



Plea in SC challenges
U.P. govt's religious
conversion ordinance

Page 9



India asks UN to
condemn bigotry
against all religions

Page 10



U.S. Senate clears Bill
on immigrant visas,
benefiting Indians

Page 11



India takes on
Australia in T20I
series from today

Page 13

PRINTED AT • CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA

NEARBY



No night curfew in Delhi
as of now, govt. tells HC

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Thursday informed the High Court that it was not going to impose night curfew in the Capital to curb the spread of COVID-19 as of now.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2



By Karandeep Singh
8826486658, 8826496658

Rajini will launch party in Jan. 2021

He will contest T.N. poll; change is need of the hour, says actor

STAFF REPORTER

CHENNAI
Ending years of oscillation, Tamil superstar Rajinikanth announced on Thursday that he would launch a political party in January 2021 to contest in the Assembly election. The date of the launch will be announced on December 31.

"In the upcoming election, we will achieve a big victory with the support of the people. A 'spiritual politics' will emerge in Tamil Nadu that will bring transpa-



Rajinikanth addressing media in Chennai. ■ S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

rency, honesty, politics with no corruption and one that is free of caste and religious bias," he wrote on Twitter. Adding that miracles and

wonders would happen, he sought to place before his supporters the slogans "Will change everything" and "Now or never".

The actor appointed R. Arjunamoorthy, who resigned as BJP Tamil Nadu unit intellectual cell president on Thursday, as the proposed party's "chief coordinator". Political activist Tamilaruvi Manian, considered one of the guiding forces behind the actor's decision, was appointed the "overseer" of party affairs.

CISCE wants schools to reopen from January 4

'Allow Class X, XII students to attend'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has written to all Chief Ministers asking that its schools be allowed to reopen partially for Class X and XII students from January 4, 2021. This is needed for students to be able to complete project and practical work and to clear doubts with their teachers before the board exams, said a

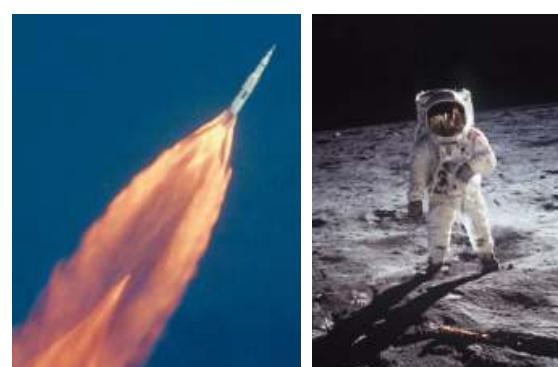
statement from the Council's chief executive and secretary Gerry Arathoon.

It said exam dates would be decided after taking into account the April-May election schedule. The CISCE conducts the ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) examination for Class X and the ISC (Indian School Certificate) examination for Class XII students.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
'VACCINE BY JAN.' ▶ PAGE 10



omegawatches.com



SPEEDMASTER MOONWATCH

The Speedmaster was first introduced in 1957, and its stories will live forever in history.

Originally designed for race-timing, this robust technical watch went on to play a central role in NASA's space program, having been worn throughout the Gemini, Mercury, Apollo and Shuttle programs.

It all started in 1965 when NASA qualified it for all manned space-flight by subjecting it to a series of extreme shock, pressure and temperature tests designed to destroy it. The Speedmaster passed with flying colours and was issued to all astronauts going forward.

In July 1969 the Speedmaster earned its nickname when it became the first watch worn on the moon, and in 1970 it went above all expectations when it helped to guide the crew of Apollo 13 back to safety after an explosion crippled the mission.

Today, the Speedmaster continues to soar on the International Space Station, remaining essentially unchanged in design and spirit since its first release. Over the decades it has proven time and again to be the ultimate explorer's watch and we look forward to the next era of space travel, as mission-ready as ever before.

Ω
OMEGA

OMEGA BOUTIQUE • C.P. 41513255
AUTHORISED OMEGA RETAILERS IN DELHI NCR
Ethos • Select Citywalk 40588700; Genuine & Gorgeous • Pitampura 8585988585;
Kapoor Watch Co • DLF Emporio 46767777 • S.Ex Part II 41658888 • Pitampura 45533477
• Mall of India Noida 6765808 • Ambience Gurgaon 4665500; Ethos • Airport T3 49633438

No night curfew in Capital as of now, govt. informs High Court

Order issued to maintain status quo with respect to restricted activities till Dec. 31'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday informed the High Court that it was not going to impose night curfew in the Capital to curb the spread of COVID-19 as of now.

The Delhi government, however, said it has issued order on November 28 to maintain the status-quo with respect to permitted or restricted activities in the Capital, including celebrating festivals, marriages, inter-State movement of buses, etc. till December 31.

The government's submission came in response to a query posed by a Bench of Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Subramonium Prasad last week, whether it would impose night curfew, as done in some other States.

50% cap on attendance
The government also submitted that there is a 50% cap on the attendance of employees (below Grade-I) of non-essential services, departments of Delhi government, Corporations, Public

To keep an unabated check on the spread of COVID-19 infection, the level of testing cannot be reduced. Efforts must be made to trace the contacts of persons who have tested positive

HIGH COURT

Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and local bodies here. The private establishments have also been advised to consider staggered office timings and also reduce the number of employees attending office at the same time, it added.

Fines collected
The court, however, said: "It is unclear from the status report as to how much impact would this order actually have on a real-time basis as it does not cover Central government employees and is only recommendatory in nature *qua* private establishments," the report said.

The Delhi government has so far collected fines to the tune of ₹17.93 crore against 2,37,907 challans issued in respect of COVID-19 violations. The Delhi police, too, have collected ₹27.68 crore fine against 5,47,394 challans.

While the fines collected from the challans are deposited in the government treasury, the same money is not directly used for incurring any specific expenditure, including Covid-19 infection.

As per the prevailing procedures, all expenditure in any department has to be incurred from the budget allocations approved through legislative procedures.

In its status report, the government said Delhi has 593 crematoriums, of which 415 are dedicated to COVID-19 deaths.

"A total of 1,265 patients who succumbed to COVID-19 have been cremated/buried in October and 2,787 patients who have succumbed to the disease have been cremated/buried in November," the report said.

While the death rate is currently just below 100, the court said, "It needs to climb down further."

The Delhi government said between November 25 and December 1, 5,28,670 tests have been conducted out of which 2,48,700 have been done by adopting the RAT method and 2,46,635 through RT-PCR and other methods.

It said the positivity rate is above 5%. "To keep an unabated check on the spread of COVID-19 infection, the level of testing cannot be reduced. Efforts must be made to trace the contacts of persons who have tested positive and ensure that persons who are symptomatic and in home quarantine, adhere to the guidelines prescribed by the ICMR," the High Court said.

It directed the Delhi government to state the measures that are being taken to ensure proper follow-up on contact tracing and to ensure that persons who are home quarantined, do not violate the isolation regime.

'Recovery rate in city at 92%, government working overtime'

Cases reducing, situation being monitored, Delhi govt. tells SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government informed the Supreme Court on Thursday that the COVID-19 recovery rate in the Capital is a whopping 92%.

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, senior advocate K.V. Viswanathan, for Delhi, said only 5% positivity was detected from 78,090 COVID-19 tests done as of December 2.

When the court asked whether there were any means to cross-check the veracity of these statistics, Mr. Viswanathan said he would place on record the audit mechanism by which these figures were reached. He said these figures were compiled from accredited centres, laboratories and authorities.

"Cases are going down. The situation is being monitored at the highest level. We don't want to be adversarial. Why did the Centre have to blame us? The Delhi government is working overtime," Mr. Viswanathan said. He added that the Lieutenant-Governor is in charge of COVID-19 management.



of COVID-19 infections.

Rejecting the Centre's claim that the Delhi government was ill-prepared for the spike in cases due to the festive season, the affidavit had said the total number of COVID ICU beds available in Delhi is 5010 presently, with an expected increase of another 1522 ICU beds.

Mr. Viswanathan referred to how Chief Minister Kejriwal had written to the Union Home Minister to increase the number of ICU beds by 1,214 in Central government hospitals like AIIMS, Safdarjung, LHM, RML, etc. It said the Delhi government, notwithstanding this request, had gone ahead to approve the procurement of 1,200 of bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP), a kind of ventilator, from CSIR. It said 300 of these machines would be arriving next week, with an equal number of them coming every week.

"In a short while, we will have 6,200 beds, including the BiPAP ones. If the Centre contributes, we will have more than 7000," Mr. Viswanathan submitted.

Virus spread	
Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
5,82,058	9,424
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
3,734	82

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN
Delhi reports over 3K cases, 82 deaths

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The city witnessed 3,734 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 5,82,058, according to a health bulletin released by the government on Thursday.

Also, 82 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 9,424. Of the total cases, 5,43,514 people have recovered and there are 29,120 active cases. A total of 75,230 tests were done in the past 24 hours, as per the bulletin.

The positivity rate of COVID-19 cases on Thursday was 4.96%, which is less than 11.65% that was the average daily positivity rate in November. The overall positivity rate till now was 8.95%, the bulletin stated.

Out of the total 18,719 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 62.6% were vacant. About 70.5% of ICU beds with ventilators for COVID-19 treatment were occupied by Thursday night and 58.1% of the ICU beds without ventilators were full. In November, there were days when more than 50% of beds were occupied and about 90% of ICU beds with ventilators were full. There were 5,759 containment zones in the city as on Thursday.

IN BRIEF

Sisodia gives tablets to govt. school students

NEW DELHI

Education Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said COVID-19 vaccine will be available soon across the world and to minimise the loss faced by students, the government is consistently working on solutions. Mr. Sisodia was speaking at an event to distribute tablets to Class XI students of the government schools. He distributed tablets to 50 students. Overall, 1,902 students will be receiving the tablets.

Cong. protests against govt. over pandemic

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Congress on Thursday organised protests in all 70 Assembly constituencies against the manner in which the government has been handling the COVID-19 situation here. The party called for the resignation of Health Minister Satyendar Jain for failing to stop the increasing death rate over the past few months. Delhi Congress chief said: "The dangerous spike in cases and deaths due to COVID-19 are being exposed on a daily."

'SDMC setting up shops in parks will lead to graft'

NEW DELHI
The Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday attacked the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) over the latter's plan to set up shops selling fruits and milk in parks, saying the BJP was doing this to encourage corruption. AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said corruption of the BJP in the municipal corporations is well known to the citizens of Delhi.

GGIPU launches PG course on fire and safety

NEW DELHI
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University on Thursday launched a PG diploma in Fire & Safety Audit in collaboration with National Fire Service College, Nagpur to train firefighters in India. Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said: "It's a first of its kind course launched by any university in India."

Office of The Superintending Engineer Irrigation Works Circle Haridwar					
E-Tender Notice No.08/SE/2020-21					
Dated: 02/12/2020					
E-Tender Notice					
The superintending Engineer, Irrigation Works Circle, Haridwar on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand, invites the item rate bids, in two bids system through Electronic Tendering, for following work from the eligible contractors registered in authorized / valid category for the estimated cost of tender in any department of central government / any state government / UT of India.					
SI No.	Name of work	Earliest Money (in Lac Rs.)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion & Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Project for Lining of Bahadradab Distributary under Nabard in Bahadradab Block of District Haridwar (CM Announcement No. 335/2017) (Reach 3.600 KM to 4.830 KM)	1.74	4000.00 + 720.00 (18 % GST)	120 days	03 Month
					2nd Time
Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement : 05-12-2020. Last Date / Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement : 21-12-2020 upto 05:00 PM. For further details please log on to www.uktenders.gov.in					
(Manoj Kumar Singh) Superintending Engineer					
DIPR/UK/14115					

CITY UNION BANK LIMITED					
Credit Recovery and Management Department					
Administrative Office : No. 24-B, Gandhi Nagar, Kumbakonam - 612 001.					
E-Mail id : crmd@cityunionbank.in, Ph : 0435-2431746					
RE-TENDER-CUM-AUCTION SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002					
The following properties mortgaged to City Union Bank Limited will be sold in Re-Tender-cum-Public Auction by the Authorised Officer of the Bank, under Rule 8 (6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, for recovery of the undermentioned security debts due to the Bank, together with further interest and other expenses, any other dues to the Bank by the borrowers / guarantors mentioned herein below:					
PART - 1					
Name of the Borrowers: No.1) M/s. Ritisha Oils Private Limited, 171, Ground Floor, Vigyan Vihar, New Delhi - 110 082, Also at- M/s. Ritisha Oils Private Limited, 39, 1st Floor, Mohalla, Ramana Dayal, Naya Basti, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.2) Mrs. Samridhi Jain, D/o. Mr. Vipan Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.3) Mr. Sami Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.4) Mr. Namit Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.5) Regional Manager, UP State Industrial Development Corporation Ltd., C-2, 4th Floor, Maha Luxmi Mall, RDC, Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad - 201 002. Outstanding Liability Amount: Rs.11,76,23,779/- (Rupees Eleven Crore Seventy Six Lakh Twenty Three Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Nine Only) as on 30-11-2020 plus accrued interest to be charged from 01-12-2020 plus other expenses, any other dues to the Bank by the borrowers / guarantors.					
Description of the Immovable Property Mortgaged to our Bank					
Reserve Price Date & Time of Auction					
(Property Owned by Mr. Namit Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain)					
₹ 1,55,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore Fifty Five Lakh Only)					
29-12-2020 at 01.00 p.m.					
Small construction over Residential Plot No.III - E-10, Block E, Sector - 3, Residential Colony, Nehru Nagar, Tehsil / District Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh). Total Area of the Plot is 227.55 Sq.M/27.15 Sq.yds. North - Remaining portion of the same Plot / Property No.III - E-9, beyond the remaining portion, South - Property No.E-11/Little Paradise School, East - Road 40 ft. Wide / Park beyond the Road, West - Remaining portion of the same plot along with superstructure putup thereon.					
PART - 2					
Name of the Borrowers: No.1) M/s. Manidhari Oils Pvt. Ltd., Gali No.32, Ground Floor, Harijan Basti, Gharot Extension, Delhi - 110 096. Also At- M/s. Manidhari Oils Pvt. Ltd., 36 & 37, Mohalla, Ramana Dayal, Naya Basti, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.2) Mr. Ramit Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.3) Mr. Sami Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.4) Mr. Namit Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.5) Mrs. Samridhi Jain, W/o. Mr. Namit Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.6) Mr. Samit Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. No.7) Mr. Namit Jain, S/o. Mr. Roshan Lal Jain, KC-48, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201 001. Outstanding Liability Amount: Rs.4,50,12,755/- (Rupees Four Crore Fifty Lakh Twelve Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Five Only) (after taking into account subsequent payments) as on 27-11-2020 plus accrued interest to be charged from 28-01-2020 plus other expenses, any other dues to the Bank by the borrowers / guarantors.					
Description of the Immovable Property Mortgaged to our Bank					
Reserve Price Date & Time of Auction					
(Property Owned by Mrs. Shilpa Jain and Mrs. Niyati Jain)					
₹ 60,00,000/- (Rupees Sixty Lakh Only)					
29-12-2020 at 02.00 p.m.					
Built-up property over portion of Plot No.39, Mohala Ramana Dayal, Naya Basti, Gharot Extension, Delhi - 110 091. (3) The total area of the plot is 83.05 Sq.Yds. with orientation as under: North - Achak, South - Drain / Road 40 ft. wide, East - Property Mpl.No.33 (Prim. Slimming Point), West - Part of Property Mpl.No.39.					
Venue of Re-Tender-cum-Auction: City Union Bank Limited, New Delhi-Mayur Vihar Branch, Door No.C-15, Acharya Niketan, Phase - I, Mayur Vihar, New Delhi - 110 091. Telephone No.011-22755089, Cell No.9312284276.					
Terms and Conditions of Re-Tender-cum-Auction Sale:					
(1) The intending bidders should be present in person for the auction and participate personally and give a declaration in writing to the effect that he/she is bidding for himself / herself. (2) The intending bidders may obtain the Tender Forms from The Manager, City Union Bank Limited, New Delhi-Mayur Vihar Branch, Door No.C-15, Acharya Niketan, Phase - I, Mayur Vihar, New Delhi - 110 091. (3) The intending bidders should submit their bids only in the Tender Form prescribed in sealed envelopes addressed to The Authorised Officer, City Union Bank Ltd., together with a Pay Order / Demand Draft for an EMD of 10% of the Reserve Price, drawn in favour of "City Union Bank Ltd.", on or before 12.00 Noon for PART - 1 & on or before 01.00 p.m. for PART - 2. (4) For inspection of the property and other particulars, the intending purchaser may contact: Telephone No.011-22755089, Cell No.9312284276. (5) The properties are sold on "As-is-where-is", "As-is-what-is" and "whatever-there-is" basis. (6) The sealed Tenders will be opened in the presence of the intending bidders at 01.00 p.m. for PART - 1 & 02.00 p.m. for PART - 2 on the date of Tender-cum-Auction Sale hereby notified. Though in general the Sale will be by way of closed Tenders, the Authorised Officer may, at his sole discretion, conduct an open auction among the interested bidders who desire to quote a bid higher than the one received in the closed Tender process, and in such an event, the Sale shall be conferred on the person making highest bid. The sale, however, is subject to confirmation of City Union Bank Limited. (7) The successful bidder shall have to pay 25% (inclusive of EMD paid) of sale amount immediately on completion of sale and the balance amount of 75% within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale, failing which the initial deposit of 25% shall be forfeited. (8) The Sale Certificate will be issued by the Authorised Officer in favour of the successful purchaser only after receipt of the entire sale consideration within the time limit stipulated herein. (9) The successful purchaser shall bear the charges/fees payable for conveyance, such as stamp duty, registration fee etc., as applicable under law. (10) The successful bidder should pay the statutory dues (lawful house tax, electricity charges and other dues), TDS, GST if any, due to Government, Government Undertaking and local bodies. (11) The Authorised Officer shall have all the powers to accept or reject the bids or postpone or cancel the sale without assigning any reason whatsoever.					
Authorised Officer City Union Bank Ltd.					
Regd. Office : 149, T.S.R. (Big) Street, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu - 612 001, CIN - L65110TN1904PLC001287, Telephone No. 0435-2402322, Fax : 0435-2431746, Website : www.cityunionbank.com					

Running of 02311/02312 Howrah-Delhi-Kalka Special Train					
Eastern Railway will run a fully reserved 02311/02312 Howrah-Delhi-Kalka Special train (via Dankuni) as per following revised time schedule :					
02311 Howrah-Kalka		STATIONS		02312 Kalka-Howrah	
Arr.	Dep.	↓		Arr.	Dep.
-	21.55		Howrah Jn.	08.05	-
23.03	23.08		Barddhaman	06.21	06.26
00.01					



(From left) Farmers hold placards; langar being prepared at the Singhu border; people protesting at NH-9 under the banner of Bharatiya Kisan Union on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA AND R.V. MOORTHY

Nihang Sikhs on horses join agitating farmers at Singhu border

Agitation will strengthen if talks with govt. remain inconclusive'



Show of strength: A group of Nihangs at the Singhu border near Delhi on Thursday. ■ REUTERS

The farmers are disappointed in the government. The leaders should not disturb the democratic fabric of the country. The protest is indefinite till the demands are met

RAJENDRA ARYA
National chief of Bharat Kisan Mazdoor Naujawan Union

That, we think, the government has come to know. As days pass by, more and more people are coming to join and our strength will only increase," said Angre Singh (58), a resident of Moga.

Rajendra Arya (39), national chief of Bharat Kisan Mazdoor Naujawan Union, said that farmers are disappointed in the government

No scarcity of food and medicines for protesters

Langars, free *gol gappas*, services by small collectives making sure farmers do not go to sleep hungry

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

At the Delhi-Haryana's Singhu border, small collectives of protesting farmers are providing services to all protesters, who they call 'sangat'. At least three mid-level *langar* services, a group providing medicines and a *gol-gappa* vendor selling for free were committed to service on humanitarian grounds.

There is no dearth of food at the Singhu border and no one will remain empty stomach during the protest – farmers stand by the statement. From rice, vegetables and *chapatis* to sweets, fruits and tea, there's nothing one won't find at regular intervals.

Sunny Singh Ahluwalia, an orthopaedic from Mohali who

However, apart from the larger *langar* service being offered by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee and smaller kitchens where food is being prepared outside almost every tractor, there are at least three *langar* services offering food to people.

Dr. Ahluwalia – who claimed that his wife has asked him not to return till farmers' demands are met – said that people are coming out together on humanitarian grounds and there is an endless supply to meet their requirements. "We don't even know who's bringing what but milk, water, sugar, vegetables are being delivered. The power of humanity is such that

was cooking *alo paranthas*, said that the reason of this service is to maximise the number of people being fed. "There are some people who hesitate to go to the larger *langar* service, so there is an option for them to come here and eat," he said.

Dr. Ahluwalia – who claimed that his wife has asked him not to return till farmers' demands are met – said that people are coming out together on humanitarian grounds and there is an endless supply to meet their requirements. "We don't even know who's bringing what but milk, water, sugar, vegetables are being delivered. The power of humanity is such that

half-an-hour ago, all of us who are cooking together now, did not know each other's names, but we are together like a family," he said.

At another *langar* service, Paramjit Singh Pumma showed a truck full of flour and said that all at least 50 people eat here every half-an-hour. He and about 10 others cooking with him served *kheer*, mix vegetable, and *chapatis*. "Most factory workers are eating here only," he said. A few steps ahead, a few men served some Punjabi delicacy and sweets.

Apart from first aid and ambulance service by Khalsa Aid and the DSGMC, a group of farmers offered medicines

for common diseases. "People here complain of cough, cold, fever and body pain. We are offering medicines," said Sukhdeep Singh, from Ropar, refusing to share how much have they spent from their pockets. "This is all for a good cause," he said.

Manjeet Singh, a chemist in Punjab, who is the mind behind the set-up, said, "Old people are camping here in the cold. Cold and cough become common," he said.

Ahead on the stretch was 20-year-old Ram Milan from U.P.'s Kanpur, who is a resident of Kundli, serving free *gol gappas* to kids. More tents have been set up as the crowd swells.

AAP workers hold stir in support of farmers

NEW DELHI
The AAP's tenant wing and street vendor wing on Thursday protested in support of farmers, at ITO and Barapullah flyovers by putting up huge banners.

"The BJP government at the Centre is describing the agricultural Bills as beneficial for the farmers, but AAP considers these as anti-farmer and stands with the farmers. AAP demands that the Centre must talk to farmers, look into their issues and withdraw all these three black laws," the party said.

