



TRS emerges single largest party, BJP gains in Hyderabad civic polls

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Lakshwadweep Administrator Dineshwar Sharma passes away

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## NEARBY



Over 50% turnout in J&K council election

SRINAGAR  
Over 50% voters turned up to cast the ballot in the third phase of the District Development Council election in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday. Polling was held in 33 constituencies – 16 in Kashmir and 17 in Jammu – in this phase with 305 candidates – 252 men and 53 women – in the fray.

NEWS ► PAGE 9

SC rejects plea for govt. nominees in mosque trust

NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea to nominate Central and State government representatives to the 'Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation Trust' for building a mosque in Ayodhya. A three-judge Bench led by Rohinton Nariman dismissed the petition filed by advocates Shishir Chaturvedi and Karunesh Kumar Shukla.

NEWS ► PAGE 10

If salons can run, why not spas, HC asks govt.

NEW DELHI  
If salons are working, then why not spas, asked the Delhi High Court while telling the Aam Aadmi Party government on Friday to review its decision prohibiting the operation of spas in the city. The query was posed by Justice Navin Chawla who said prima facie there is merit in the submission of spa owners that if salons can open, then they too should be permitted to function.

CITY ► PAGE 3

## Vaccine may be ready in a few weeks: Modi

Vaccination will begin after nod from scientists, he says

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday told floor leaders of 19 political parties represented in Parliament that a vaccine against COVID-19 could be available for roll-out in the next few weeks. He said this during his closing remarks at an all-party meeting, where nearly 30 leaders of various parties were present.

"Experts have assessed that it won't be too long before a vaccine against corona is available and that it could be a matter of weeks for that to happen," Mr. Modi said. "As soon as scientists green light a vaccine, the distribution will start," he said.

### Inputs from States

The government, he said, had set up a national experts' group of scientists, Central and State government officials for mapping the vaccination programme, which would likely take advantage of India's large and experienced vaccination network from its universal immunisation programme.

"Cold chain and other logistics will be boosted, taking inputs from State governments," he said. Frontline health workers and those with co-morbidities would be first in line for the vaccine, Mr. Modi said.

The pricing of the vaccine would be "according to the imperatives of public health" and in consultation with the State governments,



Exchanging views: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the virtual all-party meeting on COVID-19 on Friday. ■ ANI

Experts have assessed that it won't be too long before a vaccine against corona is available and that it could be a matter of weeks for that to happen

As we are on the cusp of getting a vaccine, we should not now relapse into behaviour that may see another spurt in the disease

NARENDRA MODI  
PRIME MINISTER

## Financial aid sought for States

The all-party meeting saw Opposition party leaders re-emphasising the need for the government to take urgent measures to bring the economy back on track, and demanding additional financial help. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP T.R. Baalu was the lone

he added.

He said his visits to vaccine development and manufacturing facilities in Pune, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad and his talks with company officials showed that there was a high level of confidence in the possibility of a vaccine being out for use soon.

Due to the world's requirements for an effective and inexpensive vaccine, India was very much in the spotlight, the Prime Minister said, adding that eight vaccine candidates were be-

speaker to raise the ongoing farmers' agitation. Several parties flagged the need to pay the GST dues that the Central government owes to the States, and additional financial help to meet the revenue shortfall that many States are facing due to the pandemic. ■ PAGE 10

ing manufactured in India and three were being developed indigenously.

"As we are on the cusp of getting a vaccine, we should not now relapse into behaviour that may see another spurt in the disease. India's experience in dealing with the coronavirus, despite not having the health infrastructure of developed countries, is a sign of the country's determination and adoption of a scientific approach to dealing with the disease. This must continue," he said.

The R&D kept the RBI's key lending rate, the repo rate, steady at 4%. The central bank has slashed the repo rate by 115 basis points since late March to cushion the economy from the fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, including the lockdowns to check the spread of the coronavirus.

The R&D also brightened its outlook for the economy,

## Interfaith marriage: will seek DM's nod, says groom

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

A Muslim man and a Hindu woman, whose wedding was stopped by the Uttar Pradesh police on the basis of the new ordinance against "unlawful" conversion, said they had arranged the ceremony on December 2 unaware of the legislation.

"If we knew clearly about the new law, we would have

gone to the District Magistrate and sought permission first," the 25-year-old groom, Kabir (name changed) told *The Hindu*, on Friday.

"We did not know about the new law. We will act according to the law," said Mr. Kabir, a pharmacist, the colour of mehndi still fresh on his hands.

On Wednesday, he was to get married to his friend of

six years, a 20-year-old Hindu woman, when the police reached the venue and summoned the families to the police station before the ceremonies could begin.

The marriage had the consent of their families.

Outsiders or the government should not get into interpersonal consensual relationships, the bride said, requesting anonymity.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

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# THE HINDU



Rajoana to escape gallows, but govt. mum on his plea

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Jadeja, concussion-sub Chahal fashion India's win in first T20I

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## Farmers firm on repeal of agri laws

Kisan Morcha steps up stir, calls Bharat Bandh on Tuesday



Help at hand: Farmers receiving medical assistance at the Singhu border in Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

repeal of the three laws was reached unanimously after two rounds of talks – the first between the leaders of Punjab farmers organisations and the second with farmers' unions from across the country.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Lakhawal) general-secretary Harvinder Singh Lakhawal, who presided over the morning meetings, said the farmer unions had given a call for a 'Bharat Bandh' on December 8.

They also decided to burn the effigies of the Modi government and corporate houses on December 5.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8  
MORE REPORTS ► PAGES 2, 4

## RBI holds rates, sees FY GDP contraction at 7.5%

It projects a return to growth in Q3, Q4

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday left benchmark interest rates unchanged and retained an 'accommodative' stance as it prioritised support for the economy over 'sticky' inflation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MPC kept the RBI's key lending rate, the repo rate, steady at 4%.

The central bank has slashed the repo rate by 115 basis points since late March to cushion the economy from the fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, including the lockdowns to check the spread of the coronavirus.

The R&D also brightened its outlook for the economy,

projecting that the GDP contraction would narrow to 7.5% for the financial year ending in March 2021, a full 2 percentage points shallower than the 9.5% it had forecast in October.

Citing the improvement in activity in the second quarter, it projected that GDP would return to growth of 0.1% in Q3, and expand 0.7% in Q4.

The message was conveyed to Canadian High Commissioner Nadir Patel by senior Indian diplomats after he was formally summoned to the Ministry and handed over a démarciale in this regard.

"There is considerable optimism on successes in vaccine trials," the MPC said. "Consumers remain optimistic about the outlook, and business sentiment of manufacturing firms is gradually improving," it added.

The Canadian High Commissioner was informed that comments by the Canadian Prime Minister, some Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament

## Remarks by Canadian PM unacceptable: India

Such actions could damage ties: MEA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Comments from the leadership and other members of the Canadian government regarding the ongoing farmers' agitation is "unacceptable interference" in India's affairs, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that summed up the contents of the démarciale issued to Mr. Patel.

Reacting to the development, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said: "Canada will always stand up for the right to peaceful protest anywhere around the world and we are pleased to see moves towards de-escalation and dialogue (with the farmers)."

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8



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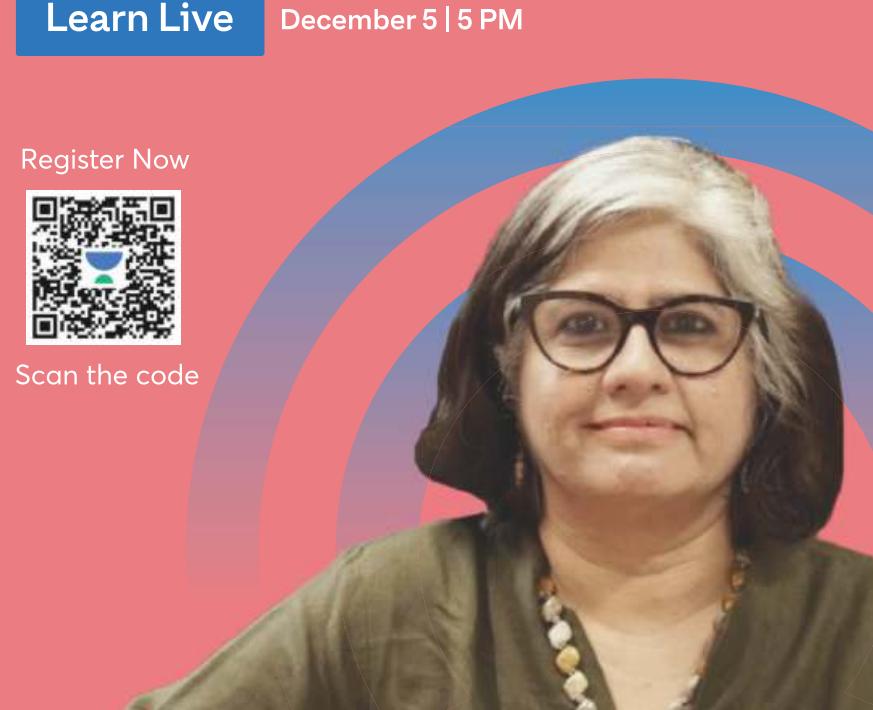
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# Verbal assurances on MSP not enough, protest will continue till R-Day: BKU

Farmers threaten to march to the Capital and take part in the January 26 parade with tractors

JATIN ANAND  
GHAZIABAD/NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) on Friday declared that the ongoing farmers' agitation would continue till Republic Day.

BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said the Centre's verbal assurances on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) were just not enough. Besides, he warned of a 'march to New Delhi' on the eve, or morning, of Republic Day before the farmers would take part in the ceremonial parade on Rajpath in their tractors.

If they are stopped, there will be chaos, Mr. Tikait told *The Hindu*.

## Strong message

Though they would probably leave the Capital to tend to their fields the next day, their struggle till then would be a lesson in "the power of the average farmer and their unity", which would serve and inform the next generation of farmers in the country, he said.

"We have come here looking for a government that stays within the confines of New Delhi. There are many



Farmers protesting at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghaziabad on Friday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

more farmers waiting to join us, and we will not leave till we make this absent government aware of the issues faced by farmers at the grassroots," Mr. Tikait said at the Delhi-Ghaziabad border in Ghaziabad.

He added that 'mere words' on the MSP were not enough and a new 'Agriculture Act' was the need of the

hour and the recently-enacted laws needed to be repealed.

"We are here and we will decide the day we leave, not the government. We will march to Delhi on January 26 to become a part of the Republic Day parade. If they stop us, there will be chaos," Mr. Tikait warned.

Some, though, detached

themselves from the cluster around Tikait, whose father is credited for bringing the Capital to a grinding halt within a week during the Boat Club agitation of 1988 almost 32 years ago to this day, to make calls asking for more provisions, especially tractors, to be dispatched towards National Highway 24.

A little away, graffiti christening the venue 'Kisan Kranti Gate' on the pillars supporting the NH-24 flyover was being neatly repainted on a white background. On the flyover, speeches recalled the sacrifice of farmers who died during similar agitations across the country over previous decades among a gathering that stretches across more than a kilometre.

"I am getting call after call from home telling me about the condition of my son who has recently fallen ill. But I can't leave. I will stay here as long as our leaders want us to remain here. We have come too far to go back without the result we need," said Vijay Kumar, a farmer from Sravasti near Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh.

"We have come here leaving our fields, crops and families behind because this sacrifice is needed, because we are talking about the interests of each and every farmer in the country for times to come. We will stay here as long as it takes for us to achieve that," asserted Rajiv Chaudhary from Meerut.

## Congress asks CM to provide farmers with basic amenities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar on Friday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, asking him to provide basic civic amenities like sanitation, mobile bio-toilets, COVID-19 testing centres, health facilities, water and food to the protesting farmers from across the country.

Mr. Kumar said the government has been making tall claims without doing anything at the ground level to alleviate the suffering of the farmers.

He asked the Chief Minister to instruct the departments concerned to provide all the necessary civic facilities to the protesting farmers, till their demands are met.

## L-G orders deployment as farmers' stir disrupts city borders

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI



L-G Anil Baijal.

At the Capital's containment zones, more home guards and civil defence volunteers will be deployed in order to ease the burden on Delhi Police personnel, who have been busy over the past week with round-the-clock security arrangements due to the ongoing farmers' agitation at almost all of the city's access points.

At a meeting convened to assess the situation related to the protest and the disruptions at Delhi's entry and exit points, Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Friday underlined the need for "human policing that was effective but not inhuman" either for the protesters or police personnel.

According to Raj Niwas sources, Mr. Baijal issued direc-

tions that three to four home guards and civil defence volunteers would now assist one police personnel at a containment zone – especially with the enforcement of COVID-19-appropriate behaviour such as wearing masks and social distancing. There are almost 6,000 containment zones.

A majority of Delhi Police personnel were already juggling their usual duties, including court appearances, investigation in existing cas-

es, law & order deployment and intelligence gathering in addition to the enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour and issuing fines to those not complying with it on a daily basis before the farmers' agitation added to their load, said sources.

Meanwhile, Mr. Baijal told police administrators to be vigilant of the emerging situation at other city access points in addition to the Singhlu, Ghaziabad, Chilla and Tikri borders.

Raj Niwas sources said the ground situation regarding COVID-19 was also discussed at the meeting with the Delhi Police informing the L-G that there was overall higher compliance to wearing masks and maintaining social distancing in Delhi, including its markets and wedding venues.

The statement added

## Supply of vegetables, fruits both to and from city's markets dips significantly

From 12K-14K tonnage to Azadpur mandi, it is now 7,500'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The supply of vegetables and fruits both to and from the Capital's wholesale markets has dipped significantly, inter-State bus services have been suspended and gridlocks have become routine on alternate routes across the city as most of Delhi's borders are either shut or affected due to the ongoing farmers' agitation.



The chairman of Azadpur mandi said the protest affected supply of coconut water, other fruits from Delhi to other States. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The daily supply of the usual 12,000 to 14,000 tonnage of vegetables to the Azadpur mandi has dipped to around 7,500 tonnes.

"The daily supply has dipped by somewhere around 50% due to the situation at the borders," said Adil Khan, chairman, Azadpur APMC.

He also said the situation had affected the supply of coconut water, apples and sweet lime from Delhi to other States. "Coconut water is supplied across northern India from Azadpur. Given the situation, very little stock of such items, if any, is

## Editors Guild issues advisory on stir coverage

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) on Friday urged media organisations to refrain from labelling farmers as "Khalistanis", "anti-nationals" and other such terms so that the protests are not delegitimised. The EGI asked media organisations to display fairness, objectivity and balance in reporting.

In a statement issued, the Guild said, "The EGI is concerned about the news coverage of the farmers' protests in the national capital, wherein certain sections of the media have been labelling them as "Khalistanis", "anti-nationals" and other such terms to delegitimise the protests without any evidence or proof. This goes against the tenets of responsible and ethical journalism."

## Delhi Metro to assist NMRC on phase 2 project

DMRC will act as general consultants

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation on Friday signed an agreement with the Noida Metro Rail Corporation under which the DMRC will provide services to NMRC as General Consultants (GC) or Project Management Consultants (PMC) for its Phase 2 project from Noida Sector 51 to Greater Noida Sector 51.

"The DMRC will also be responsible for construction supervision and independent quality and safety monitoring of all contract packages besides testing and commissioning of the entire systems work and equipment and guiding for regulatory clearances for systems contracts," it read.

The Phase 2 project of the NMRC will be an extension of the Aqua Line from Sector 51 to Greater Noida Sector 2. The corridor is proposed to be 9.6 kilometre-long consisting of five stations.

## Keeping watch over Capital



Kites sit on a roof on a cold December morning in the city on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## No licence issued under land pooling policy

DDA urges homebuyers not to invest in fraudulent schemes

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

In view of fraudulent cases where developers and promoters mislead homebuyers into investing in the Land Pooling Policy (LPP), the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Friday reiterated that it has not issued any licence or approval to housing projects in any

zone under the policy.

"It is informed that DDA at present is inviting online applications from the landowners for expressing willingness to participate in the land pooling scheme in five zones falling in 95 urbanised villages having 109 sectors. A sector would qualify for the next step of implementation

of minimum 70% contiguous land is made available through pooling and all the landowners form a consortium on the issue of notice by DDA," the urban body said.

It added: "Any person interested or being promised any land or apartments under any land pooling scheme must go through the instructions

Office of Mela Officer (Medical & Health) Kumbh Mela 2021  
Rishikul Government Ayurvedic College Campus, Haridwar  
Letter No-E-Tender KM2021/2020-21  
National Competitive Bidding (E-Tender)

The Mela officer (Medical & Health) Kumbh Mela 2021, Haridwar Uttarakhand on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites Tender of following Insecticidal Supplies by E-Tender (Two Bid System Process). Information regarding tender shall be available on <http://www.uktenders.gov.in> from 03.12.2020.

Date of online publications : 03.12.2020, Time: 12.00 P.M.  
Document download Start Date : 03.12.2020, Time: 12.00 P.M.  
Bid submission Start Date : 03.12.2020, Time: 12.00 P.M.  
Pre Bid Meeting : 10.12.2020, Time: 03.00 P.M.  
Bid submission End Date : 16.12.2020, Time: 05.00 P.M.  
Technical Bid Opening Date : 17.12.2020, Time: 03.00 P.M.

Tender Name of Tender : Tender Tentative Cost : E.M.D. (In Rs.) : Tender Form fee (In Rs.)  
ET-26 Thermal Fogging Machine (Portable) : 32.00 : 75000 : 4000  
ET-27 Thermal Fogging Machine (Mountable) : 30.00 : 75000 : 4000

Note- Following documents have to be submitted by bidder in original form in Mela office (Medical & Health Kumbh Mela 2021) before 1 day the opening of Technical bid.

1. Demand Draft of Tender form Fee and EMD.

Mela officer (Medical & Health)  
Kumbh Mela 2021  
Haridwar(Uttarakhand)

GOVERNMENT OF UT JAMMU & KASHMIR  
Office of Research Officer - PW (R&B) Department Road Research & Material Testing Laboratory (RRL&MTL):  
Designs, Inspections & Quality Control (DIQC) - Srinagar, (J&K), Gogji Bagh - KGP Premises, Srinagar

ABBREVIATED NOTICE INVITING TENDER  
(e- NIT No: DIQCD/RR&MTL-SGR/01 OF 2020-21, Dated:- 01.12.2020)

For and on behalf of the LG UT of J&K, fresh e-tenders on Item Rate Basis are invited from the Principal Manufacturers/Licensed and Authorized Suppliers/Channel partners/Reputed Agencies/Registered firms, for the supply of Laboratory equipment /apparatus, as per the details/specifications in the relevant online Bidding/Bill of item document, associated with this e-tender, available at [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in). Complete process of tendering/bidding will be strictly online. The tender/bidding documents can be downloaded from the UT of J&K e-procurement portal/website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 02.12.2020 starting at 10:00 A.M..

Any technical clarification with regards to supply of Laboratory equipment/apparatus shall be discussed/addressed to all potential bidders in pre-bid meeting in the Office of Research Officer, RRL&MTL, DIQC, Gogji Bagh KGP Premises, Srinagar, J&K, on 07.12.2020, starting 12:00 a.m., as may be convenient to attend for potential bidders, from within or outside the UT of J&K.

The bids shall be deposited strictly in prescribed electronic format as available under above e-NIT reference at the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>, from 07.12.2020 to 30.12.2020, ending 4:00 P.M.. All original/hard document copies of assured nature, which have been specifically asked for submission under prequalification criterion, including EMD in the form of DD/FDR/CDR, should strictly reach to the Office of Chief Engineer, Design Inspection and Quality Control Department, (J&K), Canal Road, Jammu-180001, on or before 30.12.2020 upto 4:00 P.M..

The technical bids (only) of all potential bidders shall be opened online at J&K-NIC Office, Civil Secretariat, Jammu, or in the office of The Chief Engineer, Design Inspection and Quality Control Department, Canal Road, Bhagwati Nagar-Jammu (J&K), or after 31.12.2020. This process shall be conveyed to the potential bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their respective e-mail ID's. After due online opening/evaluation of prequalification documents (Technical Bids) of all potential bidders, the information about successful bidders with respect to technical qualification shall be subsequently published/uploaded on the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>. The financial bids, of all technically qualified potential bidders, shall be subsequently opened online at J&K-NIC Office-Jammu or in the office of the Chief Engineer, Design Inspection and Quality Control Department, Canal Road Bhagwati Nagar-Jammu (J&K)-180001.

(Er Shazia Mushtaq)  
Research Officer (I/C)  
Road Research & Material Testing Laboratory  
Designs, Inspection & Quality Control (DIQC)- Srinagar

DIPK-9874/20

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CM YK

Timings  
DELHI

SATURDAY, DEC. 05	RISE 07:00 SET 17:25
	RISE 21:50 SET 11:04
SUNDAY, DEC. 06	RISE 07:01 SET 17:25
	RISE 22:51 SET 11:47
MONDAY, DEC. 07	RISE 07:01 SET 17:25
	RISE 23:53 SET 12:26

Delhi Weather max min  
Delhi City 29 08  
Safdarjung 29 08  
Palam 26 12

Delhi Palam Today  
27°C Rise in temperature expected. Dry and comfortable day likely. Pollution level may remain severe.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
27°C A cool morning with mist/smog and sunny sky. Pollution level may remain severe.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi	382	Gurugram 318
Ghaziabad	440	Faridabad 383
Noida	414	Greater Noida 415
Good	Satisfactory	Moderate
0-50	51-100	101-200
Poor	Very poor	Severe
201-300	301-400	>401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)   SOURCE: CPCB		

## Delhi government starts enrolling healthcare workers for vaccination

With 4,067 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, national capital's tally reaches 5,86,125

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Anticipating the roll-out of a vaccine against COVID-19 soon, the Delhi government has started enrolling healthcare workers in Delhi to receive the vaccination and have asked them to submit their details by midnight on December 5.

