr. Modi would pay a heavy price if the farmers' demands were ignored.

Core agenda

He urged the government to engage with the farmers on the core agenda of the three laws, and stop distracting

them with other issues.

Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav sought to dismiss several "lies" being propagated by the Centre and its supporters.

He denied that the protest was driven by middlemen alone, that it has political motivations, that it was restricted to Punjab alone, or has been infiltrated by Khalistani elements.

"These are shameful lies," said Mr. Yadav, slamming those who question the patriotism of protesters, some of whom have even lost family members in the defence of the country. He also accused the government of treating farmers with condescension, acting as though they are children who don't understand the law or who are being misled by others.

Gurnam Singh Chadhuni, head of another faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, also denied the allegation that only Punjab's farmers were protesting.

"Every day, more people are being mobilised in Haryana. The khap panchayats in each village have been meeting and decided to send more farmers to the capital. Wait and see how many more will come to oppose the law, which will only benefit corporates, not farmers," he said.

Opposition is misleading farmers, says Modi

If the farmers were apprehensive about the government's policies, behind it was a long history of deceit they faced, he said. And it was the habit and compulsion of those who broke their promises and cheated farmers to spread lies and fear. He was confident that farmers who had doubts about the reform laws today would benefit from them and increase their income in the future.

Mr. Modi said that whenever a policy or law was in-

troduced by the government, some would support it, but it was also natural that some questions would arise.

However, he said, a new trend had emerged in recent times. Earlier, if a government decision was not welcome, there would be protests against it. But now, the opposition was not to the government decision itself, but based on apprehension and misconception that "something will happen in future," Mr. Modi said.

'Cross-border terror biggest challenge for SCO region'

Speaking at some length on the impact of the pandemic, Mr. Naidu said a "sustainable" economic recovery depended on more open trading practices and a compliance with "multilateral rules of trade". He called for reform of global institutions, including the World Health Organisation.

Mr. Naidu pointed out that more than 60% of the vaccines for the global immunisation programme were being manufactured in India, while at least three of 30 indigenously made vaccines were in the advanced stages of development. "This global vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all the countries in fighting this crisis," he added.

With the exception of In-

Will announce my decision as soon as possible: Rajini

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

Tamil film superstar Rajinikanth on Monday said he would make his decision (on a political plunge) known to the people as soon as possible.

Mr. Rajinikanth made a statement to the media outside his Poes Garden home after meeting with district secretaries of the Rajini Makkal Mandram (RMM), an outfit that he started in early 2018 as a precursor to his political party.

"I met with the district secretaries. They shared their points of view. I shared mine. They said they would be with me no matter what

decision I take. I will take a decision as soon as possible," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Rajinikanth reportedly discussed, with the RMM district functionaries, the activities of the outfit during the COVID-19 lockdown and the chances of a victory in the 2021 Assembly election if he starts a political party. The meeting was held at his Raghavendra Kalayana Mandapam.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, RMM office-bearers said Mr. Rajinikanth reportedly expressed displeasure with some senior office-bearers not doing enough on the ground and trying to exploit his name for personal gain.

Kerala CM denies rift in govt. over vigilance raid on KSFE

Media read too much into routine inspection'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday rejected the allegation that the surprise raid by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) on Kerala State Financial Enterprises (KSFE) across the State continued to rage, its Chairman Peeliappose Thomas on Monday said the raid had failed to unearth any major



Pinarayi Vijayan

the KSFE aside for a larger piece of the estimated ₹1 lakh crore financial pie.

The Communist Party of India had also echoed a similar sentiment. The Congress had interpreted the statements as indicative of a mustering of forces against Mr. Vijayan in the government and the party.

Mr. Vijayan said the media

Chairman refutes allegations

STAFF REPORTER
PATHANAMTHITTA

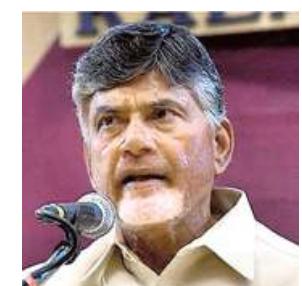
Even as the controversy over a raid by the VACB on branches of the Kerala State Financial Enterprises (KSFE) across the State continued to rage, its Chairman Peeliappose Thomas on Monday said the raid had failed to unearth any major

irregularities in the operations of the financial institution.

"A verification of accounts in 36 random branches had shown that there were no major issues with the KSFE as alleged. Not even a single chit fund scheme had been opened without taking deposit," Mr. Thomas said.

spection would erode its financial credibility and drive away customers to the embrace of private chit firms. The government would verify the Vigilance's final report and decide on its merit, he said.

The media should stick to facts. Empirical evidence should inform their analysis and not personal bias and political prejudice, he said.



N. Chandrababu Naidu

TDLP leader Nimmala Rama Naidu to respond to the Chief Minister's remarks.

Infiltrated, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu and 12 other MLAs squatted on the floor.

When repeated pleas to TDLP MLAs to return to seats failed, Information and Public Relations and Transport Minister Perni Venkataramaiah moved a motion for suspending the agitating members for the day.



IN BRIEF

Hyderabad all set for civic elections

Andhra Pradesh reported 381 fresh infections, and four new deaths on Monday.

In the past day, 40,728 tests were conducted. Their positivity rate was the lowest in six months at 0.94%.

The infection tally was 8,68,064 and the death toll 6,992. The number of active cases came down to 7,840 as 934 patients recovered in the past day. The overall recoveries were 8,53,232 and the recovery rate was 98.29%.

All the districts reported less than 100 new infections.

Telangana recorded 593 cases on Sunday from only 33,040 samples.

The 593 new cases included 119 from Greater Hyderabad, 61 from Rangareddy, 55 from Medchal-Malkajgiri and 40 from Karimnagar.

Karnataka on Monday added 998 new cases. Testing

Naidu, 12 TDP MLAs suspended for a day

Row over cyclone Nivar compensation

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly witnessed high drama on day one of its winter session on Monday as the ruling and Opposition parties locked horns on the government's claim on compensation to the farm sector due to Cyclone Nivar in Rayalaseema and a few coastal districts.

What pitted them against each other was the denial of an opportunity to former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to speak on the matter after Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy gave a clarification on the issues raised by TDLP MLA Payavula Keshav.

As Mr. Chandrababu Naidu stood up and insisted that he be allowed to make his point, Deputy Speaker Kona Raghupathi refused, saying it was for

ANDHRA
PRADESH

Kerala HC dismisses bail pleas of Kamaruddin

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court on Monday dismissed the bail pleas of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leader and Manjeswaram MLA M.C. Kamaruddin in connection with the cases registered against him in the Fashion Gold Jewellery investment fraud. Dismissing his bail petitions, the court ordered the jail authorities to provide medical aid to him, if necessary.

Police seize booby traps from Maoist militia

BHADRADRI
A day after a joint team of the police and the CRPF personnel seized booby traps from three alleged Maoist militia members in Charla mandal of Telangana, the police have scaled up anti-Maoist operations in the interior tribal pockets of Bhadrachalam Agency to ward off trouble during the CPI (Maoist)'s People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) Week slated to commence on December 2.

7th edition of Urban Lens Festival to start today

BENGALURU
The seventh edition of the Urban Lens Film Festival will begin on Tuesday.

The festival will screen 18 films, from December 1 to 6, at iihurbanlens.in free and viewers are required to register to access the films.

Decision on Sivasankar's custody extension today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The court of the additional chief judicial magistrate (economic offences), Ernakulam, will pronounce on Tuesday decision on the Customs Department's demand for extension of custody of M. Sivasankar, former principal secretary to the Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan.

Mr. Sivasankar has been remanded in judicial custody for a day.

The court allowed the Customs custody of Swapna Suresh and P.S. Sarith, accused in the diplomatic baggage gold smuggling case, till December 3.

Swapna and Sarith wanted to talk to the court confidentially, but were told to furnish in writing what they desired to communicate, through their counsel. Earlier in the day, the Customs submitted in a sealed cover the statements of Swapna and Sarith recorded by it.

The Customs told the court that Swapna had said

Kerala government bars PwC for two years

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has banned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), an international consultancy, from participating in projects promoted by the Electronics and IT Department for the next two years. The government found that PwC "did not perform a comprehensive background check, including vetting education qualification while appointing an individual (UAE gold smuggling case suspect Swapna Suresh) in the project management unit of the Space Park."

during interrogation that Mr. Sivasankar was involved in the currency smuggling case and the evidence needed corroboration.

The investigating team wanted to confront him with the evidence and statements elicited from other accused in the case, the submission said.

A Division Bench passed the interim order on three separate PIL petitions.

Karnataka HC disqualifies Vishwanath

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

While holding that MLC A.H. Vishwanath is ex-facie disqualified for being appointed as a Minister, the Karnataka High Court has said that both the Chief Minister and the Governor will have to consider this aspect as per the Constitutional mandate if he is being considered to be inducted into the council of Ministers.

However, the Court said that no such disqualification is operating against two other MLCs – R. Shankar and N. Nagaraj (MTB) – for considering them for the post of Ministers as they were duly elected to the Legislative Council in the elections held from the Legislative Assembly in June 2020 subsequent to their disqualification under anti-defection law in July 2018.

A Division Bench passed the interim order on three separate PIL petitions.

Two-phase panchayat polls in Karnataka

5,700 gram panchayats to go to polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The State Election Commission on Monday announced a two-phase poll to over 5,700 gram panchayats across 30 districts in Karnataka. While the first phase of polling will be held on December 22, the second phase will be held on December 27. The results are set to be announced on December 30.

Announcing the schedule, State Election Commissioner B. Basavaraju said all the districts would have two-phase polling, and the decision was taken in the light of COVID-19. The model code of conduct would come into force with immediate effect.

HC directive

The announcement comes in the light of the Karnataka High Court granting three weeks' time to the SEC to announce dates for gram

panchayat polls.

"EVMs will be used in Bidar district and ballot papers in the rest of the State. The SEC will notify the polls on Monday, and in turn the Deputy Commissioners will notify the first and second phase of polls on December 7 and 11, respectively," he said.

In all, 5,762 out of 6,004 gram panchayats will be going for polls in the two phases. The 2.96 crore electors will vote to elect 92,121 gram panchayat members in all. A total of 45,128 polling booths will be set up, and about 2.7 lakh polling officials will be deployed to oversee elections.

According to the schedule, the last date for filing nomination will be December 11 and 17 for the first and second phases. Dates for re-polling, if necessary, will be on December 24 and 29. Counting will commence on December 30 from 8 a.m.

Treasure hunters strike it rich on Uppada coast in A.P.

Gold ornaments mysteriously surface in beach sand during cyclones

T. APPALA NAIDU
UPPADA

Mystery shrouds the source of gold ornaments being found by local fisherfolk on a 500 m stretch of coastline at Uppada in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The phenomenon, which has been happening for some years now mainly during cyclones, was noticed again during the recent Cyclone Nivar.

On November 27, a few lo-

cal people rushed to Mangala Dibba on the Uppada coast even as the cyclone was eroding the beach to try their luck and a few of them are learnt to have indeed struck it rich.

Surada Nageswara Rao, a fisherman community elder, told *The Hindu*, "There were many instances when gold pieces were found in the beach sand on the half kilometre stretch at the existing temple point in Uppada vil-

lage. Local people throng the area in search of gold during every cyclone. They get very optimistic whenever huge tides remove the top layer of the sand."

No clue about source

"Only gold ornaments are found and we do not have any clue about their source. The area is now protected by the geo-tube from sea erosion," said Mr. Nageswara Rao.

Over the past two decades, nearly a 4 kilometre stretch suffered erosion on the Uppada coast, including

the Matsya Lingeshwara Swamy temple.

Another fisherman, Umidi Govind, observed, "The gold ornaments being found in the beach sand might have been those lost by devotees who took a holy dip in the sea earlier when the Matsya Linga temple existed."

Thousands of devotees from across the Uppada coastal belt used to take a holy dip at the Matsya Linga temple until it was gobbed up by the tides. However, there is no scientific explanation on the source of the gold being found.



Farmers' fight is just, says Punjab CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Terming the farmers' fight against the agriculture laws just, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday asked the Centre why it was being adamant on the issue and was not listening to the farmers.