South Haryana districts begin to feel the heat

Many from M.P., on their way to Delhi, reach Palwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Around half-a-dozen districts in south Haryana sharing border with Rajasthan and U.P., which had remained unaffected by the farmers' agitation, have now felt the heat with tens of farmers from Madhya Pradesh reaching Palwal on their way to Delhi

on Thursday and local farmers also extending the support to the agitation.

As a precautionary measure, the Gurugram police came out with a traffic plan on Thursday to divert the protesters at eight points in the district. The Faridabad police also deployed force in large numbers at its border with Delhi (Badarpur Border) and Palwal (Sikri Border) to try and stop the agitating farmers from entering the national capital.

Palwal Deputy Commissioner Nareesh Narwal told *The Hindu* that around 200 farmers from Palwal also set out for Delhi on foot. The Faridabad police said that attempts would be made to stop the farmers from heading towards Delhi without the use of force.

The Gurugram police have come out with a traffic plan to put in place diversions at Karpurwas Border, Bilaspur Chowk, Panchgaon Chowk, Manesar Chowk, Kherki Daula Toll Plaza, Hero Honda Chowk, Rajiv Chowk and Shankar Chowk.

Nuh women break stereotype, join stir

Their march against farm laws signals changing mindsets within the community

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Breaking all stereotypes the Muslim women from Haryana's Nuh have also come out in support of the farmers' agitation holding protests and taking part in the sit-ins at the Delhi-Haryana border. Though their number is not large, the social workers in the region say mere participation of the women in the protests signals the changing mindsets in the community.

Working among the women in Nuh, a Muslim dominated district of Haryana, for more than a decade, Sabila Jung, who runs "Jago, Chalo Mahila", a women awareness organisation, said it was not easy to convince the families with stereotype mindsets to



Women in Nuh holding protest on Gurugram-Alwar highway on Tuesday.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

allow their women to come out and protest against the farm laws. "But the change started with the protests against the CAA-NRC when women came out in small numbers to be part of the *dharma* across the district. I

went on a hunger strike then against the CAA-NRC and the women supported me. Later, the women also distributed food and masks during the lockdown. Though women are reluctant, they understand when things are explained to them," said Ms. Jung, 35.

She claimed that around a dozen men and women from Nuh were also part of the sit-ins at Tikri and Singhu borders for a couple of days. "We will support the agitation till the time the demands of the farmers are not met," said Ms. Jung.

Mubarik Atrena, a social worker, said he along with many women from his family, including his aunt, was part of the protesters from Nuh at

Tikri border. "We have been encouraging our women also to protest," said Mr. Atrena.

Jakia, 22, a woman protester, said that she was a daughter of a farmer and it was her duty to support the farmers' cause. "My family has no objection to it. I also took part in the CAA-NRC protest," said Jakia, a resident of Salsi Heri. She added that women in Nuh were actively taking part in the farmers protest.

Mewat RTI March coordinator Rajuddin Meo said that women also took part in a protest against the farm laws in Nuh on Wednesday and marched from Nuh to Sohna before the male protesters were taken into preventive custody.

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate entries to satisfy themselves as to the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, shall not be liable for the authenticity of any advertisement or advert or for any of the advertiser's products and services. It is the responsibility of the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director, or Employees of this newspaper/company to be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

**TO ADVERTISE
PLEASE CONTACT**

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

WEDDING COLLECTION OFFER

raymond

Extra fine Pure Wool, Silk, Linen & Cotton blended Fabrics
For Formals, Casual & Party Wears

By Economy Sales: 9212758425
Latest Range of Designs & Colors
GIFT PACKS AVAILABLE

60% Off

**BLAZER • SUIT
SHIRT • TROUSER • JACKET**

raymond **PARK AVENUE** **ColorPlus** **Parx**

- PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)
- WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

Hotel opens its doors to protesters

60-70 people offered halls, rooms, toilets; arrangements for more under way

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

About 6 km into Haryana from the protest site is a small hotel, which has opened its doors for protesting farmers – especially women – and offered them rooms and a hall for free.

Mandeep Khapra (25), owner of Hotel Sudhir in Kundli, said being a farmer's son, he considers the protesting farmers as his extended family. Mr. Khapra said, "This, I feel, is the least we can do for the old women who have come here. They are all like my mother."

The 20-room hotel has offered two halls and four-five



The initiative has been taken by Mandeep Khapra, the owner of Hotel Sudhir in Kundli. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

rooms, along with bathrooms and toilets, to the farmers. Mr. Khapra said that it gets cold in the night and the women need to use toilets. "When the farmers came on November 26, we asked them

to park their trucks here. Then we saw women were also there. Initially, we asked women to stay in the rooms and eventually, we opened halls for men as well," he said, adding that about 60-70 people

were currently living there and the hotel is arranging for more.

Mr. Khapra said that he and his team are also sometimes providing tea and food to the protesters. "We will continue providing them a place to stay till they decide to leave the place," he said.

Jaswant Kaur (65), who is staying at the hotel, said: "The son here has been very considerate. We are not facing any problem," she said.

"We are old but we were prepared for the worst living conditions. At least we can now bathe and use toilets," said Baldev Kaur (66) from Sangrur.

FORE **FORE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, NEW DELHI**

Established in 1981, FORE is committed to the advancement of Management Education, Research, Training & Consultancy contributing to the process of creating leaders in the global business environment.

Admission notification for Two-Year Full Time Programmes

Post Graduate Diploma in Management PGDM 30th Batch

Post Graduate Diploma in Management (International Business) PGDM (IB) 15th Batch

Post Graduate Diploma in Management (Financial Management) PGDM (FM) 4th Batch

Post Graduate Diploma in Management (Big Data Analytics) PGDM (BDA) 2nd Batch

All Programmes are Approved by AICTE, Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India.

PGDM & PGDM (IB) Programmes are Accredited by National Board of Accreditation (NBA).

ELIGIBILITY

A recognized Bachelor's Degree in any Discipline with minimum 50% marks in the aggregate. Candidates appearing in the final examination of graduation are also eligible to apply subject to furnishing the proof of graduation by 1st October 2021 with minimum 50% marks. A Candidate should have taken CAT-2020 or must appear in XAT-2021 or GMAT (test taken between 1st January 2019 & 20th January 2021).

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Apply ONLINE only at admissions.fsm.ac.in. Candidates need to pay Rs. 1,650 if applying for one programme, Rs. 2,500 for two programmes, Rs. 3,300 for three programmes and Rs. 3,500 for four programmes (GST extra) through Credit Card/Debit Card/Net Banking.

FORE School of Management "Adhitam Kendra"

B-18, Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi-110016

For any query, please send an email to admissions@fsm.ac.in or call us on 011-4124215/26569996



Last date for submission of application form : 21st December 2020 (Monday)

ADMISSIONS 2021

Learn to Lead

FORE Advantages

- Excellent placement with multiple offers
- 6000+ strong alumni network
- Scholarship to needy & meritorious students
- Strong academic-industry interface
- Renowned faculty having experience in academics and industry

Our Institute uses CAT score for short-listing/selecting the candidates for our Post-graduate Programme(s) in Management/MBA. IIMs have no role either in the selection process or in the conduct of the Programme.

HC directs jail officials to shift riot accused to guest house for exams

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the jail authorities to take Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) student Asif Iqbal Tanha, arrested in connection with the north-east Delhi riots, to a guest house to enable him to study and appear in examinations scheduled from Friday.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri also asked the jail superintendent to permit Mr. Tanha to take studying material

with him and also provide him any other teaching material if required.

The High Court ordered that Mr. Tanha will be taken to his examination centre at JMI university on December 4, 5 and 7 from the guest house. After the exams are over, he will be brought back to jail. The court also allowed Mr. Tanha to make a phone call to his counsel once a day during his stay. Mr. Tanha was arrested on May 19 in the case for allegedly being part of a pre-meditated conspiracy in the riots.

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**
Buildings (C&M) circle, (Medical Works), Madurai - 625 002.
Notice Inviting Tenders (Lumpsum Contract / Pre qualification Tender) (Two Cover System)
Tender Notice No:15SE/BCMC(MW)/2020-2021/Dated : 03.12.2020
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE
For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu sealed Tenders are invited from the contractors registered in Public Works Department in the appropriate class to the office of Superintendent Engineer, PWD, Buildings (C&M) circle, (Medical Works), Madurai upto 3.00 PM on 23.12.2020 Received tender will be opened at 3.30 PM on the same day in the reference to the contractors of their authorized representatives who chose to be present at time. The tender schedule can also available in office at 10.12.2020 to 22.12.2020 upto 5.45 PM.
1. Providing Lab Arrangements, Water Supply and Sanitary Arrangements, Front Elevation, Furniture, Fire Fighting Arrangements, Land Reclamation Works etc and other such Amenities pertinent to New Government Medical College Institution Buildings at Virudhunagar in Virudhunagar District. -**Approx Value – 1349.75 Lakhs**
2. Providing water supply and sanitary arrangement, Compound wall, internal road, Fire fighting arrangement, Medical gas line arrangement, Modular Operation theater arrangement, Modular kitchen equipment arrangement, Furniture arrangement, Entrance arch, Front elevation and other such amenities pertinent to New Government Medical college Hospital Buildings at Ramanathapuram in Ramanathapuram District. -**Approx Value – 2439.20 Lakhs**
3. Providing Water Supply and Sanitary arrangements, Fire Fighting, Furniture, Teak wood Entrance Door, Front Elevation, Kitchen Equipments, Land reclamation works and other such amenities pertinent to New Government Medical college Residential Buildings at Dindigul in Dindigul District. -**Approx Value – 1102.00 Lakhs**
For further details and tender documents visit the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.ttndtenders.gov.in.
Superintending Engineer, PWD,
Buildings (C&M) circle (Medical Works), Madurai.
DIPR/ 4499 /TENDER/2020

एसजे वीएन लिमिटेड SJVN Limited
(भारत सरकार एवं हिन्दूप्रसार संस्कृत उपकरण)
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of H.P.)
CIN No. L40101HP1988G01008409
PRESS NOTICE
E-Tendering No. Package (W)-245(O&M)
Online bids (e-tender) on Domestic Competitive Bidding (DCB) are invited on behalf of SJVN Ltd. for "Package(W)-245(O&M)/2020-for Fabrication, Repair/Refurbishment, Erection/Installation, Painting & Testing of Ventilation System of Power House Complex, NJHPS, SJVN Ltd. For details, please visit websites www.sjvn.nic.in, <https://sjvn.abcprocure.com>, & www.eprocure.gov.in.
Last date for downloading of bid documents is 29/12/2020 (12:00 Hrs.).
Last date for bid submission is 30/12/2020 (13:00 Hrs.).
Amendment (s), if any, shall be issued on above websites only.
For and on behalf of SJVN Ltd.,
DGM(P&C), NJHPS, SJVN Ltd., Jharkhand

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE:

www.thehinduads.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of "Manipur Congress". The party is located at Chingmering (Laiphap Sipha), Imphal East District, Manipur-795010. The said party was coined by General Body resolution dated 14th Sept 2020. The party in association with the all the registered "Manipur Congress" with the Election Commission of India. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. Names/address of the office-bearers of the Party are as follows: President/Chairman : Muhammad Abdus Nasir, General Secretary/Secretary : R. P. Ramamurthy, State President : K. M. Rajiv Singh. If anyone has any objection to the registration of Manipur Congress they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary, Election Commission of India, Arvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

Sign.

TRADE MARK NOTICE

To Whom So Ever It May Concern

Mr. ANGAD SINGH MALHOTRA, R/o C-116, Ashok Vihar, Phase-1, Delhi-110052, Individual, (Single Firm) the owner of the registered trademark (hereinafter the "Trademark")



having Trade Mark No.: 4429751
as of the date 04th February 2020 in
respect of Goods & Services under Class 25.

(Description of Class 25: All types of garments and clothing; Garments and clothing namely, formal and casual wears; shirts; pants; trousers; long kurtas; short kurtas; jackets; formal blazers; casual blazers and jackets; formal suits; formal shirts and pants; coats; casual wear clothes of all types; readymade garments of all types; overcoats / topcoats; pocket squares; T-shirts; Stuff jackets; Shorts; Turbans; Waistcoats; Vests; Achkans; Band gals and related wedding dressing clothing.)

Since as early as 04 February 2020, They have used the Trademark and have spent considerable sums building the reputation of the Trademark, as well as establishing their priority in the trademark. Due to their longstanding use of the Trademark as well as their efforts to build the reputation around the Trademark, the trademark has become an asset of substantial value to them. As stated above, the Trademark is already registered with Registration Number 4429751 with Trademark Registrar.

If any person who falsely represents or holds himself out to be owner of the Trademark or uses Trademark without the permission or infringes any rights of the owner of Trademark shall be punishable with criminal proceedings.

1. Imprisonment for a term of not less than six months and upto three years;
2. A fine that is not less than Rs.50,000 may extend to Rs. 2 Lakhs;
3. or both.

Sahibha Puri (Advocate)
Address : 201, Krishna Apartment, Koradi Road, Nagpur, Maharashtra - 440030
Phone : +91 797-236-9413
Email : sahibpuri8@gmail.com

Date: 26th November, 2020

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

REMEMBRANCE

31st ANNIVERSARY

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over south coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Lakshadweep. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 28.2	17.0	10.0	Kozhikode	... 30.6	24.6	10.0
Ahmedabad	... 34.1	16.4	10.0	Kurnool	... 30.8	20.2	10.0
Aizawl	... 23.2	12.2	10.0	Lucknow	... 25.6	11.6	10.0
Allahabad	... 27.7	11.8	10.0	Madurai	12.6	25.6	22.4
Bengaluru	2.4	21.6	18.0	Mangaluru	... 30.4	21.2	10.0
Bhopal	... 30.2	10.6	10.0	Mumbai	... 34.6	20.0	10.0
Bhubaneswar	... 31.2	15.4	10.0	Mysuru	... 27.8	19.0	10.0
Chandigarh	25.7	9.6	10.0	New Delhi	... 27.2	8.2	10.0
Chennai	46.3	27.0	22.0	Patna	... 24.6	11.0	10.0
Coimbatore	1.3	25.0	22.3	Pondicherry	3.8	29.9	26.1
Dehradoon	... 25.2	9.6	10.0	Tiruchirappalli	76.2	26.1	21.6
Gangtok	... 14.2	9.9	10.0	Pune	... 30.2	15.1	10.0
Goa	... 33.4	19.8	10.0	Raipur	... 30.2	15.5	10.0
Guwahati	... 28.7	14.7	10.0	Ranchi	... 27.3	11.6	10.0
Hubballi	... 29.0	17.0	10.0	Shillong	... 17.3	8.6	10.0
Hyderabad	29.8	14.6	10.0	Shimla	... 20.4	11.4	10.0
Imphal	... 24.8	8.1	10.0	Srinagar	... 13.2	10.0	10.0
Jaipur	... 30.2	12.0	10.0	Tiruvananthapuram	... 30.4	24.8	10.0
Kochi	... 29.0	25.4	10.0	Vijayawada	... 32.7	23.3	21.8
Kohima	... 18.0	6.2	10.0	Visakhapatnam	... 29.9	21.4	10.0
Kolkata	29.6	16.0	10.0		... 29.7	22.4	10.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	28	143	.34	183	.179	...
Bengaluru	14	.50	.46	.67	.85	...
Chennai	15	.8	.49	.31	.57	...
Delhi	15	157	114	.374	.326	...
Hyderabad	.50	100	.12	.149	.139	...
Kolkata	38	.39	.25	.364	.310	...
Lucknow	.5	110	.48	.427	.385	...
Mumbai	10	.66	.19	.228	.137	...
Pune	.6	106	.53	.189	.195	...
Visakhapatnam	14	.16	.103	.111	.110	...

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.

PM_{2.5} & 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.

Farmers stage 'chakka jam' in Rajasthan against farm laws

Protesters hold demonstrations in many parts of the State, clash with police

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

The farmers opposing the Centre's agriculture sector laws, accompanied by the members of the Left-leaning organisations, staged a 'chakka jam' (stop work) agitation in several cities across Rajasthan on Thursday. The protesters blocked roads, held demonstrations and burnt effigies of BJP leaders.

A group of farmers from the State joined the protest at Singhra along the Delhi-Haryana border, while a large number of agriculturists were mobilised by Kisan Mahapanchayat in Alwar district to stage a demonstration at the Rajasthan-Haryana border. They extended their support to farmer leaders holding talks with the Central Ministers in New Delhi.

Representatives of All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), labour unions, CPI, CPI(M),



Protesters blocking the Jaipur-Delhi highway in support of the agitating farmers on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CPI(ML), Rajasthan Nagrik Manch and Samagra Seva Sangh blocked the National Highway-8 near Jaipur for two hours. Some of the activists, who were stopping the vehicles coming from Delhi, clashed with the police. The traffic was diverted to other routes.

AIKSCC State coordinator Sanjay Madhav said the participants in the demonstration, held near Surajpole Mandi on

the highway, expressed solidarity with the farmers protesting on the outskirts of Delhi. Leaders addressing the protesters said the BJP government at the Centre was not only working against the interests of farmers and labourers, but also against the public at large.

CPI(M) leader Ravindra Shukla said the Centre should withdraw the farm laws without delay. "Such a large num-

Gehlot flays Centre over fuel price hike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Launching a scathing attack on the BJP government at the Centre, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursdays said the increase in the prices of diesel, petrol and LPG cylinders amounted to "betrayal with the people".

He pointed out that crude oil rates had reduced to less than \$50 per barrel in the international market.

Job scam: Odisha MLA arrested

He collected money on behalf of accused: Crime Branch

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Crime Branch of the Odisha police on Thursday arrested Pradip Panigrahi, Gopalpur MLA, on charges of collecting money from unemployed youths by making false promise to provide jobs.

"Evidence has come to the light that Mr. Panigrahi collected money on behalf of one Akash Kumar Pathak, falsely promising jobs in Tata Company to people," the Crime Branch said, issuing a

statement here.

It said, "this case relates to impersonation, cheating, forgery, criminal conspiracy and other cyber offences by Pathak, who posed himself as Managing Director of Tata Motors passenger car division."

'Sufficient evidence'
He has been booked under Section 419, 420, 467, 468, 469, 471, 120-B of the IPC. The Crime Branch claimed that there was sufficient pri-

ma facie evidence against him in this case.

Mr. Panigrahi, once a close associate of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, recently fell out of favour with BJD party leadership.

Akash Pathak is son of IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak, former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, who has been arrested by Vigilance department on charges of amassing properties disproportionate to his known source of income.

SC grants anticipatory bail to ex-Punjab DGP

Saini told to surrender his passport

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday granted anticipatory bail to former Punjab Director General of Police Sudmech Singh Saini in the Balwant Singh Multani disappearance case of 1991.

The Congress Seva Dal members organised a 'sad-buddhi yagna' (good sense of offering) at several district headquarters.

The court in September gave him protection from arrest in the case. It had earlier questioned the Punjab government on its "hurry" to arrest Mr. Saini in a case dating back to 1991.

In 1991, Multani was picked up after an attack on Mr. Saini and three police officers. The three died and Mr. Saini was grievously injured. The police later claimed that Multani had escaped custody and disappeared. However, a murder charge was recently added to the case after two of

the accused policemen in the case turned approvers. An FIR was registered on the basis of a complaint by Multani's family.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court had earlier refused his plea for anticipatory bail.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for Mr. Saini, contended that his client was a decorated officer and suffered bullet injuries. He argued that the case was politically motivated.

'Proclaimed offender'
Mr. Rohatgi said it had been 29 years since Multani escaped custody. He said Mr. Saini was an SSP at the time of the attack. Multani, on the other hand, was a proclaimed offender.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, for the Punjab government, objected to the plea for bail. He said Mr. Saini was still an influential person with power to intimidate witnesses.

Customised packages likely in aviation policy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Customised packages are likely to be offered in the new civil aviation policy of Rajasthan for creating a favourable environment for expansion and strengthening of air services. The packages will include unhindered power and water supply and connectivity with the major roads and highways.

Chief Secretary Nirajan Arya said here on Thursday that the investors could be encouraged to come up with the proposals for establishment of new airports and airstrips by the civil aviation industry's inclusion in the Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme-2019.

Final draft
The Planning Department, which will evaluate the policy after its final draft is prepared, will also compare it with the policies of other States.

The Odisha Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd.

Regd. Office : OMC House, Bhubaneswar-751001, Odisha

CIN : U13209OR2016SGC025960



NIT No. : 02/OMECL/e-PROC/2020

E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Date : 04.12.2020

1	Name of work	Engagement of agency to provide professional manpower at various locations of Odisha Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd (OMECL) (through e-tendering).
2	Availability of tender documents on the e-tendering portal of Government of Odisha	Date : 04.12.2020; Time : 5:00 PM (IST)
3	Last date for sending queries to OMECL	Date : 14.12.2020; Time : 5:00 PM (IST); queries may be sent by email to omecloffice@gmail.com
4	Pre-bid meeting	Date : 18.12.2020; Time : 11:00 AM (IST); Venue : To be held via Video Conferencing (VC)-Link shall be shared via email with the prospective bidders
5	Issue of responses to pre-bid queries, addendum/corrigendum, if required	Date : 22.12.2020
6	Bid Due Date	Date : 06.01.2021; Time : 5:00 PM (IST)
7	Opening of Technical Bid	Date : 07.01.2021; Time : 3:00 PM (IST)
8	Opening of Price Bid	To be informed to the Technically Qualified Bidders
9	Tender Paper Fee (non-refundable) including GST	Amount : INR 11,800/- (Rupees Eleven Thousand Eight Hundred only) including GST@18%. Payable online on the e-tender portal of Government of Odisha (www.tendersodisha.gov.in)
10	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Amount : INR 3,20,000/- (Rupees Three lakhs and Twenty Thousand only). Pay



Timing it right

It is reasonable to plan for school exams in summer, if progress on COVID-19 holds

Buoyed by vaccine optimism, educational administrators are working with vigour to end the prolonged disruption to schooling, and conduct traditional pen-and-paper public examinations in 2021. The CBSE, with more than 20,000 schools under its ambit at the secondary level, has weighed in favour of written mode tests, obviously counting on progress in dealing with the pandemic. As a system with 1.2 million students registering for its senior school certificate examination, and covering schools for expatriates as well, the Board is a bellwether for academic schedules. Quite fortuitously, it was able to wrap up its 2020 examination schedule that began in mid-February, without getting derailed by the national lockdown in March. State Boards, however, are yet to make up their minds on the schedule for annual examinations and the academic session for next year; badly affected Maharashtra and Gujarat are thinking of postponing the final examinations. Reflecting the overall concern on lost academic activities, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations has appealed to States to allow its schools to open Classes 10 and 12 in a limited way early in January. These dilemmas reflect those felt across the globe – on arriving at a safe compromise on schooling. In addition, there is also the likely conflict between summer elections in large States such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala, and the examination schedule for 2021.