The Directorate of Family Welfare, in a public notice, said that many of the registered nursing homes and hospitals have already submitted their data along with smaller unregistered clinics and called the remaining healthcare workers to submit their data via a link that has been provided on the website of the Delhi State Health Mission. It said that healthcare workers include medical and paramedical staffers, supporting, security and administrative staffers of all allopathic, dental,

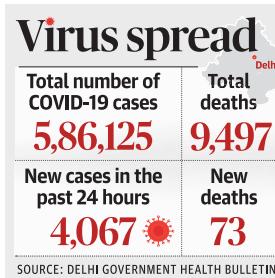


A healthcare worker collecting swab sample from a woman in New Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

AYUSH, physiotherapy clinics, diagnostic laboratories, radiology centres and other healthcare settings.

The call to enrol healthcare workers for the vaccine comes at a time when Delhi has seen a downward trend in the number of daily cases, signalling the end of a "third wave".

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that if the positivity rate in the national



capital stays below 4% for five consecutive days, it would mean Delhi has been successful in combating the pandemic.

He added that preparations have been made and enough resources are in place for the application as well as storage of vaccine and that Mohalla Clinics, polyclinics, dispensaries and hospitals will facilitate the application.

"The positivity rate has become less than 5% as compared to the surge since November 7 which is a sign of a 'third wave'."

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that if the positivity rate in the national

of relief as it points to perpetual declining of the effect of the pandemic in Delhi," Mr. Jain said.

### COVID-19

On Friday, the Capital recorded 4,067 new COVID-19 cases with a positivity rate of 4.78%, which was below 5% for the second consecutive day. In the same 24-hour period, 73 deaths were reported and 4,862 patients recovered. The number of active cases in the city now stands at 28,252.

The cumulative cases in the Capital stand at 5,86,125, with 9,497 fatalities and 5,48,376 recoveries.

The bulletin added that 85,003 tests had been conducted in the past 24 hours, out of which 40,191 tests were RT-PCR.

## Take fresh decision on order to prohibit reopening of spas, says HC

Spa owners allege discrimination as salons have got go-ahead

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the AAP government to take a fresh decision on its order to prohibit reopening of spas in the Capital due to the COVID-19 pandemic, even as salons are allowed to operate.

Justice Navin Chawla said he found merit in the contention raised by spa owners that if salons are allowed to operate, then they too should be allowed to function.

The High Court's remarks came while hearing pleas by several persons who run spas, which have been shut since the first lockdown was enforced in Delhi.

The spa owners contended that the guidelines issued by the Centre have permitted spas to open subject to maintenance of social distancing and other

COVID-19 appropriate behaviour. They contended that the Delhi government was not permitting them to operate, even though saloons, restaurants and every other business has been allowed in the Capital.

On the other hand, the Delhi government stated it was not allowing spas to reopen in view of prevailing COVID-19 numbers in the city. It also argued that employees in spas would not be able to maintain the six feet distance, as required under the norms, from the customers.

The court will hear the case again on December 16.

nant-Governor has declined to relax the prohibitions on the operation of spas.

The spa owners have contended that they were being discriminated against as only their businesses have not been permitted to reopen.

On November 24, the court had posed a similar query to the Delhi government on the reason for not allowing spas to reopen, despite allowing everything else such as markets, gyms, restaurants, metro and buses in the capital.

The court will hear the case again on December 16.

## CPCB calls for intensifying efforts to curb pollution

Pollution control panel says local sources of pollution must be dealt with effectively

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on Friday called for intensifying efforts to control air pollution due to unfavourable meteorological conditions for dispersal of pollutants over the next few days. It said that according to a forecast received from Indian Meteorological Department, air quality is likely to remain in the very poor category in the Capital.

On Friday, the 24-hour average AQI based on readings from 38 monitoring stations was 382, which was in the higher end of the very poor category.

The CPCB said that with incidences of stubble burning almost coming to an end and air quality continuing to



Heavy fog engulfs the Capital on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

remain in very poor category, it is important that local sources of pollution should be dealt with effectively. "Based on feedback received from the 50 teams deployed in the field since October 15, the major sources are open dumping of garbage, construction/demolition

activity, unpaved roads/pits, and re-suspension of road dust," it said.

**Pollution hotspots**  
It added that the 'hotspots' are Narela, Anand Vihar, Mundka, Dwarka and Punjabi Bagh in Delhi and Faridabad, Jhajjar, Noida, and Bhi-

wadi in NCR.  
"As per the analysis and number of complaints received, south, south-west district, north, north-west, and north-east districts of Delhi and Jhajjar, Bhiwadi, Gurugram North, Gautam Buddha Nagar, and Noida in NCR are the areas that need to take actions to control air pollution due to construction/demolition activity, open dumping of garbage, road dust, and industrial emissions," the CPCB said.

It asked all state pollution

control boards, civic bodies in the Capital, NHAI and other authorities to ensure that action is taken to control emissions from local sources and address complaints made on SAMEER and all social media platforms on priority.

NGT says water from sewage treatment plants should be used instead of fresh water

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed all municipal bodies in the NCR and other cities, where the ambient air quality is in the "poor" category, to ensure that water is sprinkled on roads before sweeping them.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson, Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, directed that water from sewage treatment plants should be used instead of fresh water.

"We direct all the municipali-

**Pavements may be appropriately covered to prevent generation of dust and attention also needs to be given to stop burning of biomass or waste and regulate construction and demolition activities**

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

mally non-compliant, and other cities with the air quality in 'poor' and above categories to take necessary steps to ensure sprinkling of water before sweeping of roads," the Bench said.

The green panel also directed authorities to ensure steps are taken to plant grass or raise small herbs and shrubs on the sides of pavements, roads and on open dusty areas.

"The pavements may also be appropriately covered so as to prevent gen-

eration of dust and attention also needs to be given to stop burning of biomass or waste and regulate construction and demolition activities," the NGT directed.

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by petitioner R.S. Virk, seeking action to curb the impact of dust pollution arising out of dry sweeping of roads in metro cities. The petition contended that dust contributed to around 43% of the air pollution.

## Police held insidious prosecution: Devangana to court

'They submitted incomplete documents to show 300 women precipitated violence'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

JNU student and Pinjra Tod member Devangana Kalita, arrested under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, alleged before a Delhi court on Friday that the police had carried out an insidious prosecution against her in a case related to north-East Delhi riots.

The submissions were made before Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat during hearing of her bail plea in the case related to larger conspiracy in the communal violence.

The police claimed in the chargesheet that Ms. Kalita, along with others, had allegedly given provocative speeches at protest sites to instigate the crowd.



The riots broke out in north-East Delhi in February this year. ■ FILE PHOTO

Prosecution will counter the arguments of the accused on Saturday.

During the hearing on Friday, advocate Adit Pujari, appearing for Ms. Kalita, referred to the seizure memo files submitted with the chargesheet and said the police allegedly submitted incomplete documents deliberately to falsely show that around 300 women,

who came from Jahangirpur to Jafrabad where protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were held, precipitated the violence.

He said the prosecution's case was that these women came allegedly armed with acid bottles and chilli powder and were instigated by Kalita and others to cause violence.

He said the prosecution has allegedly put selective messages from the WhatsApp chats of police officials to prove their purpose and chosen not to put on record the messages where they are aware that another kind of protests or march was ongoing by pro-CAA protesters.

The police have submitted screenshots of WhatsApp group where police is closely monitoring the movement of the 300 women who came from Jahangirpur and allegedly precipitated the riots. Police has deliberately declined to place on record messages from 12:39 pm to 12:49 pm with a view to paint an incomplete picture. Police suppressed the messages that were actually talking about the violence which started at Maujpur.

"This is mischievous. This is insidious. They are hiding these messages," Pujari alleged.

The police chose to demonstrate one message to prove that women from Jahangirpur had caused the violence, Mr. Pujari alleged.

The police have submitted

## HC seeks reply on petition against CM's ration scheme

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The High Court on Friday sought response of the Centre and Delhi government on a petition against implementation of the Mukhya Mantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana under which packed ration would be delivered at the doorstep of eligible persons.

The court issued notice to the Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation and sought their stand on the petition by an association representing fair price shop dealers. The Delhi Sarkari Ration Dealers Sangh, in its plea, said that the Delhi government scheme for doorstep delivery of ration bypasses the licensed FPS dealers without amending the necessary laws - the National Food Security Act of 2013 and Delhi Specified Articles (Regulation of Distribution) Order of 1981.

The court directed the Delhi Sarkari Ration Dealers Sangh, in its plea, to file a written statement on the matter by December 15.

## CBI arrests BJP councillor in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested Manoj Mehlawat, a BJP councillor from Vasant Kunj in south Delhi, in an alleged ₹10 lakh graft case.

The party has suspended him from its primary membership.

It is alleged that Mr. Mehlawat had demanded

bribe from a person in connection with the construction of a house in the area.

Acting on the complaint, the agency laid a trap and arrested the accused. Subsequently, searches were carried out.

The councillor was produced before a special court that sent him to judicial custody on Friday.

This is to avoid allegations of bias in sexual harassment cases against high-rank officers, says HC

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

To avoid allegations of unfairness and bias in case of complaints of sexual harassment against high-rank officers of the government, majority of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) members preferably should not be from the same Ministry or Department, the Delhi High Court ruled on Friday.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said that persons, who have served under high-rank officers or in the same department, may face difficulty in treating the complaint in an unbiased manner.

This would be in accordance with the purpose and spirit of the Sexual Harass-



the Chairman of Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).

The case of the woman was that her complaint of sexual harassment against the former Chairman was not being considered in accordance with law. She claimed her services were terminated with effect from October 3,

## Farm laws death warrant for farmers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Congress chief and former Rajya Sabha MP Kumari Selja on Friday said that the agriculture laws introduced by the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre are death warrant for farmers, which will destroy the agricultural sector.

**'Loot of agri sector'**  
"Congress had lodged strong protest against these black laws, but in spite of all efforts of the party, this government got these black laws passed in the Parliament and paved way for its capitalist friends to loot the agricultural sector," Ms. Selja said.

She said that the legislators of the Jannayak Janta Party, the Independents and that of the BJP, who are with farmers, should withdraw their support to the State government.

## Haryana govt. has lost support of people: Hooda

He seeks emergency Assembly session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Former Haryana Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Friday said that the ruling BJP-JJP alliance had lost the support of the people and the House and the Congress would bring a no-confidence motion against the ruling alliance.

Mr. Hooda said the farmers of the State are on the streets and the Jannayak Janta Party and Independent MLAs, who take their votes by posing as anti-BJP parties, are enjoying power.

### Supports for farmers

"The Congress stands in support of the farmers' demands, but the JJP and Independent MLAs who have reached the Vidhan Sabha with the vote of the farmers are standing in support of the government," the former Chief Minister said.

Mr. Hooda said some MLAs are playing a 'double-role' and are constantly making statements against the government and in support of the farmers' movement, but continue supporting the government.

### Decisive defeat'

Addressing a press conference here, Mr. Hooda said the people of the State had spoken through the people of Baroda and handed out a decisive defeat to the alliance in the by-election.

"In the last week, three Independent MLAs have publicly shied away from the government. After the peo-

ple, coalition government is fast losing the trust of legislators," he said.

Mr. Hooda said the farmers of the State are on the streets and the Jannayak Janta Party and Independent MLAs, who take their votes by posing as anti-BJP parties, are enjoying power.

Mr. Hooda said some MLAs are playing a 'double-role' and are constantly making statements against the government and in support of the farmers' movement, but continue supporting the government.

On the other hand, the Opposition had demanded that the Bills be sent to a select committee, he said.

## Gehlot asks Centre to apologise to farmers

'They were harassed while agitating against farm laws'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday asked the BJP government at the Centre to tender an apology to the farmers for their harassment during their agitation against the agriculture sector laws and repeal the three Acts, which were brought without any consultation.

The Bills were passed in the Parliament "unconstitutionally, with brute majority and without any discussion", while no prior consultation was done with the State governments, farmers' groups and agricultural experts, said Mr. Gehlot.

On the other hand, the Opposition had demanded that the Bills be sent to a select committee, he said.



Rajasthan CM seeks repealment of the laws ■ FILE PHOTO

The farmers are on the roads in the entire country today... The Chief Ministers of four Congress-ruled States, including me and Amarinder Singh, had sought an appointment with President Ram Nath Kovind to discuss the issue, but the request was turned down probably out of some compulsion," Mr. Gehlot tweeted.

## Second FIR filed under conversion ordinance

Daughter abducted, says complainant

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh police have lodged a second FIR under the newly promulgated Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020.

A case was registered under Sections 3 and 5 of the ordinance in Mau district in Purvanchal. In the complaint filed by a prominent gold trader at the Chiraiyakot police station, he has accused a local man of allegedly abducting his daughter on the eve of her wedding.

### Kidnapping charge

Additional Superintendent of Police Tribhuvan Nath Tripathi said a boy and girl from different communities in Molnaganj village had eloped. "The boy was already married," said the officer on Friday. The FIR also in-

voked Sections 366 (kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code.

"The search for them is on. We are taking action," said the officer.

### First FIR, arrest

A 21-year-old man in Bareilly, Uwaish Ahmed, had become the first person to be booked under the new ordinance. He was arrested on Wednesday. The FIR was lodged against the accused person on charges of allegedly trying to coerce a 20-year-old married Hindu woman to convert and marry him.

The new ordinance makes religious conversion a cognisable and non-bailable offence, inviting penalties of up to 10 years in prison.

## 74% turnout in Mizoram's Lai council polls

BJP had got control of it after elected Cong. members crossed over in October

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The elections to the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) in Mizoram registered a turnout of 74.11% on Friday.

The BJP hopes to retain the 25-member council that it got on a platter when most of the elected Congress members switched over in October.

District electoral officials said the voting percentage would increase after reports from 17 remote polling stations that remained open well past sunset for people to exercise their franchise. Villagers need to cross rivers, jungles and hills to access some of these polling stations, officials said.

"A majority of a total of 51,456 voters across the

LADC cast their votes to elect their representatives in 25 council seats. There are 69 candidates in the fray, most of them locked in a straight fight," a district information officer said.

Only two of the seats have a maximum of five candidates each.

Unlike in the past, the BJP had focussed its energy on the LADC poll in a bid to re-

tain it. The party took over the council in October - two months before the end of the term - when most of the Congress members crossed over.

**Main rival**

The BJP's main rival is the Mizo National Front that rules Mizoram.

The counting of votes is on December 8.

## Child rights panel summons DM, SP in girl's murder case

Case has triggered a massive political controversy in Odisha

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Friday summoned the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police for personal appearance before it over the issue of the kidnap and murder of a five-year-old girl in Odisha's Nayagarh district.

The girl's murder has triggered a massive political controversy in the State.

After the girl's parents ac-

cused State Agriculture Minister Arun Kumar Sahu of shielding the accused in the case, Opposition political parties had launched a scathing attack demanding the ouster of the Minister.

"Summon has been issued to District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of Nayagarh for in person presence in the matter of kidnapping and murder of a girl child," said Priyank Kanoongo, NCPCR chairperson, on Twitter.

He said the Commission had received complaints regarding human organ smuggling.

### Report sought

The NCPCR had taken suo motu cognisance of the matter based on a news report that had appeared in an online portal on November 25. It had directed the Nayagarh district administration to ensure speedy investigation and submit a detailed factual report within 10 days.

## Baghjan well abandoned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The Oil India Limited (OIL) has abandoned its blowout well in eastern Assam's Baghjan seven months after it burst out of control and caught fire later.

A statement from the oil exploration major, headquartered at Duliyan in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh district, said the process of abandoning Well No. 5 was completed on Thursday evening.

The well is one of more than 20 in OIL's Baghjan Oilfield close to the Dibrugarh-Saikhowa National Park in the adjoining Tinsukia district.

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and many more selections... Heartiest congratulations to all.

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BSES Yamuna Power Limited

**TENDER NOTICE**

Date: 05.12.2020

Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for following jobs from all bidders

NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BY/20/21/RB/RD/25	PROVIDING CANTEEN SERVICES IN BYPL	₹ 70.00 Lakhs	₹ 1.40 Lakhs	28.12.2020 UPTO 03:00 PM	29.12.2020 AT 3:00 PM
CMC/BY/20/21/RB/RD/26	FIRE HYDRANT SYSTEM AT URJA VIHAR, HEAD OFFICE KKD & SHANKAR ROAD	₹ 99.00 Lakhs	₹ 1.98 Lakhs	28.12.2020 UPTO 03:00 PM	29.12.2020 AT 3:00 PM

Cost of each Tender Documents: ₹1180/- For details in respect of qualifying requirements, Terms & Conditions, Purchase and Services/Submission of tender documents/Corrigendum if any etc, please visit our website [www.bsesdelhi.com](http://www.bsesdelhi.com) --> BSES YAMUNA POWER LTD--> Tenders --> open tenders.

Regd.Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 | CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525  
TEL: 011-41247777 | Fax: 011-4124 7787 | Website: [www.bsesdelhi.com](http://www.bsesdelhi.com)

**Karnataka Road Development Corporation Limited**  
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)

No. 8, "Samparka Soudha", Dr. Rajkumar Road, Rajajinagar 1st Block, Bengaluru-560 010.  
Telefax : 080-22024000 email : [cekrpcl@gmail.com](mailto:cekrpcl@gmail.com) Website: <http://www.krdcl.in>

Date: 04.12.2020

No. KRDC/IFB/2020-21/17

**INVITATION FOR TENDERS** (on e-procurement basis)

Karnataka Road Development Corporation Limited [KRDCL] proposes to take up the work of **Upgradation & Maintenance of 12 High Traffic Density Corridors (HDC) in Bengaluru City** in the State of Karnataka on using two cover system.

1. The details of works proposed to be taken up for implementation are as under:

Sl. No.	Package Details	Approximate Length of the HDC corridor (in Km)	Initial Improvement Cost	*Annual Maintenance Cost	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	PACKAGE-I : Upgradation and Maintenance of High Traffic Density Corridors in Bengaluru Metropolitan Region for [HDC No.1 Bellary Road, HDC 2: Old Madras Road, HDC No.12B Outer Ring Road from Gorguntepalya to Old Madras Road]	44.55	77.13	35.17	113.00
2	PACKAGE-II : Upgradation and Maintenance of High Traffic Density Corridors in Bengaluru Metropolitan Region for [HDC 3: Old Airport Road, HDC 4: Sarjapur Road, HDC 12C: Outer Ring Road – KR Puram to Old Airport Road]	42.39	131.07	29.11	161.00
3	PACKAGE-III : Upgradation and Maintenance of High Traffic Density Corridors in Bengaluru Metropolitan Region for [HDC 5: Hosur Road, HDC 6: Bannerghatta Road, HDC 7: Kanakapura Road, HDC 12D: Outer Ring Road – from Silk Board to Mysore Road]	49.45	27.55	35.66	64.00
4	PACKAGE-IV : Upgradation and Maintenance of High Traffic Density Corridors in Bengaluru Metropolitan Region for [HDC 8: Mysore Road, HDC 9: Magadi Road, HDC 10: Tumkur Road, HDC 11: West of chord Road and HDC 12A: Outer Ring Road from Mysore Road to Gorguntepalya]	54.60	99.43	42.17	142.00

2. Interested applicants may access bidding documents from the e-procurement portal [www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in](http://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in) from **15th December 2020 and Onwards**.

3. The bid security as mentioned in above table shall be paid in the form as indicated in tender document.

4. The schedule of dates for various activities are as follows:

- (a) Pre-bid meeting will be held at **11.00 AM on 23rd December 2020 at the Board Room of KRDCL**.
- (b) Deadline for submission of Technical and Financial Bids is **up to 5.30 PM on 15th January 2021**.
- (c) Date and Time of opening Technical Bids is **on 18th January 2021 at 4.00 P.M.**

5. KRDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tenders without assigning any reasons.

6. The initial improvement period will be 6 months from the date of award of tender.

7. The Annual maintenance cost mentioned is as indicated in the above table & for subsequent years enhancement at the rate of 5% each year for the next 4 financial years is considered.

8. Please note henceforth, any changes in the schedule will not be published through News papers and further changes will be updated only on e-portal/KRDCL Website.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered under the name of **Manipur Congress**. The name of the party is located at Chingming (Lapham Sighai), Imphal East District, Manipur-785010. This said party was coined by General Body resolution dated 26.09.2019. The party has already registered **"Anil Singh"** 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 29-A of the Representation of People Act, 1951. Names/Address of the office-bearers of the Party are as follows: **President/Chairman : Muhammad Abdul Nasir**, **General Secretary : P.K. Ramchandra**, **Deputy General Secretary : Anil Singh**. If any one has any objection to the registration of Manipur Congress they may send their Objection with reasons thereto, to the Secretary, Election Commission of India, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days. Deepak Malhotra S/o Late Sh. Jagdish Chand Malhotra R/o E-121 Sector-41 Noida.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is to inform to general Public that my father Shri Jagdish Chand Malhotra Expired on 10/11/2018. The property No-C-183/B Sector-41 Noida Owned By him was willed to transferred to me and registered with the Sub Registrar NOIDA on 07/02/2008 Application for transfer of property in my name is made . Anyone if have any objection may contact commercial department of Noida Authority, Sector-6 Noida Within 30 Days. Deepak Malhotra S/o Late Sh. Jagdish Chand Malhotra R/o E-121 Sector-41 Noida

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Chief Engineer, KRDCL

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**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/MD (TAKEN AT 18.30 HRS)

**Forecast for Saturday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	28.0	16.6	Kozhikode	0.7	30.4	24.5
Ahmedabad	—	35.1	15.9	Kurnool	—	33.1	21.2
Aizawl	—	22.0	10.1	Lucknow	—	25.4	11.2
Allahabad	—	28.9	11.2	Madurai	3.9	30.4	23.5
Bengaluru	1.8	23.2	19.2	Mangaluru	—	36.0	23.2
Bhopal	—	31.5	11.5	Mumbai	—	34.8	19.0
Bhubaneswar	—	31.0	16.6	Mysuru	—	27.0	20.0
Chandigarh	—	25.6	11.3	New Delhi	—	28.8	8.0
Chennai	60.8	24.4	—	Patna	—	25.6	11.2
Coimbatore	3.3	27.8	22.0	Poorn Blair	3.8	26.6	23.1
Dehradoon	—	24.8	9.4	Puducherry	138	25.2	22.8
Gangtok	—	14.0	9.4	Pune	—	30.5	14.3
Goa	—	35.5	21.4	Raipur	—	30.6	15.2
Guwahati	—	28.2	15.5	Ranchi	—	27.3	10.7
Hubballi	—	30.0	18.0	Shillong	—	16.1	9.0
Hyderabad	—	29.4	15.8	Shimla	—	20.3	9.7
Imphal	—	25.2	7.9	Srinagar	—	10.2	—
Jaipur	—	30.9	12.4	Thiruvananthapuram	—	20.5	25.4
Kochi	0.4	31.4	24.8	Tiruchi	42.2	24.6	22.4
Kohima	—	19.0	6.4	Vijayawada	—	31.2	21.6
Kolkata	—	29.2	16.4	Visakhapatnam	—	29.6	22.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	41	148	.40	194	190	...
Bengaluru	.4	.35	.89	160	—	...
Chennai	.6	.17	.37	.21	—	...
Delhi	13	125	103	477	461	...
Hyderabad	.5	.96	.11	.136	136	...
Kolkata	32	42	.82	.407	359	...
Lucknow	.4	102	.50	.450	.452	...
Mumbai	.66	.20	.238	.151	—	...
Pune	.9	.96	.51	.176	.112	...
Visakhapatnam	23	.22	.35	.136	.110	...