"It is the job of the government to listen to its people. If farmers are joining the agitation from so many States, then they must be really upset," said the Chief Minister while interacting informally with journalists, during his visits to Sultanpur Lodhi and Dera Baba Nanak.

Capt. Singh said the minimum support price and *arthiyā* system was the backbone of Punjab's successful agricultural model, with the farmers and *arthyas* (commission agents) sharing a very close bond. He questioned the government's need to change the established system.

"Will the corporates who will take the place of the commission agents ever care to help farmers in times of crisis," he asked.

Suspend new farm laws: Cong.

Rahul says they are meant to 'steal' from farmers and help PM's friends

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The new Central farm laws are meant to "steal" from farmers and help "two or three friends of Prime Minister Narendra Modi", former Congress president Rahul Gandhi alleged on Monday.

Releasing a minute-long video as part of the Congress's day-long social media campaign, "Speak up for farmers", in solidarity with the protests against the laws, he appealed to his party colleagues to provide farmers with any kind of assistance, including food, they might need.

"Narendra Modiji says these three laws are beneficial to the farmers. If they are in the interest of the farmers, then, why are they so angry? Why are the farmers not happy?" he said.

'Black laws'
"The farmer of the country has come to Delhi in the cold, leaving his home and fields, to voice his protest against the black agriculture laws. In this battle of truth and untruth, with whom do you stand – the *Annadata*



Not budging: Farmers taking part in a massive protest against the new farm legislation at Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

[provider of food] farmer or the PM's capitalist friends," he stated in another tweet.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra joined the #SpeakUpForFarmers campaign and tweeted, "In the name of farm laws, all billionaire friends are benefiting. How can farm laws be framed without even talking to farmers? How can the interests of farmers be ignored? The government will have to listen

to the farmers. Let us together raise our voice in support of farmers."

'Let PM talk to them'
Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala urged Mr. Modi to talk to the representatives of all farmer unions, announce the suspension of the three laws and take back all 12,000 FIRs filed against farmers without preconditions.

Senior Congress leader

Mallikarjun Kharge said if the BJP was convinced of the laws passed by them, "they [the BJP] should have the courage to meet the farmers and convince them".

Accusing the BJP of "unleashing repression on farmers", former Union Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said, "History will not forgive this government for muzzling Parliament during the corona pandemic to pass anti-farmer laws."

Left parties urge cadre to join protesting farmers

Statement calls on PM to repeal laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In solidarity with the protests by several lakh farmers, who are camped around Delhi demanding the withdrawal of the recent farm laws, five Left parties have given a call to all their units to join the protest.

In a statement signed by CPI(ML) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D. Raja, CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, AIFB general secretary Debabrata Biswas, and RSP general secretary Manoj Bhattacharya, the parties has urged the government to heed demands of the protesting farmers.

Food security

"The Left parties demand that the Prime Minister and the Central government accede to the demands of the protesting farmers for safeguarding Indian agriculture, our food security, [ensure]

remunerative returns to *kisans*, prevent artificial food shortages and rise in prices of essential commodities," the joint statement said.



Sitaram Yechury says government policies have resulted in destruction of the economy. ■ FILE PHOTO

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Mann Ki Baat* on Sunday, Mr. Yechury said Mr. Modi had on earlier occasions declared many policies "pro-people" which only resulted in destruction of the economy.

"Pro-people! We have heard you, PM Modi, saying demonetisation, GST, national lockdown are all 'pro-people'. Result: raging pandemic; economy destroyed; growing misery, unemployment, hunger, deprivation ...Do not destroy Indian agriculture and *Kisans*," he added.

Dalit man beaten to death in M.P.

STAFF REPORTER
Bhopal

A 50-year-old Dalit man from Karod village in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh was reportedly beaten to death by two youth after he said he did not have a matchbox to give them. The two accused have been arrested, the police said.

Farm labourer Lalji Ram Ahirwar was resting on a platform at Karod village when Yash and Ankesh Yadav asked him for a matchbox to light cigarettes on Friday. T.S. Baghel, Additional Superintendent of Police, said, "When he said he didn't have one, an argument ensued and the accused thrashed him with batons, leaving him with injuries," he added.

Ahirwar was admitted to the district government hospital, where he died of his injuries. The police have registered a case under the IPC and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, while the government has approved assistance of ₹8.25 lakh to the family.

RS audio feed hit during farm Bill debate: CPWD

Department lays blame on Opposition members

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has clarified that the audio feed in Parliament was disrupted for nearly 20 minutes when the three contentious agriculture Bills were debated in the Rajya Sabha on September 20 during the monsoon session.

The three Bills were passed amid din, with the entire Opposition up on its feet.

Eight members were suspended following the pandemonium in the Upper House. The members also sat on a night-long dharna.

Response to RTI

The CPWD put out the clarification in a tweet on Sunday. It provided the information in an answer to an RTI application.

"CPWD, which maintains the facility, clarifies that the feed was disrupted between 13:05 Hrs to 13:35 Hrs on 20 Sept, 2020 due to the damages caused to the microphones (mics) at the Chair-

man's seat by some of the Hon'ble MPs," it tweeted.

It laid the blame on Oppo-



In protest: Opposition members sit on dharna outside the Rajya Sabha in September, after the ruckus over farm Bills. ■ FILE PHOTO

nition members, some of whom pulled out the microphone at the Chairman's table. At that time, Deputy Chairman Harivansh was in the chair.

"As directed by the chair, no other MIC was ON at that very time except that of Hon'ble Chairman. So when these MICS were broken,

there was no audio output from the system to RSTV. It took nearly half an hour to restore this after following necessary protocols," it said in another tweet.

The disruption of the au-

dio feed of the Rajya Sabha TV also meant that many of those sitting in the Lok Sabha chamber as part of COVID-19 protocol could not hear the proceedings or participate in the debate. .

'Every polling booth in Kashmir is sensitive'

+ SEC says adequate security is in place

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

All the district constituencies going to the polls in Kashmir on December 1 have been declared "sensitive", State Election Commissioner (SEC) K.K. Sharma said on Monday.

"Every polling booth in Kashmir is sensitive. However, adequate security measures are in place for the second phase of the District Development Council (DDC), in which 43 constituencies will go for polls tomorrow [December 1]," Mr. Sharma said.

On the allegations made

by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti that candidates of the Gupkar Alliance were being stopped from campaigning, Mr. Sharma said, "No candidate is barred from going for campaigning. Ms. Mufti, being a former Chief Minister, needs to follow security protocol."

In the second phase of DDC polling in 43 constituencies, 25 are from the Kashmir division and 18 are from the Jammu division. Polling will be conducted from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. "A total of 321 candidates are in the fray," Mr. Sharma said.

On the allegations made

Fight 'fake news': BRICS Media Forum

It calls upon the five nations to combat 'virus of disinformation' during pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Representatives of media organisations from BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) on Monday called for the five nations to work together to jointly combat the "virus of disinformation" in the pandemic era.

At the fifth BRICS Media Forum, held virtually to coincide with the recently concluded BRICS summit, media organisations discussed ways in which journalists from the grouping could collaborate more closely to tell stories, with the countries facing many similar challenges, from economic issues to public health, as they grapple with COVID-19.

N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Publishing Group and former Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu Group of Publications, noted that India, Brazil and Russia were among the five in the world with the highest number of confirmed cases. "The news media around the world, especially daily newspapers, and also other forms of the media, have taken a big hit during the pandemic," he said.

José Juan Sanchez, President of Brazil's CMA Group that specialises in financial

News media around the world ... have taken a big hit during pandemic

N. RAM
Director, The Hindu Publishing Group

under the aegis of the BRICS Media Forum have done a commendable job in informing and educating readers, viewers, and listeners on the pandemic and its consequences for people's lives, health, livelihood, and well-being; on the tools and individual and social behaviours that can enable a country or a community to mount defences against this coronavirus; on the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines for COVID-19; and on the science behind all this," he said.

"I believe the mainstream media in our five countries have also helped by fielding well-informed discussions on how to strike a reasonable balance, tricky as it is, at the policy level between saving lives and health on the one hand and protecting work, livelihood, and the economy on the other."

José Juan Sanchez, President of Brazil's CMA Group that specialises in financial

and agri-business news, said a common thread was a growing problem of disinformation or 'fake news'. "We need to come together to fight disinformation. It is important for news to be instantaneous, and it is equally important to remember that false news is dangerous. Transparent and reliable information is important more than ever," he said.

The forum was attended by Sergey Kochetkov, Deputy Editor-in-chief of *Rossiya Segodnya* (Russia's state-owned news agency), whose subsidiaries include *Sputnik* and *RIA Novosti*; Iqbal Survé, Executive Chairman of Independent Media in South Africa; and He Ping, President and Editor-in-chief of China's *Xinhua* news agency, which came up with the idea of a BRICS Media Forum in 2015.

More cooperation
Mr. He said the pandemic had reinforced the needs of the countries to step up, rather than shun, cooperation. "In times of crisis, no one can stand alone or stay immune," he pointed out. "As a Chinese saying goes, fire tests gold, and adversity reveals friendship."

Mr. Ram observed that disinformation that was being transmitted globally at warp speed on the so-called technology platforms, notably Facebook, Twitter, Google, WhatsApp, and Instagram, was "a major threat not just to the mainstream media but, more importantly, to the lives and well-being of tens of millions of people and the safety and integrity of society as a whole."

He said: "The BRICS Media Forum can make a real difference in the fight against motivated and harmful disinformation by promoting and strengthening relevant media exchanges, workshops, training of journalists, and interactions with technology companies that are willing to work with us to contain and end the menace. "For example, rigorous fact-checking and investigation by well-trained teams of journalists and the new type of specialised fact-checking organisations can be supplemented by technological solutions, with the deployment of technologies like AI, in the fight against disinformation, especially large-scale online harms. BRICS countries have advantages in doing both things."

EASTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF A.P. LTD (A Govt. of Andhra Pradesh undertaking)

Corporate Office, Near Gurudwara Junction, TPT Colony, Seethammadhara, Visakhapatnam-531013

e-Procurement Tender Notice

Tender Ref. No: CGW/BWP/PFA/Automation of SS/ICB-01/2020-21

e-Tenders are invited through Central Public Procurement Portal from the eligible bidders for the work of Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Integration of ECR, PTR, TMR, VCBs and RTUs for Automation of Sub-Station in Eastern Region, West Godavari Districts of AP/EPDCL duly Establishing the SCADA/ADM Control Center (MCC & RCC) on Turnkey Basis" alongwith financial assistance from World Bank. The Bidders may visit www.eprocure.gov.in for detailed tender documents on or after 01st December, 2020.

CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER/ WB PROJECTS
AP/EPDCL: VISAKHAPATNAM

Advt-79

KMML The Kerala Minerals & Metals Ltd.

(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking)

An ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 & SA 8000 Certified Company

Sankarangalam, Chittur - 631 583, Kollam, Kerala, India

Phone : +91-476-2651215 to 2651217

Fax : +91-0476-2686721, 2686721

E-mail : contact@kmml.com, URL:www.kmml.com

CIN-U14199KL1972SGC00239

Competitive Tenders are invited for Following. For more details please visit the E-Tendering Portal https://etenders.kerala.gov.in or www.kmml.com

No. Tender Id Items

1. 2020_KMML_399856_1 For supply of 17,103 MT of Calcined Petroleum Coke

2. 2020_KMML_399819_1 For supply of PETROLEUM COKE - NPF GRADE

Chavara 30.11.2020

Sd/- HOU (T)

For The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd

Our Products: Titanium Dioxide, Titanium Tetra Chloride, Nano Titanium, Titanium Sponge

Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike

Office of the Executive Engineer, Chickpete Division,

8th Main Road, Kanakapalya, Jayanagar 2nd Block, Bengaluru.

No.EE/CKPD/E-Proc/09/2020-21 Date: 30-11-2020

CORRIGENDUM-1

Sub: Corrigendum to Tender Notification Reg.

Ref: 1. Short Term Tender Notification of even no.

Dated: 23-11-2020 issued by this office.

With reference to the above subject and reference, the Executive Engineer, Chickpete Division Office had invited Tender Notification No. EE/CKPD/E-Proc/09/2020-21 on 23-11-2020 for 42 works. In the above said Tender Notification, the work bearing Sl.No. 27 has been postponed due to technical reasons as detailed below. There is no other changes in the rules and regulations of the Tender Notice.