The strongest argument in favour of a written Board examination is that it eliminates asymmetrical access, including technology deficits, and gives all pupils an equal opportunity to score. Students are relieved that, in line with the experience in countries such as the U.K., the syllabus has been significantly pared down and examination schedules may be put off by a few months beyond March. The availability of a good vaccine that will also cover teachers and students through a staggered programme is arguably key to determining the coming year's academic time-table. Education Minister Ramesh Pokhray's move to hear public concerns on such issues through an online consultation is a positive step to build consensus. The international view, summarised by the U.S. infectious diseases expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, is that given a choice between bars and schools, it is the latter that should be kept open, posing a lower risk of large-scale infections. India is better placed than America or Europe to provide ventilated classrooms, an important factor in controlling viral spread, because of the climate. Yet, a definitive view on the school schedule for 2021 is not possible until the course of the pandemic over the next few months becomes clear. Poor adherence to safety norms by the average citizen can only jeopardise the reopening of schools further, even with a vaccine available.

The Iran challenge

Biden must go back to nuclear deal without expecting further concessions from Tehran

When Joe Biden left the government in 2017 after having served as Barack Obama's Vice-President for eight years, the U.S.-Iran relationship was on a totally different trajectory from what it is now. The U.S., along with other international powers, had signed a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015 and both countries were cooperating in the war against the Islamic State in Iraq. Then came Donald Trump, who pulled the U.S. out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the nuclear deal is called, and reimposed sanctions on Iran. Now, when Mr. Biden would assume the presidency on January 20, one of his most pressing early diplomatic challenges would be Iran. During the campaign, his promise was to take the U.S. back to the deal, but any such move would meet with strong opposition from its allies in West Asia, especially Israel. The assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian nuclear physicist, last week has escalated tensions in the region. Iran has blamed Israel for the attack (Israel has neither confirmed nor denied reports of its involvement in the hit) and vowed revenge. Any retaliatory actions by Iran could cause a further flare-up, even leading to an open war, which could scuttle diplomatic options for a Biden administration.

After the election, Mr. Biden has reaffirmed his commitment to the nuclear deal. But he has said he will seek to extend the restrictions on Iran (15 years, according to the JCPOA) and discuss the Islamic Republic's "malign" activities in West Asia. This suggests that Mr. Biden, like Mr. Trump did after unilaterally withdrawing from the agreement, would want amendments to the original accord. Mr. Trump had expected Iran to come to the table to renegotiate the deal, but Tehran did not give in to the pressure. When the Trump administration exerted 'maximum pressure', Iran came up with 'maximum resistance'. The tensions took both countries to the brink of war twice, first when Iran shot down an American drone over the Gulf in June 2019 and then when the U.S. killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in January this year. The question now is whether Mr. Biden, with an emphasis on diplomacy, would manage to restore the lost trust between the two countries and be able to revive the deal. It is in everybody's interest that the nuclear deal is revived which would not only deny Iran a path to the bomb but also restore some order in the region. Mr. Biden will have to reassess himself and rein in America's allies from launching more provocative attacks on Iranian regime figures, and press Tehran to return to the terms of the agreement and further talks on the country's regional activities in return for economic and security assurances. Iran, on its part, should observe strategic patience and give diplomacy another chance.

Personal choices, the Constitution's endurance

The Allahabad High Court verdict in 'Salamat Ansari' is a reminder of the Constitution's most cherished values



SUHRIT PARTHASARATHY

In a short and well-reasoned order, the Allahabad High Court declared last month that religious conversions, even when made solely for the purposes of marriage, constituted a valid exercise of a person's liberties. The High Court ruled that the freedom to live with a person of one's choice is intrinsic to the fundamental right to life and personal liberty. In holding thus, the order recognised that our society rested on the foundations of individual dignity, that a person's freedom is not conditional on the caste, creed or religion that her partner might claim to profess, and that every person had an equal dominion over their own senses of conscience.

None of this ought to need spelling out in a secular, democratic republic. Not least over 70 years after its founding. But such are the times that we live in, with various State governments undertaking projects to outlaw what they describe pejoratively as "Love Jihad", that this decision is an important reminder of the Constitution's goals and promises.

Right to privacy

The High Court's order makes it clear that it is neither the province of the state nor any other individual to interfere with a person's choice of partner or faith. By invoking the Supreme Court's judgment in *Puttaswamy*, the High Court held that an individual's ability to control vital aspects of her life inheres in her right to privacy, that this promise includes

the preservation of decisional autonomy, on matters, among other things, of "personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home, and sexual orientation".

Petitioners vs. State

The petitioners, Salamat Ansari and Priyanka Kharwar, had approached the High Court seeking orders to quash a First Information Report (FIR) that was lodged against them. This FIR alleged that a series of crimes had been committed, including one under Section 366 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises the abduction of a woman with an intent to compel her to marry against her will. The petitioners claimed that they were both adults competent to contract a marriage, and had, in fact, wedded in August 2019, as per Muslim rites and ceremonies, only after Ms. Kharwar had converted to Islam. They said, they had been living together for more than a year, and that their peace and happiness had been threatened by the prospects of prosecution.

The State resisted these claims. It argued that Mr. Ansari and Ms. Kharwar's partnership had no sanctity in the law, because a conversion with a singular aim of getting married was illegitimate. In making this argument, the government relied on a pair of judgments delivered by single judges of the Allahabad High Court, in particular on the judgment in *Noor Jahan v. State of U.P.* (2014). There, the High Court had held that a conversion by an individual to Islam was valid only when it was predicated on a "change of heart" and on an "honest conviction" in the tenets of the newly adopted religion (<https://bit.ly/33B05QM>). Additionally, the High Court had ruled that the burden to prove the validity of a conversion was on the party professing the act.



It is a reminder that the party professing the act.

Therefore, in *Salamat Ansari*, it was argued that it was for the woman to establish that her conversion was borne out of her conscience and out of a deep-seated belief in the teachings of her new religion. The Division Bench rejected this theory. It held that the judgment in *Noor Jahan* was incorrectly delivered. Marriage, the High Court said, is a matter of choice, and every adult woman has a fundamental right to choose her own partner. Even if such a decision encourages other concomitant decisions, including a choice of religion, the state can have little to do with it. According to the High Court, the Constitution is violated every time matters of intimate and personal choice are made vulnerable to the paternal whims of the state.

Freedom of conscience

Important as these findings might be, the verdict in *Salamat Ansari* is not a product of any interpretive ingenuity. Article 25 of the Constitution expressly protects the choices that individuals make. In addition to the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion, it guarantees to every person the freedom of conscience. By its dictionary definition, "conscience" refers to each person's own sense of moral right and wrong. It is an emotion that cannot be judged from the outside. It is certainly not something that the

state can examine as a function of its sovereign authority.

Moreover, the idea of protecting one's freedom of conscience goes beyond mere considerations of religious faith. This much is evident when we ask ourselves why the Constitution accords any protection at all to religious beliefs. Contrary to what some might think, the safeguard that the document affords to religion is not because there is something innate in religious faith that demands special security. On the other hand, this liberty is promised because questions of conscience – which include choices of faith – are matters of ethical autonomy. The provision's ultimate *raison d'être* is to allow individuals the freedom to lead their lives as they please.

On this understanding, we see that to tether a person's choice of religion to her knowledge of that faith is to render nugatory the ability of a person to express her own sense of conscience. In overruling *Noor Jahan*, the Division Bench of the High Court said that it did not see "Priyanka Kharwar and Salamat as Hindu and Muslim," but it saw them rather "as two grown up individuals who out of their own free will and choice are living together peacefully and happily...."

A tenuous peace

How long, though, can this tenuous peace last? Already, seemingly in response to the judgment, the government of Uttar Pradesh has introduced an ordinance which makes not only religious conversions that are forcefully obtained an offence but that also declares void any conversion found to be made solely for marriage. In supporting the law, the State will likely rely on a 1977 Supreme Court judgment in *Rev. Stainislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh*.

There, the Court upheld, on

grounds of public order, two of the earliest anti-conversion statutes in India: the Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantra Adhiniyam, 1968, and the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967. These laws required that a District Magistrate be informed each time a conversion was made and prohibited any conversion that was obtained through fraud or illegal inducement. We cannot doubt the proposition that no person should be compelled to choose a certain religion, but to open up to scrutiny every act of conversion by placing on individuals the burden to prove that their decision was conscientious entrenches a form of hard paternalism, where purely private choices are made subject to the State's ultimate sanction.

Respect people's choices

Today, it is hard to see how *Rev. Stainislaus* constitutes good law. In his treatise on constitutional law, the jurist, H.M. Seervai, wrote that the "judgment is clearly wrong, is productive of the greatest public mischief and ought to be overruled". Since then, a nine-judge Bench ruling of the Supreme Court, in *Puttaswamy*, has recognised that every individual possesses a guaranteed freedom of thought; that at the core of liberty is the rights of persons to decide for themselves how they want to lead their lives. When we fail to acknowledge and respect the most intimate and personal choices that people make – choices of faith and belief, choices of partners – we undermine the most basic principles of dignity. Our Constitution's endurance depends on our ability to respect these decisions, to grant to every person an equal freedom of conscience.

Suhrit Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

In farmers' protests, the core is procurement

Farmers of Punjab and Haryana need the MSP-procurement system, but the government needs it even more for the PDS



C.S.C. SEKHAR

Farmers' protests have erupted once again in north India. The farmers' unions want nothing short of a complete withdrawal of the recently enacted Farm Acts, which they claim will ruin small and marginal farmers. Their main worry is about a possible withdrawal of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and a dismantling of the public procurement of grains. They also contend that by leaving farmers to the mercy of the open market, the stage has been set for large private players to take over agriculture.

Epicentre of the unrest

On the other hand, the government claims that the Acts will only increase options for farmers in the output markets, that the MSP-procurement system will continue, and that there is absolutely no plan to dismantle the system. To support its claims, the government points to the fact that there is absolutely no mention of either MSP or procurement in the Acts. So why are farmers so agitated as to go on a march to Delhi, which according to reports, even turned ugly in several places? It needs to be noted that the protests are largely

in the States of Punjab and Haryana. If the government's assertions are true, then why are farmers in these States so rattled? And how true are the claims and counter-claims put forth by the two sides?

For a start, the government's claim that there is no mention of MSP-procurement in the Acts is true. It is also true that a large-scale public procurement of paddy is going on in Punjab as the protests are raging. But farmers are really worried and appear prepared for the long haul. Why?

It is the lifeline here

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is the lifeline in these States. Farmers in Punjab and Haryana are heavily dependent on public procurement and assured price through MSP. This is far greater than farmers in any other State. Nearly 88% of the paddy production and 70% of the wheat production in Punjab and Haryana (in 2017-18 and 2018-19) has been absorbed through public procurement, *Food Grains Bulletin and Agricultural Statistics at a Glance*, Government of India (<https://bit.ly/3g4i8VY> and <https://bit.ly/3g5WWy>).

In contrast, in the other major paddy States such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, only 44% of the rice production is procured by public agencies. In the case of wheat, this percentage is even lower. In the major wheat States of Madhya Pra-



desh and Uttar Pradesh, only a quarter (23%) of the production is procured by public agencies. This clearly shows the heavy dependence of farmers in Punjab and Haryana on MSP and the public procurement system. In a sense, this system has been the lifeline of these States. It is conceivable then that any disruption to the system, real or perceived, will cause a major upheaval. The farmers are now up in arms against the government as they perceive their very existence to be at stake.

Government's obligations

The government needs to continue procurement too. What is missed in this scenario is that if farmers of Punjab and Haryana need the procurement system, the government needs it even more. This is because of its obligations under the PDS and the National Food Security Act (NFSA). Support under the NFSA is a legal and rights-based entitlement.

There are nearly 80 crore NFSA beneficiaries and an additional eight crore migrants who need to be supported under the PDS. The government needs an uninterrupted

supply of grain, particularly from these two States, to maintain the PDS. In the last three years, nearly 40% of the total paddy production in the country (45 million tons) and 32% of wheat production (34 million tons) has been procured by public agencies to supply the PDS.

This year, due to the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic and the migrant crisis, the government has earmarked much larger quantities for public distribution – about 58 million tons of rice and 37 million tons of wheat. This translates into nearly half of the rice production (49%) and 35% of the wheat production in the country. This implies that the government needs to procure a huge quantum of grains than in previous years as the government cannot afford to go to the open market. That is a sure recipe for disaster as prices will skyrocket, and with the stock restrictions gone under the recent Essential Commodities Act Amendment, there is a possibility of large-scale hoarding too.

Why these States matter

If the government intends to procure such huge quantities of grains, then it needs to turn to these two States, because it is these States that have always been in the forefront in supplying grains to procurement agencies. Nearly 35% of the rice and 62% of the wheat procured in the last three years has been from these States. Also, nearly 50% of the total

coarse grains came from these two States. Thus, the government has little option but to continue its procurement from these States in the foreseeable future. Even after the COVID-19 situation improves and the migrant crisis abates, the obligations under the NFSA will continue.

It is clear that dismantling the procurement system is neither in the interests of farmers nor the government. Therefore, it is imperative that the government reaches out to the farmer groups and assures them of the indispensability of MSP-procurement system. The government needs to start this initiative immediately to allay their legitimate concerns.

Improvements needed

Apart from addressing the core issue of the MSP-procurement system, many more improvements are needed in the Acts. The absence of a regulatory mechanism (to ensure fair play by private players *vis-à-vis* farmers) and the lack of transparency in trade area transactions are two of the major limitations that need to be addressed immediately. The severe trust deficit that resulted from the way the Farm Bills have been rushed through needs to be addressed by adopting a conciliatory approach towards farmers and the States.

C.S.C. Sekhar is Professor of Economics, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



Consensus skipped

The farmers' protests are a reminder of why governments cannot skip the important step of building consensus in policymaking. Agriculture, as in the Constitution, is a joint responsibility of both States and the Centre. So, even if one State has a problem, there has to be a discussion before passing the Bill. There is no single policy that did not have opposition. Even the amendments to criminal laws undergo multiple iterations before they are passed in Parliament. Today, the damage is to public property, money flowing from taxpayers, and a loss of face to the government. When a consensus is achieved at the end of this ongoing turmoil, we have to

remember it could have been avoided right at the start through debate and discussion at the table instead of riots and rallies on roads.

VINEESH BADABHAGNI,
Gujianagundla, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

■ Policies that concern agriculture and farmers cannot be framed while sitting in rooms in Delhi, without any contact with farmers and knowledge about the routine hardships they undergo throughout the year. The Centre is violating the rules in attempting to hand over the agriculture sector to capitalist cronies.

T.V. JAYPRakash,
Palakkad, Kerala

Prisoner welfare

The justice system's treatment of elderly undertrials, especially those

with disabilities, leaves much to be desired. The cold legalism with which a senior prisoner with Parkinson's disease is being treated is just one example. It is better that elderly persons with such disabilities are kept under house arrest, if need be, and produced in court on the day of trial. If MPs with serious criminal backgrounds are not barred from contesting elections and can sit in Parliament, it stands to reason that elderly prisoners with serious health issues deserve better. There cannot be one kind of justice for conscientious dissenters and another for privileged politicians and the powerful.

MATTHEW ADUKANIL,
Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu

Quality of democracy

It is not at all a surprise that the quality of democracy in

India has been decreasing (OpEd page, 'Datapoint' – 'Erosion of democracy', December 2). The accusations and criticisms levelled by Opposition leaders, and against the BJP for 'misgovernance' ever since it took over the reins of the country, with it being least concerned about democratic values and principles, have now been substantiated. Shunning debate in Parliament and falling back on the ordinance route to pass Bills have eroded our parliamentary democracy. Ironically, the BJP uses the example of the Emergency to ridicule the Congress party.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

R-Day celebrations

The report (Page 1, December 3) that India has

invited the U.K. Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, to be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations next year is strange given the pandemic situation. Faced with the facts of the forthcoming New Year festivities, the on-going farmers' agitation and the severe winter season ahead, it is

Does India's neighbourhood policy need reworking?

PARLEY

India should have a plan for continuous engagement at various levels

Recent visits by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval to countries in the region appear to show new energy in India's neighbourhood policy. Over the past few years, there have been many strains in ties with neighbours – for instance, with Nepal over its Constitution in 2015 and now over the map, and with Bangladesh over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). Shyam Saran and Constantino Xavier discuss India's neighbourhood policy in a conversation moderated by Suhasini Haidar. Edited excerpts:

Is India's policy in need of reworking?

Shyam Saran: This new energy is welcome. However, it is extremely important that our engagement with our neighbouring countries should not be episodic. It should not be event-oriented; it should be process-oriented. And we should have a plan for continuous engagement at various levels. Also, the present political dispensation's domestic drivers have relegated foreign policy objectives to the background, whether it is with respect to Bangladesh and the CAA or, much more dramatically, with Pakistan. So, I hope that going forward, there will be an awareness that there is a price to be paid if we try to always prioritise domestic factors over foreign policy issues. And this is particularly important in terms of our neighbourhood policy. India should fashion its diplomacy in a manner which does not give rise to feelings [amongst smaller neighbours] of being slighted or marginalised.

Constantino Xavier: I would say that India's neighbourhood policy has been a constant work in progress. It is almost impossible for India to get all its ducks in a row in the neighbourhood at one time as it's a very complex region. It is one of the largest regions in the world by population. It is one of the least integrated regions with tremendous deficits in terms of infrastructure, connectivity, and interdependence. And it is a region that is now being exposed to various geopolitical com-

petition dynamics, with China making a grand entry and the U.S. developing relations on its own with some of India's neighbours. So, this is a difficult region, I think, as any official who has dealt with the region recognises, and there will never be great solutions or great setbacks. If the main objective of India's neighbourhood policy is to connect and have closer links with immediate neighbours, which has been stated by various Indian Prime Ministers over the last 20 years, then I would risk saying that India is doing more than ever today on connectivity and regional policies. The capacity of China to deliver on its commitments exposed India's deficit, and I would say that China has done India a great favour because it's really pushed India to do much more, to focus on its neighbourhood, which for a long time it took for granted.

In his book *The India Way*, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar says in dealing with India's neighbours "generosity and firmness must go hand in hand". Do you agree that both are required?

SS: No, I think diplomacy is not a simple game of being either tough or generous. I think it is a much more nuanced, complex exercise. I think the bottom line should be that if you have determined what your key interests are, then it is better to make it known what the red lines are.

CX: I'd say what is needed from India more than firmness is clarity. It is very easy to accuse any of India's neighbouring countries of being too close to China. But it's very difficult to set out the exact terms of what they should or shouldn't do with China. I'm concerned that sometimes [India uses] the security threat from China as an excuse to limit the capacity [of neighbours] to deepen relations with China or to accept Chinese investment for their own infrastructure modernisation. Naturally all these countries in India's neighbourhood will try to balance. They will always be anxious about India, which is the de facto



giant in this geography. The only way to really solve all this is to focus on creating interdependence in this region that will give India strategic leverage.

Is there a way to counter China's forays into the region, including on COVID-19 assistance?

CX: No, we live in a region that has an open competitive market. That means that all these countries in India's neighbourhood that used to depend and rely much more on India in the past are adopting a first come, first served policy. They have an open door policy and they don't care if it is Chinese ventilators or Indian ventilators that are reaching their capitals first. Hence, if you look at the various connectivity initiatives that India has taken over the last few years in the neighbourhood, in terms of energy, interdependence, infrastructural connectivity, grants and loans, the numbers have been going up. And that is not just because India's feeling more generous towards its neighbours; it's because India is facing competition from China.

SS: If we try to match China dollar for dollar, road for road, or project for project, I think we will constantly be trying to catch up. Connectivity is certainly a very important area. Building connections with all our neighbours, whether it is through highways, railways, the revival of riverine transportation or sub-regional energy grids, are things that we can do, because what they do is that they bring into play what is one of the greatest assets which we have with respect to all our neighbours, and that is proximity. But this con-

nectivity has to be linked with the 'software of connectivity'. There is no point in having a glass-topped highway connect if trucks have to stop at the border for hours and hours. The procedures for allowing in cargo or people are still archaic compared to, for example, what we find in Southeast Asia or Europe. Also, we often speak about the importance of transit, for example, through Bangladesh to our Northeast or through Pakistan to Central Asia, but what many people do not realise is that as far as most of our neighbours are concerned, we are the most important transit country. Why can't we, for example, give 'national treatment' to our neighbours with respect to the use of our transportation network or ports, and exports and imports? We should aim to be the best possible alternative in terms of the economic development of our neighbours. If we can do that, I think the picture will dramatically change.

Should India see U.S. engagement in the South Asian region as a counter to China, as a boon, or as a cause for concern where India could get cut out?

CX: As far as I see, the [govern-

ment's] approach for coordination and cooperation with other extraregional powers except China has been welcome. If you look at Nepal [in the past], the British had their development cooperation programme, the Japanese had theirs, the Americans had theirs, and India had its own. And often these countries were working in parallel without coordinating, which only benefited China because it plays a divide and rule approach and has been able to make the most of it. In the past few years, India has been much more open to coordinating and aligning policies in South Asia. That has an advantage because it increases synergies with the Japanese in Sri Lanka for infrastructure financing and with the U.S. and India on political issues, for example. I'd say the bottom line is of working closer together with like-minded partners that are fellow democracies, that think alike about developmental priorities and also about economic connectivity with the rest of the world.

SS: I have a slightly different view. Since we are not in a position to really match the kind of resources that China is able to deploy in the neighbourhood, it does make sense for us to join other partners which are currently benign partners, like the U.S. or Japan. But to give you the example of the time that I was Ambassador in Nepal, we coordinated with other countries under the clear understanding that India would be in the lead. So, in the current phase, my sense is that perhaps that element is getting weakened. Perhaps the U.S. or Japan or others may be pursuing projects or activities that are not necessarily aligned to India. This could be a problem in the future. I hope that India's objectives and interests remain the primary elements in any initiative by other countries in the region.

All discussions of India's policies in the neighbourhood today are held without mentioning the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), given that India had refused to attend the summit in Pakistan over the terrorism issue. Is SAARC dead? Is it even relevant anymore?

CX: The format of SAARC is outdat-

ed and does not serve the complex, fluid regional cooperation agenda any longer. I think India has taken a pragmatic policy. It is unfortunate of course, but Pakistan has taken a very different approach to regional connectivity, where it sees itself mostly as a hub between China and the Gulf or Central Asian regions, so towards the west and the north, and India therefore had to respond and seek to gravitate more towards the south, to the Indian Ocean region, and the east, across the Bay of Bengal with Southeast Asia. Effectively, what we've been witnessing over the last four years is another chapter in the split of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan that has manifested in the stagnation of SAARC.