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 455 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 17

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

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** 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<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

# Council polls: MVA wrests 3 seats from BJP

Ruling coalition wins in Nagpur, Pune, Aurangabad graduate constituencies; Independent candidate wins Amravati teachers' seat

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
PUNE

In a major jolt to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) swept the three graduate constituency seats in the Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) polls, breaching the BJP's bastion in Nagpur and clinching the crucial Pune seat.

The counting to five constituencies – three graduates' and two teachers' – commenced on Thursday. In the final results to the graduate seats declared on Friday morning, the MVA coalition of the Shiv Sena, Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress bagged all three seats, toppling the BJP in the all-important Nagpur, Pune and Aurangabad seats.

The Nagpur graduate seat, considered a veritable pocket borough of former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis's family and a seemingly impregnable BJP bastion – the seat having been held by Mr. Fadnavis's father Gangadhar Fadnavis as well as senior BJP leader Nitin Gadkari – was breached by the Congress for the first time in more than 55 years.

Abhijit Vanjari, the Congress's candidate, polled an impressive 55,947 votes of a total of 1.33 lakh votes, trouncing his nearest rival, the BJP's Sandeep Joshi, by nearly 15,000 votes.

Likewise, in the hotly contested Pune graduate constituency, the NCP's candidate, sugar baron Arun Lad, who polled 1.22 lakh votes, beat the BJP's Sangram Deshmukh by a phenomenal margin of over 48,000 votes.

Interestingly, the Sangli-based Mr. Lad, who is the president of the Kranti Cooperative Sugar Factory, was responsible for the NCP's de-



**Jubilant mood:** NCP leader Supriya Sule (centre) celebrates the victory of the Maha Vikas Aghadi in the Council polls, at the party's headquarters in Mumbai on Friday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

feat in the last Pune graduate constituency election when he had raised the banner of rebellion. The seat, while traditionally an NCP bastion, had come to be seen as a BJP stronghold in the last 20 years, with the current BJP State president Chandrakant Patil holding it twice.

Against this backdrop, the Pune graduate constituency turned into a 'prestige fight' with senior NCP leader Jayant Patil, the current Water Resources Minister, as well Mr. Chandrakant Patil both throwing their weight behind their party's respective candidates in the vigorous campaign during the poll run-up.

**Public has rejected BJP'**  
The results clearly hint at Maharashtra's changing political scenario, said NCP chief Sharad Pawar, speaking after the results. "The results clearly show that Maharashtra's public has rejected the BJP and has emphatically en-

**C** The results are also testament to the unity of the tripartite MVA government

**SHARAD PAWAR**  
NCP chief

dorsed the ruling MVA. It is also testament to the unity of the tripartite MVA government," Mr. Pawar said.

Observing that the MVA's defeat in the Dhule-Nandurbar MLC seat (whose results were declared on Thursday) was not surprising, Mr. Pawar said the BJP could win there only because sitting MLC Amrish Patel had merely switched sides to quit the Congress and join the saffron party. "The BJP's win in Dhule-Nandurbar is not a victory in the real sense...in contrast, the MVA's candidates swept the crucial Nagpur, Pune and Aurangabad graduate constituency seats. Nagpur was with the BJP for more than five decades with Nitin Gadkari and the Fadnavis family winning for a number of years from this seat. Even the graduate voters in Pune did not support us. But this year, we won big in Pune," Mr. Pawar observed.

Hitting out at the NCP chief, the BJP State president said the poll results could not be construed as a collective public verdict on the BJP. "If any of these MVA parties had the guts, then they ought to have fought alone. Very conveniently, all three – the NCP, the Sena and the Congress – came together to contest against the BJP. It should also be remembered that Arun Lad had once rebelled against his own party [the NCP]. So, this is not the people's verdict," Mr. Patil said.

In the Aurangabad graduate constituency seat, the NCP's Satish Chavan (the MVA candidate) won for the third consecutive time by beating BJP's Satish Boralkar by more than half-lakh votes. He polled 1.16 lakh votes.

In the Pune teachers' con-

stituency, the MVA's Jayant Aasgavkar (Congress) has secured a comfortable lead of 6,000 votes over his nearest rival, Dattaray Sawant (Independent), and is heading for a comfortable win.

In the Amravati teachers' seat, Independent candidate Kiran Sarnaik defeated sitting MLC and MVA candidate Shrikant Deshpande by a margin of 3,242 votes. Mr. Sarnaik ended with 12,433 votes against Mr. Deshpande's 9,191. The BJP's Nitin Dhande managed to secure only the sixth position.

## Miscalculated MVA's strength: Fadnavis

'We'll prepare better for next polls'

**STAFF REPORTER**  
MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday said that it miscalculated the strength of the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) while heading into the Maharashtra Legislative Council polls.

"The results of the six Council seat elections are unexpected to us. We miscalculated the strength of the Maha Vikas Aghadi. Now we know how big a fight they can put up together. We will prepare better for the next polls," former chief minister and Leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis said.

The BJP has managed to win only one of the six Council seats. It has also ceded the Nagpur and Pune graduate constituencies to the MVA. The party had never lost the Nagpur seat since 1958, while the Pune seat was earlier held by the BJP State president Chandrakant Patil.

Mr. Fadnavis, however, took the opportunity to take potshots at the Shiv Sena. "The party with the Chief Minister has not



Devendra Fadnavis

managed to win a single seat," he said. He was referring to the defeat of the Sena candidate from the Amravati teachers' constituency at the hands of the Independent candidate, Kiran Sarnaik.

In reply, Sena leader and State Transport Minister Anil Parab said the BJP should not bother about the future of the Sena. "The Amravati seat was never with the Sena. It was won by an Independent even before and this time too an Independent has won. The MVA has gained huge success and it will continue this performance in the future," Mr. Parab said.

Kiran Sarnaik defeated sitting MLC and MVA candidate Shrikant Deshpande by a margin of 3,242 votes. Mr. Sarnaik ended with 12,433 votes against Mr. Deshpande's 9,191. The BJP's Nitin Dhande managed to secure only the sixth position.

## Recoveries rise in Maharashtra

6,766 patients discharged; 5,229 fresh COVID-19 cases recorded

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
PUNE

Recoveries continued to outweigh cases with 6,766 patients being discharged across Maharashtra on Friday as opposed to 5,229 fresh COVID-19 cases.

The total case tally now stands at 18,42,587, with the number of active cases coming down to 83,859. The cumulative recoveries have reached 17,10,050, with the State's recovery rate inching towards 93%, rising to 92.81%. As many as 127 deaths were reported, taking the death toll to 47,599.

"Of a total of 1,11,32,231 laboratory samples tested thus far, 18,42,587 (case positivity rate of 16.55%) have returned positive with over 73,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate, adding that the case fatality rate stands at 2.58%.

Pune district reported more than 800 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,56,501, while 25 deaths saw its total death toll reach 7,532. As per district administration figures, the active case figure has dipped slightly to 11,166, while its recovery rate incrementally rose to 94.35%.

**Over 800 cases in Mumbai**  
Mumbai city reported 813 new cases to take its total case tally to 2,84,509, of which 13,754 are active. With 14 more fatalities, the city's death toll rose to 10,945.

Nagpur district in Vidarbha re-



**Taking no chances:** A health worker checks the pulse of a man at a railway station in Mumbai on Friday. ■ REUTERS

ported 570 new cases, taking the district's total case tally to 1,15,735, of which 4,498 are currently active. Nine deaths took the total death toll to 3,021.

In western Maharashtra, Satara reported four deaths as its cumulative death toll remained constant at 1,687. As many as 128 fresh cases saw the total case tally rise to 53,020, of which 1,995 are active. Neighbouring Sangli reported 45 cases and eight deaths as its total case tally reached 48,825, of which just 429 are active. Its cumulative death toll now stands at 1,723.

Kolhapur district reported just 11 cases and no deaths as its total case tally reached 48,606, of

which just 110 are active ones. The total death toll still remains constant 1,647.

In north Maharashtra,



## Trust deficit

Apart from the fresh amendments, the Centre must consider a legal guarantee for MSP

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a federation of around 500 farmer organisations, has resolved to intensify its agitation against three farm laws hurriedly enacted by the Centre. After dismissing the protests as ill-informed and motivated initially, the Centre has offered to make some changes to the laws, but the farmers have now called for a Bharat Bandh on December 8. Thousands of farmers camping on the outskirts of the national capital are sceptical of the government's claim that these laws would make agriculture more lucrative and secure by allowing market forces to play. The fear that the new regime will dismantle the system of procurement under Minimum Support Price (MSP) and leave farmers at the mercy of corporations is real. Responding to concerns, the Centre has suggested safeguards to prevent land alienation via contract farming; strengthening the State-run *mandi* system and ensuring its equal footing with private buyers through equalising taxes; allowing grievance redress in civil courts rather than just in the offices of Sub-Divisional Magistrates; and ensuring proper verification of private traders. It has not, however, offered a legal guarantee of MSP and the question of power subsidies also remains contentious.

The Narendra Modi government has a declared policy of ensuring farm prices that are at least 50% more than the input costs. This has remained more an intent than reality, and the discussion has also been muddled by the government's refusal to include rental value of the land in input costs. Agriculture has to remain environmentally sustainable and remunerative for farmers. Significant challenges have emerged with regard to these benchmarks, though India has ensured substantial food stock and a robust distribution mechanism that covers the entire country. There is a strong case for reworking the incentive structures and cropping pattern in order to account for changes in water availability and changing dietary requirements. The problems faced by farmers are by no means the same across India. But a sense of hostility from the state and market is now pervasive. Changes in land acquisition laws and the general thrust towards industrialisation together with the pressure on agriculture subsidies have increased the feeling of vulnerability of farmers in recent years. The abrupt changes in the sector brought in through the three laws have aggravated the trust deficit of the government. The combative attitude of the government and the Bharatiya Janata Party towards criticism worsened it further. Food security is considered a component of national security by all countries. The Union Agriculture Minister has said the government has no ego. The Centre must strive for reaching an agreement with the farmers that addresses their concerns.

## Star turn

Rajinikanth will need more than cinematic charisma to challenge the AIADMK, the DMK

Veteran Tamil actor, Rajinikanth, added expectations to years of suspense over his plan of forming a political party, by his tweet on Thursday, that he will launch the party in January. After his announcement in December 2017 that he would form a political party in time to contest in all 234 Assembly constituencies of Tamil Nadu in 2021, his tweets, brief observations and curt replies to journalists' queries, in the last three years, did not present any coherent view about his policies and programmes. On many occasions, he was seen to be a supporter of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). On a few other occasions, he sought to distance himself from the party. Mr. Rajinikanth, who has been talking of "spiritual politics", has, however, chosen to mention, in the tweet, secularism as one of the guiding principles of his new organisation. Regardless of the eventual outcome of Mr. Rajinikanth's political project, his move has the potential of facilitating the emergence of a credible third force in the State, where all attempts, since 1977, have ended in failure. At a time when the composition of the coalitions headed by the two big parties, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) is considered a settled matter, Mr. Rajinikanth's entry might now provide greater room for smaller parties to negotiate into an alliance. Without doubt, there exists a vote share of 10% to 15%, which can be called independent of the influence of the two principal players, going by the data of votes secured by non-AIADMK and non-DMK formations in the last four decades. Mr. Rajinikanth may be tempted to corner the support of this vote bank, but this vote bank is not homogeneous, but one of diverse social, economic, and political composition.

Very much like M.G. Ramachandran, M. Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa, Mr. Rajinikanth is banking heavily on the intangible asset of charisma. Even some of his poorly made films have made money because of a huge fan following. But this is no guarantor of success in elections in Tamil Nadu. Also, Mr. Edappadi K. Palaniswami's non-nonsense functioning, as Chief Minister, coupled with his relatively low profile, has helped the AIADMK recover some of the lost ground. The DMK's M.K. Stalin passed his first major test, post-Karunanidhi, by registering a landslide victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha election in the State. Notwithstanding all the challenges that he may have to face, Mr. Rajinikanth, by stitching up the right combination of political forces and declaring adherence to long-cherished ideals of the State such as a development-oriented all-inclusive approach, welfarism and social justice, can possibly provide a stiff fight to the established players.

# The many layers to agricultural discontent

The Farm Acts that are the focus of the farmers' protest bear variously on the different strata of the farming community



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

**A**t a kisan rally in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh on February 28, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of his vision of doubling the income of India's farmers by 2022. Subsequently, several central leaders and even official committees have reiterated this tall promise. Probably, one of the measures that the Union government proposed to subserve this end was in the form of the three Farm Bills in September 2020 – by liberalising access to agricultural markets, removing existing barriers to storage of agricultural produce, and facilitating contract-farming. In the process, the regulatory role the state played hitherto with regard to these issues was watered down to a great extent. While these measures have been defended on the basis of slogans such as 'One Nation, One Market', they appear to be more directed to scoring brownie points in the 'Ease of doing business' index (the present regime has scored impressively well here in the last couple of years). Probably, more policy measures were in the offing to subserve this objective.

### The response

Paradoxically, organised farmers' bodies are not in sync with the reasoning of the government. It is necessary to point out that a wide spectrum of the political Opposition in Parliament offered strong resistance to these Bills; some State governments even enacted their own Bills that were largely directed against the key provisions of the central farm Acts even

though the constitutional status of these enactments is highly dubious. One of the oldest members of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Shiromani Akali Dal, walked out of the alliance in protest against these Bills.

Even if we set aside the complex and multi-pronged challenges that rural India confronts today, there is a substantial body of studies that demonstrates how the vagaries of the market and the role of the middlemen reinforce agrarian distress in India. Although a body of piecemeal legislation and regulative processes have been put in place over the years in response to these issues – these include a few Pradhan Mantri yojanas – several key concerns of farmers have gone unattended.

### States have a pivotal role

However, these issues and the relation across them vary remarkably across the different regions of India and in terms of the different produce. While we can debate the constitutional provisions with regard to the respective domains of the State and the Union with regard to agricultural marketing, there is little doubt that issues affecting the farming community have a far greater bearing on the States relative to the Centre. Ideally, given its immediacy, the States are the apt agencies to respond to a host of concerns faced by the farming community, which includes agricultural marketing. While enacting the Farm Bills, the Centre extended little consideration to the sensitivity of the States, leave alone consultation, although some of them made their opposition to the Farm Bills quite explicit.

The three Acts that are the focus of the farmers' agitation, and which farmers have demanded be repealed, bear differently on the different strata of the farming



community and in different regions.

### APMC as cushion

In the very high-stake and large-scale farming in Punjab and Haryana, for instance, weakening the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system by subjecting it to competition – and its resultant bearing on Minimum Support Price (MSP), particularly on crops such as rice and wheat – is seen by the farmers as a threat to an assured sale of their produce at a price.

This system provides a cushion, wherein the farmer can anticipate the cost of opting for these crops and tap the necessary supports through channels he has been familiar with. Subjecting this system to the vagaries of a competitive market, including storing and contracting of the produce, where he would eventually be beholden to the large players, including monopolies, are prospects that a farmer detests even though he is aware that the middleman is not a saint. While elsewhere in the country the dependence on the APMC system is variegated, and where several States have redefined the role and place of this system over the years, there is widespread apprehension that the measures proposed by the Farm Acts in addition to the existing agrarian distress, are only going to make the lot of the farmer even more precarious.

All across the country, the farming community is prone to sympathise with the demand to scrap the new laws, as they have little to offer to them in a positive sense.

### Movements and an evolution

But the way the three Farming Acts were enacted, tends to crystallise a common sympathy across the farming community in India. Initially, there were ordinances that were passed when there was little urgency for these measures. After three months, when they were brought as Bills before the Houses, there was hardly any consultation with farmers' organisations. They were rushed through the Houses of Parliament by paying little heed to the issues they raised. Farmers in India, have now shown that the saying, 'they cannot govern themselves. They have to be governed' is way off the mark. India's farmers are a constituency deeply aware of their interests and challenges before them and are sensitive to developments elsewhere.

In this context it is important to recall the powerful farmers' movements that sprouted across India from the 1970s, led by such iconic leaders as M.D. Nanjundaswamy, Sharad Joshi, and Mahendra Singh Tikait, which claimed to speak not merely for farmers but to the rural segment as a whole. Even though they were clearly directed by the concerns of the relatively better-off farmers, they attempted to reach out to the farming community as a whole. There were major differences within these movements, and a few stances of some of them were definitely archaic and poorly thought over, but they presented a platform for discussion and debate beyond their immediate concerns.

The organisations that these movements set up have undergone much change and a split to-day. But they have also learnt

much in the process. While in some parts of the country the class and caste divide are still sharp, in other places, farmers' organisations have not shied away from critically engaging with class, caste and gender concerns, although it has not made a substantial difference to the prevailing configuration of these relations. The very fact that a social reality is widely accepted provides space for policy intervention. The Farm Bills have ignored that the rural is a vibrant space in India, with 'elective affinities' binding its vast expanse.

### The farming strata

Clearly, the rich farmers – those with large holdings and produce for the market – are spearheading the present stand-off against the Farm Bills, as it affects them very deeply. But farming distress is shared in common by the different strata within the farming community, even though it has a differential impact on them.

It is important to bear in mind that the rich farmer has also reinforced his position enormously in the rural over the years after the Green Revolution and farmers' movements of the 1970s. They have also invested their surplus in agri-business and clearly hold access to the wider economic and institutional domains. The lower strata of the farming community is invariably beholden to the rich farmer not merely for employment but also to access resources and services. There is very little autonomous organisation of the former in much of the country except caste. Therefore, when the die is cast on issues such as the Farm Acts, there is little doubt where the lower strata of the farming community would throw in their lot with.

Valerian Rodrigues was a professor at Mangalore University and Jawaharlal Nehru University

# A regressive agenda, a new low in governance

The U.P. ordinance not only violates guaranteed fundamental rights but is also in conflict with existing personal laws



MANURAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM

**I**n November 2020, even as the COVID-19 case tally in the State of Uttar Pradesh went past the half-a-million mark in total, its government promulgated an ordinance to combat the perceived threat of "love jihad", a pejorative term used by the religious conservatives to describe inter-faith relationships and marriages. The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance 2020 (<https://bit.ly/37zFQ8W> and <https://bit.ly/2JRFpOQ>) must be criticised for setting up multiple barriers to inter-faith marriages and providing expansive powers to District Magistrates under the guise of prohibiting "unlawful conversions". But the real and lasting impact of the ordinance must be measured in terms of the communal disharmony it sows and outright denial of agency to young women and men. It is trite that the law, in its present form, is regressive, *ultra vires* and must be consigned to the bin of legislative history.

### Upholding a right

The government of Uttar Pradesh drew strength from a judgment delivered recently in the Allahabad High Court by Justice Mahesh

Chandra Tripathi in *Priyanshi @ Km. Shamren and Others v. State of U.P. and Another* 2020. Here, while refusing a prayer for police protection by a woman who had converted from Islam to Hinduism, the High Court observed that conversion "just for the purpose of marriage is unacceptable". Fortunately, the effect of this observation was short lived, as another numerically superior two-judge Bench of the same High Court declared this to be bad law.

Setting down the correct position in the case of *Salamat Ansari And 3 Others vs State Of U.P. And 3 Others* 2020, the Allahabad High Court held that "neither any individual nor a family nor even the state can have an objection to the relationship of two major individuals who out of their own free will are living together". In doing so, the High Court has upheld the right of a person to live with a person of his/her choice irrespective of religion professed by them as something which is intrinsic to the right to life and personal liberty, guaranteed to every person under Article 21.

### Aiding social change

Historically, intermarriages – be it inter-caste or inter-faith – have been advocated as an effective tool to break social barriers and repair societal divisions. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy placed a premium on inter-marriage as much as they did on inter-dining. In *Annihilation of Caste*, B.R. Ambedkar argues that



inter-dining had not been successful in killing the spirit of caste and that the "real remedy is intermarriage". Similarly, in his book, *Women Enslaved* (translated by G. Aloysius), Periyar traverses further to say that "no third person has any right to constrain or decide" the coming together of two people. Periyar sought to provide and protect the agency of women in making life choices as a pathway to achieve a liberal society. The Self Respect Conference held in Chennalpet, Tamil Nadu, in 1929 passed resolutions allowing women to file for divorce and to remarry. Periyar recast marriage as "life partnership agreements" wherein the two partners would come together on equal terms, and conducted thousands of self-respect marriages. In 1967, the Government of Tamil Nadu amended the marriage laws to allow self respect marriages within the Hindu Marriage Act.

The most reliable statistical data shows that less than 5% of Indians have intercaste marriages and less than 3% have interfaith marriages. In spite of being a rare phenomenon in society, interfaith relationships have attracted a disproportionate amount of attention of the right-wing political class.

Lawmakers in the Bharatiya Janata Party have actively spearheaded communal campaigns and stoked fear on this issue across the country. The bogey of "love jihad" plays right into hands of those with communal and patriarchal mindsets. It is no less crime to stop an interfaith marriage than it is to abet an "honour killing" (<https://bit.ly/2IgeLz0> and <https://bit.ly/2JNMekM>).