Calendar of Events: 1. Last Date for uploading the Filled Tender Document is 9-12-2020 up to 4:00 p.m. (2). Technical Bids of Tenders will be Opened at 4:30 p.m. on 10-12-2020 (3). Financial Bids of the Tenders will be Opened after the approval of the Technical Bids.

Sd/-, Executive Engineer, Chickpete Division BBMP.

HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19? CALL APATHAMITRA ON 14410

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IN BRIEF



Masks and sanitisers our biggest arms: Vardhan

NEW DELHI
Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday reiterated that the most important principle to protect against COVID-19 was to follow basic principles of hygiene and physical distancing. "In the fight against COVID-19, our biggest weapons are the mask and the sanitiser," he said, while distributing masks and soaps at the Old Delhi Railway Station. In the last 24 hours, 38,772 persons tested positive for COVID-19.

Centre writes to States on fire safety in hospitals
NEW DELHI
Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has written to all the States and Union Territories to direct nursing homes and hospitals to recheck fire protection system on their premises to avoid a repeat of the two incidents in Gujarat. Last week, six patients were killed in a fire in a hospital in Rajkot. In a similar incident earlier in Ahmedabad, eight lives were lost. "I would urge you to direct all concerned to immediately re-inspect all hospitals/nursing homes from the point of view of fire protection," Mr. Bhalla said.

Bengal BJP chief sends legal notice to Abhishek
KOLKATA
West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh sent a legal notice to Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee on Monday. At a rally on Sunday, Mr. Banerjee called Mr. Ghosh a "goon" and "mafia", and dared the BJP leadership to take legal action against him. Mr. Ghosh said Mr. Banerjee was second-in-command of the Trinamool Congress, and was using such language against the State president of an Opposition party.

Minor girl abducted, raped in Kanpur; 4 held
KANPUR
A 14-year-old girl was allegedly abducted and raped for more than two days by four people in Chakeri town here, police said on Monday. The matter came to light on Sunday evening when the minor managed to escape after two days and reached her house, said Superintendent of Police (East) Raj Kumar Agarwal. Two accused were arrested while two suspects were detained, they said. PTI

Sheetal Amte, social worker, found dead

She is granddaughter of Baba Amte

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI
Sheetal Amte-Karjgi, social worker and CEO of Maharoji Sewa Samiti (Leprosy Services Committee), was found dead at Anandwan of Warora in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra on Monday.

She was found unconscious and was rushed to the government hospital in Warora, where she was declared dead on arrival. She is suspected to have committed suicide by injecting herself with poison. She is survived by her husband and a son.

Sheetal was the granddaughter of human rights activist and Padma Vibhushan award winner, the late Baba Amte, who founded the Maharoji Sewa Samiti in 1949. The institution has been a pioneer in medical treatment and rehabilitation of leprosy patients.

Administrative dispute
Recent media reports had said that the Amte family was in the middle of dispute over the manner in which the MSS was being run and over the appointment of new trustees.

Earlier this week, Ms. Sheetal had put out a Facebook live video in which she reportedly raised allegations against a few of her family members. The video

Solve vaccine firms' issues: PM

Modi holds virtual conference with heads of Gennova, Dr. Reddy's & Biological E

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a virtual conference with heads of three vaccine development and manufacturing companies: Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, Pune; Biological E Ltd and Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd., Hyderabad.

Biological E got permission to begin human trials of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate in October. Gennova is scheduled to begin human trials of its proprietary mRNA vaccine – similar to those of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna – in December.

Dr. Reddy's has tied up with Russia's RDIF and Gamaleya to test the Sputnik V vaccine on Indian volunteers. If all steps go according to plan and pending regulatory approvals, these companies are expected to begin making millions of doses of vaccine by next year.

The RDIF claimed an "interim efficacy", via a press



Vaccine mission: Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking with the heads of three vaccine firms on Monday. •PTI/PIB

release, of 91.4%, from its ongoing Phase 3 trials. Human trials are also scheduled in India with Dr. Reddy's, under a previous agreement between the companies. The RDIF said it planned to start producing 100 million doses of the vaccine in the beginning of 2021 in partnership with Hetero Pharma.

"The PM advised all the departments concerned to engage with the manufacturer

ers and seek to resolve matters so that the efforts by these companies bear fruit in order to serve the needs of the country and the entire world," said a statement from the Press Information Bureau on Monday.

Remarks reassuring'
During his interaction, Mr. Modi discussed how the pandemic has placed "extraordinary demands" on the

pharmaceutical industry. "He was briefed about our efforts in combating COVID-19 ranging across all stages of the disease from prevention to critical stages of the disease, including the advancements about Sputnik V vaccine clinical trials, and the collaborative work with the regulatory bodies and hospitals in India," Dr. Reddy's said in a statement.

"We are honoured and feel appreciated by the honourable Prime Minister's reassuring remarks."

A spokesperson for Biological E said the company did not have any comment on Mr. Modi's interaction. Bio E, Dynavax Technology Corporation, a U.S.-based vaccine and biopharmaceutical corporation, and Baylor College of Medicine, a health sciences university in Houston, have initiated Phase I/2 trials last month in India of their candidate vaccine. However, the details of the vaccine construct or platform technology is not yet known.

Centre convenes all-party meet on COVID-19 on Friday

Govt. invites all floor leaders in Parliament

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government has called an all-party meeting on December 4 to discuss the COVID-19 situation.

Senior sources in the government confirmed that floor leaders of all political parties in Parliament have been invited for the meeting by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi.

The meeting, to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be held via videoconference in the morning. Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and Ministers of State V. Muraleedharan and Arjun Ram Meghwal are expected to be present. Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba will also participate.



On the move: A worker collecting samples at the Borivali railway station in Mumbai on Monday. •AADESH CHOURHARI

It is expected that this too may be discussed. As for the format, leaders – at least many heading the parties with a significant number of MPs – will be asked to speak, with Mr. Modi making the closing remarks.

Mr. Modi is expected to brief party leaders on his meetings with officials of the six vaccine manufacturing facilities. This is the second all-party meet being called on the pandemic.

Congress meet reviews T.N., Assam strategies

Party to look for winnable seats in the southern State

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leaders who are part of the panel to assist party president Sonia Gandhi, along with former party chief Rahul Gandhi, on Monday discussed the party's preparedness for the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and Assam in April-May 2021.

The virtual meetings were closed-door ones, but party insiders said it was decided that the Congress, backed by a data-driven exercise, should identify winnable seats in Tamil Nadu when it negotiates with its ally, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

The exhibition includes Buddhist treasures from India, including from the Gandhara and Mathura schools, Nalanda and Sarnath, in 3D format. Objects depicting the life of Gautam Buddha from Karachi, Lahore, Taxila, Islamabad, Swat and Peshawar museums are also included.

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The central leadership, however, asked Assam leaders to refrain from making any public comment on a possible alliance with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), a party with a large minority base led by Badruddin Ajmal. Maintaining discipline and the need to refrain from speaking out

of turn on crucial issues figured in the meetings.

Mr. Gandhi and other members of the special panel, including K.C. Venugopal, Ambika Soni, Mukul Wasnik and Randeep Surjewala, had separate meetings with the leaders of the two States.

Leaders cautioned
Without mentioning anybody's name, the meeting on Tamil Nadu ended with Mr. Venugopal cautioning party leaders on violating discipline by speaking out in the press. Mr. Gandhi endorsed his statement.

In the meeting with Assam leaders, Mr. Gandhi told them to speak in one voice on all important political issues and "leave the question of alliances and funding to the central leadership of the party".

In the Lata Singh case, the

Fresh from the Bihar debacle in which the Congress won only 19 of the 70 seats it contested, Tamil Nadu leaders talked about identifying seats where the party can win as part of the DMK-led alliance. Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram is learnt to have stressed identifying the seats using data and strengthening booth-level committees.

Several leaders, including Lok Sabha member Manickam Tagore, are said to have asked Mr. Gandhi to campaign more aggressively in Tamil Nadu as it could be a "gamechanger for the party". A few State leaders also asked the party high command to effect organisational changes only after the Assembly polls.

In the meeting with Assam leaders, Mr. Gandhi told them to speak in one voice on all important political issues and "leave the question of alliances and funding to the central leadership of the party".

Hold polls where NOTA got most votes: petition

Appeal in SC pushes for 'right to reject'

Those who lost to NOTA should not be allowed to contest the fresh elections

ASHWINI KUMAR UPADHYAY
Petitioner

give tickets to honest and patriotic candidates," Mr. Upadhyay reasoned.

He contended that the 'right to reject' was first proposed by the Law Commission in 1999. "It also suggested that the candidates be declared elected only if they have obtained 50%+1 of the valid votes cast. Similarly,

the Election Commission endorsed 'Right to Reject', first in 2001, under James Lyngdoh [the then CEC], and then in 2004 under T.S. Krishnamurthy [the then CEC], in its Proposed Electoral Reforms," the petition said.

The 'Background Paper on Electoral Reforms', prepared by the Ministry of Law in 2010, had proposed that if certain percentage of the vote was negative, then election result should be nullified and new election held, the petition said.

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She is granddaughter of Baba Amte

STAFF REPORTER

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CMYK

400 experts from public and private sector share findings from money-laundering cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has apprised about 400 experts from both the public and private sectors of the latest risk findings related to money laundering and terror funding.

During its annual joint experts' meet, attended by participants from various government agencies all over the world and international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and Interpol, the FATF also informed them about solutions and its ongoing pro-

Matters of dress and food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity. Neither the state nor the law can dictate a choice of partners or limit the free ability of every person to decide on these matters, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud wrote in the Hadiya case judgment.

Autonomy of the individual was the ability to make decisions in vital matters of concern to life, the Constitution Bench said in the K.S.

Puttuswamy or 'privacy' judgment. Any interference by the State in an adult's right to love and marry has a "chilling effect" on freedoms.

Privacy inviolable
Intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy, which is inviolable, the court has said. "The absolute right of an individual to choose a life partner is not in the least affected by matters of faith".

In the Lata Singh case, the

court recognised the country is going through a "crucial transformation period". It said the "Constitution will remain strong only if we accept the plurality and diversity of our culture". Relatives disgruntled by the inter-religious marriage of a loved one could opt to "cut off social relations" rather than resort to violence or harassment.

"If the parents of the boy or girl do not approve of such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage, the maximum they can do is that they

can cut off social relations with the son or the daughter, but they cannot give threats or commit or instigate acts of violence and cannot harass the person who undergoes such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage," the court said. This is still a "free and democratic country", the Supreme Court noted.

In the Soni Gerald case, the

court warned judges from playing "super-guardians", succumbing to "any kind of sentiment of the mother or the egotism of the father".

The student, Siddhant Batra who hails from Agra, has approached the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the institution to admit him after the IIT said it cannot intervene at this stage as all the seats for the course were full and admission rules had to be followed. It said Mr. Batra could apply again next year for JEE (Advanced).

The Bombay High Court had initially directed the IIT to consider Mr. Batra's petition, after he approached it earlier this month. He had secured an All India Rank (AIR) of 270 in the JEE Advanced exams. On November 23, a Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni dismissed Mr. Batra's petition noting that IIT had considered his representation and passed its order.

Mr. Batra, who lives with his grandparents following the death of his parents, in the plea said he had worked hard against all odds to crack the exams.

Student loses IIT seat due to 'wrong' click

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

An 18-year-old student has lost his seat for a four-year electrical engineering course in the prestigious IIT Bombay after he "inadvertently" clicked on a "wrong" link which was meant to withdraw from the process.

The student, Siddhant Batra who hails from Agra, has approached the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the institution to admit him after the IIT said it cannot intervene at this stage as all the seats for the course were full and admission rules had to be followed. It said Mr. Batra could apply again next year for JEE (Advanced).

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Participants noted the important role of export companies, refiners, logistics and other non-traditional sectors in detecting anomalies and illicit financial flows from crimes

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

jects. "The FATF attaches great importance to effective information sharing, which is one of the cornerstones of a well-functioning AML/CFT [Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism] framework," said the FATF in a statement.

Ensuring that countries

had strong tools to fight money laundering, terrorist financing or the financing of proliferation required an in-depth understanding of the evolving risks and the latest detection, investigation and prosecution techniques, it said.

During the four-day meet

ing, the experts deliberated on, and proposed, various priority projects.