India has revived BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and worked in the BBN (Bangladesh-Brunei-India-Nepal) quadrilateral for a framework on motor vehicle and water governance, which don't hold India's cooperation agenda hostage to a consensus at SAARC, which will always depend on a Pakistani veto.

SS: BBN and BIMSTEC should be pursued for their own merits, but I do not see them replacing SAARC. If we consider regional integration to cover the whole of South Asia, even if we are having difficulties currently with Pakistan, even if Pakistan's orientation is today more towards China or towards its western flank, I think the overall objective and the idea of a fully integrated South Asia is something we should always keep in front of us. Our other neighbours, with perhaps the exception of Bhutan, are interested in SAARC. They see SAARC as a worthwhile platform for regional cooperation. Now, if India is going to turn its back on SAARC, if India walks out, for example, there could even be a possibility of China being welcomed into SAARC. If that were to happen, our challenges would become even worse. So, I think that even though SAARC at this point of time is not functioning as the best instrument for promoting regional cooperation, there are various other reasons, particularly with respect to how the political dynamics in this region are working out, to keep that vision alive. I would not be in a hurry to abandon SAARC.



Shyam Saran
is a former Foreign Secretary and is currently Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research



Constantino Xavier
is a nonresident fellow in the India Project, and is currently a fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

A morale boost for policepersons

Those who have maintained law and order during the pandemic should be recognised for their efforts

M.P. NATHANIEL

In early May, Amit Kumar, a 32-year-old constable, became the first COVID-19 casualty of the Delhi Police. He died after several hospitals refused to admit him. Of the 6,405 personnel of the Delhi Police who had tested positive for the infection (until November 14), 23 had succumbed. In April, sub-inspector Ikrum Hussain of the Central Reserve Police Force breathed his last in New Delhi after testing positive for COVID-19. Over 30 personnel of the battalion had to be quarantined thereafter. And in Patiala, Punjab, on April 12, while enforcing the lockdown, assistant sub-inspector Harjit Singh was attacked by a group of Nihang Sikhs when they were asked for their curfew passes. One of them chopped off Mr. Singh's hand with a sword. Fortunately, timely medical intervention helped the surgeons restore his hand.

Bearing the brunt
Undoubtedly, apart from health workers, policemen have had to bear the brunt of the spread of COVID-19. The very nature of their duties, including during the lockdown, warrants their interaction with the general public. This exposes them to the possibility of falling victim to the virus. It is no surprise that a large number of police personnel have been infected by the virus and many have died. According to the Indian Police Foundation, of the 1.5 lakh police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel who had tested positive for COVID-19 by the end of October, more than 900 had lost their lives.

In Karnataka, data till November 2 show that 9,348 police personnel had tested positive of which 31 had died. In Assam, data till the first week of October show that 4,679 had tested positive, of which 23 had died. The Andhra Pradesh Police recorded over 13,000 cases of COVID-19 till October, of which more than 100 are reported to have died. Until November 6, the Uttar Pradesh Police had reported seven deaths; 567 personnel had tested positive. With a massive inflow of tourists, the Goa Police have had the difficult task of enforcing COVID-19 protocols. In the process, 900 personnel including the Director General, Mu-

kesh Kumar Meena, got infected. In Mizoram, 11 policemen and three Assam Rifles personnel got infected. And so on and so forth.

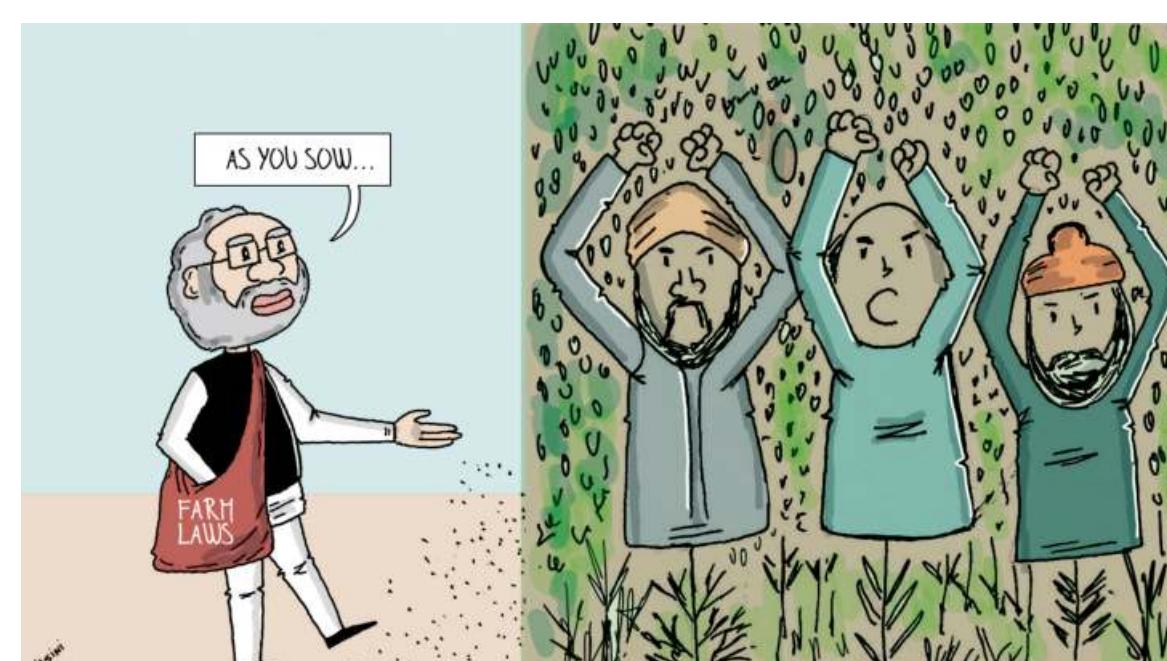
Many policepersons get infected when they deal with crowds while enforcing protocols and interact with the public at police stations. Their task becomes more difficult when their colleagues get infected or quarantined thus depleting the strength of the police on the ground. Many of them have had to put in extra hours of work to compensate for the depletion of strength. To protect their family members from getting infected, many of them either do not return to their homes or maintain distance from their dear ones if they do.

Families of those who lose their lives due to COVID-19 are paid compensation by the States. While the Maharashtra government paid ₹50 lakh to the families of 50 Mumbai policemen who lost their lives while carrying out their responsibilities during the fight to contain COVID-19, the State Police gives ₹10 lakh out of the Police Welfare Fund to the families of the deceased. Another ₹2 lakh to ₹3 lakh is paid out of the insurance fund. In keeping with the policy of the Delhi government, Amit Kumar's family was paid ₹1 crore. Another ₹10 lakh was paid from the Delhi Police Welfare Society fund.

Need for recognition
The perils for the police and paramilitary personnel during this pandemic are there for all to see. At grave risk to their lives and also to the lives of their kith and kin, they maintain law and order, enforce rules and protect lives. The Central government could recognise their services by instituting a medal to signify the efforts of many in combating the virus. The number of medals on a policeperson's chest would serve as a morale booster for them. After all, combating COVID-19 is no easy task.

The Centre and the States could also reserve jobs for the children of these policemen. It is high time that the governments pay top priority to the health and medical cover of the police and CAPF personnel.

M.P. Nathaniel is Inspector General of Police (Retd), Central Reserve Police Force



NOTEBOOK

Comment is free, but moderators pay

Moderating the online comment section is a tough and tricky job

P.J. GEORGE

Last year, an investigative report by *The Verge* had revealed the trauma faced by Facebook's content moderators. These are the people who weed out the profanity and graphic images that are posted on the platform before it reaches your phones. The report said that having to deal with the bile that humanity has to offer when given a platform to vent left many of them depressed.

We have a similar group at *The Hindu* – our online comment moderators. *The Hindu*'s readers give them the option to submit comments on stories as long as they follow a small set of conditions. Along with appeals to stick to English and its basic rules, the list of conditions says that personal attacks, abuse, and incendiary comments will not be published. Our commenters seem to be

taking an effort only on the English part. Over a thousand of their contributions land in front of our moderators, ranging from the good to the bad to the downright filthy.

Of course, we do have the meritorious ones whose takes on news and comment articles enrich the comment space. We would like to thank them for the many instances when their well-constructed thoughts and paragraphs pulled our moderators out of sinkholes of cynicism.

There are others who see commenting as a competitive sport. They leave their mark on every story they read in the form of a remark. Often, I have felt an urge to save the world from the inanities that some of them spew, by hitting delete. However, inanity is the least of our concerns.

Some of the drivel that

turns up in front of our moderators is very far from the poised prose of the 'Letters to the Editor' that make it to print. While some express their disgust in thankfully short bursts, there are others who are painfully verbose.

The commenting platform that we use has a strong profanity filter. However, creativity on this front is often a step ahead of the technology. The loyalties of the writers or the newspaper as a whole are called into question in terms that make the skin crawl.

Then there are those who couch their attacks in language that often leaves you wondering whether you have just been complimented. People also often react quite adversely to their comments being rejected, with our moderators often receiving colourfully worded instructions on how to do their job.

The toughest task for the moderator is deciding whether a comment has crossed the thin line between genuine criticism and personal attack. While it is glaringly obvious in most cases, some are tougher to call out. The moderator has to decide whether a commenter is criticising a writer's understanding of the subject or attacking her personally – the former is acceptable, while the latter is not.

Comment moderation definitely has a subjective element to it. A moderator might at times clear a comment that is similar to one that did not pass muster with him or her earlier. At one point, we thought of handing over the task to an Artificial Intelligence platform that is trained in our rules and methods. However, these algorithms are yet to earn the level of trust we have in our own moderators.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 4, 1970

Hundred years of Life Insurance (From an Editorial)

The centenary of life insurance being celebrated this fortnight all over the country should be an occasion not merely for rejoicing, but more appropriately for stock-taking. The significance of life insurance in a developing economy like ours consists in that it is one of the most useful means both to mobilise savings for developmental schemes and to ensure sound social security to individual families especially when the Government is unable to implement a nationwide social security programme. In assessing the performance of the Life Insurance Corporation, the stress has therefore to be not so much on figures of new business as on how the growth of such business has helped cover an increasing number of families against life risk besides making available more and more funds for investment in a carefully diversified manner. The L.I.C. has no doubt made progress in these fields. The rural sector accounts for 30 per cent of the total policies issued and the middle and low income groups for 70 per cent. But the point is that, in crossing the Rs. 1,000 crores mark in new business, the L.I.C. has only fulfilled a target which should have been achieved seven years ago.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 4, 1920
The situation in Fiji (From an editorial)

In the paucity of Fiji news, which a meticulous censorship contrives to secure with wonderful success, it is impossible to grasp the full significance of the telegram, which we published the other day, that thirty thousand Indian settlers in the north of the island are about to sell away their property and sail down to India. The northern and western portions of the island had remained unaffected by the recent riots and were saved from the humiliations and sufferings of martial law. Though not entirely above discontent on account of low wages, the Indians in the north were comparatively better conditioned and there were even wealthy men among them who leased out extensive areas of land from the Colonial Sugar Company. In 1916, according to Mr. C. F. Andrews, there were 1,000 Indian lease-holders who cultivated roughly 13,000 acres of sugar-land and received about £100,000 for the sugarcane which their fields produced.

FROM PAGE ONE

Government offers eight amendments to farm laws

He listed several areas of concern where the government is willing to consider changes to the laws. These include placing safeguards to ensure that land alienation is not possible via contract farming; strengthening the State-run mandi system and possibly equalising taxes in these markets and private markets; allowing grievance redressal in civil courts rather than just in the offices of Sub-Divisional Magistrates; and ensuring registration of private traders beyond the requirement of a PAN card. Issues related to stubble burning and power subsidies were also discussed.

"With regard to MSP, we gave an assurance that it was there, is there and will continue to be there," said Mr. Tomar, appealing to farmers to end their protest. Some farmer leaders said a written statement that MSP will continue is also on the table, but not a legal guarantee.

Farmer groups say their problems with the laws are more fundamental and can-

not be resolved with a few changes. "When a law goes wrong in its objectives, then the provisions will also be wrong. The list of all the problems is so long that it is not worth keeping the law. A bad law will only become worse," said Kavitha Kuruganti, the only woman on the 40-member farmers delegation, who represents the Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch.

"The talks have made a little progress, especially on the issue of MSP. But the government wants to talk about amendments, while the farmers want a full rollback," said Rakesh Tikait, who heads his own faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, mostly in western Uttar Pradesh, that joined hands with the Punjab unions on Wednesday evening.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the united alliance of farmers groups coordinating the protests, will hold a strategy meeting at 11 a.m. on Friday at the Singhu border crossing, in order to consider their next options in this stalemate.

Badal returns Padma Vibhushan in protest

He added: "When the government of India had brought the Ordinances, assurance was given to us that the farmers apprehensions on these Ordinances would be addressed to their satisfaction, when these would be converted to Bills and subsequently into Acts. Accordingly, even I appealed to the farmers to trust the government's word. But I was shocked when the government simply went back on its word."

"That was the most painful and embarrassing moment in my long political career. I just cannot put in words the emotional stress which I have been going through since then. I have truly begun to wonder why the government of India has

become so heartless, so cynical and so ungrateful towards farmers," he wrote, adding, "I am who I am because of the people, especially the common farmer. Today when he has lost more than his honour, I see no point in holding on to the Padma Vibhushan honour." Mr. Badal described the betrayal of the farmers by the government as "bolts from the blue on the already beleaguered peasantry of the country" adding that "farmer finds himself waging bitter struggles in severe cold just to secure his fundamental right to live". He said he has been "deeply pained also by the communal insinuations being thrown at the peacefully and democratically protesting farmers".

'India's vaccines will be available after phase 3 trials'

Covishield is based on the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine candidate, ChAdOxi nCoV19, and is being tested in 16,000 volunteers across the country. Covaxin has just begun Phase 3 trials and is being tested in 28,500 volunteers across the country. SII CEO, Adar Poonawalla, has said that the company plans to approach the Central Drugs Standards and Control Organisation for an EUA within two weeks.

The EUA is not an approval. It is permission granted to a company for a limited time to offer a vaccine or a drug to people to tide over a crisis. For a formal approval, the company must eventually offer all data on

the drug's efficacy, side-effects and adverse events to the regulator for it to determine if the vaccine or drug ought to be approved in the country. Several drugs, like Remdesivir and Favipiravir, have been given an EUA but have been added or removed from recommended treatment guidelines by the Indian Council of Medical Research over time.

Indian officials have said that they have a broad blueprint ready to vaccinate 30 crore high-risk individuals within the first half of next year.

Covaxin and Covishield are the furthest ahead among Indian vaccines in the approval journey.

CISCE wants schools to reopen from January 4

In his statement, Mr. Arathoon noted that schools had been closed since March due to COVID-19, but most schools affiliated to the Council had continued with the teaching-learning process in an online, offline or blended manner. As the academic year was drawing to a close, the Council has requested the Central Election Commissioner to share the election dates of States due to go to the polls in April-May 2021 to ensure that there is no clash with the examination schedules.

"For the final run-up to the examinations, the CISCE has requested the Chief Ministers of all State governments/Union Territories to allow schools to reopen par-

tially," said the statement. It added that if permitted to open, schools will follow all COVID-19 safety protocols. "With the students physically attending school, this time will be utilised for practical work, project work, SUPW [or Socially Useful Productive Work] and for doubt-clearing lessons. This will be extremely beneficial to the students who will now get the time to interact directly with their teachers," said Mr. Arathoon.

Although the Centre had permitted schools to reopen from mid-October, few State governments have taken the decision to allow school students to return to physical classes.

"My field staff informed me that in many instances, when transgender children in need of care and protection are produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), they are not able to place them in existing homes for boys and girls. I interacted with several people from the transgender community who spoke about the violence and abuse they faced and decided that it is best a home is established for such a vulnerable section," she said.

"As it was a new initiative, it was not an easy task to get

Kerala is trying to stall probe in cashew purchase graft case: CBI

State has denied prosecution nod, says probe agency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Kerala government has denied prosecution sanction in the cashew nuts purchase corruption case of the Kerala State Cashew Development Corporation (KSCDC) to avoid the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filing its final report in the case, according to the investigation agency.

The agency submitted an affidavit in the Kerala High Court on Thursday in a petition challenging the government decision not to give prosecution sanction.

The investigation revealed a prima facie case against the former managing director of the KSCDC K.A. Rath-



K.A. Ratheesh, and right, R. Chandrasekharan

eesh and former chairman the late E. Kasim and R. Chandrasekharan and JMJ Traders.

Abuse of power

The trio abused their official positions as public servants to cause undue pecuniary advantage to JMJ Traders and themselves and cheated the corporation in the process, the agency submitted.



granting prosecution sanction.

However, the Principal Secretary (Forest and Wildlife) and Industries (Cashew) forwarded the government's decision to decline the prosecution sanction, it submitted.

Charge against govt.

The State government had not properly appreciated the proofs forwarded by the CBI on technical grounds and ignoring the gravity of the offence, the agency submitted.

The CBI further submitted that no sanction under Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act was necessary as Mr. Ratheesh was not working as managing director of the corporation and Mr. Chandrasekharan not a public servant on the date of registration of the First Information Report in the case.

Prohibitory orders issued after tension in Shivamogga

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HASSAN

Tension prevailed in parts of Shivamogga town in Karnataka on Thursday following a series of incidents, including the assault of a Bajrang Dal activist, since late night on Wednesday. Police have been deployed in sensitive areas to avoid any untoward incident.

Prohibitory orders have been clamped in Shivamogga city till 10 a.m. on Saturday.

Three construction workers were assaulted by unknown people at Gopala on Wednesday. They are undergoing treatment in a hospital in Shivamogga.

Early morning on Thursday Nagesh, an activist of Bajrang Dal, was attacked by unknown people near Deepak Petrol Bunk. He suffered injuries on his head and face.

Later in the day, minor incidents of breach of peace were reported in Gandhi Bazar and other nearby areas. A couple of vehicles were damaged in stone-pelting. Senior police officers rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

However, business area remained closed following the incidents. It is said the heated arguments over sharing the parking place between two groups of shopkeepers turned violent.

The 609 new cases include 114 in Greater Hyderabad, 48 in Rangareddy, and 45 in Medchal Malkajgiri.

From March 2 to Decem-

A.P. reports daily positivity rate of 1.05%

Kerala's rate drops to 8.89%, but State adds 31 deaths; Karnataka records 1.33%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's cumulative COVID-19 cases rose to 6,20,049 on Thursday with 5,376 new positive cases detected from the testing of 60,476 samples. The test positivity rate, however, dropped to 8.89%.

The State also reported 5,590 recoveries on the day, taking the total number of COVID-19 recoveries till date to 5,56,378. The active case pool was 60,476 cases. The Health department added 31 more deaths to the State's of-

COVID-19

ficial list, taking the State's cumulative COVID toll to 2,329.

Kollam reported seven deaths, Alappuzha six, Thiruvananthapuram five, Thrissur four, Malappuram three, Kannur and Kozhikode two each and one death each was reported from Wayanad and Ernakulam.

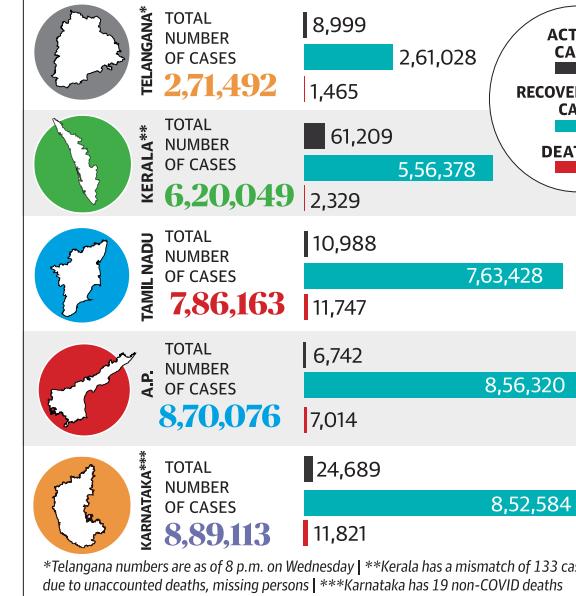
Telangana recorded 609 cases on Wednesday from 53,686 samples. Three more COVID-19 patients died.

Throughout November, daily tests did not cross 47,000. December opened with over 50,000 samples being tested in a day.

The 609 new cases include 114 in Greater Hyderabad, 48 in Rangareddy, and 45 in Medchal Malkajgiri.

From March 2 to Decem-

ber 2, a total of 56,05,306 samples were tested and



2,71,492 were found to be positive. Out of the total cases, 8,999 were active.

The infection tally in Andhra Pradesh crossed 8.7 lakh and had a higher incidence than the remaining districts with less than 100 cases.

The number of samples tested in a day slightly increased to 63,049 and the daily positivity rate was down to 1.05%.

The overall positivity rate for 1.02 crore samples tested so far was 8.51% and the tests per million ratio was 1.91 lakh.

Nine districts reported fresh deaths, and Krishna and Chittoor reported two fatalities each.

They were followed by Anantapur, Kadapa, Nellore, Prakasam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and West Godavari which reported one

death each.

Also, Krishna and Chittoor reported 105 new infections each in the past day, and had a higher incidence than the remaining districts with less than 100 cases.

Visakhapatnam reported 73 new infections, Guntur 72, West Godavari 70, East Godavari 67, Prakasam 40, Nellore 34, Anantapur 29, Kadapa 21, Vizianagaram 19, Kurnool 19 and Srikakulam 10.

Karnataka on Thursday reported 1,446 new cases, taking the total number of cases to 8,89,113. With 13 more deaths, the toll rose to 11,821.

Moreover, 894 persons were discharged on Thursday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,52,584. Of the remaining 24,698 active

Three sentenced in fake currency case

Trial is continuing against four others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) special court has sentenced three persons to simple imprisonment and imposed a fine on them in a fake currency circulation racket registered and investigated by the agency in March 2018.

The NIA officials, along with the police, arrested Mohammed Sajjad Ali, M.G. Raju, Gangadhar Ramappa Kolkar, and Vanitha from various parts of Bengaluru in March 2018.

Fake Indian currency notes with a face value of ₹6,84,000, in denominations of ₹2,000, were seized from them.

During the investigation, the involvement of four more persons – Vijay from Karnataka and Sabiruddin, Abdul Kadir, and Jahiruddin

from Malda, West Bengal – was revealed.

Vijay, Sabiruddin, and Abdul Kadir were arrested, while Jahiruddin is still at large.