### The Kerala instance

In 2017, the High Court of Kerala had cautioned against the use of the term "love jihad" to refer to interfaith marriages (<https://bit.ly/33L7LS5>). In the controversial "Hadiya case" (*Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M.*, 2018), the Supreme Court of India was called to assess the allegation that Hadiya (born Akhila) was deceived into marrying a Shafin, a Muslim man (<https://bit.ly/33KtVDZ>). In this case, the Court held that "The strength of the Constitution lies in the guarantee which it affords that each individual will have a protected entitlement in determining a choice of partner to share intimacies within or outside marriage" and laid emphasis on the point that the "right to marry a person of one's choice" is integral to Article 21. It would seem that these observations and diktats have not persuaded the government of Uttar Pradesh to see constitutional sense while promulgating the said ordinance.

Various sections of the ordinance are in outright violation of

the Constitution of India. For instance, Section 12 of the ordinance flips the burden of proof onto the person who has converted or caused conversion of religion to establish and prove that there was no force, fraud, misrepresentation, undue influence, coercion or allurement involved. Any conversion for the purpose of marriage can be declared void under Section 6 of the ordinance. Under Section 3 of the ordinance, the scope of which the aggrieved person may lodge a complaint against any conversion of religion is expansive to include parents, brother, sister, or any other person who is related to him by blood, marriage or adoption. Read cumulatively, this ordinance invades privacy, deepens communal divides, advances patriarchy and eliminates agency (<https://bit.ly/3gRULg>).

As such, the ordinance is a manifestation of an exclusionary and regressive agenda, which presents a new low in governance for the government of Uttar Pradesh and therefore, must be allowed to be part of the modern political discourse. Not only does the ordinance violate fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but it is also in conflict with existing personal laws. While playing to the 'Hindu Rashtra' gallery, the government of Uttar Pradesh has abandoned all semblance of secularism and constitutionalism.

Manuraj Shunmugasundaram is an advocate and spokesperson of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

## 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.

### Political debut

Corruption and language chauvinism have long been affecting Tamil Nadu and if Mr. Rajinikanth can usher in honesty, transparency and sobriety to governance, so be it. With the launch of Mr. Rajinikanth's party planned in January, which would also be close to Ms. Sasikala's release from jail, one wonders whether it would affect the AIADMK (Page 1, "Rajini will launch party in January", December 4).

KANGAYAM R. NARASIMHAN,  
Chennai

■ The decision by the silver screen superstar, Rajinikanth, to establish a political party and be active in politics to serve the people

is welcome. However, silver screen stardom is not enough in politics. He may float the party with his tinsel image, but it might be a challenging task to match the organisational machinery of the Dravidian parties. He has to work hard to garner the votes of neutral franchises and the anti-incumbency votes to make his presence felt. Let us wait and see whether he can bring a wave of resurgence in the politics of Tamil Nadu.

MEJARI MALLIKARJUNA,  
Nadigadda, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh

■ If Mr. Rajinikanth is so eager to found a party and fight a political battle in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections in 2021, let him be more assertive in his

decision to try his hand in politics instead of procrastinating at short intervals and disappointing his sea of supporters and the public, who have been eager for change in Tamil Nadu since 1969. Mr. Rajinikanth, I am sure, is knowledgeable enough to realise that fame and a name earned in the film world may not fetch him dividends politically. One only hopes that the 'Super Star' made a well-considered decision given how murky the waters are in politics.

MANI NATARAJAN,  
Chennai

■ Neither Mr. Rajinikanth nor his advisers seem to have done their homework before taking the decision. The two major Dravidian parties are

fully entrenched with their committed cadre and a well-established network. There are also a few caste-based parties which too have a considerable following. Mr. Rajinikanth has little room to manoeuvre and gather the required votes to get a mandate in his favour, that too at such a short notice. At the most, he may play spoilsport to the fortunes of either of the two major parties by cutting into neutral votes and voters who would have performed otherwise. Moreover, it is unfair of him to expect the people to vote for him on the basis of his celluloid heroics. His intentions may be noble, but his handling of such a sensitive issue of ruling a well-developed State in such

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Dombivli, Thane, Maharashtra

a casual manner leaves a lot to be desired. By procrastinating for too long and failing to spell out clearly his policies, he missed an opportunity to be of some force to reckon with. If events do not turn out as per his script, he may face a dent in an image built brick by brick over decades.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA,  
Bengaluru

■ It is a matter of shame that honey has to now be added to the list of commonly adulterated foods such as milk, ghee, other

# How dearth of data killed a healthy diet

The tracking and monitoring of nutrition services to the poorest of the poor in India have been hampered by the lack of online data. Jagriti Chandra reports how this has affected pregnant women in a pandemic year when hunger and poverty have worsened

**T**wenty-year-old Afsana's baby is due in a month. Afsana conceived just 10 days after the nationwide lockdown was imposed to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. Afsana and her family of nine live a hand to mouth existence and the pandemic has only worsened their woes. The expectant mother is anaemic, having survived along with her family on just chapatis and red chilli paste on most days.

Afsana's husband, brother-in-law and father-in-law, the three breadwinners of the family, work at the local stone quarries in Derwala village in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan, where they live. They had no work for nearly three months, from April to June. Though work has picked up slowly since then, their daily earnings are as low as ₹150 on a good day. They survive on the wheat supply from the public distribution system. "Only if we go out in the day to work can we buy pulses, sugar and milk for our evenings. There is barely enough to last us a day," says Mohammad Rafiq Bhati, Afsana's brother-in-law.

Afsana has already undergone blood transfusion four times. Her eyes are listless. She has been called again to the primary healthcare centre on December 9 for a check-up. The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, a scheme of the Union Health Ministry, aims to provide quality antenatal care, free of cost, to all pregnant women in the country on the ninth of every month and also a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their second/ third trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities. However, Afsana's take-home rations as part of anganwadi services have been irregular. Of the eight months of her pregnancy, she has received 6 kg worth of monthly entitlement (1.5 kg wheat, 1.5 kg rice and 3kg pulses) only for four months. The supply of these, too, has been erratic as anganwadi workers have to wait for the stock to accumulate sufficiently before disbursing it. Though the aim of the programme is to ensure adequate nutrition for expectant mothers, this food has been used by all the members of Afsana's impoverished and hungry family.

While Afsana, as the expectant mother of her first child, is also entitled to receive a total of ₹5,000 in multiple tranches under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, a scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, she has still not got any benefits. Her sister Ruqsa Bano says no one has come to collect documents or even asked them to submit the papers at the anganwadi centre. "We have completed the paper work. We are waiting for the government to release her claim," says Rekha Sharma, a local ASHA worker. Afsana, shy and reticent, wishes she had the money to buy vegetables and fruits.

The delivery of nutrition services to the poor in India has been brought to a halt or slowed down due to lack of online data, a problem caused by poor Internet and server issues. This has not only affected the beneficiaries, but also the anganwadi workers. It has also caused frustration among those working towards addressing India's malnutrition, poverty and health issues. The lack of publicly available nutrition data is not only affecting India's nutrition goals but is also pushing States into thinking of ways of setting up their own systems to tackle the problem.

## In Jhunjhunu, a vague memory

An IT-based nutrition monitoring system called the Integrated Child Development Services-Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jhunjhunu on March 8, International Women's Day, in 2018. Under this system, anganwadi workers log the details of the beneficiaries and daily activities to enable monitoring at the district, State and Central levels for improvement in the quality of delivery of services. However, in this village, ICDS-CAS is only a vague memory for most.

"Two years ago, we were given tablets and smartphones. But when we had Internet issues, those were taken away," says Rekha. She and her team of one anganwadi worker and one anganwadi helper have been working overtime, about eight to 10 hours a day, conducting surveys on COVID-19 patients and ensuring social distancing at Panchayat elections, among other duties. A phone may have helped teams like hers at the block and district levels fill the gaps in programme implementation.

The ICDS-CAS was the mainstay of Poshan Abhiyaan, approved by the Union Cabinet in December 2017 at a budget outlay of ₹9,000 crore. Half of this was to be funded by the Indian government and the other half through a loan from the World Bank. Poshan Abhiyaan strives to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers by reducing undernourishment, bringing down anaemia, and increasing birth weight. As the aim of Poshan Abhiyaan is to reach 10 crore beneficiaries at 14 lakh anganwadis, the



Afsana, whose first child is due next month, with her sister Ruqsa at Derwala village in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan. (Below) An anganwadi worker visits a household to deliver essentials and gather details about the children's health at a village in Jhunjhunu district. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN



government set up the ICDS-CAS to ensure swift tracking and effective implementation.

Under the ICDS-CAS, anganwadi workers are provided mobile phones, and anganwadi supervisors, tablets. Anganwadi workers enter details of daily activities, including photo evidence of the opening of anganwadis; attendance of children; details of food, weight and height; etc. These are then monitored at five levels – first by the anganwadi supervisor and then at the block, district, State and Central levels. The assessments and feedback from these levels are provided to the workers. Service delivery is thus tracked and informed decisions taken based on the assessments.

## Plugging gaps in Churu

Churu, a district located three hours from Jhunjhunu, paints a different picture. It is among the nine districts where the ICDS-CAS has been implemented. The use of technology and the monitoring of activities through mobile phones allow block-level supervisors to extend support to anganwadi workers and plug gaps from time to time.

Sunita is full of praise for the local anganwadi in Gajjar village in Churu. "Food was being delivered regularly. We often ask when they will open the anganwadi so that the children get hot meals and remain busy," she says. Before the lockdown, the Rajasthan government also attempted weekly menus which included milk, fruits, and a mixture of rice and lentil, but this was discontinued during the lockdown.

Sunita's immediate neighbour Amina Bano, who has a six-year-old grandson Shoaib, says, "We are happy with the anganwadi as children get to learn some numbers and alphabets."

Here, the efficient monitoring system ensures that if there is a lag in ration supply at the anganwadis, programme supervisors at block levels are alerted and supply is restored. Smartphones distributed to anganwadi workers also help to alert them when vaccinations are due. They are also able to maintain a list of the malnourishment levels of the entire village population. The phone helps them identify children at risk of being malnourished as well as those already stunted or wasted. Those at risk of being malnourished are highlighted on the app in yellow and those already stunted/wasted are marked in red after the anganwadi workers log in the height and weight details of the children. Sanju Devi, the local anganwadi worker, shows her phone: two of the 20 chil-

dren registered with the anganwadi where she works are in the red category and need special interventions.

## Internet issues

However, server issues and Internet problems plague the system here, too. Also, smartphones which were given to the workers to simplify their tasks have doubled their work. Workers are now expected to note down details not only in their phones but also in registers.

In Churu, the server has been down for over two months. Since the ICDS-CAS platform is common for the whole country, this means that monitoring activities across more than 26 States where the ICDS-CAS is running have been hampered.

"For the past two months, they have been logging details in their phones as well as in registers, so there is duplication," says Mohammed Mushtaqeem Khan, District Co-ordinator, National Nutrition Mission. "They usually use the phone to upload photos of children attending the anganwadi. Photos can't be misused as they are uploaded directly on the app and can't be saved in the phone's gallery. This avoids a situation where an anganwadi worker clicks photos for the entire week on the same day.

We also use the photos to do surprise checks and contact the beneficiaries and their parents to receive feedback. The technology has helped the parents become more aware too. They often use these occasions to tell us if they have been receiving less than what they are entitled to get."

The collapse of the system also means that the anganwadi workers are the hardest hit. "The anganwadi workers' incentives have been delayed at a time when the pandemic has resulted in their work increasing manifold. The system helps automatically calculate an anganwadi worker's incentives through the activities logged in by her. But since that is not possible now, they haven't received their incentives for the past two months. The State government is devising a new parameter to overcome this problem," he says.

Experts say on the condition of anonymity that the server crash is a result of the government's lack of preparedness to deal with a massive amount of data (nearly seven lakh out of 14 lakh anganwadis where the ICDS-CAS have al-

ready been implemented) and cloud storage and managing the entire architecture including hardware and software. The technology support has alternated between the National Informatics Centre and Tata Consultancy Services in the recent past, while it was earlier handled by the U.S.-based Dimagi.

## Lack of data

Even before the server problem, unavailability of data from an expensive technology system set up primarily to improve service delivery caused anger among implementation partners, researchers, nutrition advocates and public health experts. This happened at a time when warnings were issued about the likelihood of an additional 10,000 under-five deaths per month globally and of 6.7 million more children suffering from wasting, a strong predictor of mortality, due to the pandemic.

"The strength of India's future will be determined by the health and nutrition of its babies today. The government deploys significant resources and hundreds of thousands of front-line anganwadi workers across the country, who work every day, including through the pandemic, to reach some of India's more vulnerable citizens. As an example, Poshan Abhiyaan disseminates over 10 nutrition-related messages across more than 20 platforms. But what is the reach of platforms and messages? Have pregnant and lactating women's nutrition behaviours changed over time? How has all of this been changing during the pandemic? It is very important to track progress, understand gaps, and acknowledge and reward heroic efforts. Without live information systems like the CAS, many key decisions will be made without robust evidence," says Divya Nair, Director, IDinsight.

"The less said about ICDS-CAS, the better. The data have not been available, and we can't use the software tool the way we would like. So, we use our application called Sampark, where we log the data of children, mothers as well as the status of welfare schemes such as PDS, BPL, labour cards accessible to beneficiaries..." says a representative of the Madhya Pradesh government.

Dr Vandana Prasad, a public health expert, Joint Convenor of the People's Health Movement-India (Jan Swasthya Abhiyan) and a member of the Steering

Committee of the Right to Food Campaign agrees. She says, "ICDS is important because it caters to the entire life cycle of pregnant women and lactating mothers, adolescent girls and children between the age of six months and six years, by making direct interventions. It also provides a platform for delivering health services. Data are critical to any programme, especially nutrition programmes. During a pandemic we need more data, not less. Data are critical as people are at a higher risk now, they are severely vulnerable. All public data need to be made public. Data must be open for evaluation so that there are no cover-ups."

The problem of lack of access to data is also faced by State governments. Many States, including Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, are known to have written to the Centre raising their concerns about unavailability of data for programme implementation and review.

"The guidelines for a supplementary nutrition programme allow States to decide what food they would like to distribute, but the ICDS-CAS is a common application for the entire country which doesn't allow us the flexibility to record and monitor data as per the specifics of our scheme. We have written to the Centre raising this issue and demanded that all data be put in the public domain so that there is transparency and accountability. If we want the data of the past two or three months, for instance, to study the impact of our interventions, we don't have them," says Rajasthan's Women and Child Development Secretary, Krishna Kant Pathak.

"There are no data available. We have requested the Central government for access, but beyond their templated dashboard, nothing is available to us. We haven't even received a response from the Centre," says Annapurna Garu, Joint Project Co-ordinator, National Nutrition Mission.

When the scheme was designed and being implemented, it was driven by a spirit of co-ordination and co-operation, explains one of the chief architects of the Poshan Abhiyaan at the Centre, on the condition of anonymity. "We often wrote letters and communicated over the phone to address the problems expressed by the States. Data, too, were always discussed at meetings where different non-government stakeholders were present as well. It is not true that data were meant to be kept under lock and key because of privacy issues. There are enough ways to mask the identity of the beneficiaries," he says.

## Need for convergence

States demand not only the Centre's co-operation but also harp on the need for convergence between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Women and Child Development's ICDS through a common data portal. "There is a need for convergence. The Pregnancy, Child Tracking and Health Services Management System, for example, can give us data about a woman becoming pregnant. We can then use this to trans-

fer their entitlements through the Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana, a maternity benefit scheme," says Pathak.

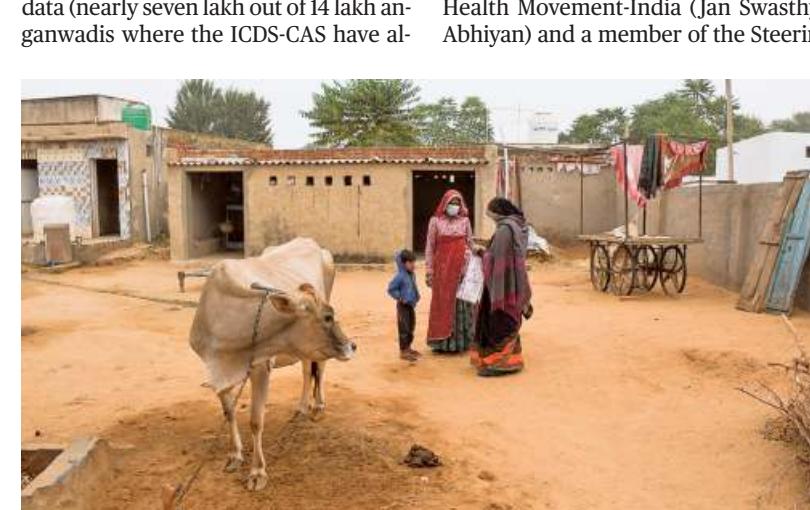
Since the Centre has failed to do this, the Rajasthan government is now planning to launch an AAA app or the 'Auxiliary Nurse Midwife, Anganwadi and ASHA' app, to ensure that all three of them are connected through the same tool. Andhra Pradesh, too, says that a pre-existing app called NutriTask, which was put aside after the ICDS-CAS was conceived, may now be revived.

Ironically, a month before the launch of Poshan Abhiyaan, the Union Women and Child Development Ministry had written to the State Chief Secretaries to ensure a "single point of impact for all nutrition-related schemes" through the ICDS-CAS and advised them to "phase out State-/ UT-level initiatives to enable a synergised approach, avoid replication, and achieve the overall goals of the Mission." But three years later, things seem to be moving in the opposite direction as several States are keen to develop their own software modules.

"The accountability system is enormously centralised and top-down and is focused on surveillance of anganwadi workers. This is risky during a crisis like a pandemic or a flood because it means that the local community is not taught to take ownership of nutrition services and trained to monitor service delivery. To me if you want accountability, you could have a mother's group that can monitor whether or not an anganwadi is functioning, whether an anganwadi worker is providing those supplies to children or not. Local mothers' groups and panchayat committees can play not just an inspector role, but also a supportive role," says Jashodhara Dasgupta, social researcher on gender, health and rights, and convener of the Feminist Policy Collective.

The ICDS-CAS harps on accountability of the person at the ground level instead of addressing other systemic, she says. "Anganwadi workers are treated as voluntary workers as they are considered to be part-time workers, and they live close to the houses they monitor. They are underpaid, overworked and deprived of social protection. So why are we so hooked to their accountability when there are inadequate budgets, delays in disbursal of cash benefits, lack of data, etc.? The entire system is intent on policing her," Dasgupta says.

"There is a strong case against centralisation of data systems. The systems must be flexible and in tune with local interventions. They must also be available to the front-line workers as well as at the local level for analyses and execution of corrective measures, and not just to programme developers. After all, it is an anganwadi worker who can take corrective steps immediately. Data systems should also be built with local participation and consensus. The Centre can facilitate setting this up locally and providing a supportive role to ensure capacity building for effective use of data," Prasad contends.



## FROM PAGE ONE

## Farmers firm on repeal of three agri laws

Mr. Lakhowal said sportspersons and other dignitaries would return their medals to the government on December 7 as a mark of protest. He said toll barriers across the country would be made "free" for a day on a later date.

He added that farmer unions would also attempt to close the two highways leading to Delhi that are still open by December 8.

Mr. Lakhowal said the government had, at the December 3 meeting, agreed to make amendments to the three laws, withdraw the ordinance on stubble burning and make a law on minimum support price to an extent, but the unions wanted a complete withdrawal of the three laws. He claimed that the movement had support pouring in from across the country, with sit-ins and protests in Bengaluru and other parts of Karnataka as well. Bharatiya Kisan Union general-secretary Yudhvir Singh also addressed the joint press conference, saying the farmers were fast losing patience and were ready for a "do-or-die" battle.

There was strong consensus among the farmer

## 'Remarks by Canadian PM unacceptable'

Friday's comment is tougher compared to the December 1 statement when India had avoided naming Mr. Trudeau, even though he had expressed concern about the condition of the farmers in his Gurupurav message.

Mr. Trudeau's coalition partner Jagmeet Singh of the New Democratic Party has made several public comments about the farmers' agitation. He had praised the farmers, saying they were opposing "privatisation". "As millions of farmers march towards India's capital... they walk with this spirit (of Guru Nanak)," Mr. Singh said on November 30.

Another MP, Jack Harris, had criticised India's handling of the protests and said "We are shocked" during the police action against the farmers.

The December 1 statement from the MEA had merely described the Canadian messages as "ill-informed". However Friday's demarche said the comments from the Canadian

leaders that nothing short of the withdrawal of three laws would be acceptable. The farmer leaders also stressed the demand for legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price," said Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav, present at the media briefing.

Mr. Yadav said the BKU leader sharing the platform with the Morcha leaders was an important development since the union was earlier holding "parallel" negotiations. "Ten big federations of trade unions also pledged their support to the movement. There are spontaneous protests across the country in support of the agitation just as we saw during the 'Anna movement', Mr. Yadav said.

Farmer leaders from several States addressed the media briefing, stressing that it was an all-India movement and their demand for repeal of the three farm laws was "non-negotiable". Claiming that the movement was headed for a "historic win" and the government for a "historic defeat", the leaders stressed that the talks on Saturday would be only about the withdrawal of the three laws and nothing else.

authorities "have encouraged gatherings of extremist activities in front of our High Commission and Consulates in Canada that raise issues of safety and security". The farmers' agitation has found strong resonance among the Indo-Canadian community as many members have their roots in the north Indian plains. Various cities in Canada have witnessed drive-in protests and gatherings by Indo-Canadians against the police action on the farmers.

Several such car rallies have been planned during the weekend in multiple cities. A major rally in support of the farmers is scheduled in capital Ottawa on Saturday. A rally at Brampton, Ontario, is also expected on Saturday.

"We expect the Canadian Government to ensure the fullest security of Indian diplomatic personnel and its political leaders to refrain from pronouncements that legitimise extremist activism," the MEA said in its statement.

## RBI holds rates, sees FY GDP contraction at 7.5%

Governor Shaktikanta Das, while announcing the policy, however, reiterated that inflation still remains a concern for policymakers. "Cost-push pressures continue to impinge on core inflation, which has remained sticky and could firm up as economic activity normalises and demand picks up," he said.