They also exchanged ideas on issues such as financing of ethnically or radically motivated terrorism, their transnational links, environmental crime, illegal arms trafficking and terror financing, and digital transformation.

Terror funding

"Experts shared their experience and findings from money laundering cases linked to illegal logging and land clearance, mining related crimes and waste trafficking.



Historian John Ferris walks us through the major turning points of espionage technologies, and why we should want to know more about them

JOHN XAVIER

The GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) is one of Britain's leading intelligence agencies known for its code-breaking achievements during the Second World War. Enter *Behind the Enigma: The Authorized History of GCHQ, Britain's Secret Cyber-Intelligence Agency* (Bloomsbury Publishing): the first book to authoritatively capture the history of this secretive intelligence agency.

The 848-page book explores GCHQ's early missions of information assurance and signals intelligence, underpinning why the organisation continues to be the top security and cyber-intelligence tool of Britain state.

In an email interview with *MetroPlus*, author John Ferris shares his perspective on surveillance, data gathering and how intelligence agencies have changed their approach to bring in contractors after the Edward Snowden episode – an incident which stunned the GCHQ.

+ In the book, you mentioned that bulk collection of data and of private messages happened in 1914. How different is it now?



Into the void The Government Communications Headquarters in the UK (top); John Ferris (above); the book jacket ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

• It was collected from different media – cable and radio, as against cell phones and the Internet. It also was used only during wartime. Most importantly, almost all communications across the Atlantic between 1914 and 1919, and 1939 and 1945, were in-

Inside the vault of Britain's secret service agency

tercepted, read, analysed and used by states.

Today, bulk collection constitutes only a tiny part of international communications – and only an equally tiny part of these messages are ever read.

Signals intelligence (Sigint) agencies have limited abilities to examine connections between communications, and even less to break encryption. Therefore, they must ration their efforts in a rational way – i.e. against real threats and targets, like spies, terrorists or hostile states.

Very few of us [citizens] fall in those categories or attract their attention. State-directed surveillance against the communications of their citizens is dramatically

weaker than people think in western countries.

Commercial entities have far more ability to analyse and read your data, than Government agencies do, and much more incentive to do so, because it makes them money.

How do you view GCHQ's approach to handling citizens' data in the light of documents obtained by US National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden on GCHQ's information collection for its mass surveillance programme?

• These documents showed how far states could intercept international communications, and

shocked even technical experts.

However, in both Britain and the United States, subsequent examination showed that these actions were legal, under British and American law, and that national authorities (including oversight committees in Congress and Parliament) had been properly informed of these practices.

Moreover, independent technical authorities, like the US Academy of Sciences in 2014, concluded that if states were going to conduct signals intelligence at all, the use of bulk collection was unavoidable.

All technically competent states did similar things – Chinese penetration of private and state communications in India at that

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, is a professor of History at the University of Calgary, an honorary professor at the Department of International Politics of the University of Aberystwyth, and the Department of Law and Politics, Brunel University. He is also an associate member of Nuffield College, Oxford.

John has written or edited eight books and over 100 articles or chapters on diplomatic, intelligence, imperial, international, military and strategic history, and strategic studies.

Western states have found dealing with those problems difficult, and have not done well at it, except by having their own security and intelligence agencies block foreign cyber criminals, cyber intelligence and cyber subversion. Most western states have taken steps to ensure that security and intelligence agencies do not illegally acquire intelligence on their citizens – which is complicated by the undeniable fact that many of their citizens in fact pose security problems, like terrorists.

This requires serious attention to legal and political controls over intelligence and security agencies – which can be achieved. Western states have not in the least changed how they collect intelligence on foreign people or states.

Are nation-states doing enough to allay their citizens' fear over mass surveillance?

- They need to explain the nature of mass surveillance, and how limited their powers to do so are against their citizens. They should also show what they do and do not do – and why what they do is

Commercial entities have far more ability to analyse and read your data, than Government agencies do, and much more incentive to do so, because it makes them money

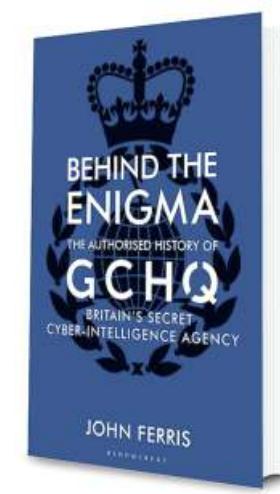
JOHN FERRIS

justified, in order to deter or defeat real threats. They need clear legal and political controls over the works of their agencies, and respected oversight agencies in legislatures, and they need to walk the talk.

Where can a line be drawn between a citizen's right to privacy and right for safe living in their country?

- Where it always has been. In western countries, before the Internet, state agencies needed to pass a high legal bar before they attempted to read the messages of their citizens. Precisely those controls can and should be enforced as, by and large, they already are done in North America and western Europe.

Behind the Enigma: The Authorized History of GCHQ, Britain's Secret Cyber-Intelligence Agency by John Ferris (R999) is available across major e-tailers and retailers.



The AOC among us

Thanksgiving weekend invited a wave of 'paying it forward' during the Coronavirus pandemic. One of the proponents of this thoughtfulness has been the gaming industry; virtual charity events held on platform du jour Twitch have seen a surge.

In fact, US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez aka AOC, of New York took to the gaming site on November 28 for a five-hour-plus livestream of her and others – including MP Jagmeet Singh, leader of Canada's New Democratic Party – playing the popular social deduction game Among Us. In the process they helped raise US\$2,00,000 for people in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We did it!" AOC said in a tweet on November 28. "\$200K raised in one livestream (on a whim!) for eviction defense, food pantries, and more. This is going to make such a difference for those who need it most right now. Thank you all." The proceeds would go towards money needed by the underprivileged for eviction defense and food pantries, among other things.

This is not the first time AOC has played Among Us. Her first time playing Among Us on Twitch was a remarkable hit, peaking at 45,300 viewers at one point during the match on October 20.



Bend it like Beckham

David Beckham has returned to EA Sports in FIFA 21. Gamers who play FIFA 21 by January 15, 2021 will receive a non-tradable, one-of-a-kind David Beckham item to add to their dream squad in FIFA Ultimate Team starting December 15. They can also add him in Volta Football as a Groundbreaker, EA Sports notes in the game's page.

CMYK



Same Yakuza, different play



YAKUZA: LIKE A DRAGON

Developer: Ryu Ga Gotoku Studio

Publisher: Sega

Price: ₹3,499 on PlayStation 4

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

choose your characters' jobs. You can be 'Hero' or pop music performing 'Idol'; each job equips the characters with different traits and each is more suited to a particular character than others. It is fun to experiment and mix and match these jobs.

One of the downsides of Like a Dragon is that some

points, especially towards the end, slows down. With very high-level enemies and bosses, you are forced to fight for cash just to stand a chance. All the hard-earned momentum just comes to a grinding halt. While the game tries to keep things fun, it does feel like a chore at points.

The verdict

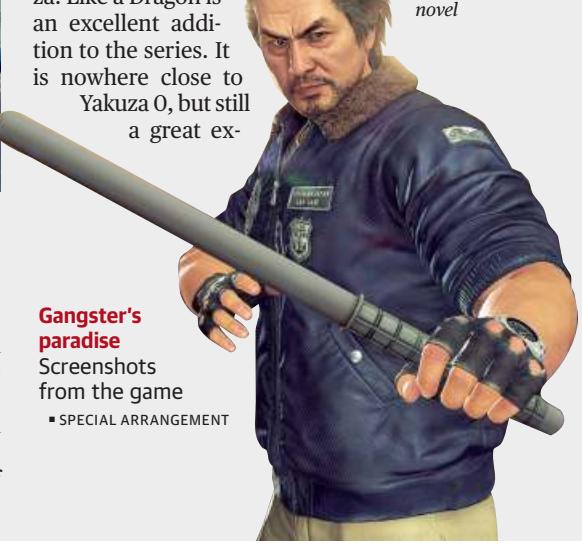
Despite that, Yakuza: Like a Dragon is an excellent addition to the series. It is nowhere close to Yakuza 0, but still

a great ex-

periment. With memorable characters, excellent story, it is a lot better and addictive, despite the action being turn-based.

Also, this game is for adults only; set in a seedy part of town, many of the mini-games, attacks and bosses veer into risqué humour territory.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel

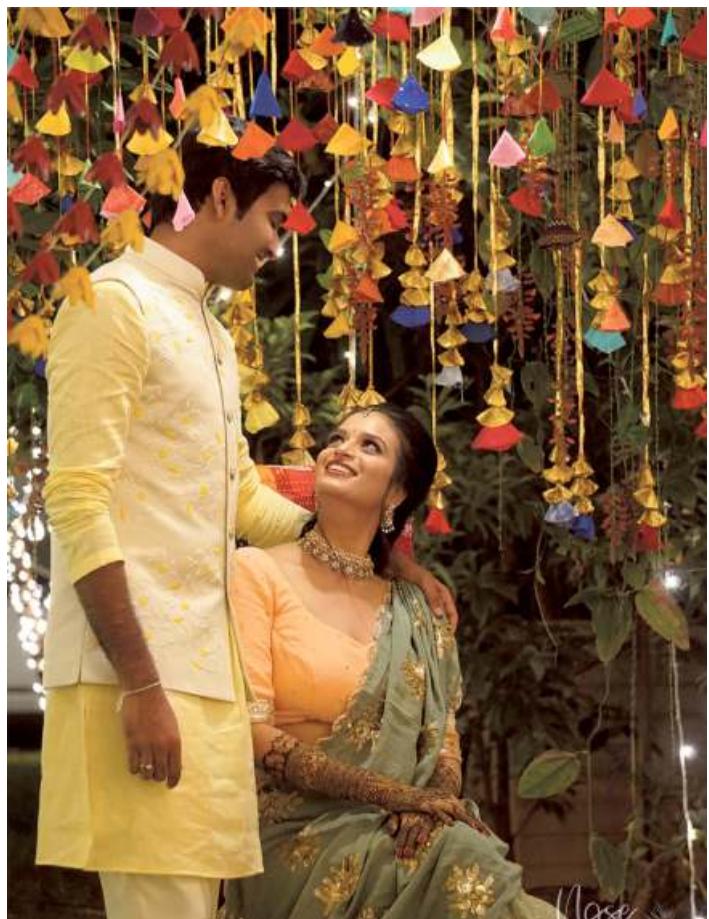


Gangster's paradise

Screenshots from the game

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

AN-DOE



K JESHI

The 'big fat Indian wedding' was streamlined this year. As e-invites and online attendance become the norm, courtesy the pandemic, not only are weddings turning into more intimate affairs, but couples are also showing more interest in sustainable, waste-free celebrations.

Recently, a Kongu-style wedding of Helga Mary Campbell and Stephen Inbaraj at Pollachi, near Coimbatore, saw the bride, Helga, dressed in a gown entirely recreated from repurposed clothes using zero-waste pattern cutting techniques. "Mulmul, muga, and summer silk fabrics were recycled to create the bridal trousseau. We opted for an elegant gown with organic thread work in breathable fabric," says Rachel J Amirtharaj, a Delhi-based designer who conceptualised the wedding. "For the decor, we supported local craftsmen and used materials like clay, wood, straw and native flowers. The wedding feast included seasonal vegetables grown locally," Rachel adds.

Cutting waste

"With small gatherings, zero waste can easily be achieved," says Mumbai-based Aishwarya Lonial, who co-founded Nose to Tail with Indraja Khare, which specialises in sustainable weddings. "Right from invites to gifts, we cut down on waste generation at source. For an upcoming wedding in Delhi, we are using scrap cloth and tailor waste



From paperless invites to recycling lehengas, families are turning to smaller, more sustainable weddings



Waste-free weddings (From left) Some of the eco-friendly decor by Nose and Tail; A virtual blessing in progress at a function organised by Wedding Wishlist ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Made in heaven, but Earth-friendly



for the decor. We have tied up with NGOs like Feeding India and Robin Hood Army to donate excess food," Aishwarya adds.