Charges framed

On Tuesday, the NIA special court, Bengaluru, framed charges against all the seven charged.

Mohammed Sajjad Ali, M.G. Raju, and Abdul Kadir pleaded guilty.

They were sentenced to six years of simple imprisonment along with a fine of ₹10,000, five years of simple imprisonment along with a fine of ₹5,000, and two years of simple imprisonment along with a fine of ₹5,000, respectively.

The trial against the remaining four accused is continuing, as is the search for the absconding Jahiruddin.

IN BRIEF



Jagan moves privilege motion against TDP MLA

VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy moved a privilege motion against TDP MLA Nimmala Rama Naidu (in picture) for "misleading the House by distorting facts" over the issue of granting pensions to various sections of people. Subsequently, Speaker Tammineni Sitaram referred the issue to the Privileges Committee of the Legislature.

GHMC: arrangements in place for counting

All arrangements are in place for the counting of votes pertaining to the GHMC elections conducted on December 1. The counting will begin from 8 a.m. on Friday, at 30 centres in city, a statement from GHMC informed. A total of 150 halls have been demarcated across the 30 centres, one for each division.

Among the 1,416 persons who tested positive were eight returnees from Assam, Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. The fresh cases took the State's tally to 7,86,163. Till date, a total of 7,63,428 persons were discharged and 11,747 have died in T.N.

(With inputs from Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Chennai bureaus)

Two homes for trans children in Bengaluru

Govt.-run facilities, the first in country, will accommodate 50 children each

TANU KULKARNI
BENGALURU



Safe space: Exclusive homes for trans children will help them escape bullying, say members of the community.

protection are produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), they are not able to place them in existing homes for boys and girls. I interacted with several people from the transgender community who spoke about the violence and abuse they faced and decided that it is best a home is established for such a vulnerable section," she said.

Pallavi Akurathi, head of the Directorate of Child Protection, who mooted the idea, said she had learnt that many transgender children in State-run children's homes for girls or boys were not comfortable. "My field staff informed me that in many instances, when transgender children in need of care and protection are located, and to

understand the challenges they face.

Antony Sebastian, Chairperson, Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, said it is essential that a home is established for transgender children as they face a lot of stigma and abuse. "They will not fit in homes for

Feeding a protest: women keep the fire in the belly and hearth burning

Apart from taking part in the demonstrations, they have been mobilising rations and preparing food for those agitating against the farm laws

VIKAS VASUDEVA
HARIGARH

It's dusk and a group of women, both young and old, have returned to their village of Harigarh in Barnala district of Punjab after staging a protest for hours at a nearby toll plaza in Badbar on the National Highway connecting Patiala and Bathinda.

Perturbed over the Union government's "indifferent" attitude towards the farmers' protest and their demands, Ramanpreet Kaur, 27, who works at a private healthcare company, told *The Hindu* on Thursday that she was willing to leave for Delhi. "I am the daughter of a farmer, and if I don't support this agitation and farmers, then I feel I will be betraying my community," she said.

Ms. Kaur, who has been

rendering her services since the agitation started over two months ago, said: "Several committees of women have been set up across the



Daughters of the soil: Women protesting at Badbar toll-plaza in Punjab against the Centre's farm laws, and, right, collecting grains for langar preparation. • VIKAS VASUDEVA

Balbir Kaur, 60, said she was with the protesting farmers and would not relent at any cost unless their demands were met. "After completing my household work in the morning, I go to the protest site and sit there for three or four hours daily. Later, in the evening, I, along with other women, walk around the village for collecting food and other items. We are collecting all necessary things – be it clothes, food or medicine – as part of the preparations for going to Delhi," she said.

"All of us are together in this battle. Whenever we receive a call from our leaders, we will march to Delhi without hesitating," Amarjeet Kaur, 65, said.

Karnail Kaur, 70, said: "The women in Punjab are very well capable of taking

care of themselves and their households and fight for their rights in the outside world with all their might."

Delhi must listen'

Expressing doubts over positive results emerging from the ongoing talks between the government and farmers, Parminder Kaur, 54, said: "I have lost trust in the government, they [the Centre] have backstabbed us by bringing the new laws, which are not in our interest. I will keep fighting even if it costs my life... Delhi will have to listen to us, we will make them listen."

Parvinder Singh Makkhan, farmer leader, said that in the agitation, the cooperation of women had been phenomenal. "They have been the backbone of our agitation. In several villages,

women's committees had been set up and assigned different responsibilities from time to time. At the Badbar toll plaza, where a day-night dharna is being held, food for hundreds of participants is prepared and provided with the help of the village women," he said.

"Every day, we make announcements from a loudspeaker in the village about the requirement of food, based on the number of people at the protest site. Never had there been a day when there was any shortage of food or other essential items. The involvement of women has been a key factor in strengthening this agitation," he said. "Now, they [women] are all set to leave for Delhi. They are only waiting for the nod from leaders."

Farmers refuse to 'break bread' with the government

They prefer to bring in food from nearby gurdwara

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Farmer leaders who came for the meeting with Union Ministers at Vigyan Bhawan declined the government's offer of lunch and tea, preferring to bring their own food from a nearby gurdwara.

"The government said they would not repeal the three laws, and there is much anger about that, and a lot of heated arguments going on in the meeting room. In that situation, how can they eat the government's food during the lunch break?" said one farmer leader.

"So they brought lunch for themselves from a gurdwara *langar* instead," the



Self service: Farmers arranged for their own meals from a gurdwara during the talks on Thursday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

farmer added.

"Last time, there were photos of the farmers eating the Vigyan Bhawan buffet, which were put out by a government handle on social

media. There were some unnecessary comments that the farmers were enjoying a sumptuous meal at government expense," said one member of the delegation.

Amarinder for a quick solution

Punjab CM meets Amit Shah, urges him to listen to farmers with an open mind

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Thursday and requested him to listen to the farmers with an open mind and "quickly resolve the stand-off".

After the half-hour meeting, Capt. Singh told reporters outside Mr. Shah's residence that the protests should be ended soon as the matter also pertained to national security.

'Economy affected'

"We have reiterated our position, it is between the farmers and the Government of India now, it is for them to resolve. I came to meet the Home Minister to reiterate our position and to also make a request to him and



Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh addressing the media after meeting Home Minister Amit Shah. • PTI

the farmers that we must resolve the issue soon because this affects the economy of my State and also national security," the Chief Minister said. The Punjab Assembly had passed a legislation to negate the farm laws passed

by Parliament. The laws are yet to get the Governor's nod. The Chief Minister tweeted, "Today I met Union Home Minister @AmitShah Ji and reiterated the need to protect MSP & continue with the APMC based mandi system. Requested him to listen to the farmers with an open mind & quickly resolve the stand-off."

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and other parts of the country have assembled on Delhi borders to protest against the three farm laws.

Earlier in the day, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar met Mr. Shah over the farmers' agitation. Mr. Tomar later held a seven-hour meeting with farmer leaders at Vigyan Bhawan.

Nothing short of total repeal, says Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Anything short of repealing the farm laws would be a betrayal of India and its farmers, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Thursday.

Several other leaders, especially from Punjab, endorsed Mr. Gandhi's demand for a complete rollback of the farm laws.

Tagging Mr. Gandhi's comment, cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Sidhu tweeted, "No Compromise on this Stand!!!".

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a tweet, attacked BJP leaders for branding farmers as "traitors" and calling their protests an international conspiracy.

Former Law Minister Ashwini Kumar said the government should not make the farm bills a matter of "prestige". "Without standing on prestige, the Central government should suspend the operation of controversial laws and respect the sentiments of the community for whose benefit the laws are stated to have been passed," Mr. Kumar said.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT
NOTICE NO:09/2020

Manual Auction will be conducted for disposal of Ferrous scrap, other Misc Scrap of small value lots

Manual auction conducted by	Date of auction for the Month of December 2020
St.DMM/MAS	21-12-2020
St.DMM/TVC	22-12-2020
St.DMM/PGT	23-12-2020
St.DMM/TPJ	24-12-2020
St.DMM/TPJ (for MDU divn)	28-12-2020

Materials for auction: The details of item to be sold Manual auction will be available with the auction conducting officer/ respective Divisional stores officer.

All other Auctions scheduled for December 20 remain unaltered.

For detailed terms and conditions and downloading of catalogue please visit our website: www.irres.gov.in → Auction → Live Auctions

Principal Chief Materials Manager Dy.CMM/Sales/PER For PCMM/RS Ry

Follow us on: [Twitter](https://twitter.com/GMSRailway)

Plea in SC to quash U.P. ordinance

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A petition was filed on Thursday in the Supreme Court to declare two ordinances, passed separately by Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, criminalising religious conversion through marriage as unconstitutional.

Two advocates and a law researcher have approached the court against the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition Of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018.

Advocates Vishal Thakre, A.S. Yadav and researcher Pranvesh, represented by advocates Sanjeev Malhotra and Pradeep Kumar Yadav, said the ordinances go against the fundamental right to personal liberty, dignity and choice of companion.

'Carefully monitoring' Brahmaputra developments: India

Beijing had said it was its 'legitimate right' to develop hydropower projects on the lower reaches of the river

ANANTH KRISHNAN

India on Thursday said it "carefully monitors all developments on the Brahmaputra" river, even as Beijing said it was its "legitimate right" to develop hydropower projects on the lower reaches of the river.

A state-run Chinese hydropower firm, POWERCHINA, is planning to build the first downstream dam on the Brahmaputra, known as the Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet.

Officials from the firm said last week that they were eyeing the enormous potential of the river's "Great Bend" just across the border from Arunachal Pradesh in Tibet's Medog county, where the river falls over a 2,000-



metre drop before turning to flow into India. While China in 2015 operationalised its first hydropower project at Zangmu in Tibet and is constructing three other dams at Dagu, Jixu and Jiacha, these are run-of-the-river dams on the upper and middle reaches. The proposed new dam is also likely to be a run-of-the-river hydropower project that will not divert water, but will be the first on the lower reaches of the river.

On Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said "it is China's legitimate right to carry out hydropower station development in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river."

"China has always held a

responsible attitude towards the development and utilisation of cross-border rivers and adopted the policy of simultaneously developing and protecting cross-border rivers," she said. "Any project we undertake will go through scientific planning

and research and we fully consider the impact on the downstream areas, taking into account the interests of both the upstream and the downstream. At present, the development of a hydropower station at the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river is still in the early planning and research stage, and there is no need to interpret too much into it."

It remains unclear whether technical feasibility studies will allow construction to go ahead, as POWERCHINA is not the first company to propose a downstream dam and previous projects did not take off.

Ms. Hua said China had "for a long time carried out good cooperation with India and Bangladesh in flood reporting, flood control, disaster relief, and emergency management" and "will maintain communication with India and Bangladesh through existing channels".

Asked about China's plans, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at his weekly briefing that the government carefully monitors all developments on the Brahmaputra river.

Chinese authorities have urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas," he said. "The Chinese side has conveyed to us on several occasions that they are only undertaking run-of-the-river hydropower projects which do not involve diversion of the waters of the Brahmaputra. Various issues relating to trans-border rivers are discussed with China under the ambit of an institutionalised Expert Level Mechanism which was established in 2006, as well as through diplomatic channels. We intend to remain engaged with China on the issue of trans-border rivers to safeguard our interests."

Cong. seeks winter session of Parliament

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after protesting farmers demanded a special Parliament session, Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Thursday wrote to Speaker Om Birla to convene a short winter session.

In his letter, Mr. Chowdhury mentioned a number of issues such as the farmers' agitation, the status of the COVID-19 vaccine, the stand-off on the India-China border, the economic slowdown and unemployment to press for the session.

Convicted legislators can't be barred for life from polls

Centre responds in affidavit to Supreme Court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government has told the Supreme Court that it rejected the idea of barring convicted legislators for life from contesting elections, forming or becoming an office-bearer of a political party.

The Union Ministry of Law and Justice said an elected representative of the people cannot be equated with public servants who are banned for a lifetime on conviction.

The government said disqualification under the Representation of the People Act of 1951 for the period of the prison sentence and six years thereafter was enough for le-

gislaters. The Centre's stand differs from that taken by the Election Commission, which endorsed a life ban as necessary to "champion the cause of decriminalisation of politics".

The case is based on a plea by Supreme Court advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, who argued that a life ban on conviction should uniformly apply for members of the judiciary, executive and the legislature. There should not be any discrimination of one from the other.

Mr. Upadhyay said an MP or MLA convicted for offences enumerated in Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act should be banned for

GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY BUILDINGS AND ROADS DIVISION P.W.D., KARAikal

e-TENDER NOTICE No.29 & 30/PW/B&R/KKL/2020-21, dt. 24-11-2020

On behalf of President of India, e-tenders are invited from the eligible contractors / firms by the Executive Engineer, Buildings and Roads Division, P.W.D., Karaikal for the following works:-

Name Work-29-01: Improvements to Thirunallar road from Karaikal to Thirunallar including reconstruction of Noolar river road culvert in Thirunallar, Karaikal. Approximate Estimated Cost: ₹3,21,85,281/- EMD: ₹6,43,706/- & Time of completion: 6 Months.

Last time and date for download / sale / submission online of tender documents: up to 3.30 P.M. on 08-12-2020. Other details / information can be seen in the website: <https://puduntenders.gov.in>

Name Work-29-02: Improvements to Sorakudy road from Thirunallar to Nallathur village in State border in Thirunallar and Nendungadu Commune, Karaikal. Approximate Estimated Cost: ₹4,14,60,457/- EMD: ₹8,29,209/- & Time of completion: 6 Months.

Last time and date for download / sale / submission online of tender documents: up to 3.30 P.M. on 08-12-2020. Other details / information can be seen in the website: <https://puduntenders.gov.in>

Name Work-30: Improvements to Neravy I road & II road, Zhiyiduji road and Thittacherry road from NH45A including Ayiram Kaliyamman Arch road upto State Border at Neravy & T.R.Pattinam Commune in Karaikal. Approximate Estimated Cost: ₹5,16,32,038/- EMD: ₹10,32,641/- & Time of completion: 6 Months.

Last time and date for download / sale / submission online of tender documents: up to 3.30 P.M. on 09-12-2020. Other details / information can be seen in the website: <https://puduntenders.gov.in>

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER-B&R P.W.D., KARAikal

WORKS DEPARTMENT	
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, EASTERN CIRCLE (R&B), BALASORE	
e-mail: seec_bls@rediffmail.com	
Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice	
Bid Identification No. SEEC-06/2020-21	
No.5976 / dt. 25.11.20	
Nature of work	
Number of works	
Amount put to Tender	
Class of	

INTERVIEW | RANDEEP GULERIA

'India can be looking at making vaccine available as early as January'

Two groups will submit trial results by December-end or January, and depending on the results the regulatory body should be able to clear them, says AIIMS chief

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
JACOB KOSHY

India could be looking at making available a COVID-19 vaccine as early as January, says All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Director Randeep Guleria, while adding that what matters the most is safety and efficacy and not being the first off the block.

Britain has approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for wide-scale use. How close is India to having its own vaccine roll-out?

■ Two vaccines in India are in their third phase of testing, and we are hopeful that by January, we should be able to get emergency use authorisation. The two groups will be submitting their trial results by the end of this month or next month and then, depending on the results, the regulatory body should be able to clear this

through. Vaccine manufacturing is not about being first off the block – safety, efficacy of the vaccine which will be administered to a large healthy population is the prime concern. Also, we look forward to these (Indian-manufactured) vaccines because they are better suited for use in the Indian climate and will be more easily available.

After the alleged adverse vaccine reaction incident in Chennai, should the SII trial have been halted?

■ Trials would have been halted had the regulators found any direct relationship between the vaccine and the medical condition of the volunteer. It isn't something that hasn't been done before. We have seen COVID-19 vaccine trials being halted previously also. There are set worldwide protocols when it comes to testing drugs and vaccines and there are enough checks and guards in the country for any adverse action.

In the U.S., Italy and France, there is a renewed spike. While India is seeing a decreasing caseload, can we be sure that we are past the worst or, is it possible that we are simply on a down curve?



■ [SII] trials would have been halted had the regulators found any link between the vaccine and the volunteer's condition

■ There are clear indications that India is seeing a downcurve. But this in no way means that we become lax in any manner. With the vaccines just round the corner now is the time to more ag-

gressively adhere to COVID-appropriate behaviour. We shouldn't have more fatalities now. During the winter months, respiratory illnesses have a tendency to be more widespread and case spikes in Europe and the U.S.A. have shown that we need to have our guards up.

With a vaccine now expected to be widely available in India soon and assuming that it will be more than 70% efficacious, can we look forward to being mask-free in the latter half of the year?

■ The pandemic behaviours as we know are linked to human behaviour. We can spread this by poor hygiene and respiratory habits. Wearing a mask protects us from a

variety of illnesses and is a safety guard against air pollution. We have seen that discipline and COVID-appropriate behaviour have ensured that places such as Vietnam and Taiwan didn't see the spikes that were witnessed in other parts of the world. India has to stay vigilant and ensure that we stay disciplined despite the COVID-19 fatigue that seems to have set in.

■ Why is it that the pandemic continues to rage in India despite one of the world's longest lockdowns? And how is it that China, with a bigger population than India, has contained it?

■ There are multiple issues with China here. First the data from here isn't clear and

enforcement of various norms and rules aren't done in the same fashion as was done in India and Europe. In these places, people's cooperation is sought and rules aren't imposed on them. So these things make a difference.

■ Is it likely that we will reach a situation where lockdowns – at least at the level of State or district – might have to be reimposed? There seem to be suggestions of a lockdown in Delhi?

■ No, large-scale lockdown cannot be the answer. I think we should look at aggressive testing, tracing and monitoring and creating containment zones. Large-scale lockdowns have an adverse impact on the livelihood of

daily wagers and several others. We have to use the testing infrastructure and ensure that people isolate and follow appropriate behaviour.

India has significantly ramped up testing capacity. However, with nearly half the tests of the rapid antigen variety, and most testing centres in urban localities, do you think a significant number of cases continue to be missed, particularly in rural India?

■ India has ramped up testing in a manner that this is now available at primary health care centres. So while there may be variations, overall testing is now available to all. Aggressive testing is one of the cornerstones in beating this pandemic.

IN BRIEF



MDH Masala owner passes away

NEW DELHI
MDH Masala owner Mahashay Dharmpal Gulati, 97, died here on Thursday. Gulati, who was awarded Padma Bhushan last year, was undergoing post-COVID-19 treatment. Born in Sialkot (now in Pakistan) in 1923, he came to India after Partition. Mahashay Di Hatti (MDH) was founded by his father Mahashay Chunni Lal Gulati.

Rahul takes a dig at PM over vaccine promise
NEW DELHI
Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Thursday took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the Health Secretary said the government never promised COVID-19 vaccine to all. "PM – Everyone will get vaccine. BJP in Bihar elections – Everyone in Bihar will get free vaccine. Now, GOI – Never said everyone will get vaccine. Exactly what does the PM stand by," he tweeted.

HC grants parole to Shahabuddin to meet kin
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has granted custody parole for three days to former MP Mohd. Shahabuddin, who is lodged in Tihar Jail and serving life term in a murder case, to meet his family in the national capital. The former Rashtriya Janata Dal MP had sought parole to visit Siwan to meet his family on account of his father's death. Police had said that they could not assure his safety in Siwan.

HC lets Varavara Rao be in hospital till Dec. 14
MUMBAI
The Bombay High Court on Thursday said poet Varavara Rao, 81, accused in the Bhima Koregaon violence case, will remain at Nanavati Hospital till December 14. A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing a plea filed by senior advocates Indra Jaisingh and Anand Grover on behalf of Mr. Rao's wife Hemlata, citing his multiple ailments.

'Ensure dignity to dead at hospitals, mortuaries'
NEW DELHI
Former Union Law Minister Ashwani Kumar has written to Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde to take suo motu cognisance and lay down a uniform protocol to ensure that the dead are treated with dignity in hospitals and mortuaries. His letter referred to "heart-wrenching visuals on TV of a dog nibbling away at the remains of a dead girl" in a hospital in Uttar Pradesh.

Defamation case: Akhtar records statement
MUMBAI
Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar on Thursday recorded his statement through his lawyer before the Andheri Metropolitan Court in connection with the complaint of defamation filed by him against actor Kangana Ranaut for allegedly making baseless comments against him. The court is slated to hear the matter on December 19.

Not using masks flouts fundamental rights: SC

Bench also flags neglect of physical distancing norms

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

People who do not wear masks in public and follow physical distancing norms violate the fundamental rights of others amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court said on Thursday.

"Things are wanting. People are violating guidelines on COVID with impunity all over the country," Justice Ashok Bhushan, heading a three-judge Bench, said.

Justice M.R. Shah, on the Bench, drew attention to how vegetable markets overflowed with people showing scant regard for physical distancing. "There are so many vegetable markets and people are supposed to keep a distance of six feet from each other. Nobody is following this in the entire country. These are places where the super-spread started," Justice Shah said.



A worker at a unit in Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

While expressing deep anxiety about the lack of implementation of COVID-19 norms across the country, a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, however, stayed a Gujarat High Court order of December 2, which went to the part of the authorities to enforce COVID-19 norms was stark. Weddings and rallies were seeing hundreds of people, Justice Shah remarked. The court asked why the police were not taking any action against the violators.

Mr. Mehta agreed the problem had to be dealt with on a war-footing.

The court asked Mr. Mehta to file his suggestions by Monday on ways to improve the implementation of COVID-19 norms. It scheduled a hearing on Wednesday.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the Gujarat High Court's order may lead to a cure worse than the disease itself. "Harm of not wearing a mask is less than this," Mr. Mehta said.

Justices Shah and R. Subhash Reddy, however, focused on the intention behind the High Court order, saying the poor implementation and lack of will on the part of the authorities to enforce COVID-19 norms was stark. Weddings and rallies were seeing hundreds of people, Justice Shah remarked. The court asked why the police were not taking any action against the violators.

Mr. Mehta agreed the problem had to be dealt with on a war-footing.

The court asked Mr. Mehta to file his suggestions by Monday on ways to improve the implementation of COVID-19 norms. It scheduled a hearing on Wednesday.

Border challenge continues: Navy chief

P-8I patrol jet deployed several times'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy had on several occasions deployed its P-8I long-range reconnaissance aircraft on the northern borders during the ongoing stand-off in eastern Ladakh, Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh said on Thursday while stating that attempts to "change status quo" on the northern borders had increased the complexities in the country's security situation.

The P-8I is a potent platform that has certain equipment that can be used on the border. Based on the requirements of the Army and the IAF, we have deployed the P-8I on several occasions. We have also deployed the Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

(UAV) from one of the northern bases," he said in response to a question from *The Hindu* at the annual press conference ahead of the Navy Day.