Mr. Das projected retail inflation to average 6.8% in Q3, before moderating to 5.8% in Q4 and 5.2% to 4.6% in the first half of the next fiscal year, with risks broadly balanced. With the MPC convinced that inflation would remain elevated, "barring transient relief in the winter months from prices of perishables", the rate-setting panel said it found itself in a bind.

Stating that supply-side bottlenecks had fuelled inflation and large margins were being charged to the consumer, Mr. Das said, "This

constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth. At the same time, the signs of recovery are far from being broad-based and are dependent on sustained policy support."

Asserting that the RBI would monitor all threats to price stability closely so as to anchor broader macroeconomic and financial stability, he said the MPC had decided to continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary – at least during the current financial year and into the next financial year – to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remained within the mandated target. The RBI also announced a raft of liquidity management measures and steps to improve regulatory oversight of the financial system.

## Interfaith marriage: will seek DM's nod, says groom

Mr. Kabir said the date for the marriage had been fixed more than a month ago, before the ordinance was passed. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Suresh Chandra Rawat said both families were

called to the police station after they got to know that a boy and girl from different communities wanted to get married. The families were informed about the new ordinance and provided a copy of the same, he said.

## TRS single largest party in GHMC polls

Big gains for BJP as it wins 46 divisions; MIM retains 44

SWATHI VADLAMUDI  
HYDERABAD

The ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) retained its status as the single largest party in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Council polls by winning the highest number of seats in the 150 divisions for which elections were held on December 1.

Of the 147 divisions for which results were declared up to 9 p.m. on Friday, the TRS has won 56, while the BJP has secured victory in 46 divisions.

The MIM retained 44 divisions.

The Congress could barely make its presence felt, with



Saying it with pink: Telangana Rashtra Samiti supporters celebrate as counting was progressing in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections on Friday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

mere two seats. The TRS's arch rival BJP improved its score several times over, and emerging as the main opposition in the Council.

As a result, the pink team of TRS on its own will be short of a majority when it comes to the contest for the Mayor seat, and will be forced to look for alliances.

The results of the Jangammet and Mylaredevpally divisions were still awaited, while that of Neredmet was

## Kerala gold smuggling case: 2 quizzed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Customs on Friday interrogated the gunman and driver of the UAE consulate in Thiruvananthapuram in connection with the diplomatic channel gold smuggling and foreign currency smuggling cases.

Gunman Jayaghoose and driver Siddique were interrogated at the Kochi office of the agency. It was following the information gathered after questioning the other accused in the case that the duo were interrogated. The officials suspect that huge amount of foreign currency was smuggled out of the country with the help of those employed in the consulate. It had obtained a non-bailable warrant against Khaled Mohamed Ali Shoukry, an Egyptian national for smuggling U.S. dollars worth around ₹1.30 crore.

The election will be held in three phases on December 8, 10 and 14.

CPI(M) acting State secretary A. Vijayaraghavan told reporters in Kollam that a mere summons was no evidence of guilt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Enforcement Directorate has summoned C.M. Raveendran, additional private secretary to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, to appear at its office in Kochi on December 10.

The date has reportedly raised eyebrows in the Communist Party of India (Marxist). By one account, the CPI(M) felt that the ED had timed Mr. Raveendran's arrival at its office with the local body election. It is felt that the potential television optics of Mr. Raveendran's arrival at the ED office would impact voters setting out to polling booths.

The election will be held in three phases on December 8, 10 and 14.

CPI(M) acting State secretary A. Vijayaraghavan told reporters in Kollam that a mere summons was no evidence of guilt.

The ED reportedly wanted to question Mr. Raveendran in connection with its ongoing investigation into the money laundering aspect of the gold smuggling case. The agency was also probing the suspected "kickbacks in the various infrastructure contracts" being implemented by the State government.

Mr. Raveendran's questioning brings ED ominously close to the Chief Minister's Office. In a court filing, the ED had deposed that M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to Mr. Vijayan, and his "team in the CMO" were "fully aware" of the illegal gold import via the "diplomatic channel" of the UAE consulate.

Mr. Raveendran had twice pleaded inability to appear before investigators. He was stricken by COVID-19 and later laid low by health issues.

## ED calls Ravindran to its office on Dec. 10

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday adjourned the hearing of the SNC Lavalin corruption case appeals against the discharge of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to January 7 on the basis of a request made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who is appearing for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

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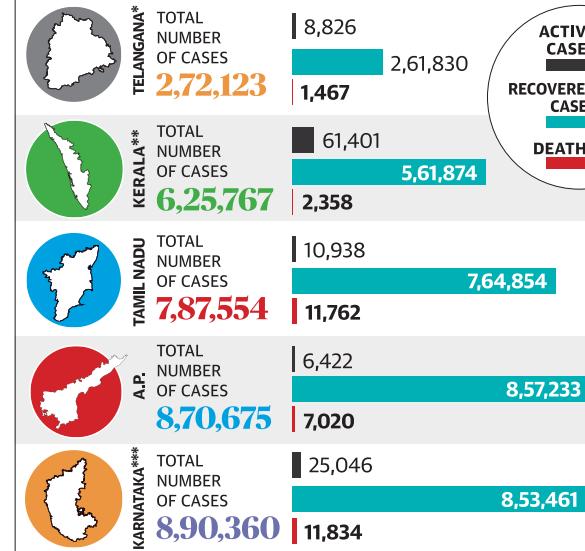
Justice U.U. Lalit, heading the three-judge Bench, noted how the case is being adjourned time and again.

Mr. Mehta said the case required a detailed hearing and would require some time. Meanwhile, the court gave the central agency permission to file additional documents.

When the case came up before Justice Lalit's Bench,

## Test positivity rates stay flat in multiple States

Kerala remains high at about 10%, Karnataka reports 1.27%, A.P. less than 1%; Telangana raises testing



Andhra Pradesh witnessed six more deaths and 599 new infections on Friday. The overall positivity rate of tests came down to 8.46% as the number increased to 1,029 crore. In the past day 63,406 samples were tested with a positivity rate of 0.94%. Krishna district reported two deaths, Chittoor, Guntur, Kurnool and Nellore one death each.

Telangana recorded 631 cases on Thursday taking the total to 2,72,123.

While 57,405 people were tested, results of 658 are awaited. Two more patients died. Thursday was the third day when more than 50,000 tests were done.

Throughout November, the daily tests did not cross 47,000. The 631 new cases included 109 from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation.

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

## Change in stance over Sabarimala entry draws flak

Kerala portal for virtual queue booking states women below 50 and above 65 will not be allowed



Sensitive subject: Entry of women below 50 years is a non-issue now, the TDB president said. ■ FILE PHOTO

people above 65 years will not be permitted to the temple because of COVID-19 restrictions.

But, the sudden change in the stance of the government just before the local body poll has come in for flak.

The new condition comes two years after the Left Democratic Front government had given police support for two young women to visit the temple in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict.

Age-old customs The government's decision has come in for opposition from devotees who wanted to stick to the age-old customs of the temple. The LDF government had also opposed the review pleas filed against the September 28, 2018 verdict that allowed women's entry to the temple.

With the reported change in stance, the government and the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) have gone back to preserving the age-old customs at Sabarimala.

Responding to the restrictions, TDB president N. Vasu said on Friday that the portal was maintained by the Kerala Police since 2010.

"We have not given any instruction to this effect. Moreover, the entry of women below 50 years is a non-issue now. We want peaceful situation to prevail at Sabarimala. There are several other pressing issues before us to be addressed for pilgrims," Mr. Vasu said.

"No one in this age group has evinced interest for darshan nor has come after the temple was opened last month for the season. Except for media reports, no organisation has raised it officially so far. It is still with the Supreme Court," he added.

## HC: hold polls in 198 wards of Bengaluru

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

In a serious setback to the State government, the High Court of Karnataka on Friday issued direction for holding elections expeditiously to 198 wards of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council and also held that amended law to increase the number of wards in the BBMP to 243 would not apply to the present election.

While directing the government to publish within a month the final notification on caste-based reservation of 198 wards, the court asked the State Election Commission to hold elections within a maximum period of six weeks from the date of publication of the final reservation notification.

## IN BRIEF



Naidu killed cooperative dairies, says Jagan

VIJAYAWADA Stating that the partnership with Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul) will make dairy farming a profitable business for nearly 30 lakh women, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, while speaking in the Assembly on Friday, accused his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu of killing cooperative dairies in the State to benefit private ones such as Sangam, Visakha and Jersey and his own Heritage Dairy.

## A.P. couple seeks mercy killing of ailing daughter

CHITTOR A couple from Neerugutta-varipalayam locality in Andhra Pradesh's Madanapalle town on Friday approached the local court, appealing for euthanasia for their seven-year-old daughter, said to be suffering from cerebral palsy since birth. Ramakrishna, a construction worker, and Geetanjali said they had sold their property for the child's treatment. They were now left with no funds for treating their child. Hence they took a decision to seek euthanasia for the child, submitting the appeal at the II additional district judge court at Madanapalle.

## Two injured in grenade blast in Kasaragod

KASARAGOD A policeman and an employee of the AR camp were injured when a grenade exploded on Friday while removing materials from a training site in Kasaragod district. The injured have been identified as Sudhakaran, 45, and Pavithran, 45. The training was held on Thursday at the District Armed Police Camp Grounds as part of measures to ensure security during local body elections.

# Over 50% turnout in J&K polls

Apni Party candidate shot at by suspected militants in Anantnag district

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Over 50% voters turned up to cast the ballot in the third phase of the District Development Council (DDC) election in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday.

Polling was held in 33 constituencies – 16 in Kashmir and 17 in Jammu – in this phase with 305 candidates – 252 men and 53 women – in the fray.

## Candidate attacked

In the first militancy-related violence during the ongoing polls, militants attacked a candidate from the J&K Apni party in Anantnag district of south Kashmir.

"J&K recorded 50.53% of voter turnout. The Jammu division recorded an average voter turnout of 68.88%, while the Kashmir division saw 31.61%," State Election Commissioner (SEC) K.K. Sharma said. Kulgam district in the volatile south Kashmir, which has seen frequent encounters in the past two years, recorded the highest polling at 64.45%.

"Our vote is to keep the



**Light touch:** Children shaking hands with CRPF personnel during the third phase of the District Development Council election in Anantnag district of Kashmir on Friday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

BJP at bay. Electoral politics has become essential to stop the process of disempowerment initiated by the BJP in J&K since August 5 last year," Nazir Ahmad, a teacher from Kulgam, said.

A spontaneous boycott was observed in most polling booths in the other three districts of south Kashmir – Shopian with 22.68% polling, Anantnag (21.64%) and Pulwama (10.87%).

"We have seen too many

young bodies heading to graves to be casting votes," Rehman Ganai, a resident of Pulwama, said.

North Kashmir saw a

higher voter turnout, with Bandipora recording 56.73%, Kupwara 46.25% and Baramulla 30.94%. In central Kashmir, Budgam saw 50.18% polling and Ganderbal 24.69%, officials said.

"In the Jammu division, poll percentage of 72.18% was recorded in Poonch,

70.44% in Jammu, 70.35% in Kishtwar, 70.15% in Samba 64.79% in Ramban and 62.18% in Kathua," Mr. Sharman said.

"Around 12 p.m., a terror crime took place at Sagam in Kokernag area of Anantnag, where terrorists had fired upon a DDC candidate, Anees-ul-Islam Ganie. He received injuries in a finger and on the thigh. His condition is stated to be stable," a police spokesperson said.

## BJP scared of people power: Mehbooba

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Former J&K chief minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday took a jibe at the Centre for its handling of the farmers' protests.

"Farmers' protests have brought the Government of India to its knees. The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) is scared of people's power and it is why a reign of repression has been unleashed in J&K since the illegal abrogation of Article 370. Not allowing any peaceful medium for dissent shows their nervousness and failure on all fronts," Ms. Mufti said.

She expressed her condolences on the passing away of Dineshwar Sharma, an administrator of Lakshadweep and former interlocutor of the Centre for Jammu and Kashmir.

"He was a thorough gentleman and tried his best to restore bridges of trust and goodwill between people of J&K and rest of the nation," she said.

## Yechury flags move on postal ballots for NRIs

He urges EC to hold all-party meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Flagging news reports about the Election Commission mulling the facilitation of voting by overseas Indians/NRIs to exercise their franchise in the upcoming Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Pondicherry, CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury flayed the Commission for initiating the process without any consultations with political parties.

"Farmers' protests have brought the Government of India to its knees. The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) is scared of people's power and it is why a reign of repression has been unleashed in J&K since the illegal abrogation of Article 370. Not allowing any peaceful medium for dissent shows their nervousness and failure on all fronts," Ms. Mufti said.

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Sitaram Yechury

citizens to cast their votes in countries where they are residing.

Instead, as per news reports, the ECI was mulling on postal ballots for overseas Indians, which they can dispatch to India "electronically". Mr. Yechury said dispatching the ballot paper electronically is fraught with the risk of manipulation.

"Seen against the physical verifiability of the voter as an inviolable principle for casting the vote, ensuring it in the context of an overseas/NRI voter through the electronic transmission of the ballot is clearly problematic," he wrote.

## World trusts India as a partner: Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, while addressing the international global PAN IIT conclave, invited alumni to contribute ideas to commemorate India's 75th anniversary of Independence in 2022.

"We have ensured that the brand of IITs has only become stronger. We are committed to strengthening science and tech education. We have been working with various countries in southeast Asia and Europe in this area. Our aim is to ensure that our youngsters get an international platform to showcase their skills and learn from best practices globally," he said.

## Record investment

In the testing times of COVID-19, India had got "record" investment, much of it in the tech sector. "Clearly, the world sees India as a trustworthy and promising partner," Mr. Modi said.

## AAP: convene special session of Lok Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday demanded that a special session of Parliament be convened immediately to revoke the recently passed agriculture sector laws, which have been opposed by farmers.

AAP State president and Sangrur MP Bhagwant Mann urged in a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to immediately convene a special session to ensure a legal guarantee on the minimum support price for crops and rolling back of the contentious farm laws.

Mr. Mann said revoking the farm laws and the offer of a legal guarantee on MSP by the Centre was the only way forward to resolve the stalemate.

# We will use social media to widen protests, say farmers

'The eventual plan is to shut entry to and exit from Delhi'

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

At the Singhu border on Friday, the protesting farmers said they will find ways to keep the momentum going if they have to remain at the borders as talks between them and the government were inconclusive.

At a meeting on Thursday, they said they would not accept anything other than a repeal of the three laws.

"Going forward, if we have to continue at the borders, we will not just sit and eat. We will use social media like Facebook and Twitter to mobilise, plan protests, and marches inside Delhi while we remain here. The eventual plan will be to shut entry to, and exit from, Delhi completely," said Ranjeet Singh (34), a farmer from Bhatinda.

Gurdeep Singh from Chandigarh said: "If the demands are not met, there is going to be an unexpected reaction. Perhaps, a hunger strike."

A 25-year-old farmer, Hardeep Singh Liddar from Chandigarh, said the government had not given anything in writing and they did not trust them. "We have already seen what corporatisa-



**Taking a stand:** Nihangs, armed Sikh warriors, lending support to farmers in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tion of crops can do. We cannot accept any amendments," he said.

"We have decided we won't back down and it's only been eight days," Shamsher Singh said.

### Families supportive

Bayant Singh (40) from Patiala said their families back home were very supportive and in fact, the villagers would feel betrayed if they go back without getting their demands fulfilled.

A group of farmers also said they will follow their leaders. "We have come with our leaders and for us, their word is final. If they tell us to leave, we will leave

right away. And if they tell us to stay, we will stay for even two years," said Iqbal Singh from Jalandhar. He said allegiance to *jathhe bandi* (groups) leaders is of utmost importance to them.

At the protest on Friday, Anmol Rana from Sonipat was seen carrying a mattress on his shoulder. "This is the weapon used by God Hanuman and Angad and it depicts that the government won't be able to disperse us. Haryana Chief Minister had said only Sikhs from Haryana are participating but that's not true. We are all with them and will intensify the protest if the demands are not met," he said.

A group of farmers also said they will follow their leaders. "We have come with our leaders and for us, their word is final. If they tell us to leave, we will leave

## Amarinder and Sukhbir lock horns

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Friday accused Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh of attempting to sabotage the farmers' agitation by linking it with threats to national security. The Chief Minister hit back, saying all the Opposition parties in the State were playing politics with the lives of farmers.

"Mr. Badal asked the Chief Minister to share with the people the specific grounds or intelligence surrounding the threat to national security. 'Capt. Singh's warning' comes after his meeting with a powerful Union Minister. Does he think the farmers can't see through his conspiratorial role against them?"

At the protest on Friday, Anmol Rana from Sonipat was seen carrying a mattress on his shoulder. "This is the weapon used by God Hanuman and Angad and it depicts that the government won't be able to disperse us. Haryana Chief Minister had said only Sikhs from Haryana are participating but that's not true. We are all with them and will intensify the protest if the demands are not met," he said.

A group of farmers also said they will follow their leaders. "We have come with our leaders and for us, their word is final. If they tell us to leave, we will leave

## Plea in SC to move protesting farmers from Delhi's borders

'It must apply its judgment in the Shaheen Bagh case'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A petition in the Supreme Court on Friday sought a direction for the "immediate removal" of protesting farmers from Delhi's borders, by applying its judgment in the Shaheen Bagh case that dissent should not intrude on public movement.

"This court in the case of Amit Sahni vs. Commissioner of Police [Shaheen Bagh] case has stated that the protest which blocked the public way caused grave inconvenience to commuters and that such protest cannot be allowed, and indeterminate number of people cannot assemble wherever they choose to protest," Rishabh Sharma, a law student from



Police redirecting a car at the Delhi-U.P. border at Ghazipur. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Delhi, said in his petition. He said thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, have been choking the entry points to Delhi since November 26.

Mr. Sharma said protesting farmers could not block

public movement. The judgment in the Shaheen Bagh case had frowned upon protesters occupying public places indefinitely. Dissent, the court had said, could not be expressed by blocking public places and spaces.

The student contended that farmers continued to camp at the borders and block the roads, though the government had allotted the Nirankari ground in Burari to hold their protests peacefully.

The petition said the large gatherings of farmers at the borders posed a challenge to the fight against the pandemic in the capital. Entry of patients to Delhi from other States for treatment would also be affected.

**CHENNAI METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD**  
No.1 Pumping Station Road, Chintadripet, Chennai 600 002, Tamil Nadu, India.  
Telephone : +91 44 2845 1300-1320, Fax : +91 44 2845 8181  
E-Mail: cmwssb@md2.vsnl.net.in, secandm@cmwssb.in

**INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING CORRIGENDUM/TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE**

Tenders have been invited in CMWSS Board for the following work. The due date for submission of the Prequalification application has been extended as indicated below.

Sl. No.	Tender No. and Name of work	Original Due Date	1st Extended due Date	2nd Extended due Date	Prequalification Application Documents available upto
1	Construction of 400 MLD Seawater Reverse Osmosis (SWRO) Desalination Plant at Perur, Chennai with 20 years of Operation and Maintenance (DBO Basis) CMWSSB/CNT/WSS/CB/JICA/DESAL/CP01/018/2020-2021	01.12.2020	16.12.2020	05.01.2021	04.01.2021

All the other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (CONTRACTS & MONITORING)**

DIPR/4509/Tender/2020

**The Singareni Collieries Company Limited**  
(A Government Company)  
Regd. Office: Kothagudem-507101, Telangana

**Employment Notification No. 03/2020**

SCCL is looking for Suitable Candidates for the following Executive Posts. (Lateral Entry)

Name of the Post, Grade & Scale of Pay	No. of Posts
Dy. Law Manager- E5 Grade - Rs. 80,000/- to 2,20,000/-	02
Sr. Law Manager- E4 Grade - Rs. 70,000/- to Rs. 2,00,000/-	02

For further details, i.e., experience, age, qualification, grade, scale of pay etc. Please visit our SCCL website: <https://www.sclmines.com> "Careers" Link available on Home page, Please apply ONLINE w.e.f. 05.12.2020 to 12.12.2020 and also submit their application (hard copy) on or before 17.12.2020 20 by post/courier

PR/2020-21/PER(CRP)/68  
R.O. No.: 1190-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2020-21 Dated 04-12-2020

**Chairman & Managing Director**

**KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(Bhadra Generating Station)  
CIN: U85110KA1970SGC001919

**ABSTRACT 'e' TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
(Through e-procurement portal only)

Bids in two covers are invited through 'e' procurement portal (website URL: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>) for the following works from reputed bidders with proven track record of successful completion of similar works. Tenders must be electronically submitted (online through internet) within the due date and time published in e-procurement portal. EMD and tender processing fee should be paid online through e-procurement portal.

Sl. No.	Tender No. & Date	Name of the Work & EMD ₹
1	KPCL/2020-21/PS/Work Indent 10602 Dtd: 27-11-2020	Dismantling of existing compressed air system, supply, installation, testing & commissioning of new high pressure compressed air system for RBPH of Bhadra Generating Station. ₹ 49,792/-
2	KPCL/2020-21/PS/Work Indent 10603 Dtd: 27-11-2020	Supply, Installation, Testing and commissioning of Motor Pump sets, Level Transmitters, Motor Control Panels along with seamless pipe lines and accessories for MIV pit Dewatering System of all Generating Units of Bhadra Generating Station. ₹ 48,418/-
3	KPCL/2020-21/PS/Work Indent 10617 Dtd: 30-11-2020	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Chartless Recorders and Field Instruments for LB Unit and RBK-1 Unit at Bhadra Generating Station. ₹ 50,000/-

**Last date & time for online submission of tenders:** for Sl.No. 1: 11-12-2020 up to 16:30 hrs, for Sl.No. 2: 11-12-2020 up to 16:00 hrs, for Sl.No. 3: 15-12-2020 up to 16:30 hrs. **Date & time of opening the Technical Bid:** for Sl.No. 1 & 2: 14-12-2020 at 10:30 hrs, for Sl.No. 3: 17-12-2020 at 10:30 hrs. Further details can be had from the office of: **The Executive Engineer (O&M)Bhadra, Bhadra Generating Station, KPCL, B.R. Project-577115, Bhadrapatti Taluk, Shivamogga District.**

## Rahul slams beating of health staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Friday tweeted a video clip of Madhya Pradesh police baton-charging health workers in Bhopal and called it shameful.