Sanna Vohra, founder and CEO of The Wedding Brigade, an online portal that curates wedding fashion, suggests choosing paperless or recycled invites, opting for venues with recycling/composting facilities, buying from sustaina-

ble brands and using locally sourced flowers or recycled material for decor. Mumbai-based RJ Preeti Bindaa's wedding in August was one such; she calls the event "an extension" of her sustainable lifestyle. "We upcycled used tyres, used bottles and scrap for decor. Discarded telephone directories became gift envelopes wrapped in a glossy cover (which were made from

discarded car covers)," she says. Preeti continues: "Why do you need to order plastic water bottles for a two-hour function? The waste we leave behind takes millions of years to decompose."

Kanika Subbiah, founder of Wedding Wishlist concurs. "We have 1.1 crore weddings a year in India. Tonnes of waste goes to the landfill." Her company offers gift registry services. This, she says, can reduce waste generated by gifts alone by 50%. "Couples can also request guests to support charity as gifts," Kanika adds.

Meaningful events

There is a greater focus on replacing single-use plastic cutlery with steel jugs and glasses, wooden spoons, banana leaves and areca plates. Anujna Ravikumar, founder of Bengaluru-based Levitate Wedding recently helped organise a zero-waste wedding at Panchvati in Kanakapura, near Bengaluru. "We use roses, orchids, lillies and chrysanthemums sourced from farmers in the



Scent of success

Kanpur-based Help Us Green (HUG) upcycles floral waste from weddings, temples and mosques as colours and incense sticks. Their latest addition is seed paper covers with tulsi seeds (picture above). "We have been getting orders from South India for seed covers to be given away as return gifts at weddings," says HUG's founder Karan Rastogi. The covers are available to order on Amazon.

Rastogi's team collected flowers that were being discarded due to events not happening during lockdown directly from farmers in a bid to support their livelihood. "We trained 25 farmers through an online programme along with the Government of Uttarakhand, and collected 10 tonnes of fresh flowers during the pandemic, which we used to make dyes, incense sticks, handmade paper, potpourri and so on," he adds.

neighbourhood. The used flowers are upcycled as natural dyes," Anujna says, adding COVID-19 has been an influencing factor on these trends.

The pandemic has revived forgotten traditions, says Arabind Chandrasekhar, managing director of Kochi-based Tamarind Event Management Solutions. "If you look back 40 years or so, weddings were much smaller and conducted at homes, the safest place for any celebration. COVID-19 has made people realise that relationships matter and not revelry."

Tamarind, which holds destination weddings in Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu encourages clients to cut down on guest lists and use minimal resources for decor. "We also tell them to stick to a time limit to reduce use of diesel gensets."

Kanika says they organised over 60 registry weddings and another 40 virtual ones after the pandemic began. "Of late, we are seeing couples from Rajasthan, Punjab, Chandigarh and Ludhiana showing interest in virtual weddings. For an upcoming wedding, we have an eight-hour online function where we have ushers for every guest to make the virtual wedding a memorable one," she says.

Vohra too, expects an increase in virtual weddings. "There will be online streaming of the main ceremony for family and friends, or even sharing more intimate wedding moments like an at-home haldi or the post-wedding bride and groom games," she says, adding, "Weddings will still be beautiful, but excesses will be cut."

Carnatic vocalist and independent musician Renuka Arun's music videos highlight contemporary issues concerning women and the LGBTQ community

Tuning into reality

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

As the world observes 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2020, which goes on till December 10, Carnatic vocalist Renuka Arun turned to music to register her support for the elimination of violence against women and the LGBTQ community.

In the last week of November she uploaded 'Maravairi', an aesthetically shot video that narrates the story of two young women who fall in love. It depicts how their relationship evolves when

Love is love A still from 'Maravairi', a music video by Renuka Arun ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

they finally decide to throw caution to the wind and follow their heart. Based on the Thyagaraja kriti in Nasikabhushani raga, Renuka designed a fusion that is visualised on the bond between the women. "At present, even after the reading down of Section 377, many face discrimination and ostracisation. Some of them are subject to terrible acts of violence. That is why I conceptualised this video on such a relationship," explains Renuka, a senior corporate executive.

Premiered at the Krithi Festival in Kochi in 2019 by Bombay

Jayasree, the film travelled to festivals in India and abroad and gained her bouquets and brickbats. Buoyed by the response to the music video, she is now working on the myth of Marutha, the vengeful yakshi thirsting for revenge even in the afterlife. "It is different from the maternal concept of women that we are used to hearing and reading about. This is an extremely different idea of a woman who unleashes her inner strength to destroy wrongdoers. The new music video I am working on, 'Maruthayi, the fetish mother', depicts this; she not only nurtures, she can also punish those who persecute women," explains Renuka.

She wants to address abuse of women and children through the video. Written and composed by her, Renuka has fused the soundscape of the Macedonian Symphony Orchestra for the music.

"It is a massive project and it proved that Malayalam lyrics can

be in sync with a pure Western orchestration. I have not used Carnatic lyrics or music," says Renuka.

Although she had commenced work on it before the lockdown, the visualisation could not be completed. She hopes to finish and release it by January.

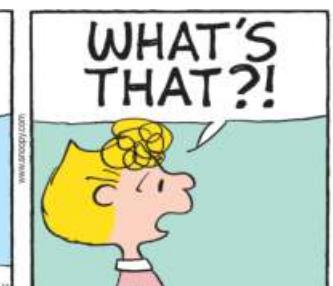
Renuka says reactions to 'Maravairi' were along predictable lines. "While the music and the singing was appreciated, conservative followers of Carnatic music were not happy with the way it was depicted on screen. They felt it was a travesty of the lyrics. On the other hand, there were many youngsters and liberals who empathised with the film."

She points that the experimental work had begun as a piece to create fusion music with a rare raga. The LGBTQ concept came in later. "In the disclaimer, I made it clear that this is an experimental, conceptual divergence from the usual concept of Indian Classical music."

POOCHE CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



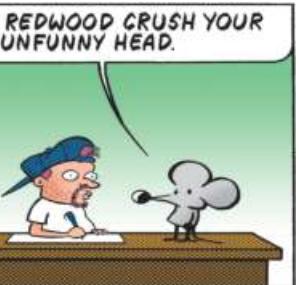
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



'Israel, exiled opposition killed scientist in complex operation'

The attack was carried out using electronic equipment, says top Iran official

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran said Israel and an exiled opposition group used new and "complex" methods to assassinate its leading nuclear scientist, as it buried him on Monday in a funeral befitting a top "martyr".

As it laid Mohsen Fakhrizadeh – seen by Israel as the "father" of Iran's nuclear weapons programme – to rest, the Islamic republic also vowed to redouble his work.

Fakhrizadeh died on Friday after his car and bodyguards were targeted in a bomb and gun attack on a major road outside the capital, heightening tensions once more between Tehran and its foes.

Iran's top security official, Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani of the Supreme National Security Council, said the "operation was very complex, using electronic equipment and no one was present at the scene".

The People's Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK) were "certain-



In grief: Iranians mourning at the funeral ceremony of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in northern Tehran on Monday. ■ AFP

ly" involved, along with "the Zionist regime and the Mosad", he said, referring to the Israeli government and its spy agency.

'Remote-controlled'

The top official's comments came in video interviews broadcast by state television and the Fars news agency.

Without citing sources, Fars itself reported the attack had been carried out with the help of "a remote-controlled automatic machine-gun" mounted on a pick-

up truck.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani had on Saturday accused Israel of acting as a "mercenary" for the United States by carrying out the assassination.

Fakhrizadeh's funeral was attended by several high-ranking officials, including Defence Minister Amir Hatami and Revolutionary Guards commander Hossein Salami.

As the funeral got underway, a religious singer praised Fakhrizadeh and al-

luded to the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the revered 7th century holy figure from whom Shiites Muslims draw inspiration. "If our enemies had not committed this heinous crime and spilled our dear martyr's blood, he might have remained unknown," Mr. Hatami said in a speech.

The assassination has led to demands for a strong response from Iran's leadership and calls by some conservative lawmakers to avoid entering potential negotiations with the U.S., even as the hawkish presidency of Donald Trump draws to a close.

Mr. Rouhani has accused Israel of acting as a U.S. "mercenary", blaming it for the killing of Fakhrizadeh, and Supreme Leader Khamenei has called for the perpetrators to be punished.

Parliament on Sunday demanded a halt to international inspections of nuclear sites, a step that could prove a fatal blow to the nuclear deal Iran agreed with world powers in 2015.

Ms. Tanden's nomination is a part of Mr. Biden's plan to build a team of liberal and centrist economic advisers to serve alongside planned Treasury Secretary nominee Janet Yellen, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on Sunday.

Nomination of Ms. Tanden and others are expected to be announced soon, multiple news reports said.

'Biden intends to nominate Neera Tanden as OMB chief'

Her confirmation would make it a first for Indian-Americans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden intends to nominate Indian-American Neera Tanden as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, a top position inside the White House responsible for managing the administration's budget, according to media reports.

If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, 50-year-old Ms. Tanden would be the first woman of colour to head the influential office at the White House. Ms. Tanden is currently the chief executive of the Centre for American Progress, a public policy research and advocacy organisation.

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Neera Tanden

According to *The Washington Post*, Ms. Tanden will be under pressure from conservatives to rein in government spending, but will probably play an instrumental role in crafting the Biden administration's response to the current economic downturn.

She was a close ally of Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State and the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate, and helped pass the Affordable Care Act under President then Barack Obama, it said.

"Another proud day for Indian Americans to see Neera Tanden be nominated

for a Cabinet level position in the next administration," said M.R. Rangaswami, founder of non-profit organisation Indiaspora.

Cecilia Rouse, a Princeton University labour economist, is likely to be named the chairwoman of Council of Economic Advisers.

Mr. Biden named former State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki as the White House Press Secretary as he announced an all-women communications team for his administration.

Kate Bedingfield has been named as the White House Communications Director; Karine Jean Pierre as the Principal Deputy Press Secretary, and Symone Sanders as the Senior Adviser and Chief Spokesperson for the Vice-President.

Elizabeth E. Alexander has been named the Communications Director for the First Lady, Pili Tobar the Deputy White House Communications Director, and Ashley Etienne the Communications Director for the Vice-President.



Janet Yellen to head Treasury department

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden on Monday named former Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen as his choice for Treasury Secretary.

"Janet Yellen is nominated to serve as Secretary of the Treasury. If confirmed, she will be the first woman to lead the Treasury Department in its 231-year history," Mr. Biden's transition team said in a statement.

The 74-year-old previously broke barriers as the first female Fed chief.

"As we get to work to control the virus, this is the team that will deliver immediate economic relief for the American people during this economic crisis," Mr. Biden said.

Taliban mastermind of Army base attack killed in air strike

It comes after 31 Afghan soldiers were killed in suicide attack

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Afghan forces have killed the Taliban mastermind of a suicide car bomb attack that left 31 security personnel dead, officials said on Monday.

Hamza Waziristani was killed in an air strike overnight in the eastern province of Ghazni, where the bomber struck an Afghan military base on Sunday.

"The mastermind behind

yesterday's terrorist attack on the (Ghazni) base was killed along with seven other terrorists," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Ministry spokesman Faizuddin Aman told AFP that Waziristani was a Taliban militant from the Pakistani border region of Waziristan.

The attack was one of the deadliest in months targeting government forces in Afghanistan, where violence has surged since the start of 2021.

peace talks between President Ashraf Ghani's administration and the Taliban in Qatar.

The Taliban often do not comment on deadly attacks.

The insurgents have

launched near daily attacks against Afghan forces, primarily in rural areas, since signing a deal with Washington in February that paved the way for the withdrawal of foreign troops by May 2021.

Australia-China row over use of fake image

Canberra seeks apology from Beijing over picture depicting an Australian soldier killing an Afghan child

REUTERS
SYDNEY

Australia demanded an apology after a senior Chinese official posted a fake image of an Australian soldier holding a knife with blood on it to the throat of an Afghan child, calling it "truly repugnant" and demanding it be taken down.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison called a media briefing to condemn the posting of the image, marking another downturn in deteriorating relations between the two countries.

The Australian govern-



Scott Morrison

ment has asked Twitter to remove the image, posted on Monday by China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on his official Twitter account, Mr. Morrison said.

"It is utterly outrageous

and cannot be justified on any basis," Mr. Morrison said. "The Chinese government should be utterly ashamed of this post. It diminishes them in the world's eyes."