The Navy had also deployed the P-8Is on the northern borders during the 73-day Doklam stand-off with China in 2017.

Talking of the challenges this year, Adm. Singh said 2020 had been defined by COVID-19 which had permeated and disrupted every aspect of people's lives, and a near simultaneous attempt to change the status quo on the northern borders had increased the complexities in the country's security situation.

"The P-8I is a potent platform that has certain equipment that can be used on the border. Based on the requirements of the Army and the IAF, we have deployed the P-8I on several occasions. We have also deployed the Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

"This dual challenge scenario continues as we speak," he said.

Condemn bigotry against non-Abrahamic faiths too, it says

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

India has asked the United Nations to expand its criticism of hatred and violence against religions beyond the three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

"At the outset, let me state that we fully agree that anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-Christian acts need to be condemned and India firmly condemns such acts. However, UN resolutions on such important issues speak only of these three Abrahamic religions together," First Secretary at India's Permanent Mission to the UN Ashish Sharma said on Wednesday.

"This august body fails to



The remarks were made at a 'Culture of Peace' session organised by the UN General Assembly

acknowledge the rise of hatred and violence against Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism also." Mr. Sharma's remarks were made during a "Culture of Peace" session organised by the UN General Assembly. The UN has organised such sessions each year since 1997.

"The shattering of the iconic Bamiyan Buddha by fundamentalists, the terro-

rism bombing of the Sikh gurdwara in Afghanistan where 25 Sikh worshippers were killed and the destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples and minority cleansing of these religions by countries, call for condemning such acts against these religions also. But the current Member States refuse to speak of these religions in the same breath as the first three 'Abrahamic' religions," Mr. Sharma said.

The UN, however, has condemned such acts. For instance, in 2001, the General Assembly adopted a resolution without a vote condemning the Taliban for destroying cultural artefacts, including the Buddhist sculptures in Bamiyan.

"What we are trying to build here is an 'alliance of civilisations' not set up a clash. I call on the UN Alliance of Civilizations to act likewise and speak for all, not just a select few," Mr. Sharma said.

"Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, senior advocate Maninder Singh said that on one hand doctors were hailed as 'frontline warriors' against COVID-19, while on the other, they were not paid their salaries. The Supreme Court agreed with Mr. Singh.

"If Pakistan changes its current culture of hatred against religions in India and stops its support of cross-border terrorism against our people, we can attempt a genuine culture of peace in South Asia and beyond," he said.

(With inputs from Suhani Haidar in New Delhi)

IMA can move HC to get salaries: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a contempt petition filed by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), beseeching the court to help doctors in Delhi to get their salaries paid on time amid the raging battle against the pandemic.

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, senior advocate Maninder Singh said that on one hand doctors were hailed as "frontline warriors" against COVID-19, while on the other, they were not paid their salaries. The Supreme Court agreed with Mr. Singh.

The court gave the IMA liberty to move the Delhi High Court, where their case is already pending, seeking immediate relief.

Lottery, gambling and betting taxable under GST Act: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday held that lottery, gambling and betting are taxable under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act.

The court held that lottery, betting and gambling were "actionable claims" and came within the definition of 'goods' under Section 2(52) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan said the levy of GST on lotteries did not amount to

"hostile discrimination". "Lottery, betting and gambling are well known concepts and have been in practice in this country since before Independence and were regulated and taxed by different laws. When the 2017 Act defines the 'goods' to include actionable claims and included only three categories of actionable claims, i.e., lottery, betting and gambling, for purposes of levy of GST, it cannot be said that there was no rationale for Parliament in including these three actionable

claims for tax purposes, and leaving others," Justice Bhushan wrote in the 87-page judgment.

Already regulated
The court said State regulation, including taxation in one form or other, on lottery, betting and gambling, had been in existence for decades.

Justice Bhushan was responding to arguments made by Skill Lotto Solutions and other lottery agents that lottery was not 'goods' and GST on it was illegal.

Go-ahead to operate more flights

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday announced that airlines could fly 80% of flights that they operated pre-COVID-19, raising it from the existing 70%.

"Domestic operations recommended with 30K passengers on 25 May & have now touched a high of 2.52 lakhs on 30 Nov," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri tweeted.

International flights are yet to resume.

on various criminal charges faced by alleged PFI activists, who have denied all allegations. The investigation by multiple agencies is said to be linked to the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests and the ensuing Delhi riots.

According to the ED, 73 accounts maintained by the PFI, its related entity Rehab India Foundation (RIF) and certain individuals/entities with 17 banks have been detected. A sum of ₹120.5 crore was credited in these accounts and most of it was withdrawn soon. About ₹50 lakh in foreign contributions was transferred to the RIF's

bank account from three foreign entities, even though it is not registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, it alleged.

Witch-hunt, says party

The PFI condemned what it called "unjust ED searches".

A statement from Muhammed Shakif, the party's national secretary, said: "The Central government has come under immense pressure following the farmers' protests and the ED raids are nothing but a gimmick to divert the issue."

It also accused the Centre of indulging in a "witch-hunt" against activists.

ED searches PFI premises

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday carried out nationwide searches on the premises of the Popular Front of India (PFI) and those of its members in connection with money laundering allegations.

"The searches were conducted in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala," said a senior agency official.

The ED is probing a money laundering angle based

A ND-NDE

The annual Hong Kong Wine and Dine festival goes online, with livestreamed master classes, takeaway hampers and a virtual food walk

SHONALI MUTHALALY

As Chef Christian Yang takes an appreciative sip of his tea at Hong Kong's 92-year old Lin Heung Tea House, the dozen people on his food tour do the same. Only they are drinking tea they made themselves, seated at their own desks, scattered all over the world.

Despite COVID-19, this year's Hong Kong Wine and Dine festival is bigger than ever. Spread over five weeks, the festival aims to champion the food and wine industry, which has been struggling due to the pandemic.

The Gourmet at Home programme offers a curated list of takeaways and delivery menus from luxury hotels for Hong Kong locals: an afternoon tea hamper by the Ritz for instance, with smoked salmon rillettes, spiced cookies, raisin scones and more. The festival also includes an online cellar, offering 442 wines from all over the world.

However, the biggest draw this year are 34 free livestreamed masterclasses, hosted by Hong Kong's most celebrated chefs and mixologists. This weekend, for instance, chef Ronald Chau, of FAM, will demonstrate how to make Sichuan style stewed Mandarin fish fillets, while chef Uwe Opocensky from Petrus at the Island Shangri La teaches participants to make his shallot tarte Tatin with truffles and come sauce, and chef Manav Tuli from CHAAT, Rosewood Hong Kong, cooks a Punjabi *dhaba* chicken curry.

Popular with Indian tourists, Hong Kong received 3,37,997 visitors from India last year. Puneet Kumar, director, South Asia and Middle East at Hong Kong Tou-



Log on for sorrowful RICE

rism Board, says they decided to stage the decade old festival in a "brand new 'online + offline' format" to sustain global interest in the event and boost the local economy without compromising on the health and safety of exhibitors and participants.

Puneet says the first 12 masterclasses, on November 21 and 22, attracted around 1,70,000 views. He adds, however, that dining offers from hotels and

restaurants also proved popular with Hong Kong locals, with some selling out on the first day, demonstrating that offline events too had enthusiastic takers despite the pandemic.

On the ground

While the virus has evidently had a powerful impact, Hong Kong is fighting back. Back in Lin Heung Tea House, famous for its dim sum trolley, which usually

draws a large, animated crowd of diners, it is unusually quiet. Between teaching his virtual tour group how to brew tea, chef Christian appreciatively eats shrimp dumplings. In the background servers hover in masks while a relaxed elderly customer reads his newspaper.

The tour continues through the Kowloon Soy Company, offering traditional, artisanal, naturally fermented sauces alongside large jars of fermented tofu, salty duck eggs and dry tangerine peels.

Chef Christian walks through the business district, explaining how busy it gets in the evenings, with woks on high flames and "guys in tailored suits sitting on plastic stools, eating the most delicious sea snails in black bean sauce". Then, he introduces

viewers to chef Dai Lung, creator of one of Hong Kong's most iconic dishes, sorrowful rice.

Here roasted pork belly is marinated in a heady blend of rose wine, with sesame sauce, oyster sauce, fermented bean curd, red bean curd and cinnamon, then served on rice with perfectly fried eggs, sunny side

up. In 1996, the dish featured in a movie, *The God of Cookery*, directed by Stephen Chow, and has inspired both fine dining and street food ever since.

Stating that he has been a chef for 58 years, chef Dai Lung explains how Stephen challenged him "to take a common dish and make it special".

The secret, he says, while taking a festival master class, is an obsession with high quality ingredients. The most charming discovery, however, is when he unveils the recipe for his secret sauce: fry grated onions, then add light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, sugar and "Maggie seasoning."

Like sorrowful rice, the festi-

al's strength, despite being held in a difficult year, is its alluring blend of luxury and easy accessibility. Winding up his tour at the local wet market, Chef Christian shows viewers how to check the quality of an egg, by holding it up against a light bulb ("If it is cloudy, it is old. Do not buy it").

It's all a metaphor

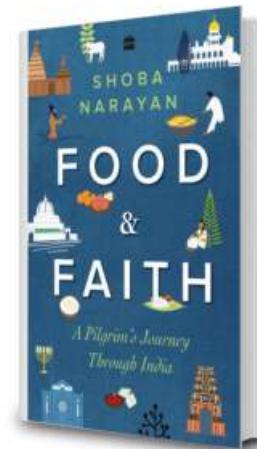
He waxes eloquent about how much Hong Kong loves eggs. "Especially tea eggs, which are stewed in their shells in a marinade of star anise, soy and tea leaves for many hours," he says, explaining how cracks in the shell leave a distinctive pattern, and infuse the eggs with flavour.

He concludes thoughtfully, "We have a saying here: Life is like tea eggs – it tastes better only if there are cracks."

Log onto the Hong Kong Wine and Dine festival at winedinefestival.discoverhongkong.com/eng



A taste of the devout



Food is an inherent part of India's places of worship. In her new book, Shoba Narayan delves into the making of *prasadams*, *langars* and more



Journey of faith (Clockwise from above) Shoba Narayan; her book; a devotee distributes jalebis at the Golden Temple's Langar Ghar during Baisakhi • AFP AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"As humans, I think that we depend on certain objects and experience for sustenance and indeed life and living. Both food and faith nurture us. Food nurtures us in a very obvious physical way. Faith nurtures the psyche, the spirit, the soul," she says. According to her, *prasadam* is "food as a connection to the human experience and to the divine."

In her new book, while exploring the connection between food and faith, Shoba also uncovers

larger questions about "faith and its place in our lives and society." While the majority of her chosen shrines are Hindu temples, the Ajmer dargah, the Golden Temple, a Rosh Hashanah celebration and Christmas at Goa also get their due. She describes finalising her list as both fun and nerve racking. Her strategy was to include temples from across India and those that worshipped a multitude of gods and goddesses.

Keen to have *prasadam* from

the temple of a female goddess, she went to Madurai and found that "the thing that people talked about was the Azhagar Kovil dosa. I decided to make a trip almost as an afterthought. It ended up being the centerpiece of the story."

Puri Jagannath temple was also fascinating not just for the bhog but also the confluence of history, she says.

In each chapter, Shoba talks not just about the *prasadam* and temple history but narrates legends,

the temple of a female goddess, she went to Madurai and found that "the thing that people talked about was the Azhagar Kovil dosa. I decided to make a trip almost as an afterthought. It ended up being the centerpiece of the story."

Puri Jagannath temple was also fascinating not just for the bhog but also the confluence of history, she says.

In each chapter, Shoba talks not just about the *prasadam* and temple history but narrates legends,

asks questions of herself and her faith, records her discomfort at practices like caste segregation and invites the reader to share her journey. There are lovely little vignettes like the mechanisation of Palani *panchamritam*, how onions were sneaked into the Udupi masala dosa, and why copious amounts of ghee is used in the food at the Kashi Annapurna temple.

Accessibility was one of the criteria in finalising her list. Shobha also lists "geography, history and the seasons. Going to these temples at the right time, being able to speak to priests and scholars about the food, having some sort of connection with the food so that I could actually write about it, and also ensuring that the multitudes of faiths present in the land that we call Bharat or India" as the other factors she considered.

She had wanted to include temples from the Northeast but "ended up not being able to, because accessing those temples and interviewing the priests proved to be very difficult."

Transferring the taste, smell and colour into text, she says, has to be approached tangentially, "almost like the sprinkling of some garnish instead of hitting one over the head with a ladle. Descriptions of food need to include memory, nostalgia, history, provenance, and context. Every place of worship had very specific stories, tastes and myths associated with the food that was offered to the gods and the faith that was epitomised in the sacred food offerings." An aspiring food writer, according to her, needs to link the food with the larger context of family, community, connection, mythology, faith, and above all, identity apart from descriptions of what he/she ate.

Of all the temples she visited, she found the smaller ones to be more satisfying. The best "have to do not just with taste but also memory." The Golden Temple's langar for the service mentality that was behind its taste; the ecology, history and geography that went into the Palani *panchamritam* and Kashi was as richly layered as its halwas. She also lists the Ambalapuzha *payasam* and Azhagar Kovil dosa among her favourites.



HORS D'OEUVRES

Grover Zampa Vineyards' latest

Grover Zampa Vineyards introduced the Grover Chene Grande Reserve Chardonnay recently. The new Chene Grande Reserve Chardonnay is a white wine, aged for nine months in French oak barrels to give it a rich creamy texture with a toasty flavour and hints of vanilla. Made from Chardonnay grapes, this wine is a blend of Indian terroir and an extension of bottled Chene Grande Reserve. According to an official release from the brand, the wine exhibits subtle aromas of nectarine, hazelnuts, vanilla, and crème brûlée. The wine also consists of concentrated flavours of apple, pear, and green plums. The company also suggests that the texture and smoothness of the wine pairs well with cream-enhanced soups, mild curries with spinach, potatoes, fish and poultry.



More mead to pick from

Bengaluru-based micro brew pub Hops Haus launched its brewery with a range of artisanal beers. More interestingly, it also presents its first mead on tap, made with local honey from forests in Karnataka. It plans to give patrons different versions of mead with each batch that is brewed. On the tap are some of the crowd favourites like the Witty Belgian (Belgian Wit), Honey Maiden (Mead) with gentle floral flavours of wild honey, The Hopster (IPA), a citrusy crisp, still and floral hipster, Basmati Bounty, a grainy rice Lager that teases the senses with a hint of herbs and a sweet lingering finish. The Ol' Smoked Stout has distinct roasted cocoa and coffee notes with creamy flavours and subtle roasty notes leading to a heady mocha and hint of dark chocolate on the finish, states the brand.



SUNALINI MATHEW

"Modi mardabab," shouts a six-foot farmer and his companion, as they lift a bunch of *methi* each, shouting in protest, responding to the camera. They've just received their supply of vegetables for the night meal from a mini truck carrying greens brought in from the Beri Anaj Mandi in Jhajjar, Haryana. The *arthi* (middleman) says that everything has been donated.

At Delhi's Tikri border with Haryana, today, *methi* and cauliflower seem to be the food for the day. Here, as life is lived out in trailers where up to eight people share space for the night, aggressive words like *murdabab* mix with gentler ones like *seva, guru ki kripa, langar, bade dil wale* (large-hearted). The farmers, mostly from Punjab, are gathered at Delhi's borders to protest the three agriculture-related laws that will impact their livelihoods.

At the receiving end

"In the beginning nothing had been decided about the food, so we brought our own: *atta, dal, ghee*," says Bikramjeet, a 25-year-old farmer from Tarn Taran in Punjab, who helps his father on their fields of grain and cattle feed. "Then we got so much support from the people of Delhi, from the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, from the AAP, the neighbouring villages in Haryana. *Thoda-thoda bhi aa raha hai; jada-jada bhi aa raha hai* (things are coming in a little at a time and a lot at a time). We are very thankful to everybody," he says, readying to camp on the Singhu border (with Haryana) for a year if necessary, and to live this life.

Food wise life has not been a struggle. Bikramjeet gestures for us to join him in a hot meal of *maatar-paneer* and roti. There's sweet pure-milk *chai* with rusk and bread on offer too.

Both sites are serviced by a range of organisations, individuals, and informal groups, who have come out to support the farmers. A few *langar* cooks have travelled with them and some of the older women make food. Mostly though men cook themselves, shelling peas, chopping cauliflower, stirring cauldrons of milk, pounding the almonds for *kheer*.

There's large consumption of seasonal fruit, tea and snacks are always available (Hovis and British bread seem popular), *chhaas*

The land of the langars

flows in the sunny afternoon. A class 12 volunteer from Barnala, volunteering with the Jamindara Student Organisation of Haryana, says, "We brought six barrels of *lassi*; then six more arrived. Each barrel has about 200 litres. The disposable glasses may get over, but the *lassi* won't."

Two men from Patiala who were coming to join the protest drove down through the night, their car loaded with boxes of water, when they heard the people at the Singhu border needed it.



Selling at the border

- Most stores in Singhu are shut, while those in Tikri are open for the locals, especially the sweets and savoury snacks that crowd the run-down lanes around.
- At Singhu, just beyond the barricade, Usha Bhardwaj (above) runs a roadside *dhabha* that serves up mix veg, dal fry, two types of paneer (shahi, matar), and roti, all priced between ₹40 and ₹80. "Dal sees the greatest demand," she says, adding that sales have doubled now. Before the lockdown, she was a beauty advisor at a cosmetics company. They hadn't paid her, so she's here now, with customers who come to visit the protest site.
- At the Tikri border, Devender Bansal, who has run a little store on the highway for 18 years, says the protesters buy mostly water from him, with *namkeen* forming just 5% of his sales.

At Delhi's borders, vegetables, milk, even dry fruit and *jalebis* flow, as farmers talk of support pouring in by way of supplies



Food for farmers Eating *kadhi-chawal* offered free; *methi* from mini trucks; *chhaas* that comes in barrels; the men shelling peas, preparing for the evening meal ■ SUNALINI MATHEW

In Delhi, United Sikhs, an organisation that provides humanitarian aid, has also come in with water. "We brought only water, but people said take this too," says Jaspal Singh, of the *mathri* and biscuits he has on offer. It's almost a continuation of the lockdown spirit, when citizens gave of whatever they could.

Rohit Rathee is one of those who provided food for migrants. He works with an MNC in Delhi, but is here because his grandfather was a farmer: "Hum dil se kisan hain" (We're farmers at heart), he says. Supplies come in from Kaithal, Haryana, and are cooked on site. His team has made arrangements for gas cylinders, but there's also a lot of food being cooked on wood fires. At a meal of *kadhi-chawal*, there may be about 200 kg of rice, 50 kg of *besan* and 300 litres of milk used. It feeds about 2,000 people.

Crossing borders

What's different between the two borders is that Singhu seems to have more, their cups quite literally overflowing. Unfortunately, the garbage is piling up – plastic cups and plates thrown in front of the *guru ka langar* offered by the Bangla Sahib and Rakab Ganj Sa-

hib gurudwaras. People sit in neat rows on the road, on long mats, as simple food is ladled out.

Even as the Nihang Sikhs cordon off a section, restricting anyone without a head covering or with shoes to enter the area, their wood fires inviting people to stand around and stare longingly, everywhere else, people offer of the plenty: a *jalebi*, a banana, *gobhi pakora*.

At a long table, a bunch of about eight school boys stand, one with his voice not yet broken, calling to people to have some *poori-aloo*. They've come from the Pratap Sports School, Kharkhoda, Sonipat, where they study wrestling. A parent who owns a *gaddi* and their bulked up teacher have accompanied them. They've commissioned a *halwai* to cook for a 1,000 people daily.

"Everyone felt that we should be there for the farmers," says Vijay Dahiyा, who works with the electricity board and has taken leave to do this, just one of the many who are showing solidarity with the cause.

The men from the crowd (and there are mostly men) are careful to point out that everyone from every community is there to offer food and other forms of help.

Not a world apart

This year's virtual True Colors Film Festival sees three Indian films playing to a global audience



In frame Still from *Vijay S Jodha's Poop on Poverty*; (below) festival organiser Tan Bee Thiam

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Film festivals have had to adapt to a virtual viewing ground owing to the pandemic, but True Colors Film Festival (TCFF), Singapore, is not shying away from this medium. Since its inception in 2006, the festival has travelled to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, and Japan, having presented more than 1,100 performing artists from more than 30 countries and having attracted more than 40,000 people.

The film festival, which went live on International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Thursday, is all about celebrating inclusivity regardless of disability, gender, race or religion, through movies. The theme this year is One World One Family,

reminding filmmakers and audiences they are bound by a common love for movies.

Tan Bee Thiam, the festival organiser, is eagerly waiting for the virtual festivities to begin. A filmmaker himself, his first feature film *Tiong Bahru Social Club* is playing at TCFF. But equally so, he is proud of the diverse spectrum of films.

"Indeed we are happy to find a wide spectrum of films that cover themes about disability, woman representation, LGBT, poverty and adversity, and racism," he explains over e-mail. "There are recent award-winning titles like *37 Seconds* (2019, Japan) and [the 2020 Portuguese film nominated for Oscar contention] *Listen*, as well as rare classics like *The Chess Game Of The Wind* (1976, Iran), *Moral* (1982, Philippines) and *Darkness and Light*. Viewed from a range of perspectives, these films deepen our understanding of what an inclusive and diverse 'One

World, One Family' will be like." *Dignity with Flowers* (2018) by Gautam Pemmaraju will also be playing at TCFF, much to Tan Bee's delight.

Gurugram-based filmmaker Vijay S Jodha, whose film *Insight Within* is premiering at the festival while his 2013/14 film *Poop On Poverty* is also set to show, admits, "short films have no theatrical screening prospects and a minuscule television broadcast option. So the downturn faced by TV or cinemas due to COVID-19 makes little difference to prospects of short films like *Insight Within*."

"My film is about a serious issue [visual impairment] and an inspiring personality who addressed it meaningfully. Materials from this film project have been used over the years as part of presentations to build partnership and raise resources to address this issue. So that payoff is the biggest success for me as the film's director.

Just last Saturday, the protagonist of my film Dr Jitender Aggarwal was on India's leading TV show *KBC* with Amitabh Bachchan where he shared this journey. So this inspiring story is travelling far and wide in myriad forms."

Speaking of the OTT norm, Tan Bee elaborates, "Because of the pandemic, most international film festivals have gone online. However, not all films, especially newer titles, are ready to go online yet as they are still waiting for theatrical distribution. Without film festivals, audiences might never have discovered films beyond what was pushed to them by algorithms of commercial OTT platforms."