"Shameful! They are being mercilessly beaten up only because they were doing a sit-in protest to demand employment -- what is

# Opposition seeks financial aid for States

DMK's T.R. Baalu, who raised farmers' stir, had his mike muted

**SOBHANA K. NAIR**

NEW DELHI  
An all-party meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine strategy saw Opposition party leaders re-emphasising the need for the government to take urgent measures to bring the economy back on track, and demanding additional financial help. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP T.R. Baalu was the lone person to raise the ongoing farmers' agitation.

Several parties flagged the need to pay the GST (Goods and Services Tax) dues that the Central government owes to the States, and additional financial help to meet the revenue shortfall that many States are facing due to COVID-19 pandemic.

According to sources, the Shiv Sena, which was represented by Lok Sabha mem-



**Many a grievance:** PM Narendra Modi and Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad at all-party meeting on COVID-19, through video conferencing in New Delhi on Friday. ■ ANI

ber Vinayak Raut, forcefully argued that GST collection by the Central government was more than ₹1 lakh crore and there was no reason to withhold the share of the State governments.

NCP patriarch Sharad Pawar, while praising the Centre's efforts in controlling the pandemic, stressed that there was a need for greater intervention in salvaging the economy. Trinamool Congress leader Sudip Bandhopadhyay spoke on the need to "handhold" the States in this hour of crisis.

Sources said that when Mr. Baalu raised the farmers' issue, Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Pralhad Joshi interrupted and told him to stick to the topic. Mr. Baalu, sources said, retorted that for the past 10 days farmers had been on the road and should not be ignored. A heated exchange between Mr. Joshi and Mr. Baalu followed. Sources said Mr. Baalu's microphone was muted.

Only a select few parties, which had 10 or more MPs, were allowed to speak. CPI (M) leader Elamaram Karrem wrote a letter to the PM flagging the "continuous contraction" in GDP and the "inadequate" economic stimulus package.

Sources said that when Mr. Baalu raised the farmers' issue, Parliamentary Affairs

## Rajoana to escape gallows, but govt. mum on his plea

SC livid that Ministry didn't convey its decision for a year

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**

NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court was livid on Friday to find that the Centre kept a condemned man's plea for presidential mercy hanging in limbo despite having decided over a year ago to spare his life.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde discovered that the Home Ministry had declared its resolve to commute the death penalty of Balwant Singh Rajoana, found guilty of the murder of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh, in September last year.

The decision was taken in commemoration of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji in 2019. However, the Ministry

failed to make good its declaration till date. Rajoana, in a petition to the Supreme Court from his jail cell, said his repeated pleas to the government about the fate of the mercy plea were met with silence. The mercy petition was filed in 2012.

On Friday, Additional Solicitor-General K.M. Nataraj, for the Centre, explained that Rajoana's plea for mer-

cy was kept in abeyance because appeals filed by his fellow accused were pending in the Supreme Court.

"But if you have already

taken a decision to commute his death sentence because of Guru Nanak Jayanti, why do you have to wait for a decision on the appeals filed by his co-accused?" CJL Bobde asked the government side.

The court said the law is settled that once the government has decided to recommend a presidential pardon for a condemned man, the pendency of appeals of his co-accused cannot delay the process initiated under Article 72 (presidential pardon) of the Constitution.

The court gave Mr. Nataraj two weeks to make a statement on the issue.

## Police file chargesheet against Arnab, 2 others

Case relates to suicide of Anvay Naik

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

The Raigad police on Friday filed a chargesheet against Republic TV chief Arnab Goswami and two others in the case of alleged abetment of suicide of interior designer Anvay Naik and his mother in 2018.

The chargesheet is of 1,914 pages and names Mr. Goswami, Feroz Shaikh of iCastix/Skimedia and Neetish Sarda of Smartworks. It states that Mr. Goswami owed Naik close to ₹84 lakh for the Bombay Dyeing studio project at Lower Parel, Mr. Shaikh owed Naik ₹4 crore and ₹7 lakh for his project at Andheri and Mr. Sarda owed him ₹55 lakh for his projects at Margarpataan Baner.

Special public prosecutor Pradeep Gharat told *The Hindu*, "The chargesheet has statements of 65 witnesses. It will be submitted before the magistrate court at Alibag on Saturday. After the court takes cognisance of the same it will be committed to the sessions court. Then charges will be framed and the trial will begin." Naik and his mother were found dead on May 5, 2018.

## SC rejects plea for govt. nominees in mosque trust

Petition said it was needed for proper fund management

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea to nominate Central and State government representatives to the 'Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation Trust' for building a mosque in Ayodhya.

A three-judge Bench led by Rohinton Nariman dismissed the petition filed by advocates Shishir Chaturvedi and Karunesh Kumar Shukla.

The Ramjanmabhoomi title dispute verdict of November last year had directed the Centre to allot five acres to the Sunni Waqf Board for a new mosque at a prominent place. The judgment had unanimously

## Map long-term effects of vaccine: Azad

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad on Friday said India should be well placed to get a COVID-19 vaccine at an 'affordable price' at an early stage, and asked policy makers to take note that a COVID-like pandemic can pose a threat to internal security in future.

At the all-party meet, Mr. Azad also asked the government to put in place an effective monitoring system to study long-term adverse effects of the COVID-19 vaccine.

"...the government should rigorously monitor the quality, safety and efficacy of the vaccine," he said.

Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, said there was no "road map" for vaccinating common citizens.

## Safety of COVID vaccine paramount, says DCGL

'System in place to compensate for adverse drug reaction'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Safety and efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine is paramount with the regulatory pathway for the vaccine in India seeing an accelerated rolling review and interim analysis of clinical trials, Drugs Controller-General of India V.G. Somani said on Friday.

At a discussion on "Regulatory pathways for COVID vaccines, clinical trials, rolling reviews and adverse event monitoring", he said India had a system for compensating participants for adverse reaction to new drugs being tested.

Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), said the vaccine expert committee set up by the department met every two weeks and gave scientific inputs on meeting the regulatory requirements.

Speaking about the COVID vaccine development

process, Sheela Godbole, senior scientist, ICMR-National AIDS Research Institute (NAARI), said that besides the accelerated dedicated research and rolling reviews, the vaccine development had been provided an enabling environment, rapid recruitment facilities and safety review.

### 540 deaths

India reported 540 COVID fatalities in the past 24 hours with 77.78% of this from 10 States and Union Territories.

"21.29% of new fatalities reported are from Maharashtra which reported 115 deaths, Delhi also saw a fatality count of 82 while West Bengal reported 49 new deaths," a release from the Health Ministry said.

Also India's recovery rate

now stands at 94.2%. Maharashtra leads with 8,066 persons recovering from COVID-19 while Kerala recorded 5,590 recoveries.

## Canadian writer plays Santa Claus in Santiniketan

'Nursilly' rhyme videos will spread cheer via YouTube till Christmas 2021

**BISHWANATH GHOSH**

KOLKATA



Brian Godzilla Salmi came to Santiniketan in February this year. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Rabindranath.

"Everyone wants to see 2020 in the rearview mirror. In the famous words of Queen Elizabeth, it has been an 'annus horribilis'."

Her Majesty was speaking of 1992, but 1992 was an extended trip to Disneyland compared to 2020," Mr. Salmi told *The Hindu*.

"The vast majority of us will survive COVID-19, but suffering through the pandemic, and its myriad aftershocks and side effects, may destroy the inner child inside of us. In order to safeguard against that possibility, the Souper SillySaurus Conspiracy [that's how he has labelled his initiative] is launching this YouTube juggernaut," he said.

The rewritten lyrics all seek to ridicule the virus. For example, the popular carol "Deck the halls with boughs of holly" goes as "We've had

enough of you dumb year/ Fa la la la la la la la/ It's time for you to disappear/ Fa la la la la la la la."

"The videos will be released in the next two weeks and will be followed by a series of brand new nursilly rhymes in the form of one-minute songs. On Christmas Day we will release 30 of those nursilly rhyme videos, and we will release a new one every day until Christmas 2021. So, when people are feeling down, they will know that at the same time every day they are going to get a new injection of silly on our YouTube channel," Mr. Salmi said.

Sudipta Tagore is impressed by the project. "It's good for the children," Mr. Tagore said, "Learning new songs and meeting someone from a different cultural background is a good exposure for them."

## FIR against Assam MP's foundation for misuses of foreign funds

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

GUWAHATI

A foundation run by Assam MP Maulana Badruddin Ajmal has received funds from some foreign agencies allegedly linked to terror groups, a First Information Report (FIR) filed on Friday claimed.

Mr. Ajmal is the chief of the All India United Democratic Front, which has been in talks with the Congress for an alliance before the 2021 Assembly polls.

Right-wing leader Satya Ranjan Borah cited a report by an NGO named Legal Rights Observatory in his complaint against Ajmal Foundation at a police station in Guwahati. "Considering the report, we want proper investigation in this

connection under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act... Ajmal Foundation has misused those foreign funds from several anti-national activities," Mr. Borah said in the FIR, demanding that the culprits be brought to book.

The NGO had in a tweet said the foundation received ₹69.55 crore received from "Turkish and UK terror groups" for education but used only ₹2.05 crore.

Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hoped that the Centre would investigate the possible Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) violations by the foundation.

The Ajmal Foundation trashed the accusation. It denied receipt of money from any Saudi Arabia-based agencies.

## Lakshwadweep Administrator Dineshwar Sharma passes away

His career included postings as IB chief, interlocutor in Assam, J&K

**VIJAYA SINGH**

NEW DELHI

Lakshwadweep's Administrator and former Intelligence Bureau chief Dineshwar Sharma passed away at a Chennai hospital on Friday. He was 66. Mr. Sharma was being treated for interstitial lung disease at a city hospital since November 25. He is survived by wife Manju Sharma, a son and a daughter. Mr. Sharma, a 1979-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, hailed from Bihar. He served as IB Director from 2014 to 2016. He headed the

bureau when the government announced demonetisation on November 8, 2016. Mr. Sharma had told this correspondent that he was not consulted by the government on the decision.

After his retirement, the Modi government was keen on giving him an extension but he turned down the offer, saying it would upset the succession chart of his juniors. He was then appointed as an interlocutor for talks with the Assam-based insurgent groups and also headed a committee to restructure the Home Ministry.

Amnesty package Following successive reports by Mr. Sharma to the government that the killings and encounters were not yielding the desired results in Kashmir, the Centre announced

As per the court directive, five acres had been allotted to the Sunni Waqf Board for a new mosque.

handed over the ownership of the disputed land where the Babri mosque stood to the Hindu side.

The petition said that apart from private individuals and members of State Sunnis Board, the presence

of Central and State government

representatives was essential to ensure proper management of the funds.

According to the plea, the Sunni Waqf Board on July 29, 2020 announced the creation of a trust under the title of "Indo Islamic Cultural Foundation" for building a mosque, cultural and research centre and public utility facilities, including a community kitchen, a hospital and a library, within the five acres allotted to it.

It had said there was no provision for nominating any officer of the government. There should be the proper management of the funds and property vested in the trust.

1990s, said his death had come as a rude shock.

**Right man for Kashmir?**

"When he was appointed an interlocutor for Kashmir, it was a great opportunity both for Delhi and Kashmir. Unfortunately, he could not do what he wanted to do. He was the right man, capable of much more. Even when he disagreed, he smiled," Mr. Dulat recalled.

Asif Ibrahim, who was Mr. Sharma's predecessor in the IB, recalled that Mr. Sharma always took his team along. "He had an unassuming personality and was always willing to take any kind of challenge. He took his family along to Kashmir after he

was posted there even when the militancy was at its peak in the 90s," Mr. Ibrahim said.

Retired IB chief Rajiv Jain, who succeeded Mr. Sharma, said he was a "straight shooter" and "someone whose character one should emulate." "He was a simple soul and had no airs about him," Mr. Jain said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted, "Deeply anguished to learn about the passing away of Administrator of Lakshwadweep Shri Dineshwar Sharma ji. He served the nation with utmost devotion as a dedicated officer of the Indian Police Service. My heartfelt condolences to his family. Om Shanti."



Dineshwar Sharma  
"cease-ops or suspension of operations" in the former State on May 16, 2018. He also pushed for an amnesty package for the youth in Kashmir who were arrested for stone throwing after the



## Machan, again

The best part about the Taj Mahal New Delhi's 24x7 diner Machan in its new avatar, is the invitation of the outdoors inside. So grab a seat next to the window that looks out onto the trees, enjoy the jungle theme wall (spot the tigers), the cane tree canopies, the terra cotta animal masks, even the waiters' uniforms with tiger-stripe cravats.

What's missing from the original, launched in 1978, is the buffet, because we never imagined what dipping into a common bread basket or touching a common serving spoon meant, in pre-COVID times. Now, everything comes to the table, the mats and napkins are disposable, and sets of cutlery packaged individually. You can choose a table with clear partitions between seats, for extra caution.

For breakfast, there's a tray of cereal and juice, along with fruit, cheese and fresh bakes, before you actually get around to ordering. The idea was to keep much of what people loved about Machan, so nostalgia is a big theme. For instance, the hotel's Chikmagalur-blend Kona Coffee is back, priced at ₹5 as it was in the original menu, and can be ordered between 11 pm and 6 am on a minimum order of ₹500 per guest. Legend has it that it was named thus because the coffee station was placed in a corner!

There is the new too, so terrarium plants have replaced flowers, as a sustainable option. Most of the fresh ingredients on the menu are sourced from around Delhi, another nod to going local.

The hotel also has a new-look-and-feel lobby and Emperor Lounge.



JANE DE SUZA

Welcome to our Forest Lodge. Now that you are released from your cages, the wildlife joins us in inviting you to share our wide, open space. Please do take note of our ground rules.

■ **Do not wear the bedsheets.**

We understand that your clothes have shrunk during the lockdown; we sympathise that your buttons don't button up, your zips don't zip up, but please do not walk around in our

# Jungle rules apply

## How to resist the call of the wild

towels or bedsheets.

■ **Hunting is discouraged.**

The wild animals are used to a free run of their land. They may get excited at the sight of a fattened meal. Though our notices, like this one, across our

property discourage them from hunting you, we cannot guarantee they will obey these rules. Do not tempt the hosts.

■ **Do not drink up the hand sanitiser.**

We provide only one bottle per room per day.

■ **There are no share buttons.**

We know that you have been in a chicken coop for the last eight months, with views of your neighbour's kitchen. But please refrain from taking videos while running on our rolling hills,

or rolling in our running streams. You are not a part of our attractions.

■ **Please do not hoard.** There is no need to rush and stack up on things before someone else finishes them off. We will not run out of leaves, twigs, sunlight.

■ **The umbrellas are for everyone's use.** Overcome by the joy of making new friends after ages, please resist the urge to throw yourself at or hug other guests. The large pointy umbrellas may officially be used by them to poke you back into safe-distancing.

■ **Masks save lives.** They stop you from arguing, yelling and scaring the animals away, overeating or drinking the hand sanitiser – and accidentally swallowing some of the flying insects. Save their lives!

■ **We apologise for our low-tech.** The birds do not come with volume control buttons. The sound of rain on the tiled roof has no mute option. The only web series is courtesy our many spiders. You cannot book a sunrise. Or pre-order a sunset. Or reschedule a storm. The mosquitoes refuse to obey safe-distancing rules. The bats deny responsibility for Covid-19. The deer refuse to keep appointments on time. The long-distance calls are mating calls, so be careful whom you respond to.

Enjoy your stay!

Where Jane De Suza, author of Flyaway Boy, pokes her nose into our perfect lives.

## Delhi stuff

Things to do, see, buy, eat in the city



### Under the stars

In their seasonal pop-up, Diya offers open-air dining by the pool, with Indian cuisine. The highlight is the live grill and sit-at-table service, where chefs assemble dishes to your taste. Expect an array of kebabs (Gongura paneer tikka, kakori kebab, Amritsari machhi) and a platter of desserts. The Leela Ambience Gurugram, Wednesday-Monday, 7 pm to 10:30 pm



### Sikh heritage

Harshdeep Kaur's solo exhibition 'Engaging with the Ultimate' has a mix of canvases showcasing landscapes and figurative works depicting the imaginative self. The series is based on Sikh men and women and is embedded in the artist's lived experience, her observation of the lives of Sikh people, their festivals and rituals. Until December 8, Arpana Art Gallery, Siri Fort Institutional Area



### Inner space

Villa Ortiga, an interior design and architecture studio founded by architectural designer Sarabjit Singh, has launched its flagship furniture and lifestyle studio in Delhi. They offer sofas from Italy, accent chairs from France, cutlery from Cape Town, Panama hats made in Ecuador, and more. 5 Jangpura A, Mathura Road, open all days, 11 am to 7 pm

### Arun Thakur | 34

Haryana

**Who:** Former photojournalist and founder, Highway Players Wheels: Four Royal Enfield motorcycles Camera kit: Canon 5D-Mark III, Canon 6D and two GoPros 4 & 7 Lockdown buy: Godox AD-200 flashlight to shoot in extremely low light conditions



1 This photograph is special as it was taken on my first lockdown group trip to Rohru, Himachal, in October. The pandemic isn't over yet but it is a time to experience nature at its undisturbed best. What I have realised during my lockdown rides is that one doesn't have to travel far for stunning sights; they are right in our backyard. I have been going on weekend 'breakfast' rides – to Murthal, Agra, Mathura, Meerut, Neemrana Fort – with fellow club members since June. For photography on-the-go, invest in a good lens and learn post production procedures. I am now trying my hand at video editing with Final Cut Pro and will soon ride to Rishikesh followed by a long ride to Auli, Munsiyari.



### Harsh Man Rai | 59

Mumbai & Gurgaon  
**Who:** Photographer and co-founder of magazines Helmet Stories, Rolling Stone India  
**Wheels:** 2020 BMW 310GS  
**Camera kit:** iPhone 11 Pro Max, GoPro action cameras, Sony A6300

2 I've always wanted to ride to Arunachal Pradesh, over the Sela Pass. This is where my father, Major Hasta Bahadur Rai, along with his battalion 4 Garhwali Rifles, fought a tragically valiant, but ultimately losing rear-guard battle against the People's Liberation Army at Nurang in the bitter winter of 1962. I haven't been able to close this circle and I got an opportunity last month to go on a ride with friends. Even though our journey didn't end at Dong, where the sun's rays first kiss Indian soil, it was a fitting symbolic end to our quest. The bike lived up to its vaunted GS moniker in conditions that would have stopped other bikes dead in their tracks. In honour of this ride and my father's memory, I've named my motorcycle 'Nura'.



### Shikha Dalal | 32

Ahmedabad  
**Who:** Former pilot and now a filmmaker, photographer at her digital marketing agency, Reboot My Brand  
**Wheels:** Bajaj Dominar 400  
**Camera kit:** GoPros (7, Max), iPhone 11 Pro  
**Lockdown buy:** 360 camera MAX



### Srivatsan Sankaran | 30

Chennai  
**Who:** Founder, Madras Photo Bloggers  
**Wheels:** Royal Enfield Bullet 350 ES  
**Camera kit:** Sony Alpha A7RIII, GoPro

Read the full story on weekend.thehindu.com

## Shooting from the saddle

They are lensmen and motorcyclists, and talk about recent journeys across the country, tech tips and how the pandemic has changed the way they travel

NIDHI ADLAKHA

### Shubham Saini | 25

New Delhi

**Who:** Founder, Photographers of India  
**Wheels:** Chooses to rent them  
**Camera kit:** Olympus OMD EM 10 Mark 3, DJI Mavic Pro Drone  
**Lockdown buy:** An iPhone 11 for travel photography



### 5

Dhankar Gompa – and the stunning contrast of the snow-covered mountains at a distance blending with the earthy colours of the mountains in front of us – in Spiti Valley was unplanned. As a trip organiser, health will now take precedence and pit-stops will be fewer. We are currently prioritising smaller groups and destinations that allow us to have an entire place to ourselves. Participants are recommended to get tested prior to departure for our upcoming rides to Tirthan Valley and Lahaul.



3 The pandemic has changed my entire perspective towards travelling – I now prefer solo trips, isolated destinations and road trips on familiar terrain. I've learnt to slow down while exploring new places and to connect with nature. The lockdown got me to use my phone camera more since it helps me focus on the picture's composition rather than the technology. I've always wanted to ride to Meghalai (Theni) in the winter and will be heading there soon.

4 I rode to Mount Abu in July and it was spectacular as we witnessed the onset of the monsoon season. We rode about 225 km and the journey uphill during the rains saw us cocooned in a misty cloud surrounded by green landscapes on the ghats. We left for a trek in the hills soon after we reached and the view has stayed with me since. I feel caged when I am not riding and on this trip especially, I felt like a bird set free. The lockdown has urged me to take more road trips and explore my state rather than travel elsewhere. I will soon be riding across coastal Gujarat.



(Clockwise from left) Traditional meal at The Bangala; Meenakshi Meyappan; the floating breakfast at Anantya Resorts

## #backinbusiness

How some boutique hotels in the South spent lockdown and now, as virtual becomes 'actual'

SUSANNA MYRTLE LAZARUS

When the pandemic hit, Instagram went back to its roots: being a platform where people were sharing the food they had cooked or baked. Meanwhile, the hospitality industry turned to wellness – live sessions with yoga instructors, mental health conversations, work from home tips. But when travel restrictions were laid down indefinitely, they were in dire need of content not just to keep their social media handles active, but also to stay fresh in people's memories. More so for single-owner properties that have carved a niche for themselves with their signature menus, personal attention and Insta-friendly interiors.

At The Bangala in Karaikudi – known for their home-style, traditional Chettinad cuisine – the daily menu is decided based on the produce from their garden. During lockdown, the Facebook page had notes on their single-origin spices and coffee. A video of the charismatic founder Meenakshi Meyappan, 86, discussing Chettiar history with Live History India was a popular addition.