Unlawful killings

Thirteen special forces soldiers face dismissal in relation to an independent report on alleged unlawful killings in Afghanistan, the head of the country's Army said on Friday.

"It is the Australian government who should feel ashamed for their soldiers

killing innocent Afghan civilians," said Hua Chunying, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, when asked about Mr. Morrison's comments.

The image posted by her colleague shows people's "indignation," said Ms. Hua, speaking at a regular news conference in Beijing on Monday. Whether it will be taken down is a matter between Twitter and the Australian government, she said.

Australia's relationship with China has deteriorated since Canberra called for an international inquiry into

the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier this month, China outlined a list of grievances about Australia's foreign investment, national security and human rights policy, saying Canberra needed to correct its actions to restore the bilateral relationship with its largest trading partner.

Mr. Morrison said Australia had established a "transparent" process for investigating the allegations against the accused soldiers and this

Moderna to seek U.S., EU vaccine authorisation

Results from late-stage study show a 94.1% efficacy rate, consistent across age, race and ethnicity

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Moderna Inc will apply for U.S. and European emergency authorisation for its COVID-19 vaccine on Monday after full results from a late-stage study showed it was 94.1% effective with no serious safety concerns, the company said.

Moderna also reported that its vaccine's efficacy rate was consistent across age, race, ethnicity and gender demographics as well as having a 100% success rate in preventing severe cases of a disease that has killed nearly 1.5 million people.

'Backed by data'
The filing sets Moderna's product up to be the second vaccine likely to receive U.S. emergency use authorisation this year following a shot developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, which had a 95% efficacy rate.

A dose of hope: Moderna also claims to have a 100% success rate in preventing severe cases of COVID-19. ■ AP

"We believe that we have a vaccine that is very highly efficacious. We now have the data to prove it," Moderna chief medical officer Tal Zaks said. "We expect to be playing a major part in turning around this pandemic."

Of the 196 people who contracted COVID-19 out of over 30,000 volunteers, 185 had received a placebo and 11 got the vaccine. Moderna reported 30 severe cases, all in the placebo group, which

means the vaccine was 100% effective against severe cases.

Moderna shares were up 6.7% at \$138.58 in U.S. pre-market trade, a record high and a rise of more than 600% this year.

"As the numbers of cases reported grows, confidence grows that this amazing protection will be maintained in a product that can be rolled out to protect the public," said Alexander Edwards, as-

sociate professor in biomedical technology at Britain's University of Reading.

In addition to filing its U.S. application, Moderna said it would seek conditional approval from the European Medicines Agency, which is already reviewing its data, and would continue to talk with other regulators doing similar rolling reviews.

"Although we await the full details of these results in published form, we can now assume that this vaccine will be approved for use in December," said Gillies O'Bryan-Tear, chair of policy and communications at Britain's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine.

Others in the race
He expected Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to approve the vaccine within two weeks.

Pfizer has already applied

for emergency use authorisation in the United States and Europe, putting it about a week ahead of Moderna.

Moderna said it was on track to have about 20 million doses of its vaccine ready to ship in the United States by the end of 2020, enough to inoculate 10 million people.

The vaccines developed by both Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech use a new technology called synthetic messenger RNA (mRNA) whereas others, such as Britain's AstraZeneca, are using more traditional methods.

AstraZeneca has announced an average efficacy rate of 70% for its shot and as much as 90% for a subgroup of trial participants who got a half dose, followed by a full dose.

But some scientists have expressed doubts about the robustness of the 90% efficacy figure for the smaller group.

U.K. mercenaries' role in Sri Lanka war under lens

Private agency allegedly trained STF

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

London police said on Monday they have launched an investigation into alleged war crimes by British mercenaries who trained a security force accused of brutalising Tamil people during Sri Lanka's civil war.

The war crimes unit of the Metropolitan Police said it was acting on a referral received in March "concerning war crimes alleged to have been committed by British mercenaries in Sri Lanka during the 1980s".

"Following receipt of the referral, the War Crimes Team began a scoping exercise into the matter and have subsequently launched an investigation," it said, declining to comment further while the probe is ongoing.

The investigation concerns Keenie Meenie Services (KMS), a now-defunct private security company that trained an elite unit of the Sri Lankan police called the Special Task Force (STF) in the 1980s to fight Tamil separatists, according to the BBC.

The STF has been accused of summary executions of alleged Tamil Tiger rebels and killings of Tamil civilians.

Book on KMS
The probe follows the publication in January of a book by investigative journalist Phil Miller called "Keenie Meenie: The British Mercenaries Who Got Away with War Crimes".

"A lot of Tamil people became refugees in the 1980s, that's when KMS were there," Mr. Miller told the BBC.

"People remember being attacked by helicopter gunships so I think people are

quite shocked to learn that in many of those cases helicopters were flown by British mercenaries," he said.

KMS was founded in the 1970s by former officers of Britain's elite Special Air Service, including David Walker.

It ceased trading in the 1990s and Walker, 78, is now listed as one of the directors of another London-based company, Saladin Security.

Charges denied

The BBC quoted a representative of Walker as saying: "The allegations that David Walker or staff of KMS Limited were complicit in war crimes in Sri Lanka in the mid-1980s is categorically denied."

The police unit "has not yet asked for assistance from Saladin or Mr. Walker, but they will be happy to cooperate if asked", the representative added.

Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist war ended in 2009. More than 100,000 people lost their lives, according to United Nations estimates.

The United Nations has accused the Sri Lankan forces of killing at least 40,000 Tamil civilians in its military campaign, an allegation denied by successive governments.

Gunfire at Sri Lanka jail as riot toll rises to eight

Inmates protest spread of COVID-19

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Intermittent gunfire rang out on Monday at a Sri Lankan prison where a riot by inmates over a surge of coronavirus infections left at least eight dead and 55

'Bank capital in India, Sri Lanka to fall more than in other EMs'

NPAs to rise most for India and Thailand, funds infusion is key: Moody's report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Bank capital will shrink moderately in Asia's emerging markets over the next two years with banks in India and Sri Lanka expected to post larger declines in the absence of public or private funds injections, Moody's Investors Service said in its Emerging Markets Financial Institutions Outlook report.

"Non Performing Loans (NPLs) will rise most for banks in India and Thailand because of the greater shock to their economies and the historically poor performance of certain loan types. In India, stress among non-bank financial institutions will also curtail their capacity to lend," it said.

Moody's said the tangible



Capital threat: In India, stress among NBFCs will also curtail their capacity to lend, Moody's warns. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

common equity to risk-weighted assets will remain broadly unchanged or decrease modestly at most banks in emerging Asia over the next two years.

"This will not be significant enough to prompt us to change our views on most

Moody's said the outlook for emerging markets insurers was stable.

Asset quality uncertainty

"The uncertain trajectory of asset quality is one of the biggest threats for emerging market banks, as operating conditions remain challenging amid the current health crisis," it said.

"Profit growth will be modest because of low interest rates and subdued lending, but lower loan volumes should aid capital," said Moody's MD Celia Vanetti-Hutchins. "Additionally, banks' lending and funding shifts in response to flatter yield curve dynamics and low rates will also pressure net interest margins," Ms. Vanetti-Hutchins added.

Amalgamation ensures stability, says DBS Bank India

All erstwhile LVB employees are now on DBIL's rolls'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The amalgamation of the erstwhile Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) with DBS Bank India Ltd. (DBIL) has ensured stability and better prospects for the former's depositors, customers and employees following a period of uncertainty, the subsidiary of DBS Group Holdings Ltd. said on Monday.

"The amalgamation of LVB has enabled us to provide stability to LVB's depositors and employees," said Surojit Shome, CEO, DBIL. "It also gives us access to a larger set of customers and



Surojit Shome

All LVB employees were now on the rolls of DBIL and would continue in service, the Singapore-based group's Indian banking unit said.

Systems integration

"The DBS team is working closely with LVB colleagues to integrate LVB's systems and network into DBS over the coming months," DBIL said in a statement.

"Once the integration is complete, customers will be able to access a wider range of products and services, including the full suite of DBS digital banking services," the bank added.

Passenger vehicle, bike wholesales to decline'

Dealers have huge inventories: Ind-Ra



Domestic passenger vehicle and two-wheeler wholesales will come down in the next few months as inventory levels remain high at the dealer level, according to rating firm India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

The overall auto industry would, however, continue to grow in the next few months, it noted.

"With the festive season now over in India, the rating agency expects wholesale billings to moderate in the next couple of months, given that the inventory at dealer level for passenger vehicles (PVs) and two-wheelers is already at higher than the 21 days recommended by Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA)," Ind-Ra said in a statement.

Over the past two-three months, original equipment manufacturers had been focusing on stocking up at the dealership level ahead of the peak demand expected during the festive season in October-November. Consequently, production had surged since August.

'Bank credit growth to stay slow in near term'

'Asset quality unease curbs disbursals'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Bank credit growth is likely to remain moderate in the near term as lenders will continue to remain risk-averse due to the pandemic-led uncertainty, according to a report.

The overall bank credit growth in October continued to decelerate to 5.6%. "The overall credit growth is expected to remain slower in the near term as banks are being selective in giving fresh loans due to asset quality concerns," Care Ratings wrote in a report.

It said though the interest rates of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) were fall-

S&P still sees GDP shrinking by 9% in FY21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained its forecast of 9% contraction in the Indian economy for the current fiscal, saying even though there were now upside risks to growth, it would wait for more signs that COVID-19 infections had stabilised or fallen.

&P, in its report on Asia Pacific, said the Indian economy would grow at 10% in the next fiscal.

"We project headline consumer price inflation just above the mid-point of the Reserve Bank of India's [target] range of 2-6% through 2021. One-off factors should ease, including food-supply disruptions... But the pass-through to core inflation, currently near 6%, suggests inflation persistence remains a challenge," S&P said.

Consumer spending to rebound in 2021: Fitch

Consumption is forecast to contract by 12.6% in 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

After a COVID-19 pandemic-led contraction in consumer spending in 2020, household spending will return to growth in 2021, expanding by as much as 6.6%, Fitch Solutions said on Monday.

Consumer spending in India is forecast to have contracted by 12.6% in 2020.

"While growth will return to positive in 2021, we do note the recovery will be slower than most countries, as a result of the significant contraction over 2020," it said. "Unemployment will remain heightened, while the effectiveness of government support measures is questionable."

Fitch Solutions forecast a return to pre-COVID-19 levels only over the second



Slow lane: Recovery in India will be slower than in most countries, due to a significant contraction in 2020. ■ R. RAGHU

half of 2021 and 2022.

In nominal terms, total household spending will only be 1.2% higher than what it was in 2019 (₹123 lakh crore in 2021, compared to ₹121.6 lakh crore in 2019), indicating the extent of the impact that the pandemic has had on consumer spending.

Fitch Solutions said the main categories will return to growth in 2021.

However, the economic impact of 2020 had created a significant base effect.

Food and non-alcoholic drinks were prioritised in household budgets in 2020 and so growth in spending on these items will be slightly lower than in 2020.

India to surpass 350 mn 5G connections by 2026'

First connection likely in 2021: report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

710 million in 2020 to 820 million in 2026" by which time 3G will be phased out.

Based on the reported timeline for spectrum auction for 5G services, India could have its first 5G connection in 2021, according to Nitin Bansal, head of network solutions for the market area south east Asia, oceania and India, Ericsson.

The report added that in India, the reliance of people on mobile networks to stay connected as well as work from home during the pandemic has resulted in average traffic per smartphone user rising from 13.5 GB a month in 2019 to 15.7 GB in 2020, the highest globally.

Safe Storage to enter packing and moving

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Safe Storage, a storage solutions provider, has drawn up plans for a countrywide expansion by end-2021 and a foray into the packers and movers business by early next year, said a top official.

"Owing to the lockdown and 'work-from-home' scenario for the foreseeable future, self-storage facilities have seen a significant rise in demand, as people have moved out of their rented apartments back to their native places," said M. Ramesh Babu, CEO and co-founder. "The number of enquiries have also seen a huge surge," he added.

"Our aim is to be present across nine cities in India by end of 2021. We will also be venturing into the packers and movers business by early next year," he said.

S&P Global to acquire IHS Markit in \$44 bn mega deal

Transaction expected to close in the second half of 2021

REUTERS

Data giant S&P Global Inc. has agreed to buy IHS Markit Ltd. in an all-stock deal worth \$44 billion that will be the biggest corporate acquisition of 2020 and create a heavyweight in the increasingly competitive market in financial information.