True Colors Film Festival is on till December 12, and is available for free. For details, visit: truecolors2020.jp/en

POOCH CAFE



© 2020 Paul Shaffer. Used by permission of King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.



© 2019 Paul Shaffer. Used by permission of King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

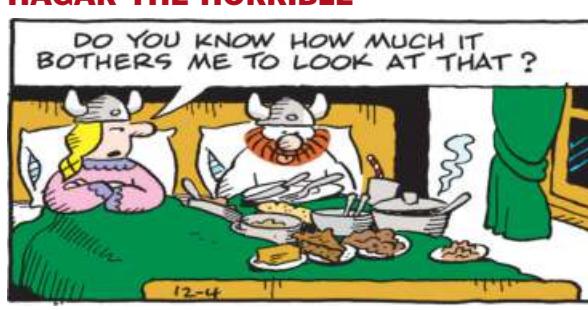
PEANUTS



© 2019 Peanuts Worldwide LLC. All rights reserved.



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



© 2020 Big Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.



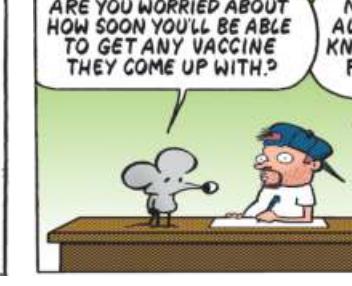
TIGER



© 2020 Big Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



U.S. tightens visa rules for CCP members

New policy cuts duration of travel visas to one month for members of the Chinese Communist Party

PAUL MOZUR
RAYMOND ZHONG

The Trump administration on Wednesday issued new rules to curtail travel to the U.S. by members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their immediate families, a move certain to further exacerbate tensions between the two countries.

The new policy, which took immediate effect, limits the maximum duration of travel visas for party members and their families to one month, according to a State Department spokesman. Previously, party members, like other Chinese citizens, could obtain visitor visas for the U.S. that were valid for 10 years. Travel visas for party members will also be limited



Fresh curbs: Travel visas for party members will also be limited to a single entry under the new law. ■ FILE PHOTO

to a single entry rather than multiple entries as was possible before, according to two people familiar with the changes.

The new measures do not affect party members' eligibility for other kinds of visas,

such as immigration or employment. The State Department spokesman added that no current visas would be revoked as a result of the policy changes.

The new visa rules add to the conflict, now years long,

between the two countries on trade, technology and much else. Coming in the twilight of the Trump administration and aimed squarely at China's ruling elite, the visa restrictions and the likely Chinese response will be yet another challenge to President-elect Joe Biden, who is inheriting a U.S.-China relationship that is in its worst state since the normalisation of diplomatic ties in 1979.

To protect the nation' In principle, the new visa policy could affect the travel of roughly 270 million people, according to U.S. government estimates based on a Communist Party membership of 92 million. In practice, it might be difficult

to determine who, apart from high-level officials, belongs to the party.

The State Department spokesman called the move part of "ongoing policy, regulatory, and law-enforcement action across the U.S. government to protect our nation from the CCP's malign influence".

A spokeswoman for China's Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying, condemned the new rules during a news conference on Thursday. "We hope people in the United States will adopt a common rational view toward China and give up their hatred and abnormal mindset toward the Communist Party," Ms. Hua said, according to Bloomberg News. NY TIMES

U.S. to block import of 'slave labour' cotton from China

The new rule allows officials to seize cotton originating from Xinjiang

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The United States will block imports of cotton that, it says, is harvested with "slave labour" in China's Xinjiang region, authorities have announced.

Beijing has come under intense international criticism over its policies in the resource-rich territory, where rights groups say as many as one million Uighurs and oth-



Crucial trade: People emptying sacks of cotton onto a truck on a farm on the outskirts of Xinjiang. ■ FILE PHOTO

er mostly Muslim minorities are being held in internment camps.

The new rule allows Customs and Border Protection officials to detain shipments containing cotton originating from the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a major paramilitary group already sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury.

"The human rights abuses taking place at the hands of

senior Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official Ken Cuccinelli on Wednesday.

Beijing responded by accusing the U.S. of fabricating "fake news of so-called forced labour" and attempting to "oppress Xinjiang businesses." "Their aim is to constrain and oppress relevant parties and enterprises in China and curb China's development," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying on Thursday.

She denied there was any forced labour in Xinjiang, saying workers in the region "choose occupations based on their own wishes".

All six contested States have now certified their tal-

the election, saying the Democrats used the COVID-19 crisis to force widespread use of mailed ballots, which he said were fraudulently manipulated to support Mr. Biden. "This may be the most important speech I've ever made," he said.

"This election was rigged, everybody knows it ... It is statistically impossible that the person, me, who led the charge, lost," Mr. Trump added. "This is not just about honoring the votes of 74 million Americans who voted for me ... It's about ensuring that Americans can have faith in this election. And in all future elections."

According to media reports, Mr. Trump is preparing for his exit, holding discussions about issuing preeminent pardons for his three adult children – Don Jr, Eric and Ivanka – for Ivanka's husband Jared Kushner, and his own personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

Mr. Trump's supporters continued to fight against the results. Mr. Giuliani appeared before Michigan's State legislature Wednesday to present his claims of irregularities. In Georgia, another lawyer tied to the Trump campaign, Sidney Powell, spoke to a rally of supporters claiming their votes were not counted.

'Rigged election'
Mr. Trump also released a 46-minute video, in which he again claimed that he was robbed of victory in a "rigged" election. He recited a litany of complaints about

Donald Trump hints at 2024 presidential run

Democrats used COVID-19 to force mail ballots, he says

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Still irate and bitter one month after his election defeat to Joe Biden, Donald Trump is openly musing about a second run at the U.S. presidency in 2024.



Donald Trump

lies, and the national count gives Mr. Biden nearly seven million more votes than Mr. Trump, an insurmountable four percentage-point margin.

On Tuesday, Attorney General Bill Barr declared that the Justice Department had found no significant evidence of fraud in the election.

Mr. Biden, meanwhile,

continued to prepare for taking office on January 20, telling The New York Times in an interview how he plans to revive the economy. "I want to make sure we're going to fight like hell by investing in America first," Mr. Biden said.

According to NBC News, Mr. Trump has discussed the possibility with his close aides of launching his 2024 campaign on January 20, the day Mr. Biden is to be inaugurated as President. In theory, nothing prevents another run. The U.S. Constitution restricts presidents to two four-year terms, but does not require that they be consecutive. But only one president did so: Grover Cleveland, in the late 19th century.

All six contested States have now certified their tal-

Iran moves to step up nuclear enrichment

New law halts UN inspections, gives a month to countries to ease sanctions

REUTERS

DUBAI

Iran's watchdog body approved a law on Wednesday that obliges the government to halt U.N. inspections of its nuclear sites and step up uranium enrichment beyond the limit set under Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal, if sanctions are not eased in a month.



The Natanz nuclear facility in Iran.

hardline-dominated Parliament on Tuesday approved the Bill with a strong majority, hardening Iran's nuclear stance.

The law pushed by hardline lawmakers would make it harder for U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, who will take office on January 20, to rejoin the agreement. Mr. Biden has said he would return to the pact and would lift sanctions if Tehran returned to "strict compliance" with the nuclear deal.

Iran's pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani, the architect of the 2015 deal, criticised Parliament's move as "harmful to diplomatic efforts" aimed at easing U.S. sanctions.

IN BRIEF



Former Pakistan PM Zafarullah Jamali dead

ISLAMABAD

Zafarullah Khan Jamali, a veteran Pakistani politician who served as the country's Prime Minister from 2002 to 2004, died on Wednesday at a hospital in Rawalpindi, days after he suffered a heart attack. He was 76. AP

Hong Kong media tycoon remanded in custody

HONG KONG

Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai was remanded in custody on Thursday after being charged with fraud, the latest in a string of prosecutions brought against high-profile Beijing critics and democracy campaigners. His detention came as a prominent opposition politician announced he had fled overseas during a trip to Denmark. Mr. Lai is the owner of Apple Daily, a popular tabloid that is pro-democracy and critical of authorities. AFP

Some tile-roofed homes of

Cyclone Burevi hits northern Sri Lanka, 12,000 people affected

Heavy rain lashes Northern and Eastern provinces

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

At least 12,000 residents of Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces were severely affected as heavy rain lashed the region while cyclone Burevi made a landfall on Wednesday night. The maximum rainfall – 279.8 mm in the last 24 hours – was recorded in Kilinochchi district.

Incessant rainfall continued on Thursday as the cyclone moved towards Mannar district located on the island's northwest coast, before heading towards south India. Thousands living in Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya and the eastern Trincomalee district were badly affected, and nearly 200 homes were damaged, according to Pradeep Kodippili, spokesman of Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly damaged, with roofs collapsing during the cyclone and strong winds, images shared on social media showed.

In the Eastern Province too, authorities had evacuated several hundreds, fearing severe damage.

"The situation is returning to normal, but we have urged residents in the area to remain vigilant and avoid

venturing out to the seas," Mr. Koippilli said in a media statement.

Asked if there was any fear of flooding, he told The Hindu: "There could be flash floods and inundation in some low-level areas. We are working swiftly to ensure relief reaches affected families at the earliest."

The local Sunday Times paper reported that at least four fishermen from the Northern Province were missing since Wednesday.

Some tile-roofed homes of

families, who were displaced during the civil war and returned in recent years, were badly

MARKET WATCH

	03-12-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	44,633	-0.03
US Dollar	73.93	-0.16
Gold	48,887	1.49
Brent oil	48.28	1.88

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	435.80	-2.40
Asian Paints	2411.40	9.55
Axis Bank	602.70	-5.40
Bajaj Auto	3294.40	-43.75
Bajaj Finserv	9114.05	311.85
Bajaj Finance	4967.45	42.55
Bharti Airtel	479.90	-5.00
BPCL	393.90	9.40
Britannia Ind	3635.95	38.95
Cipla	762.15	3.80
Coal India	133.45	3.70
Divis Lab	3692.35	52.80
Dr Reddys Lab	4923.05	72.80
Eicher Motors	2549.50	17.00
GAIL (India)	118.25	1.55
Grasim Ind	910.05	-5.45
HCL Tech.	862.20	19.05
HDFC	2253.95	-22.40
HDFC Bank	1377.20	-29.75
HDFC Life	647.95	11.45
Hero MotoCorp	3139.85	13.65
Hindalco	242.00	10.15
Hind Unilever	2127.75	-11.55
ICICI Bank	481.85	1.40
IndusInd Bank	896.25	-1.05
Infosys	1126.45	-14.45
Indian Oil Corp	89.90	1.50
ITC	196.20	0.25
JSW Steel	370.85	2.45
Kotak Bank	1821.00	6.80
L&T	1125.15	11.40
M&M	745.85	-7.75
Maruti Suzuki	7739.10	532.60
Nestle India Ltd.	17492.15	225.70
NTPC	98.55	3.75
ONGC	88.70	3.85
PowerGrid Corp	193.45	-0.70
Reliance Ind	1964.05	5.90
SBI Life	858.15	-17.40
State Bank	256.30	9.35
Shree Cement	24905.15	269.45
Sun Pharma	548.25	3.60
Tata Motors	184.85	1.25
Tata Steel	620.90	16.55
TCS	2709.45	-40.10
Tech Mahindra	915.15	6.45
Titan	1418.50	29.50
UltraTech Cement	4893.50	-39.60
UPL	454.75	12.80
Wipro	360.30	1.40

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.70	74.02
Euro	89.36	89.75
British Pound	99.03	99.46
Japanese Yen (100)	70.67	70.98
Chinese Yuan	11.25	11.30
Swiss Franc	82.57	82.94
Singapore Dollar	55.14	55.38
Canadian Dollar	57.00	57.26
Malaysian Ringgit	18.07	18.17
Australian Dollar	54.70	54.98

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



SEBI awaits 'clarification' on Future-Reliance deal

NEW DELHI Markets regulator SEBI has sought some 'clarification' from BSE before giving its go-ahead to the ₹24,713 crore deal between Future group and Reliance Industries. In an update on November 27, SEBI said it is awaiting a reply to the "clarification" sought on the draft composite scheme of arrangement between Future Group companies and Reliance Group firms. PTI

Shriram City Union gives ₹1,000 crore bike loans

CHENNAI Shriram City Union Finance Ltd., a non-banking finance firm, has disbursed more than ₹1,000 crore by financing about 1.67 lakh two-wheelers during November. "After having financed over one lakh vehicles in October, our teams did even better in November, and we funded almost 1.67 lakh two-wheelers in the month," said Y.S. Chakravarti, MD & CEO.

NCLT okays Reliance Infratel resolution plan

MUMBAI The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday approved a resolution plan of Reliance Infratel, following which lenders may get about ₹4,400 crore. RCom and subsidiary Reliance Telecom Infrastructure will go to UV Asset Reconstruction Company, while Reliance Infratel will go to Jio for a total consideration of ₹20,000-23,000 crore to be paid over a 7-year period. PTI

Chhattisgarh accepts GST recompence plan

NEW DELHI Chhattisgarh has accepted the alternative offered by the Centre to meet the GST compensation shortfall for States through a special borrowing window, the Finance Ministry said on Thursday. With Chhattisgarh's acquiescence to the Centre's formulation to resolve the GST compensation, all States, barring Jharkhand, and all UTs have come on board.

Economy firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery, says govt.

Finance Ministry flags prospects of a second COVID-19 wave as 'downside risk'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's economy is firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery after the collapse in the first quarter, and further improvement is expected in the third quarter, notwithstanding some moderation in November's indicators, the Ministry of Finance said on Thursday, attributing the recovery to the unlocking process along with 'astute' stimulus measures.

The prospects of a second wave of COVID-19 infections, however, remains the key downside risk to the economy, with 'Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi probably



Positive impetus: Economic recovery has been aided by unlocking and government's 'astute' stimulus measures. AP

facing their second and third waves' in November, the ministry said.

"However, there is a growing cautious optimism that the steep plunges of April-

June quarter may not resurface with significant progress in vaccines and contact intensive sectors increasingly adapting to a virtual normal," the ministry said in a

monthly economic report. "The prospects of a vaccine are encouraging but we need to remain on guard till it is approved and permeates to a large section of the population," it added, urging people to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour and maintain safety protocols earnestly.

Arguing that inflation, which had risen to 7.61% in October, may have peaked, the Department of Economic Affairs in the ministry said consumer price inflation was likely to 'decelerate gradually' as base effects would kick in, and food inflation was expected to cool thanks to a good kharif harvest.

RBI halts HDFC Bank from issuing new credit cards

Curbs covering fresh digital initiatives follow tech outages

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

HDFC Bank on Thursday said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had issued an order asking the bank to temporarily stop all new digital banking initiatives and sourcing of new credit card customers.

The order, issued on Wednesday, comes after certain incidents of outages in the Internet banking / mobile banking / payment utilities of the bank over the past two years, the latest of which occurred on November 21 due to a power failure in the primary data centre, HDFC Bank said. "In addition, the order states that the bank's Board [must] examine the



its IT systems and would continue to 'work swiftly to close out the balance and would continue to engage with the banking regulator in this regard.'

"The bank has been taking conscious, concrete steps to remedy the recent outages on its digital banking channels and assures its customers that it expects the current supervisory action will have no impact on its existing credit cards, digital banking channels and existing operations," it said. It added these measures would not materially impact its overall business.

The stock fell 2.13% on the BSE to ₹1,377.05 and was the biggest loser on the Bankex.

Services PMI signals rise in activity for a second month

Survey points to first increase in employment in 9 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The recovery in the Indian services sector was sustained in November as new work orders supported business activity growth and the first rise in employment in nine months, a monthly survey showed on Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index posted above the critical 50 mark that separates growth from contraction for the second month in a row.

Despite easing to 53.7 in November, from 54.1 in October, the latest reading was still indicative of a solid pace of expansion.

"The Indian service sec-



tector continued to recover from the coronavirus-induced contractions recorded from March through to September," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.

"Companies enjoyed a further rise in new work intakes and responded to this by lifting business activity and em-

IL&FS gets nod to sell CNTL to CUBE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

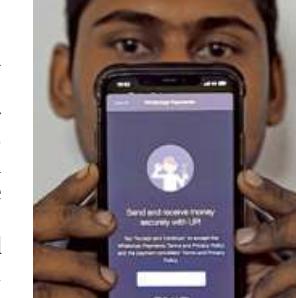
MUMBAI

IL&FS Group said it had received Justice (retd.) D.K. Jain's approval for sale of Chenani Nashri Tunnelway Ltd. (CNTL) to Cube Highways and Infrastructure Ltd. (CUBE).

ITNL (an IL&FS company) jointly along with its nominees, holds 100% equity of CNTL. IL&FS had invited EoIs for sale of its road assets in December 2018.

CUBE had bid approximately ₹3,900 crore for the entire 100% stake in CNTL.

The company said it would now seek approval from NCLT and NHAI to complete the sale transaction. On completion, this sale would help address ₹4,910 crore of IL&FS debt.



bal leader, Analytics, McKinsey & Co.

"The report suggests that the world has leapfrogged on digital adoption by 3-5 years in the last nine months," he added.

Nasscom and McKinsey stated in the report that 70% of enterprises were looking to either increase or re-prioritise their outsourcing expenditure.

UltraTech to invest ₹5,477 cr. to add capacity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The board of directors of UltraTech Cement, a subsidiary of the Aditya Birla Group, on Thursday approved increasing the production capacity by 12.8 mtpa with a mix of brownfield and greenfield expansion at an investment of ₹5,477 crore.

The additional capacity will be created in the fast-growing markets of the east, central and north regions of the country, the company said. "This significant investment in a core infrastructure sector will accelerate the wheels of economic activity and aid the kick-start of the private investment cycle," said Kumar Mangalam Birla, chairman, Aditya Birla Group.

Webinar on exchange traded funds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund and *The Hindu BusinessLine* will conduct a webinar on the topic 'Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) - Simplified', on December 5 at 5 pm.

Experts from the industry will provide advice on mutual funds and answer all queries related to mutual funds.

The webinar will be a conversation between Chintan Haria, Head, Product Development and Strategy at ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund, and Radhika Merwin, Associate Editor, *The Hindu BusinessLine*.

To register for this free webinar, log on to <https://bit.ly/EDITICICI>

Webinar ID: 884 4761 2671

HCL's Roshni tops list of India's richest women

Shaw leads list of self-made women

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

HCL Technologies chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, with a net worth of ₹54,850 crore, tops the Kotak Wealth Hurun list of India's wealthiest women.

Trailing her is Biocon's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw with a net worth of ₹36,600 crore. In the third spot is Leena Gandhi Tewari of the Mumbai-headquartered pharmaceuticals firm USV, with a net worth of ₹21,340 crore. The list of 100 richest women is based on their estimated net worth as on September 30. The cumulative wealth of those on the list is ₹2,72,540 crore.

The threshold for the ranking was net worth of ₹100 crore. According to a release, the 2020 edition of

the report focusses exclusively on women who play an active role in their family business, entrepreneurs and professionals. There are 31 self-made women in the list and among

Kohli's men expected to pose a tougher challenge in T20 series



Cheer, at last! India, which bounced back to win the final ODI, will look to continue in the same vein in the three T20Is. •AP

Washington, Chahar and Natarajan lend balance to bowling attack; Aussies look to retain momentum

INDIA IN AUS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CANBERRA

Short of resources in ODIs, India will have enough options to choose from to pose a stiffer challenge to Australia when the two sides clash in a three-match T20 series beginning here on Friday.

The presence of Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahar and T. Natarajan, who did well on his ODI debut on Wednesday, lends the much-needed balance to the bowling department.

Washington will be high on confidence after a solid IPL where Royal Challengers Bangalore and India skipper Virat Kohli used him effectively in the PowerPlay and

middle overs. With Hardik Pandya not bowling regularly, India had only one specialist all-rounder in Ravindra Jadeja in the one-dayers.

However, in the T20s, Kohli will also have the services of Washington in both the departments and there is

a possibility that Hardik can roll his arm over for a brief spell like he did from the second ODI onwards.

Yorker specialist Natarajan, who was a late addition to the ODI squad, could also make his T20 debut on Friday having shown enough promise in his maiden international appearance.

who batted at five in ODIs, is expected to go back to his preferred opening slot alongside Shikhar Dhawan.

The in-form wicketkeeper batsman had also opened in the previous series against New Zealand and would be expected to bat the bulk of the 20 overs like he did so well in the IPL.

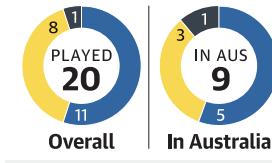
Skipper Kohli looked in good touch in ODIs and will be aiming to build on that while No. 4 Shreyas Iyer will look to find his rhythm after an ordinary run in the ODI games.

Australia, after naming the same squad for ODIs as well as T20s, will back themselves to beat India after a clinical display over the last one week despite injury con-

cerns. Mitchell Starc is expected to return to bolster the attack even as the side misses the services of Pat Cummins, who has been rested as part of his workload management.

India vs Australia in T20Is

• INDIA • AUSTRALIA • ODI



The schedule

December 4, Canberra
December 6, Sydney
December 8, Sydney

ALL MATCHES START AT 1.40 P.M. IST

India vs Australia ODI series in numbers



The top performers in the India-Australia ODI series which the latter won 2-1

BATTING	M	R	HS	Avg.	50/100
Aaron Finch	3	249	114	83.00	2/1
Steve Smith	3	216	105	72.00	0/2
Hardik Pandya	3	210	92*	105.00	2/0
Virat Kohli	3	173	89	57.66	2/0
BOWLING	M	W	BBI	Econ.	4W/5W
Adam Zampa	3	7	4/54	5.36	1/0
Josh Hazlewood	3	6	3/55	6.20	0/0
Mohammed Shami	2	4	3/59	6.94	0/0
Jasprit Bumrah	3	4	2/43	6.61	0/0

BCCI set to add two new IPL teams

'Approval' to be sought at the AGM on December 24

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

A decision on adding two new teams to the Indian Premier League is set to be made during the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI's) Annual General Meeting (AGM) on December 24.

"Approval on inclusion of 2 (two) new teams to the Indian Premier League," states one of the 23 points on the agenda for the 89th AGM, accessed by *The Hindu*.

The manner in which the item is phrased hints that it's all but certain that two new teams will be added ahead of the 2021 edition.

Keen on expansion

The BCCI hierarchy is keen on expanding the IPL and it's not just because of the interest evinced by several corporates.

It is learnt that the Board also views the addition of teams as an opportunity to

compensate the promoters of the now-defunct Kochi franchise by offering them a team or a stake in a team.