"We're encouraging guests to recreate the dishes from our cooking sessions, and share videos and photos of their efforts. Same for those who own The Bangala Table cookbook," says manager Jacob George, who also handles the property's social media. Going forward, we can expect live cooking sessions with their in-house chefs, but there will be no influencers or self-appointed food historians. "Our USP is the authentic Chettinad experience brought by our staff. We would like to highlight that," he explains.

At Arjun Motha's Aqua Outback in



Tuticorin, apart from kite surfing and kayaking, post-pandemic offers include celebratory dinners and seafood specials. Anantya Resorts near Kanyakumari shared IGTV videos of their signature dishes like karimeen pollichathu and Kerala chicken roast. Always marketed as a photo-op destination, their new floating breakfast, ideated by directors Lakshmy Ashok and Lavanya Ramachandran, is served in the pool villas overlooking Chittar Lake.

At Svama in Thanjavur, general manager K Sridhar says traditional variations of immunity-boosting juices were a big hit, as were live cooking sessions with their chef, Raghu Babu, and nine varieties of sundal for Navratri.

Now that they are open for business again, they will continue sharing food-related posts as they have brought in more interest, adds Sridhar. Even if you choose not to travel and experience these culinary delights in person, tune into the social media platforms to get your fill.

The ballroom at Menezes Braganza House, Chandor • MAKE IT HAPPEN



**Maria Victor**  
Founder-CEO of experiential travel company, Make It Happen

"I have always been fascinated by the quaint villages in the hinterland. There is so much mysticism that surrounds the pre-Portuguese heritage of the old Goan capital of Chandor. Some of the grandest Indo-Portuguese mansions are in Salcete and Quepem. Palacio De Deas in Quepem, which is a mansion that's over 200 years old, was built by the Dean of the Church. Ruben and his wife Celia, who now own the house, curate home-cooked meals fit for a *bhatkar* (landlord). The Figueiredo Mansion in Loutolim was built in 1590, and predates the Taj Mahal. Loutolim is also where satirist Mario Miranda hailed from. His ancestral residence close to the main square is a sight to behold. *Trikal*, one of my favourite Shyam Benegal films, was shot in Loutolim and captured the vibe of a sleepy Goan village. You could also drive down and experience the Buddhist caves of Rivona, the prehistoric rock carvings in Usgalimal, and the Betal Sateri temple in Netravali. I wouldn't leave the South without treating myself to delicious bakes at Jila bakery. Their éclairs and Geneva pastry are to die for!"



Fishermen at Palolem beach

As the beaches of North Goa fill up, the locals are heading South to escape the crowds. Here are some of their best-kept secrets — from farm stays to quiet sea fronts

## The secret susegad life

PRASAD RAMAMURTHY

The sun is peaking. The sea is fairly still. There is a gentle breeze, not too warm, that is causing the coconut palms to stir. Palolem beach, in South Goa, is largely empty. It is a Sunday in high season, but there is no yelling and screaming. No hustlers attempting to sell trinkets and sarongs and DVDs and wood carvings. Just some kids building sand castles. Adults sunbathing. The occasional foot massage offer. Peaceful and quiet. I wonder to myself why I haven't done this before. Why don't more Goa regulars head South more often?

Yes, the North does have a buzzing entertainment scene (and some of the fanciest sports cars bearing number plates from around the country). But the South has the secluded serenity that many of us want. Especially now. To be able to escape our urban existences without wondering if we're jumping from the pan into the fire. So, where should one go? I have always believed the locals have the best intel. So, I asked a few of them:



**Mandira Sharma**

Owner, The Inner Temple, a three-bed villa in the village of Moira, North Goa

"Galigibaga beach is my secret happy place in the South. It is an Olive Ridley turtle nesting site. There's a sweet two-bedroom villa there called Casa Galigibaga that I rent. It is an old Goan home that's been renovated to today's standards. They also organise excursions into the Catigao Wildlife Sanctuary and fishing trips with local fishermen. Even if you catch nothing, you can still return to Luiza's (976585502) for a food coma-inducing meal. She's a proper Goan lady who will feed you the best home-style seafood. Another area I frequent is Chaudi in Canacona. Turiya Villa (turiayavilla.com), an old Goan home refurbished by architect Sandesh Prabhu, is a charming place to stay. You are within earshot of the sea and yet can wake up to birdsong in a garden full of chickoo, coconut, mango and frangipani trees."

## Kunal Shah

Interior designer and co-founder of the furniture and interiors store, Claro

"There is a lot to explore on the culture and heritage front in South Goa. I recommend a visit to the Shaivite shrine in Tambdi Surla. Surrounded by mountains, it is highly atmospheric and best visited early in the morning. Then there's the Safa Masjid in Ponda, which was built by Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur, in the Deccani style. Those interested in art should book a trip that takes in the major Kaavi art sites. Kaavi, indigenous to Goa, was painted on religious shrines and homes of landed gentry in the pre-Portuguese area. Portuguese builders adapted this technique, rechristening it as graffiti, and used it to decorate their religious structures. Lastly, if you're looking for a place to stay that's not on a beach, check into 250-acre Mangal Farm Stay (mangalfarmstay.com). It is a working organic farm where they grow exotic vegetables, over 200 varieties of mangoes, herbs and spices, and ornamental flowers. Plant paddy in the day, eat what they grow (cooked in the local Velip tribal way), and sip on home-brewed feni come evening. It is a whole different take on the *susegad* life."

## Martino Caramia and Jagvir Matharoo

Creative directors of home, fashion and accessories concept store, The Flame Store

"We find the beaches of the South – Patnem, Colomb, Talpona – special. Unlike in the North, the season down South starts in November. Even then, comparatively, they are empty. There's the rustic-chic Turtle Hill (turtlehillgoa.com) in Patnem, the mother of all boutique hotels to stay at. The always fantastic Jaali Boutique and Café on Patnem Beach Road, run by [South African designer] Kate Abramovitz, is where you should shop for resort wear and espressos after (or something stronger, if you please). Lastly, you should book a tour of Cazulo which houses Goa's only feni cellar and offers a tasting session like none other."



## FOOD SPOT

# Delhi by the LAKE

A park, monuments, and food — everything that the Capital loves, has come together in Fabcafé by the Lake



RAHUL VERMA

Think of Delhi, and you picture parks or monuments. And when the parks come with the monuments, there is nothing quite like it! Sunder Nursery in the heart of the city, is a combination of both. Some of you may remember the time when it was merely a large government nursery, and keen gardeners went there for their seasonal saplings and seeds. It is now the most 'happening' place in Delhi, ever since the complex was renovated some years ago. In COVID-19 times, its open-air environment has also been especially welcoming.

Of course, in Delhi these days, if



(Clockwise from left) The outdoor seating at Fabcafé by the Lake, coastal chicken curry, chicken biryani

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and later thought I could have made a full meal out of the salad. I moved to a triangle of a *paratha* (₹120) that had been prepared with various kinds of seeds and wholewheat. It was wafer thin, had the aromatic flavour of ghee and went rather well with chicken *tikka makhni* (₹520) – juicy chicken pieces in a well-flavoured butter-chicken-like sauce. The gravy was not too sweet, nor too tangy, and not heavy either.

The coastal chicken (₹540) consisted of tender pieces of chicken in a tasty, coconut-based sauce. What disappointed me was the chicken biryani (₹610 for 500g). It had been cooked with Basmati rice, and flavoured with desi ghee, saffron and *kewra*, but somehow the rice had not soaked in the flavours of the meat. The dessert – a deliciously soft almond-espresso cake – was vegan (as I learnt later), but I loved it: it was moist, full of nuts, and had a nicely coffee-bitter taste that I enjoyed.

For my tea that evening, I had their baked *samosas* (₹200 for four). We are a *samosa* family, and I love all kinds – with potatoes in their skin, cauliflower florets, minced meat, dal, even kheer. This was baked, so I didn't feel guilty about biting into it. The stuffing – *chana* dal, potatoes, green peas – was delicious, and the crust was seed-laced and nicely crisp. This came with three kinds of chutneys: a green coriander one, a tangy red sauce and a tomato-based one.

The pandemic has taught us that having a meal in the open air and in picturesque surroundings with good food can raise one's spirits. What else can one ask for?

The writer is a seasoned food critic



would have liked some finger food like sandwiches that are ideal for a picnic spot.

What's interesting is that Fabcafé outlets now deliver food (through their website fabcafe.menu and delivery services) and have a pick-up scheme, too. You order and a tray is prepared that you take away and eat at leisure. The food is packed in brown paper bags and comes on a biodegradable tray, along with disposable cutlery, mouth fresheners and tissue. I started with the salad – roasted sweet potato cubes, watermelon, organic salad greens and pumpkin seeds in a zesty citrus dressing (₹369). I love *shakarkandi*,

## Have chalk, will travel

From Agra to Antarctica, these siblings are seeing the world through drawings on their driveway

CHAITALI PATEL

In March, when 14-year-old Macaire Everett began drawing on her driveway in Libertyville, Illinois, little did she think that her artwork would get her brother and her an invitation to *Live with Kelly and Ryan*, one of the most watched talk shows during the pandemic. What started out of boredom has since grown into a project on Instagram that is closely followed by an ever-growing online community (21,000 and counting on [macairesmuse](#)).

Macaire began drawing to entertain her 9-year-old brother, Camden, after the pandemic cancelled their spring travel plans. Chalk sketches of balloons soon gave way to gondola rides in Venice and swimming with the penguins in Antarctica, with Camden stepping into each drawing, infusing them with life and motion. The children, who have never travelled outside the United States, have now gone on a spate of adventures thanks to her fertile imagination.

"I don't think it is something we can get bored of, as there are so many possibilities for where Camden can travel and things he can do," she says, of what was initially supposed to be a 100-day project. "We have many plans and we get requests from all over the world – India, Norway, Japan, Mexico, Scotland," she adds.

The siblings spend a lot of time doing research on what they should create next. "We try and choose sights that are colourful, fun, interesting, and something we haven't done before," she says. Places with great architecture also pique their interest. Through Macaire's drawings, Camden has visited the Taj Mahal and the two hope to feature one of India's other sights soon.

Each drawing – measuring 12x16 feet – takes her four to five hours to finish. "Chalks are really good to draw with and it is easy to go over something that I don't like," she says. Once done, Camden gets into position and



(From top to bottom) Macaire's chalks, a snapshot of an artwork, the artist at work • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

their father captures the scene using a drone. Dad is not only the photographer, but also in charge of power-washing the driveway to give Macaire a clean 'canvas' for her next inspiration. When it rains, they move to the basement of their house.

The duo enjoys interacting with children from across the globe. One of their recent highlights: interacting virtually with sixth graders from Norway. While all the attention is welcome, Macaire says they haven't let it supersede their sense of wonder and adventure. "It's grown on me," she concludes.

# U.K. drugs regulator defends fast pace of vaccine approval

'Expected standards of safety, quality and effectiveness have not been bypassed'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Britain's medicines regulator insisted on Friday its world-first approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine met all safety standards, after officials in Europe and the U.S. queried the rapid process.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on Wednesday announced emergency approval for the vaccine's general use against COVID-19, and the government plans to start rolling it out next week.

Any vaccine "must undergo robust clinical trials in line with international standards", the MHRA said in a statement.

"No vaccine would be authorised for supply in the U.K. unless the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met."

Leading U.S. infectious disease scientist Anthony Fauci on Thursday said the MHRA had "rushed through that approval", but later apologised.

"I have a great deal of confidence in what the U.K. does



Raising hope: Shoppers in London after non-essential shops were allowed to reopen on Wednesday. ■ AP

both scientifically and from a regulator standpoint," Mr. Fauci, who leads the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told the BBC.

"Our process is one that takes more time than it takes in the U.K. And that's just the reality," he said. "I did not mean to imply any sloppiness even though it came out that way."

MHRA chief executive June Raine previously insisted that "no corners had been cut" in vetting the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

With Britain transitioning out of the European Union, the U.K. regulator obtained an exemption from the EU's

medicines agency, which has stressed it prefers to wait for further review and consultations across the 27-nation bloc.

Britain plans to distribute an initial batch of 8,00,000 doses starting next week, prioritising care homes.

#### Vaccine nationalism

The MHRA said it was able to move quickly after launching a rolling review of data provided by Pfizer and BioNTech as human trials proceeded, rather than waiting for all the data to be compiled at the end of the trials.

"COVID-19 vaccines, including this one, are being developed in a coordinated

Biden says he asked Fauci to join his COVID-19 team

WASHINGTON

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday said he had asked the government's top infectious disease specialist Anthony Fauci to remain in his post and join his COVID-19 team after he takes office. Mr. Fauci is a member of the U.S. President Donald Trump administration's Coronavirus Task Force.

way that allows some stages of this process to happen in parallel to condense the time needed, but it does not mean steps and the expected standards of safety, quality and effectiveness have been bypassed," it said.

Approval is expected this month by both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the European Medicines Agency.

Some British Ministers have strayed into anti-EU jingoism after London beat Brussels to approving the Pfizer-BioNTech jab. Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said the U.K. was first because it was "a better country".

In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chu-

# China poses greatest threat to U.S., says intelligence chief

'Beijing wants to dominate the U.S. and the rest of the world'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

China poses the greatest threat to America and the rest of the free world since the Second World War, outgoing National Intelligence Director John Ratcliffe said on Thursday as the Trump administration ramps up anti-Chinese rhetoric to pressure President-elect Joe Biden to be tough on Beijing.

"The intelligence is clear. Beijing intends to dominate the U.S. and the rest of the planet economically, militarily and technologically," Mr. Ratcliffe wrote in an op-ed published on Thursday in *The Wall Street Journal*. "Many of China's major public initiatives and prominent companies offer only a layer of camouflage to the activities of the Chinese Communist Party."

"I call its approach of economic espionage 'rob, replicate and replace,'" Mr. Ratcliffe said. "China robs U.S. companies of their intellectual property, replicates the technology and then replaces the U.S. firms in the global marketplace."

Trump administration officials have been stepping up their anti-China rhetoric for months, especially during



John Ratcliffe

ning dismissed the editorial as a further move to spread "false information, political viruses and lies" in hopes of damaging China's reputation and China-U.S. relations.

#### 'Lies and rumours'

"It offered nothing new but repeated the lies and rumours aimed at smearing China and playing up the China threat by any means," Ms. Hua said at a daily briefing on Friday. "It's another hodgepodge of lies being produced by the relevant departments of the U.S. government for some time."

Trump administration officials have been stepping up their anti-China rhetoric for months, especially during

the presidential campaign as President Donald Trump sought to deflect blame for the spread of the coronavirus. On the campaign trail, Mr. Trump warned that Biden would go easy on China, although the President-elect agrees that China is not abiding by international trade rules, is giving unfair subsidies to Chinese companies and stealing American innovation.

The Trump administration, which once boasted of warm relations with Chinese President Xi Jinping, also has been ramping up sanctions against China over Taiwan, Tibet, trade, Hong Kong and the South China Sea. It has moved against the Chinese telecoms giant Huawei and sought restrictions on Chinese social media applications like TikTok and WeChat.

Mr. Ratcliffe, a Trump loyalist who has been accused of politicising the position, has been the nation's top intelligence official since May. In his op-ed, he did not directly address the transition to a Biden administration. Trump has not acknowledged losing the election.

'U.S., Huawei in talks over official's return'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. government is discussing a deal with Chinese tech giant Huawei that could see its detained finance chief Meng Wanzhou allowed to return to China, the *Wall Street Journal* said.

Ms. Meng was arrested in Vancouver in 2018 on a U.S. warrant and is fighting extradition to the US over charges Huawei violated American sanctions on Iran, in a case that has plunged Canada-China relations into crisis.

Under a "deferred prosecution agreement" with the U.S. Department of Justice, Ms. Meng would admit to some of the fraud and conspiracy charges related to the alleged violations by Huawei, the *Journal* said on Thursday.

Both sides are hoping to reach agreement before the end of the administration of President Donald Trump, although Meng is reluctant to agree on a deal that would see her admit wrongdoing, the *Journal* said, citing sources.

Huawei and the Department of Justice both declined to comment when reached by AFP.

# U.S. sues FB for favouring immigrants

Americans faced discrimination as jobs were channelled to H1-B visa holders: DOJ

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SAN FRANCISCO

The Trump administration on Thursday sued Facebook, accusing it of discriminating against American workers by favoring immigrant applicants for thousands of high-paying jobs.

The Department of Justice's lawsuit opens a new front in the administration's push against tech companies – and in its clampdown on immigration – as President Donald Trump enters his final weeks in office.

The suit concerns more than 2,600 positions with an average salary of some \$156,000, offered from January 2018 to September 2019.

"Facebook engaged in intentional and widespread



violations of the law, by setting aside positions for temporary visa holders instead of considering interested and qualified US workers," assistant attorney general Eric Dreiband, of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, said in a statement outlining the department's allegations.

The internet giant reserved positions for candidates with H1-B "skilled worker" visas or other temporary work visas, the department said.

Facebook "channelled" jobs to visa holders by avoiding advertising on its careers website, accepting only physically mailed applications for some posts, or refusing to consider U.S. workers at all, according to the suit.

The unusual move to file a lawsuit – with the Justice Department pivoting suddenly away from simply discussing their concerns with Facebook – could be seen as a rush to hit the courts before Mr. Trump leaves the White House in January.

The California-based social network planned to continue cooperating with the department as the case plays out.

#### Restrictions rejected

The lawsuit was filed just two days after a U.S. federal judge blocked rule changes ordered by Mr. Trump that made it harder for people outside the country to get skilled-worker visas.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Bay Area Council in Facebook's home state of California and others had sued the Department of Homeland Security, arguing that the changes rushed new restrictions through without a proper public review process.

# West Asian nations, U.S. signal progress to resolve Qatar crisis

After 'fruitful' talks, all are keen for a final deal: Kuwait Minister

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DOHA

Rivals Qatar and Saudi Arabia, along with neutral Oman and Kuwait, said on Friday progress had been made towards resolving the Gulf crisis that has pitted a regional group of nations against Doha.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he hoped Washington could broker a resolution but cautioned he was "out of the prediction business in terms of timing", signalling a breakthrough may not be imminent.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nasser al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, whose

country is leading mediation efforts, said all sides had expressed keenness for a "final agreement" during recent "fruitful discussions", which have included the U.S.

Qatar and Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministers, along with Oman's Foreign Ministry, tweeted similarly worded statements thanking Kuwait and the U.S. for their efforts to resolve the spat – but gave no further details.

Saudi Arabia led its allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to cut ties with Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of backing radical Islamist movements and Iran, charges Doha denies.

They subsequently forced out Qataris residing in their countries, closed their airspace to Qatari aircraft and sealed their borders and ports, separating some mixed-nationality families.

"Right now, there are some movements that we hope will put an end (to) this crisis," Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said at the Mediterranean Dialogues forum in Rome, without giving details.

Later at the same event, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud said a "final agreement looks in reach".

# Trump raised \$207.5 mn since election

Donations keep coming in for the President's legal challenge to the poll result

SHANE GOLDMACHER

Even in defeat, President Donald Trump continued to raise money at some of the fastest rates of the year, pulling in \$207.5 million in the month since Election Day along with the Republican Party as he made baseless claims of voter fraud to undermine the legitimacy of the election.

Mr. Trump's campaign apparatus has continued to aggressively solicit donations under the guise of supporting his various legal challenges to the election of Joe Biden, but as of now 75% of donations goes to a new political action committee that Mr. Trump formed in mid-



Donald Trump

November, up to the PAC's legal limit of \$5,000. The other 25% goes to the Republican National Committee. Only if a donor gives more than \$6,000 do any funds go to Mr. Trump's formal "recount" account.

Mr. Trump, who has not formally conceded the 2020 race but has begun talking

about running again in 2024, has repeatedly challenged the presidential results in court with virtually no success.

In his statement, Mr. Stepien added the money "also positions President Trump to continue leading the fight to clean up our corrupt elections process in so many areas around the country, and to build on gains from the 2020 elections..."

Mr. Trump's next political steps are much discussed in both parties, and his non-stop fundraising in the month after his loss at the polls ensures his new political operation will continue to be well-financed. NY TIMES

# Erdogan hopes France will 'get rid of Macron'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ISTANBUL

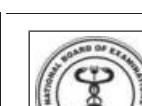
Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday he hopes France will "get rid" of his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron as soon as possible, in the latest salvo in an escalating war of words between the two leaders.

"Macron is a trouble for France. With Macron, France is passing through a very, very dangerous period. I hope that France will get rid of Macron trouble as soon as possible," Mr. Erdogan said.

Turkey and France are embroiled in a series of disputes, from tensions in the eastern Mediterranean to the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region.

And the spat has risen to new levels in recent months as France has moved to crack down on Islamist extremism after several attacks on French soil. Mr. Erdogan has repeatedly suggested that Mr. Macron get "mental checks" and urged the Turkish people to boycott French-labelled products.

On Friday, Mr. Erdogan said France should get rid of Mr. Macron "otherwise they will not be able to get rid of yellow vests," referring to the protest movement that began in France in 2018. "Yellow vests could later turn into red vests," Mr. Erdogan said, without elaborating.



NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATIONS  
(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)  
NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar,  
New Delhi – 110029

Tender Notice – 3rd Call

National Board of Examinations (NBE) invites tender under two bid system from eligible firms for conduct of Hybrid Examination (Offline) and Digital Evaluation of Answer scripts for various examinations. Last date for Bid Submission is **28/12/2020 12 noon**. Please refer to the Tender Documents available at NBE website <https://natboard.edu.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in>

Government of Odisha - "e" procurement Notice TENDER CALL NOTICE BID IDENTIFICATION NO. SENH(SBP) /03/ 2020-21					
Pack age No.	Name of the work	Estimated Cost in Rupees	Period of completion in calendar month	Date/Time for receipt of bids	Name and address of the Officer inviting Tender
1.	S/R to NH-26 such as Providing C.C Paver Block Toe Wall from 76/030 to 77/720 km and Drain from 75/277 to 76/145 km of NH-26 of Bolangir Town under State Plan for the year 2020-21.	1,28,19,259.00	3 (three) Calendar months	10.00 A.M. of Dl.10.12.2020 to 5.00 P.M. of 23.12.2020	Superintending Engineer, N.H. Circle, Sambalpur
2.	S/R to NH-26 such as Providing C.C Paver block from 75/400 km and Dl. 77/720 km to 78/830 km in Bolangir Town for the year 2020-21	2,58,05,083.00	3 (three) Calendar months	10.00 A.M. of Dl.10.12.2020 to 5.00 P.M. of 23.12.2020	Superintending Engineer, N.H. Circle, Sambalpur

Further details can be seen from the "e" procurement website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

b-23:

Sd/-  
Superintending Engineer,  
N.H. Circle, Sambalpur.