The mega deal, which IHS Markit Chief Executive Officer Lance Uggla told employees in a memo had been in the works for the last few months, highlights the growing importance of big data in financial markets governed by information-hungry trading algorithms.

It is expected to close in the second half of 2021 if it can pass reviews by antitrust



regulators who have been showing increasing interest in the sector.

Regulatory hurdles

"The next steps will be to receive regulatory approvals both in the U.S. and the EU, which we expect to take between six to nine months, and receive approval by our

respective shareholders," Mr. Uggla said in the internal memo seen by Reuters.

S&P Global is best known for providing debt ratings to countries and companies, as well as data on capital and commodity markets. It became a standalone business in 2011 when its then parent McGraw-Hill separated S&P.

IHS Markit was formed in 2016 when IHS, whose businesses include data on automotive and technology industries to publishing Jane's Defence Weekly, bought Markit for about \$6 billion.

Markit, founded by former credit trader Mr. Uggla, provides a range of pricing and reference data for financial assets and derivatives.

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THE HINDU GROUP



IN BRIEF

Patym Money enables user applications for IPOs

NEW DELHI
Online investment platform Paytm Money said its users can now put in applications for investment in IPOs via the platform, adding that it was aiming to capture an 8-10% share of total applications for IPOs in the first year of the introduction of this facility. It said it had made the process of IPO application 'digital and simple for retail investors'.

Kaspersky, CERT-in ink pact on cybersecurity

NEW DELHI
Kaspersky on Monday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) for collaboration in the area of cybersecurity. The MoU will facilitate cooperation for detection of latest cyber threats and to devise security measures, the firm said in a statement.

IHCL, Ambuja Neota tie up for 3 hotels in east

MUMBAI
Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (IHCL) has announced an agreement with the Ambuja Neota Group to manage three Taj hotels – two in Kolkata and one in Patna – which would add to its east India presence. The Ambuja Neota Group is building two other hotels in the east, in Darjeeling and Gangtok, which will open in 2022.

Indian Bank to write off losses of ₹19,000 crore

CHENNAI
Indian Bank shareholders on Monday approved the write-off of net accumulated losses of about ₹19,000 crore arising from the lender's merger with Allahabad Bank. MD and CEO Padmaja Chunduru said the bank would use the ₹19,833 crore in the Share Premium Account to set off the losses.

CM YK

A ND-NDE

Warner ruled out, Cummins rested

Short, who had a good run in the Big Bash League, comes in for remainder of limited-overs series

INDIA IN AUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY

In-form Australia opener David Warner has been ruled out of the remainder of the limited-overs series against India due to a groin injury he suffered during the second ODI here, while top pacer Pat Cummins has been rested as part of workload management.

Warner, who scored 69 and 83 in the first two ODIs, hurt himself on Sunday while fielding at the SCG in the second one-dayer which Australia won by 51 runs.

The dashing opener has returned home to begin his rehabilitation and will be looking to get fit ahead of the opening Test at Adelaide starting on December 17.

Priority

"Pat and Davie are critical to our plans for the Test series," coach Justin Langer was quoted as saying by the Australian media.



Bad news! David Warner is helped to his feet by Pat Cummins, left, and Josh Hazlewood. • AFP

"Davie will work through his injury rehab."

"The priority for both is being fully prepared for one of the biggest and most important home Test series we have played in recent years, especially with World Test

lenging summer."

Championship points up for grabs," Langer said.

Left-handed batsman D'Arcy Short, who was the leading run-scorer in two series in the Big Bash League, has been named Warner's re-

placement in Australia's white-ball squad.

India and Australia will play one more ODI on Wednesday before the three T20 Internationals begin on Friday.

Cummins, who was part of Australia's England tour in August and also played for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, has not been at his best and went wicketless in the first game before claiming three for 67 in the second.

All-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who missed the second ODI after suffering a side strain in the opening game, will stay in the squad.

No game for Marsh

But all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who is recovering from an ankle injury sustained while playing in the IPL, will not be playing the warm-up game between India-A and Australia-A starting on Sunday.

He will continue his rehabilitation and no replacement has been named for him in the 'A' squad.

Struggling

"I didn't know I was playing today. I had a really bad dose of vertigo this morning and I was struggling. I came down early to have a hit and a bit of a run around," Smith told cricket.com.au after receiving his second successive Man-of-

Smith almost missed Sunday's ODI with a bout of vertigo

Team doctor Golding's prompt action saved the day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY

Top Australia batsman Steve Smith has revealed he suffered a "bad dose of vertigo" ahead of the second ODI against India on Sunday and was not sure of playing the game in which he struck a series-clinching hundred.

Smith's quick-fire 62-ball 100 propelled Australia to a mammoth 389 for four in the second ODI, which it defended easily to secure a decisive 2-0 lead in the ODI series.

However, the former skipper said it "didn't look great there for a while".



Fighter: Steve Smith had Indian heads in a spin with his onslaught in the second ODI. • AFP

the inner ear). "The doctor,

I think he performed six manoeuvres on me this morning and got the crystals out of my ears and I was struggling for a bit," he said.

"Just pleased to be able to get out here and play another good innings and help the team."

Final T20I rained off; Kiwis take series 2-0



Lockie Ferguson...
Man-of-the-Series. • AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOUNT MAUNGANUI

The third and final Twenty20 International between New Zealand and the West Indies here was rained off on Monday, giving the Black Caps a 2-0 series win.

Only 2.2 overs were bowled before a downpour forced players from the field with the West Indies on 25 for one after being asked to bat.

The umpires called off the fixture two hours later with no sign of a break in the weather.

New Zealand won the first T20 by five wickets and the second by 72 runs against a West Indies outfit that only emerged from COVID-19 quarantine on Thursday.

Paceman Lockie Ferguson was named Man-of-the-Series for his five for 21 in the opening fixture, plus one wicket apiece in the second and third matches.

The first of two Tests between the sides begins in Hamilton on Thursday.

Arsenal slumps to yet another defeat

Napoli honours Maradona by routing Roma; Sociedad's winning run halted

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
LONDON

Arsenal slumped to a fourth defeat in six Premier League games as Wolves shrugged off a worrying early injury to Raul Jimenez to claim a 2-1 win at The Emirates on Sunday.

Pedro Neto put the Wolves ahead in the 27th minute and although Gabriel headed the host level, a clever finish by Daniel Podence restored the visitors' lead before halftime.

Ending a drought
Wolves hung on for its first league win at Arsenal since 1979 to move up to sixth in

the table on 17 points, four points off the top, while Arsenal is languishing in 14th spot with 13.

Napoli, playing in Argentina-style shirts as a tribute to the late Diego Maradona, demolished AS Roma 4-0 in Serie A on another poignant evening on Sunday.

Lorenzo Insigne put Napoli ahead with a sublime free kick and celebrated by running halfway across the pitch to collect and kiss a shirt with Maradona's name on it.

Fabian Ruiz, Dries Mertens and Matteo Politano added three more goals in the second half to hand Roma its first defeat of the season on the pitch in all competitions.

The visitors took the lead as Gerard Moreno converted a penalty after six minutes but Sociedad pulled level when Mikel Oyarzabal also netted from the spot in the 33rd.

Sociedad is on top with 24 points after 11 games but Atletico Madrid is one point be-

hind with two games in hand. Villarreal (20) is third ahead of Real Madrid (17).

The results: Premier League:

Arsenal 1 (Gabriel 30) lost to Wolves 2 (Neto 27, Podence 42).

LaLiga: Celta Vigo 3 (Nolito 27, Baeza 81, Beltran 85) bt Granada 1 (Suarez 25); Real Sociedad 1 (Oyarzabal 33-pen) drew with Villarreal 1 (Moreno 6-pen).

Serie A: Lazio 1 (Immobile 74-pen) lost to Udinese 3 (Arslan 18, Pussetto 45+3, Forestieri 71); Bologna 1 (Soriani 45+2) bt Crotone 0; Cagliari 2 (Joao Pedro 52, Pavoletti 58) drew with Spezia 2 (Gyasi 36, Nzola 90+4-pen); Napoli 4 (Insigne 30, Ruiz 64, Mertens 81, Politano 86) bt Roma 0.

Bundesliga: Mainz 1 (Quaison 33) drew with Hoffenheim 1 (Bebou 62).



Doing it for Diego! Napoli's Dries Mertens, sporting an Argentina-style shirt as a tribute to Diego Maradona, fires in his team's third goal against Roma • REUTERS

As with all other Serie A matches, the game was preceded by a minute's silence for Maradona, who enjoyed seven remarkable seasons at Napoli, and the game stopped in the tenth minute for a round of applause.

La Liga leader Real Sociedad's six-game winning streak ended on Sunday as it was held to a 1-1 draw at home to Villarreal.

The visitors took the lead as Gerard Moreno converted a penalty after six minutes but Sociedad pulled level when Mikel Oyarzabal also netted from the spot in the 33rd.

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Angulo helps FC Goa hold NEUFC

The NorthEast side stays in second spot in the standings



Rising to the occasion: FC Goa goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz came up with a couple of crucial saves against NorthEast United FC. • ISL/SPORTZPICS

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

Igor Angulo's third goal of

the tournament helped FC Goa earn a 1-1 draw against NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) in an Indian Super League (ISL) encounter at Fatorda Stadium (Goa) on Monday.

A proactive FC Goa created better chances, but it was not enough to record a first win. An unbeaten NEUFC stayed in the second spot with five points from three games.

Soft penalty

NEUFC took a 1-0 lead despite FC Goa dominating the possession battle. FC Goa centre-back Ivan Gonzalez tugged on the arm of NEUFC

forward Idrissa Sylla inside the box, leading to the referee awarding a soft penalty.

Sylla, forced to retake the spot kick after an overeager teammate infringed, calmly converted his second attempt.

Drawing level

Just a few minutes later, FC Goa pulled level through Angulo.

The chance was created by Brandon Fernandes, who turned his marker Provat Lakra inside out to create space on the flank.

A fine cross from Fernandes was received by Angulo, who deftly slotted it past the goalkeeper with a first-time left-footed shot.

Fernandes, who has made a name for himself as an expert provider, found a clinical

TUESDAY'S MATCH

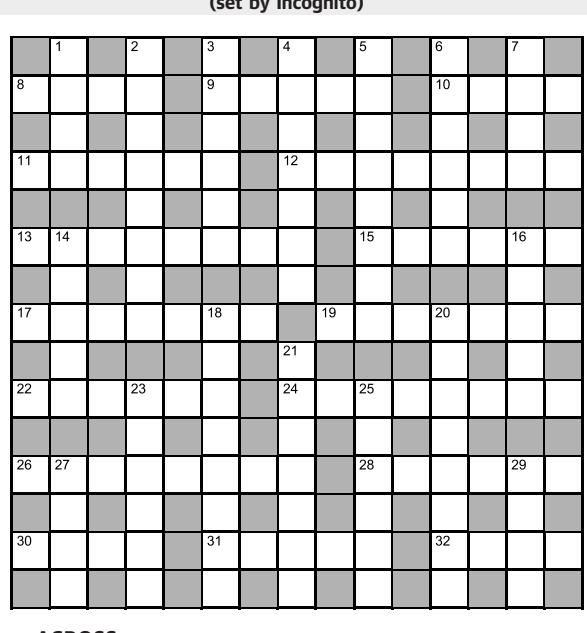
Mumbai City FC vs SC East Bengal

7.30 P.M.

STAR SPORTS 2 (SD & HD) AND 3

TH CROSSWORD + 13107

(set by Incognito)



ACROSS

- 8 Couple's investment (4)
- 9 Zulu editing You Only Live Twice initially gets money (5)
- 10 In Ireland, John's spiritual meet excluding civil engineer (4)
- 11 More nervous European's fantastic grid contains surprise ending (6)
- 12 Wrongly mention a name for a position (8)
- 13 Tax-man's animal has horrible sors (8)
- 15 Get canines, for example, (alien hounds initially) in golfer's resting

Free your mind from lockdown.

Solve puzzles on our interactive site.

@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY



SUDOKU

1	5							6
3	6	7			5	1	7	
			2	7		9		
8		9	3				7	
	9		6	5				
	8	1	3					
1					4	5	1	
					8	9		

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13106

M	A
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TV PICKS

ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.
South Africa v England: 3rd T20I, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m.
UEFA Champions League: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 11.25 p.m. & Sony Ten 1, 2, 3, Six (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

IN BRIEF



Senegal football star Diop dies aged 42

DAKAR
Former Senegal midfielder Papa Bouba Diop has died at the age of 42 after a long illness, Senegal's football federation said on Sunday. Diop is best known for scoring the winning goal against defending champion France in the opening match of the 2002 World Cup. He won the 2008 FA Cup with Portsmouth in a club career that included stints at Lens, Fulham, West Ham and Birmingham City. AFP

Archer Kapil tests positive for COVID-19

KOLKATA
Archer Kapil, who is part of the National camp at the Army Sports Institute, Pune, has tested positive for COVID-19. He is asymptomatic. Kapil is being monitored by a medical team.

Yash overcomes Utkarsh

AGRA
Top seed Yash Yadav beat Utkarsh Tiwari 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the first round of the ₹100,000 AITA-ranking tennis tournament on the clay courts of the Agra Lawn Tennis Centre on Monday. **The results (first round):** Yash Yadav bt Utkarsh Tiwari 3-6, 6-4; Nishith Naveen bt Akshat Kumar 6-3, 6-2; Harshom Gupta bt Akash Choudhry 6-3, 6-1; Abhishek Saroha bt Shaswat Verma 6-1, 6-2; Digvijay Singh bt Dhaval Jain 6-1, 6-0; Varmit Arora bt Amandeep Singh 7-6(5), 6-4; Lakshya Batwara bt Sarthak Sherawat 6-1, 6-0; Hanu Verma bt Rohit Goswami 6-1, 6-0.

Arnav upsets Manas

GURUGRAM
Arnav Yadav overcame third-seeded Manas Sinha 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the first round of the AITA Championship series under-18 tennis at the Pradhan Tennis Academy in Sector-62 on Monday. **Other results:** Tushar Mittal bt Aniket 6-1, 6-4; Nishant bt Arnav Yadav 6-2, 6-4; Deepam Malik bt Akshat Sharma 6-0, 6-2; Jai Rana bt Nikhil Mittal 6-4, 6-4; Arjun Sinhmar bt Vinit Rathore 6-3, 6-4; Ashfaq Izaan bt Davat Mehta 6-1, 6-0; Aditya Rvara bt Kanishk Yadav 6-3, 4-6, 6-2; Tejas Kartikey bt Yashwanth Duggal 6-2 6-4; Abhiraj Mohil bt Vijay Sehgal 6-3, 6-4; Manish Yadav bt Aniket Singh 6-4, 6-3; Mukul Ramanan bt Tanmay Chugh 6-4, 6-4, 6-1; Bhavya Sinhmar bt Tharakosh Ashokar 6-3, 6-4; Mayank Sharma bt Arnav Sharma 6-4, 1-6, 6-4; Dhruv Kumar bt Sarthak Sharma 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; Lokesh Puri bt Shourya Singh 6-3, 6-2.

Women footballers to resume training today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
The Indian women's football team will start its first training camp in nine months in Goa on Tuesday under National coach Maymol Rocky in a strict bio-security environment put in place by the AIFF.

Coach Rocky said the team was excited to resume training with an eye on the big-ticket event – 2022 AFC Asian Cup.

Four boxers included in TOPS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
Four Olympics-bound Indian boxers have been included in the Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), SAI said on Monday. World bronze-medallist

Conte in the firing line, seeks miracle

Inter Milan has painted itself into a corner with a poor showing so far in the competition

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILAN

Antonio Conte is in the firing line with another Champions League failure looming as his Inter Milan side heads to Borussia Monchengladbach on Tuesday with its hopes of reaching the knockout stage hanging by a thread.

The three-time European champion is bottom of Group B with just two points from four games, six points behind leader Gladbach.

Real Madrid is one point behind the Germans in second place and three clear of Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk with two matches to play.

Title drought

An Italian team has not won a European trophy since Inter secured the Champions League to complete a treble



Can they? If Inter is to stay alive, it needs an encore of such scenes with its strikers – Lautaro Martinez and Romelu Lukaku – celebrating a goal. ■REUTERS

under Jose Mourinho in 2010. And Inter needs a miracle to avoid a third consecutive exit in the group stage.

Against Gladbach, the

1977 European Cup runner-up, there will be no room for error.

The teams settled for a 2-2 draw at the San Siro last

month, with Romelu Lukaku scoring both goals for the hosts.

Inter needs to win and then beat Shakhtar, while al-

so hoping other results go its way.

An exit from the lucrative tournament would prove costly for Inter, who this week revealed losses of €102.4 million for 2019/20, largely blamed on the coronavirus pandemic.

This season Inter has frequently had to come from behind, battling back from two goals down to equalise before Real Madrid snatched a 3-2 victory in Spain.

Against Gladbach, Conte will be counting on the attacking duo of Lukaku and Lautaro Martinez, who have scored 10 of Inter's 14 Champions League goals in the past two seasons.

Sanchez factor

Alexis Sanchez also scored against Sassuolo, finding the net in two consecutive league fixtures for the first time since December 2017 when he was at Arsenal.

Police begin probe into Maradona's death

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BUENOS AIRES

Police began investigation for involuntary manslaughter against Diego Maradona's personal doctor on Sunday, four days after the Argentine football legend died following a heart attack, prosecutors in San Isidro said.

Police raided Leopoldo Luque's surgery and home in search of possible evidence pointing to negligence, according to television images.

The probe was triggered by concerns raised by three of Maradona's daughters Dalma, Gianinna and Jana over the treatment he received for his heart condition at his home in Tigre, north of Buenos Aires, judicial sources said.

Dr. Luque said he did



Dr. Leopoldo Luque with Maradona. ■AFP

"everything he could, up to the impossible" and considered himself a "friend" of Maradona and saw him "as a father, not as a patient".

"I am a neurosurgeon," said Luque. "I am the person who has been taking care of him. I'm proud of everything I've done. I have nothing to hide. I am at the disposal of justice."

So rallies twice to keep final level

SKILLING OPEN

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Magnus Carlsen and Wesley So won with white to be locked 2-2 after a dramatic first set of the title-clash in the \$100,000 Skilling Open online chess tournament on Sunday.

Rarely does Carlsen lose, but to see him lose twice in a set was almost unbelievable. So bounced back twice from deficit to level the match and later said Carlsen was clearly not playing his best chess.

Carlsen promptly punished a So mistake in the first game, with a decisive attack. In the second game, it was Carlsen who tripped into a checkmating net.

Carlsen was seen giving vent to his frustration by punching the air in disgust.

But when the action resumed, Carlsen produced a masterclass and brilliantly won with white to regain his lead at 2-1.

In the fourth game, So brought Carlsen under time-pressure. The pressure took its toll and Carlsen cracked to leave the score at 2-2.

So said, "To beat Magnus twice is very special. I am very happy to compete with Magnus, he is the superior player by all measures and standards. I guess, he is not in his best form right now, so that gives me some chances."

The results: Final: Set One: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) drew with Wesley So (USA) 2-2.

Fittipaldi for Grosjean at Sakhir GP

Injured Haas driver expected to be in hospital until Tuesday

FORMULA ONE

REUTERS
MANAMA

Brazilian reserve driver Pietro Fittipaldi will make his Formula One race debut with Haas at next weekend's Sakhir Grand Prix in Bahrain as a stand-in for the injured Romain Grosjean, the US-owned team said on Monday.

Frenchman Grosjean suffered burns to the back of his hands in a fiery crash that split his car in two during Sunday's Bahrain Grand Prix.



Pietro Fittipaldi...getting a big break. ■GETTY IMAGES

The 34-year-old is expected to remain in hospital until Tuesday.

The team said he was un-

able to compete.

"After it was decided that the best thing for Romain was to skip at least one race, the choice to put Pietro in the car was pretty easy," said team principal Guenther Steiner in a statement.

"He's familiar with us having been around the team for the past two seasons as a test and reserve driver.

"He's been patient and was always prepared for this opportunity and now it has come.

"That's why we want him in the car and I'm sure he'll do a good job."

TNCA willing to host domestic calendar

CRICKET

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Cricket Association on Monday expressed its willingness to host domestic competitions in Chennai after the BCCI wrote to State associations outlining its plan to conduct a curtailed domestic season.

The TNCA also stated its preference to start the season with the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20

Quality grounds
The official also added "apart from the main M.A. Chidambaram Stadium, we also have quality grounds like IIT-Cheplast, IC-Guru Nanak, SRMC."

A senior TNCA official told

'Olympics delay is a blessing in disguise'

Sable says he hopes to cover all bases and improve his timings before Tokyo

ATHLETICS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Avinash Sable, who smashed the National record while winning the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon gold among Indian elite runners on Sunday, has set the tone for next year's Tokyo Olympics.

Having clocked 1:00:30sec at the event, Sable said he wanted to test his endurance level for the Tokyo Games.

"I wasn't doing any special preparations for the half-marathon. My focus has been the Olympic Games and since I haven't had any chance to compete this year, I participated in the ADHM to test my endurance level and to get back into a competitive frame of mind. As I had started training just 15-20 days before the event, it



Runner with a mission: Avinash Sable is determined to better his endurance levels as he prepares for the Olympics.

■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

felt great to break the National record," said Sable.

No visit to home

Sable, who has been training with coach Amrit Singh in Bengaluru, hasn't visited his home for over four years and has decided to do so only after the Olympic Games.

Speaking about the train-

ing during the lockdown, Sable said, "The initial few days were a little troublesome, but after realising that this thing is going to last long, I started training again. I decided not to go home as it becomes challenging to get back into the rhythm after a long break. So, whenever I got time here [Bengaluru], I

started training and tried to keep up my fitness."

The 26-year-old, who earned the Olympics berth last year, feels the postponement has been a 'blessing in disguise' as he now has more time to improve his timings.

"Initially, I thought I would go to the Olympics and give it my best. I just wanted to get done with it as quick as possible. But the delay has turned out to be a blessing in disguise as I have realised that it's a great chance for me to cover all bases before heading to Tokyo," said Sable.

"In terms of timing, I was way far from the world-level, but the delay has helped me grow and improve on various aspects of this sport. Now, I'll go to compete, not only to participate, and I am hopeful of getting good results," concluded Sable.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

Redhu 3/13, Divij Prakash 3/16).

Sporting Club

in semifinals

Half-centuries from Rajesh Sharma and Shivam Gupta saw Sporting Club beat Sports Cube Academy by 61 runs and enter the semifinals of the Eventeneers Cup.

The scores: Sporting Club 250/9 in 50 overs (Rajesh Sharma 70, Shivam Gupta 66, Karan Dagar 43, Rohit Dua 3/37) bt SC 189/3 in 39.1 overs (Gulshan Kumar 47).

Chetan shines for TCA

Chetan Rishi top-scored with 38 not out and took two wickets as Triakash Cricket Club beat GK Academy by five wickets in the Tripathi Premier League.

The scores: GKA 124 in 38.4 overs (Urooj Rizvi 54) lost to TCA 127/5 in 15 overs (Chetan Rishi 38 n.o.; Rahul Rajput 4/20).

Youth XI and Rann Star Club

A five-wicket haul by Neeraj Yadav and half-century by Shubham Sehrawat saw Youth XI win by two wickets against Rann Star Club and enter the quarterfinals of the All India T20 Unique tournament.

The scores: RSC 104 in 19.3 overs (Abhishek Goswami 40, Neeraj Yadav 5/20, Mani Kumar 2/26, Sunil 2/16) lost to Youth XI 105/8 in 19.4 overs (Shubham Sehrawat 55, Ankit

n.o., Ankit Bisht 50).

Facile win for LB Shastri

Man of the match Priyanshu Arya's 62 and Hiten Dalal's 43 helped LB Shastri Club beat RS Cricket Club by seven wickets in the Choudhary Shyam Singh T20 tournament.

The scores:

Niz Sports

222/7 in 20 overs (Abhishek 65, Yash Sehrawat 32; Vishwas Malik 2/37) lost to LB Shastri CC 169/3 in 17.3 overs (Priyanshu Arya 62, Hiten Dalal 43).

Delhi