The BCCI owes the promoters more than ₹5,000 crore after a court-appointed arbitrator ruled against it for wrongful termination.

Maximum of six venues
The Hindu understands that unlike in 2010, when a long list of eligible venues was presented to prospective bidders, a maximum of six venues – Ahmedabad, Kochi, Guwahati, Lucknow, Pune and Dehradun – are likely to be offered in the bid document this time around.

At least three corporate giants – a Gujarat-based energy firm, a Kolkata-based industrial conglomerate and a prominent banker – are understood to be bracing themselves to enter the bidding war.

The agenda does not specify the venue for the AGM,

implying that the meeting will be held at the headquarters in Mumbai.

Three in the race

However, if the authorities in Maharashtra do not give clearance, the meeting may be held in Ahmedabad, Kolkata or Chennai.

Also on the agenda

- Election of vice-president, with Mahim Verma resigning earlier this year
- Appointment of cricket committees, including the selection panels, standing committees and umpires committee
- Discussion on inclusion of cricket in 2028 Los Angeles Olympics
- Updates on 2021 T20 World Cup scheduled in India

Krishna's injury-time header breaks Odisha FC hearts

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

Roy Krishna found the target in the final minute of injury time to help ATK Mohun Bagan beat Odisha FC by a solitary goal in its ISL match at the Fatorda Stadium on Thursday. ATKMB's third win in as many matches catapulted it to the top with nine points.

The first session came alive only after the half-hour mark as the teams focused on getting their midfielders organised. Mohun Bagan enjoyed greater possession and came up with more passes, but Odisha created more chances and was unfortunate to not go ahead.

Both opportunities came

off set pieces, but a goal remained elusive as Odisha's Australian defender Jacob made a mess of his headers. Off the first attempt, in the 33rd minute, Marcelinho's corner was sent wide by Jacob. A couple of minutes later, Jacob missed another simple header, handing Odisha a lifeline.

Krishna had a chance to put ATKMB ahead in the final minute of the opening half, but his header sailed over.

ATK MB showed more aggression after the break, but the inciseness in attack that had powered it to two wins in its previous two outings was clearly missing. Odisha, too, organised its defence well to ward off the Krishna threat.

The Kolkata outfit earned

a couple of chances midway through the second session, but Jayesh Rane and substitute Bradden Inman failed to beat Odisha goalkeeper Kalraj Singh.

The match was heading for a goalless draw when a Tiwi free kick was headed towards goal by Sandesh Jhingan. Krishna, lurking nearby, headed the ball home past Kalraj, whose best efforts couldn't save the day for Odisha.

The result: ATK Mohun Bagan 1 (Roy Krishna 90+4) bt Odisha FC 0.

FRIDAY'S MATCH

Chennaiyin FC VS Bengaluru FC
7.30 P.M.
STAR SPORTS 2 (SD & HD), 3



The final twist: Roy Krishna, centre, headed home the winner in the nick of time. •ISL/SPORTZPICS

Messi, Barcelona fined

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BARCELONA

Lionel Messi was fined €600 for taking his jersey off to pay tribute to Diego Maradona, the Spanish soccer federation said.

The federation's competitions committee fined the Argentine player for his actions after scoring in Barcelona's 4-0 win over Osasuna in the Spanish league on Sunday.

After a strike from outside the box, Messi took off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to reveal the red-and-black of Maradona's jersey from his stint at Newell's Old Boys. Messi then blew a kiss with both hands to the sky as he looked upward.

After the game, Messi posted a photo of his tribute alongside an older image of



Maradona in the same shirt, adding the message 'Farewell, Diego' in Spanish. The federation also refused to void the yellow card that was shown to Messi for taking off his jersey, and fined Barcelona €180 euros. Messi and the club can appeal the decisions.

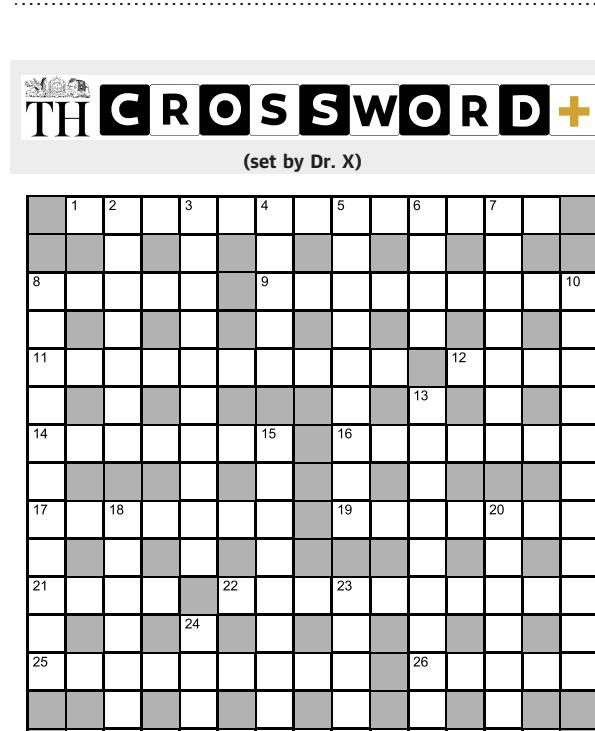
FAITH

Shunning royalty

In the Rama avatara, the Supreme One was the son of an Emperor, and so He was naturally treated with a great deal of respect. As a result, common men maintained a distance from Him. The Lord wanted to mingle with ordinary people. The only way to do that was to get away from the royal family and the court. Mantara's advice to Kaikeyi, and Kaikeyi's atrocious demands were all just excuses for Him to achieve what He wanted, namely, to befriend the common man. Kaikeyi's demand that He should go to the forest suited His purpose perfectly, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan in a discourse.

This is the very purpose of avatars – to gladden the hearts of those who adore Him, by giving them an opportunity to be with Him. Because He went to the forest, He was able to make friends with Guha, to accept Sabari's offerings, to accept Sugreeva as a friend and so on. But all this was for only a period of 14 years. When His exile ended, Rama became Emperor, and again His subjects maintained a respectable distance from Him.

The Lord was determined that in His next avatara, this problem would be addressed, which is why as Krishna, He grew up among the cowherds, playing with them, dancing with the Gopikas, and being as naughty as any other child of that age would be. Right from His birth, He exhibited His simplicity. He was born in a prison and was taken away to grow up elsewhere. Krishna's father Vasudeva was of royal lineage, but because of the curse of his ancestor Yayati, Vasudeva did not rule his kingdom, even after the killing of Kamsa. He made his father-in-law Ugrasena the king. Thus, Krishna was born in a Kshatriya family, but it was not a family that ruled. So the royalty that kept Him far from people in the Rama avatara was not a hurdle in the Krishna avatara.



- CROSSWORD**
13110
(set by Dr. X)
- 14 Wine in endless session, more savoury (7)
16 One damsel, largely enthralled by peg gives number (7)
17 Rural boy starting to undergo abdominal pain (7)
19 Mark keeps fish in motorcycle attachment (7)
21 Geek in dinner date (4)
22 Dash to squeal about affair (10)
25 Chemical agents more frequently transported by steamer (9)
26 Roll dope, have a little smoke (5)
27 Result of bookies shutting shop – anything can happen now (3,4,3,3)
- DOWN
- 2 Contemporary people mostly reserved about Republican nationalist (7)
3 Commercial shot around Britain is acceptable (10)
4 Endlessly shout after sailor enters party (5)
5 Extremely masterly programme featuring tense whodunits (9)
6 Soldiers out to lunch, wanting bit of booze (4)
7 South American Indian in Nicaragua ran impressively (7)
8 Tricksters in gambling game welcoming posh groups (11)
10 At first, egg husband to sort out performance anxiety (5,6)
13 Exactly in the middle of mortuary (4,6)
15 Rude bum in novel is lying (9)
18 Scrupulous fellow taken in by a cruel rogue (7)
20 Despicable person from CIA engineered dispute (7)
23 Analysis by leading attorney in hard case (5)
24 Woman starting to braise culinary plant (4)

SCANTO PLAY



SUDOKU

4				7			
5	8				6		
			6		9	4	2
				3	8	4	1
					8	1	5
					2	5	3
1	9			6		4	
					3		8

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

No.SS54915 Distribution: www.nigntfeatures.com

B	A	I	T	A	N	D	S	W	I	T	C	H
L	I	O	E	D	H							
I	N	U	R	E	N	T	H	E	B	A	L	L
N	M	B	S	P	A	R	E					
M	Y	E	R	E	R	E						
Y	N	E	R	E	R	E						
S	Y	E										

TV PICKS

Australia vs India: 1st T20I, Sony Ten 1, 3 & Six (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
South Africa vs England: 1st ODI, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m.
Sakhir Grand Prix: Practice, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.50 p.m. & 10.30 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.15 p.m.
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



1960 Olympics decathlon winner Johnson passes away

LOS ANGELES
Rafer Johnson, who won the decathlon at the 1960 Rome Olympics and helped subdue Robert F. Kennedy's assassin in 1968, passed away on Wednesday. He was 86. Johnson was among the world's greatest athletes from 1955 through his Olympic triumph in 1960, winning a National decathlon championship in 1956 and a silver medal at the Melbourne Olympics that year. He also carried the American flag at the 1960 Games and lit the torch at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to open the 1984 Games. AP

Siddarth outplayed

CAIRO
Qualifier Carlos Sanchez Jover of Spain outplayed third seed Siddarth Rawat 6-2, 6-0 in the second round of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Cairo on Thursday. Arjun Kadhe lost 2-6, 7-6(5), 6-3 against second seed Fabrizio Ornago of Italy in the first round. **The results: \$15,000 ITF men, Cairo: Second round:** Carlos Sanchez Jover (Esp) bt Siddarth Rawat 6-2, 6-0. **First round:** Miljan Zekic (Srb) bt Manish Sureshkumar 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Amateur Sneha retains one-shot lead

NOIDA
Amateur Sneha Singh retained a one-shot lead in the seventh leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Thursday. Sneha, who closed with a 72, is a shot ahead of Siddhi Kapoor, whose solitary win on the Hero WPGT came in her rookie year in 2016. Amandeep Drall carded a two-over 74 while Vani Kapoor finished with 75. PTI

Prashant in quarterfinals

SONEPAT: Prashant Kumar fought his way past Gajender Singh 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in the pre-quarterfinals of the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament on Thursday.

The results (pre-quarterfinals): Prashant Kumar bt Gajender Singh 6-4, 4-6, 6-2; Karan Singh bt Hemant Kumar 6-0, 6-1; Ricky Choudhary bt Dhananjay Singh 7-5, 6-4; Sandesh Dattrey bt Vaibhav Kundu 6-2, 6-3; Yogeet Panwar bt Amit Dahiya 6-4, 6-4; Fardeen Qamar bt Chinmay Chauhan 6-3, 6-4; Ajay Malik bt Siddharth Asaudha 6-1, 6-3.

Arnav cruises past Jai

GURUGRAM: Unseeded Arnav Yadav cruised past Jai Rana 6-1, 6-3 to make the AITA Championship series junior tennis tournament under-18 boys' final here on Thursday. In the final, Arnav will challenge second seed Lokesh Pun.

The results: **sUnder-18: Boys: Semifinals:** Arnav Yadav bt Jai Rana 6-1, 6-3; Lokesh Pun bt Mukil Ramanan 6-4, 6-2.

Girls: Semifinals: Ruchita Talwar bt Riya Sachdeva 6-2, 6-3; Shruti Ahlawat bt Tamanna Panwar 6-0, 6-0.

Boopathy blanks Ayush, enters semifinals

AGRA: Boopathy Sakthivel blanked Ayush Sharma to reach the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament semifinals here on Thursday. In the semifinals, Boopathy will play Ayub Ahmed Khan. **The results (quarterfinals):** Yash Yadav bt Nishith Naiveen 6-1, 6-4; Digvijay Pratap Singh bt Abhishek Saroha 6-1, 6-1; Ayub Ahmed Khan bt Varun Arora 6-2, 6-4; Boopathy Sakthivel bt Ayush Sharma 6-0, 6-0.

Neymar brace keeps PSG in the hunt

Giroud slams in four for Chelsea; Ronaldo climbs another peak; Dortmund advances

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 750th career goal. Olivier Giroud put on a four-goal masterclass. Neymar got the goals that mattered most to leave Manchester United facing a possible Champions League exit.

Neymar scored early and late at Old Trafford as Paris Saint-Germain won 3-1 in the latest bout of a fierce Champions League rivalry to take control of its destiny in Group H.

Big mistake

United was left to regret not substituting midfielder Fred who seemed lucky not to be sent off in the first half when head-butting PSG's Leandro Paredes.

Fred finally got a red card in the 70th minute just as United tried to come back from PSG taking a 2-1 lead through another Brazilian, Marquinhos.

PSG and United are joined on nine points by Leipzig, which got a stoppage-time winning goal to beat Istanbul Basaksehir 4-3 in a thrilling game.

Job on hand
United has perhaps the toughest task in the final games next Tuesday, travelling to Leipzig while PSG hosts Basaksehir.

Borussia Dortmund was the only team to advance on Wednesday, drawing 1-1 at home against Lazio to become the ninth team in the round of 16.

Juventus was already safely into the next round before Ronaldo marked his 750th goal for his clubs and Portugal.



Cock-a-hoop: Neymar and Giroud, right, had a night to remember with their goal-scoring exploits. ■ AFP

gal. It was a simple tap-in at the far post in a 3-0 win over Dynamo Kyiv.

Chelsea and Sevilla had also advanced before Giroud tore apart the Spanish side on its home turf. The France forward's perfectly balanced quadruple came from shots with his right and left feet, a header, and then from the penalty spot.

Like Real Madrid on Tuesday, Man United lost to leave itself a tense last-round challenge just to qualify for the knockout stage in February.

Lopsided

In the most lopsided group, Barcelona was able to rest Lionel Messi against Ferencvaros and still score all its goals in the first half hour in a 3-0 win.

Barcelona has five straight wins and leads Juve by three points before they meet in Spain next Tuesday to decide who tops the group.

Group winners are seeded in the last-16 draw and play the second leg at home.

If Messi and Ronaldo both play, it will be the veterans' first meeting in the group stage.

The results:

Group E: Krasnodar 1 (Berg 71) bt Rennes 0; Sevilla 0 lost to Chelsea 4 (Giroud 8, 54, 74, 83-pen).

Group F: Club Brugge 3 (De Ketelaere 33, Vanaken 58-pen, Lang 73) bt Zenit Saint Petersburg 0; Borussia Dortmund 1 (Guerrero 44) drew with Lazio 1 (Immobile 67-pen).

Group G: Ferencvaros 0 lost to Barcelona 3 (Griezmann 14, Braithwaite 20, Dembele 28-pen); Juventus 3 (Chiesa 21, Ronaldo 57, Morata 66) bt Dynamo Kiev 0.

Group H: Basaksehir Istanbul 3 (Kahveci 45+3, 72, 85) lost to RB Leipzig 4 (Poulsten 26, Muriel 43, Olmo 66, Sorloth 90+2); Manchester United 1 (Rashford 32) lost to Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Neymar 6, 90+, Marquinhos 69).

Frappart makes history

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TURIN

Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a men's Champions League game on Wednesday as Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 750th career goal in a 3-0 win for Juventus over Dynamo Kiev.

"Another barrier has been broken down, we know that she is very good, which is the most important and fundamental thing," Juventus chief football officer Fabio Paratici said before the game of Frappart.

The 36-year-old Frappart has already made history as the first woman to referee in



Stephanie Frappart. ■ REUTERS

Ligue 1, and took charge of the 2019 UEFA Super Cup final between Liverpool and Chelsea. She also made her Europa League debut in October.

DELHI ROUND-UP

Easy win for LB Shastri

LB Shastri Club beat Madan Lal Academy by nine wickets in the Turf Youth Cup under-19 cricket tournament.

The scores: Madan Lal Academy 101 in 28.4 overs (Yuvraj Singh 47, Sanyam Jain 3/6, Sampoorn Tripathi 3/13) lost to LB Shastri Club 107/1 in 14.2 overs (Deepesh Balyan 54 n.o., Ayush Sharma 41).

Kairav, Aditya star for UGA
Kairav Singhani picked up four wickets and Aditya Naithani top-scored with 88 as Uday Gupta Academy

memorial under-14 tournament. **The scores:** STWA 147 in 35 overs (Sparsh 4/17, Rohan Rathi 3/26) lost to Sporting Club 150/1 in 12.4 overs (Pradeep Sangwan 76 n.o., Rohan Rathi 70 n.o.).

Raghav scalps five
A five-wicket haul by Raghav Kumar helped Friends Club edge past Youth Club by one run in the Ghevra Cup cricket tournament.

The scores: Friends Club 233/7 in 40 overs (Mrigank Pathak 72, Vikas Kumar 54, Mayank Kumar 52) bt Youth Club 232/9 in 40 overs (Vatsal Govind 92, Krish Kumar 56, Raghav Kumar 5/36).

PRA in title round
Positive Roads Academy beat Ganga International Academy by 172 runs to enter the final of the P.T. Wings Sports tournament.

The scores: PRA 213 in 39.4 overs (Vikas Kumar 76, Yash Sharma 48, Raj 3/51) bt GIA 141/8 in 36 overs (Pukhraj Singh 59, Yash Sharma 5/20).

Blitzkrieg by Dhruv

A quickfire 112-ball 190 by Delhi under-23 batsman Dhruv Kausik saw Telefunken Club thrash SC Academy by 266 runs in the Friendship Cup cricket tournament.

The scores: Telefunken Club 339/5 in 40 overs (Dhruv Kausik 190, Piyush Mittal 49, Sahil Wilson 43) bt SCA 73 in 14.5 overs (Rohan Prachanda 4/8).

Harshit, Karan shine

Half-centuries and two wickets each by Harshit Sethi and Karan Sharma helped Noida Wonder defeat Sehgal & Choudhary Academy by three wickets in the first Choudhary Shyam Singh memorial T20 tournament.

The scores: SCA 149/5 in 20 overs (Anmol Sharma 56, Karan 30, Ayush Badoni 28, Harshit Sethi 2/21, Karan Sharma 2/15) lost to Noida Wonder 150/7 in 19.4 overs (Harshit Sethi 57, Karan Sharma 55, Vishal Choudhary 2/32).

Five-wicket win for Youth XI

Haryana Ranji Trophy batsman Deepak Punia scored 74 not out and Vipul Choudhary took 4/32 as Youth XI beat RP Academy by five wickets in the first Tripathi Premier League.

The scores: RPA 215 in 39.5 overs (Vaibhav Rawal 86, Aryaman Sen 60; Vipul Choudhary 4/32) lost to Youth XI 219/5 in 35 overs (Deepak Punia 74 n.o.).

24 wrestlers for individual World Cup

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

India will field 24 wrestlers, including Olympics medallist Sakshi Malik and Worlds medallists Ravi Kumar Dahiya and Deepak Punia, in the individual World Cup to be held in Belgrade from December 12 to 18.

Some top wrestlers, including Bajrang Punia (65kg), Jitender (74kg), Somvir (92kg) and Vinesh Phogat (women's 53kg), will skip the event.

Participation in the tournament has been approved by the Government at an overall cost of more than ₹90 lakh.

Selected wrestlers: Men: Freestyle: Ravi Kumar Dahiya (57kg), Rahul Aware (61kg), Naveen (70kg), Gurav Balayan (79kg), Deepak Punia (86kg), Satyavrat Kadian (97kg), Sumit (125kg).

Greco Roman: Arjun Halakurki (55kg), Gayender (60kg), Sachin Rana (63kg), Ashu (67kg), Aditya Kundu (72kg), Sajan (77kg), Sunil Kumar (82kg), Hardip (97kg), Navneen (130kg).

Women: Nirmala Devi (50kg), Pinki (55kg), Anshu (57kg), Sarita (59kg), Sonam (62kg), Sakshi Malik (65kg), Gurshanpreet Kaur (72kg), Kiran (76kg).

Cosmos clinches Ashoka Chakra Cup

BENGALURU: Darius Byramji-trained Cosmos (Suraj up) won the Ashoka Chakra Cup, the feature event of the races held here on Thursday (Dec. 3). The winner is owned by Mr. Rienzie M.K. Edwards & Mr. P.P.M. Edwards.

The line-up has two of the country's big names Gaurav Gill (co-driver Musa Sherif) and Amitrajit Ghosh (Ashwin Naik).

The former has called the shots both home and away and, as expected, will lead the challenge for the Yellow brigade in the overall class.

The Arjuna awardee and multiple national champion will be on a Mahindra XUV 300 and alongside him will be his friend and former teammate Ghosh.

The championship has attracted quite a few new entrants but all eyes will be on Gill and Ghosh, who have the rich experience of driving to win in different terrains.

Testing and feedback

"They are two of the country's finest drivers. Their testing and feedback of our products and development will add tremendous value in our endeavour to return to Indian rallying bigger and

better," said Sanjay Sharma, head of motorsport, JK Tyre.

JK Tyre will also support four local teams from North East that includes an all girls team. Phurpa Tsering (Yashwardhan Kumar), Nabam Asha (Dinky Varghese), Hage Naku (Hage Bitu) and Pem Sonam (Lenin Joseph) are sure to get a lot of support from the fans in Arunachal.

Interesting competition

"We are looking forward to an interesting competition in the challenging terrains of Arunachal," said Gill, who has been preparing for the season with renewed vigour.

"I am happy to be back with JK after a brief hiatus," added Ghosh.

Malwa. Owner: Mr. S. Pathy. Trainer: Irfan Ghatala.

6. ASHOKA CHAKRA CUP (1,800m, 3-yo & over) (Terms): COSMOS (Suraj) 1, Salazar (Anjar Alam) 2, Well Connected (Trevor) 3 and Secretive Force (Irvan) 4. 3/4, 5 and 1/4. Im 20.56s. ₹28 (w), 18, 23 and 20 (p), SHP: 63, THP: 43, FP: 363, Q: 88, Trinella: 841 and 631, Exacta: 2,412 and 2,067. Favourite: Astral Force. Owners: Mr. K. Manoj Kumar & Mr. Kamesh. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

8. CORDON BLEU PLATE (Div. I), (1,400m), rated 15 to 35: KATANA (Trevor) 1, Realia (Akshay K) 2, Sovereign Legend (Neera) 3 and Bombix (Arshad) 4. 1, 3/4 and 11.5. Im 28.16s. ₹67 (w), 21, 25 and 23. Favourite: Astral Force. Owners: Mr. R. Manoj Kumar & Mrs. Rina Mahindra. Trainer: S. Attaolah.

Jackpot: ₹30,326 (carried over); Runner-up: ₹6,498 (two tks); Treble (i