OPR-34007/11/0005/2021

The nuclear reactor is expected to provide clean energy



Tapping energy: China's HL-2M

## MARKET WATCH

	04-12-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	45080	1.00
US Dollar	73.80	0.17
Gold	48813	-0.15
Brent oil	49.05	1.59

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	453.70	17.90
Asian Paints	2438.75	27.35
Axist Bank	614.50	11.80
Bajaj Auto	3311.40	17.00
Bajaj Finserv	9052.45	-61.60
Bajaj Finance	4975.35	7.90
Bharti Airtel	493.75	13.85
BPCL	392.30	-1.60
Britannia Ind	3648.20	12.25
Cipla	766.95	4.80
Coal India	133.30	-0.15
Divis Lab	3711.95	19.60
Dr Reddys Lab	4908.55	-14.50
Eicher Motors	2553.50	4.00
GAIL (India)	119.80	1.55
Grasim Ind	931.50	21.45
HCL Tech	858.50	-3.70
HDFC	2245.90	-8.05
HDFC Bank	1385.60	8.40
HDFC Life	643.25	-4.70
Hero MotoCorp	3180.45	40.60
Hindalco	252.70	10.70
Hind Unilever	2184.20	56.45
ICICI Bank	502.05	20.20
IndusInd Bank	913.65	17.40
Infosys	1134.65	8.20
Indian Oil Corp	90.40	0.50
ITC	198.20	2.00
JSW Steel	370.40	-0.45
Kotak Bank	1846.25	25.25
L&T	1149.50	24.35
M&M	750.55	4.70
Maruti Suzuki	7803.15	64.05
Nestle India Ltd.	17828.70	336.55
NTPC	98.55	0.00
ONGC	89.85	1.15
PowerGrid Corp	194.35	0.90
Reliance Ind	1946.45	-17.30
SBI Life	863.00	4.85
State Bank	263.50	7.20
Shree Cement	24912.85	7.70
Sun Pharma	569.05	20.80
Tata Motors	184.15	-0.70
Tata Steel	622.70	1.80
TCS	2727.55	18.10
Tech Mahindra	923.10	7.95
Titan	1437.15	18.65
UltraTech Cement	5091.40	197.90
UPL	455.70	0.95
Wipro	360.80	0.50

## EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 04

CURRENCY TT BUY TT SELL

US Dollar 73.60 73.92

Euro 89.59 89.99

British Pound 99.11 99.55

Japanese Yen (100) 70.78 71.09

Chinese Yuan 11.27 11.32

Swiss Franc 82.64 83.00

Singapore Dollar 55.24 55.48

Canadian Dollar 57.22 57.49

Malaysian Ringgit 18.11 18.21

Australian Dollar 54.62 54.91

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Infosys co-founder invests in MobiKwik

NEW DELHI  
Fintech firm MobiKwik on Friday said it had raised ₹52 crore in funding, led by Hindustan Media Ventures, the investment arm of HT Group. The funding round also saw participation from Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishnan's family office, Pratithi, as per a statement. The fresh capital will be used for growth in all key business segments of the company, it added. PTI

## Payments firm Paysharp offers flat-tariff plan

CHENNAI  
B2B payments provider Paysharp is planning to expand its offering by providing enterprise-grade support so that businesses need not hold back on digitalisation for lack of a seamless payment solution. On offer now is a ₹12 flat charge for all transactions beyond ₹2,000, it said, adding this was less costly for users than paying a percentage per transaction.

## FTMF to seek unitholder nod for scheme closures

NEW DELHI  
Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund has said it would seek the consent of unitholders shortly for winding up of six debt schemes. It also assured investors that voting for an orderly winding up did not mean a lengthy wait for return of funds. The Supreme Court had on Thursday asked the fund house to initiate steps within a week to call a meeting of unitholders to seek consent for closure of the six MF schemes. PTI

## Burger King India IPO subscribed 156 times

NEW DELHI  
Investors seem to have fully savoured the Burger King India IPO, with the share sale getting subscribed by a massive 156.65 times on the last day of the offer on Friday. The portion meant for qualified institutional buyers was subscribed 86.64 times, non-institutional investors 354.11 and retail investors 68.15 times. The ₹810-crore IPO included a fresh issue of shares worth ₹450 crore. PTI

## RBI tightens oversight of NBFCs, UCBs

Regulator strengthens audit norms for urban cooperative banks, non-bank lenders in moves to bolster financial stability

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced the introduction of risk-based internal audit norms for large urban cooperative banks (UCBs) and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), as part of measures aimed at improving governance and assurance functions at supervised entities.

The RBI also moved to harmonise the guidelines on appointment of statutory auditors for commercial banks, UCBs and NBFCs in order to improve the quality of financial reporting.

Observing that the growing significance of NBFCs and their interlinkages with different parts of the financial system had made it imperative to enhance the sector's resilience, RBI

Governor Shaktikanta Das said, it had been decided to put in place transparent criteria for the declaration of dividends by different categories of NBFCs.

## Systemic risk potential

"Further, the current regulatory regime for the NBFC sector, built on the principle of proportionality, warrants a review," Mr. Das said. "It is felt that a scale-based regulatory approach linked to the systemic risk contribution of NBFCs could be the way forward," he added.

The RBI would remain strongly committed to preserving the stability of the financial sector and would do whatever was necessary, the Governor asserted.

"While we are constantly focussed on strengthening the regulations and deepening



**Securing the future:** Banks need to invest more in IT systems to maintain public confidence, Mr. Das said. ■ PAUL NORONHA

our supervision, financial sector entities like banks and NBFCs should also give highest priority to quality of governance, risk management

and internal controls," Mr. Das stressed. "They are the first line of defence in matters relating to financial sector stability," he said.

## 'Accommodative' stance to help revive durable growth: bankers

'Puzzling that there are no steps to absorb liquidity'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The decision of the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee to continue with its accommodative stance this fiscal as well as the next would ensure sustainable economic growth, bankers said.

"The RBI policy of maintaining the status quo was expected but the continued forward guidance of an extended accommodative stance will continue to serve the markets well," State Bank of India Chairman Dinesh Khara said.

IBA Chairman and Union Bank of India's MD and CEO Raj Kiran Rai G said that the RBI had clearly indicated



continuation of accommodative stance during the current financial year and into the next financial year to revive growth on a durable basis while containing inflation in the prescribed range.

"This gives clarity to the market on the rate front.

Evolving macroeconomic dynamics augur well for maintaining the status quo on policy rates," he said.

Punjab National Bank's MD and CEO CH.S.S Mallikarjuna Rao said the elevation in consumer prices had been acknowledged by the RBI as a sign of economic activity getting normalised, which could lead to increase in demand.

HDFC Bank's Chief Economist Abheek Barua said the absence of any major liquidity absorption measures in the midst of a prolonged inflationary episode and the upward revision of both growth and inflation forecasts were somewhat puzzling.

Petrol price was raised by 20 paise per litre and diesel by 23 paise in line with the firming international oil rates, according to a notification from oil marketing companies.

Petrol price in Delhi rose to ₹82.86 per litre from ₹82.66. Diesel rate went up from ₹72.84 to ₹73.07. In 15 days, the petrol price has gone up by ₹1.8 per litre and diesel rate has risen by ₹2.61. Rates vary from State to State depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

## Diesel rises, petrol nears ₹83 in Delhi

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Diesel price on Friday crossed ₹73-a-litre in Delhi and the petrol rate neared ₹83 after the 12th increase in the last fortnight.

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With a view to deepening financial markets, regional rural banks would be allowed to access the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) and marginal standing facility (MSF) of the RBI, as also the call/notice money market.

## Secure digital payments

To significantly improve the ecosystem of digital payment channels with robust security and convenience for users, the RBI has proposed to issue Digital Payment Security Controls directions for the regulated entities.

These directions will

contain requirements for robust governance, implementation and monitoring of certain minimum standards on common security controls for channels like Internet and mobile banking and card payments," he said. Justify-

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## TV PICKS

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m. onwards;  
**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. onwards

## IN BRIEF



Narsingh clears COVID-19 test, set for WC

NEW DELHI  
Wrestler Narsingh Yadav's participation in the upcoming World Cup in Serbia was confirmed on Friday after he returned a negative test for the coronavirus. Making a comeback after serving a four-year doping ban, Narsingh had replaced Jitender Kinha in the 74kg in the Indian squad but was rendered doubtful for the competition after testing positive for the virus. PTI



Davis agrees to \$190 million deal with Lakers

LOS ANGELES  
Anthony Davis has agreed to a five-year contract worth \$190 million with the Los Angeles Lakers just a day after LeBron James agreed to a two-year extension. The 27-year-old Davis spent seven seasons with the New Orleans Pelicans before being traded to Los Angeles in June 2019 for three players. AFP

## Indian pair bows out

CAIRO  
The Indian pair of Anirudh Chandrasekar and Manish Surendran lost 2-6, 6-2, [10-8] to Hady Habib of Lebanon and Jose Fco. Vidal Azorin of Spain in the quarterfinals of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament. **The results:** \$15,000 ITF men: Doubles (quarterfinals): Hady Habib (Lbn) & Jose Fco. Vidal Azorin (Esp) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Manish Kumar 2-6, 6-3, [10-8].



Patrick Vieira sacked as Nice coach

MARSEILLE  
Patrick Vieira was sacked as coach by French Ligue 1 club Nice on Friday, paying the price for five consecutive defeats, the club said. A 1998 World Cup winner, Vieira had his contract terminated the day after his team lost 3-2 at home to Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa League. AFP

## Insurance for differently-abled cricketers

KOLKATA  
The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) has given a one-year insurance cover to 30 differently-abled cricketers from three categories – hearing impaired, visually challenged and physically challenged. These players were greeted on the occasion of the World Disability Day on Thursday.

## Marquez undergoes another surgery on arm

MADRID  
Six-time MotoGP World champion Marc Marquez, who has not raced since fracturing his arm at the start of the 2020 season, underwent another operation on his right arm on Thursday. The 27-year-old Catalan rider had already undergone surgery on three occasions since his crash four laps from the end of the season-opening race in Jerez in July. AFP

## Pakistan cricket team's training ban stays

WELLINGTON  
New Zealand health officials refused to lift a ban on Pakistan's coronavirus-hit cricket team training during quarantine on Friday after the touring party's number of infections climbed to 10. The decision means that the players will have only 10 days to prepare for their first tour match, a Twenty20 international in Auckland on December 18. AFP

# Kane Williamson hits a Test-high 251

It is the Kiwi skipper's third double-century as the host piles it on against the West Indies

## WINDIES IN NZ

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
HAMILTON

Captain Kane Williamson scored 251, his third double century and highest Test score, before making an assertive declaration at 519 for seven, on the second day of the first Test against the West Indies, here on Friday.

Williamson waited for all-rounder Kyle Jamieson to post his maiden half century before declaring with about 26 overs left in the day's play.

At stumps, West Indies, hit by minor injuries to batsman Darren Bravo and wicketkeeper Shane Dowrich, was 49 without loss.

**Dogged batting**  
Kraigg Braithwaite (20) and John Campbell (22) batted doggedly through the late afternoon to ensure the tourists went to stumps without losing a wicket.

The second day was highlighted by Williamson's superb innings. He batted al-

most 10 1/2 hours, struck 34 fours and two sixes to eclipse his previous highest score of 242 against Sri Lanka at Wellington in 2015.

Williamson is only the third New Zealander after former skippers Brendon McCullum and Stephen Fleming to score three double centuries in Tests.

He resumed Friday at 97 not out and reached his 22nd century from 224 balls.

New Zealand's commanding total mounted as he passed 150, then 200

from 369 deliveries.

## Reprise

Williamson had a lucky break on 221 when he was caught behind by stand-in wicketkeeper Shamarr Brooks from Roach's bowling.

The dismissal was annulled when the television umpire found Roach had over-stepped. Jamieson, whose previous highest score was 49, reached his half century from 62 balls with five fours and two sixes.

## SCOREBOARD

**New Zealand – 1st innings:** T. Latham b Roach 86, W. Young b Gabriel 5, K. Williamson c Chase b Joseph 251, R. Taylor c Brooks b Gabriel 38, H. Nicholls c Holder b Roach 7, T. Blundell lbw b Gabriel 14, D. Mitchell c Holder b Roach 9, K. Jamieson (not out) 51, T. Southee (not out) 11; Extras (b-11, lb-23, nb-12, w-1); Total (for seven wkt., decl. in 145 overs): 519.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-14, 2-168, 3-251, 4-281, 5-353, 6-409, 7-503.

**West Indies bowling:** Roach 30-7-114-3, Gabriel, 25-6-89-3, Holder 31-12-60-0, Joseph 31-8-99-1, Chase 25-0-109-0, Brathwaite 3-0-14-0

**West Indies – 1st innings:** K. Brathwaite (batting) 20, J. Campbell (batting) 22; Extras (b-4, lb-1, w-1, nb-1); Total (for no loss in 26 overs): 49.

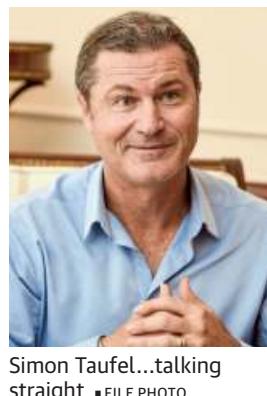
**New Zealand bowling:** Southee 9-3-20-0, Boult 5-1-6-0, Jamieson 6-2-7-0, Wagner 6-1-11-0.



Superb knock: Kane Williamson was all class as he dominated the second day of the Test. ■ AP

## Not practical to ban switch-hit: Taufel

On-field umpire already burdened

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SYDNEY

Former ICC Elite Panel umpire Simon Taufel feels it will not be practical to outlaw the switch-hit shot, adding that it's "impossible" for the on-field umpire to monitor the batsman for change in grip or stance.

Earlier this week, former Australian skipper Ian Chappell had suggested the ICC to ban switch-hitting saying the shot is "blatantly unfair" to the bowlers and the fielding team. A switch hit involves a batsman changing the order of his hands (from left-handed to right handed grip or vice-versa) after the bowler has already started on his run-up.

"The game of cricket is not a science, it's an art. We're not perfect," the former ICC Elite Panel umpire was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald*. "When we say that we want to ban that type of shot how does the umpire officiate to that? It's impossible," Taufel added.

The Australian, who umpired 74 Test matches and

## First S. Africa-England ODI postponed

## COVID IMPACT

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
CAPE TOWN

The first One-Day International between South Africa and England, scheduled to be played at Newlands here on Friday, has been postponed after a South African player tested positive for COVID-19.

Cricket South Africa made the announcement just over an hour before the day-night match was due to start.

According to a statement from Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board, the unidentified South African player's positive status emerged from tests conducted after his team's final scheduled practice on Thursday.

The first match will now be a day-game in Paarl on Sunday, when the second match was scheduled. The second match will be a day-night game at Newlands on Monday, with the series concluding as scheduled with another day-night match at Newlands on Wednesday.

## Tottenham through despite draw

Arsenal welcomes back fans in routine win over Rapid Vienna

## EUROPA LEAGUE

## PARIS

Premier League leader Tottenham struggled to gain the draw it needed in Linz, finishing 3-3 on Thursday thanks to two penalties and securing a place in the knock-out rounds of the Europa League.

The result in Austria ensured that Antwerp – which beat Ludogorets 3-1 – will also advance from Group J with only first place in the group at stake when they meet next week.

Elsewhere in the early games, Braga, AC Milan, Lille, Villarreal, Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade ensured their places in the last 32 with one round of group games still to play.

They join Leicester, Arsenal, Hoffenheim and Roma who had already qualified.

For the first time in 270 days, fans were back inside a Premier League ground as Arsenal welcomed 2,000 supporters into the Emirates for its routine 4-1 win over Rapid Vienna.

The sparse crowd in a 60,000 capacity stadium, were well distanced between

two stands and in high spirits despite the Gunners' poor form of late in the English top-flight.

Despite Arsenal having already booked its place in the knockout stages, demand from fans to be one of the lucky few back through the gates crashed the club website on Saturday morning.

In Group H, AC Milan fell two goals behind at home to eliminated Celtic but rallied to win 4-2 and advance.

Milan is second in the group, one point behind Lille which also came from behind to win at home.

Baumgartlinger 51).

**Group F:** AZ Alkmaar 1 (Martins Indi 54) drew with Napoli 1 (Mertens 6); Real Sociedad 2 (Bautista 69, Monreal 79) drew with Rijeka 2 (Velkoski 38, Lencar 73).

**Group G:** Zorya Luhansk 1 (Sayyadmanesh 84) bt Leicester City 0.

**Group H:** AC Milan 4 (Calhanoglu 24, Castillejo 26, Hauge 50, Diaz 82) bt Celtic 2 (Rogic 7, Edouard 14).

**Group I:** Sivasspor 0 lost to Villarreal 1 (Chukwueze 75).

**Group J:** LASK Linz 3 (Michorl 42, Eggstein 84, Karamoko 90+3) drew with Tottenham Hotspur 3 (Bale 45+2+pen, Son 56, Alli 87+pen).



Slotting in: Dele Alli scores Tottenham Hotspur's third goal from the spot. ■ GETTY IMAGES

## DELHI ROUND-UP

**Sahgal CC in quarterfinals**  
Fine half-centuries by Sultan Ansari and Ayush Badoni helped Sahgal Cricket Club beat Ravi Brothers by five wickets and enter the quarterfinals of the 30th all-India Om Nath Sood memorial cricket tournament.

**The scores:** Ravi Brothers 212/8 in 40 overs (Ayush Doseja 62, Shivam Tripathi 49, Faizan Alam 3/40) lost to Sahgal 213/5 in 32.2 overs (Sultan Ansari 79, Ayush Badoni 68, Diwiz Prakash 3/36).

**One-run win for TN Memorial**  
Anchit Yadav's 98 set up a close one-run victory for TN Memorial (TNM) against Gyanti Academy in the Turf Youth Cup under-19 cricket tournament.

**Pragam, Harshit excel**  
Pragam Sharma's unbeaten 106 and left-arm spinner Harshit Chaudhary's five-

wicket haul saw Hari Singh Academy (HSA) beat Delhi Development Authority (DDA) by 18 runs in the B.R. Sharma memorial cricket tournament.

**The scores:** HSA 218/5 in 40 overs (Pragam Sharma 106 n.o., Deepanshu Chaudhary 46) bt DDA 200/7 in 40 overs (Aryan Kumar 91, Akshat Dadu 51, Harshit Chaudhary 5/21).

**Prashant, Mrigank sizzle**  
A quickfire 78-ball unbeaten 101 by Prashant Kumar, aided by Mrigank Pathak's 91 and Parivesh Kumar's 3/30 helped Friends Club thump Harry Academy by 139 runs in the Ghevra Cup cricket tournament.

**The scores:** Friends Club 265/2 in 35 overs (Prashant Kumar 101 n.o., Mrigank Pathak 91, Mayank

Kumar 43) bt Harry Academy 126 in 22.2 overs (Gagan Sodhi 33, Parivesh Kumar 30, Raghav Kumar 2/4).

## Bal Bhawan Academy triumphs

A match-winning half-century by Arash Malhotra and three wickets by Sampoorn Tripathi helped Bal Bhawan Academy defeat Udaybhan Academy by two wickets and win the third Vicky Bandrey memorial under-16 cricket tournament.

**The scores:** Udaybhan Academy 142 in 39.1 overs (Shivani Bhandari 60, Sampoorn Tripathi 3/25) lost to BBA 143/8 in 39.3 overs (Arash Malhotra 53, Badal Biswal 3/16).

**Avinash, Manan scalp four each**  
Avinash Thapa and Manan Bhardwaj took four wickets apiece and Rohit Sharma

slammed an unbeaten 12-ball 31 as Aarush Sports thrashed L.B. Shastri by nine wickets in the first Tripathi Premier League.

## The scores:

L.B. Shastri 59 in 25.4 overs (Avinash Thapa 4/13, Manan Bhardwaj 4/5) lost to Aarush Sports 63/1 in 4.4 overs (Rohit Sharma 31 n.o.).

## Rohit claims three

Rohit Chauhan's three-wicket haul helped Uday Bhan Cricket Academy (UBCA) beat Telefunken Club by 33 runs in the Bhola Singh memorial tournament.

**The scores:** UBCA 184 in 38 overs (Amanpreet Singh 38, Vansh Bedi 33, Sahil Wilson 5/31) bt Telefunken Club 151 in 32.2 overs (Yash Dabas 50, Rohit Chauhan 3/29).

## TENNIS ROUND-UP

**Shruti bags a double**  
GURUGRAM: Shruti Ahlawat won a double crown in the AITA Championship series junior tennis tournament at the Pradhan Tennis Academy, Sector-62, here on Friday.

The 14-year-old Shruti beat Rachita Talwar 6-4, 6-0 for the singles title. She combined with Laxmi Gowda for the doubles title.

**Digvijay Pratap Singh triumphs**  
AGRA: Digvijay Pratap Singh

beat Boopathy Sakthivel 6-3, 7-5 in the final of ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament on Friday. In the semifinals, Fardeean will play Sandesh Dattaray. The other last-four clash will be between top seed Paras Dahiya and National under-16 champion Karan Singh.

**The results (quarterfinals):** Paras Dahiya bt Prashant Kumar 6-4, 6-1; Karan Singh bt Ricky Choudhary 6-3, 6-1; Sandesh Dattaray bt Yoge Panwar 6-1, 7-6(9); Fardeean Qamar bt Ajay Malik 6-2, 6-1.

**Fardeean knocks out second seed Ajay**  
SONEPAT: Fardeean Qamar knocked out second seed Ajay Malik 6-2, 6-1 in the quarterfinals of the

## Radhakrishnan is new National chief coach

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT