



UDF, BJP move SEC against Kerala CM's free vaccine announcement
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Two terrorists killed, another held after Poonch encounter
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Four stabbed and one shot as violence erupts at pro-Trump rallies
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Shami strikes twice but Australia-A hangs on for a draw
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NEARBY



Delhi CM to observe day-long fast today

NEW DELHI
Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said he will fast on Monday in solidarity with the protesting farmers across the country. He hit out at BJP leaders for defaming the farmers by calling them anti-national. The CM also appealed to all supporters who cannot be at the borders with the farmers to observe a day of fast.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

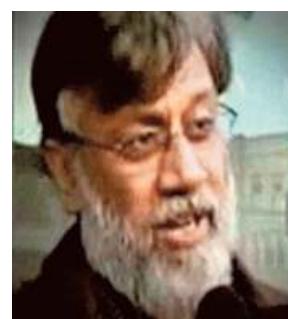
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EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 5

U.S. court rejects bail plea filed by Tahawwur Rana

Mumbai attack accused poses significant risk of flight, it says

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI



A U.S. court has rejected the bail plea of Tahawwur Rana, key accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack lodged in a Los Angeles prison, who awaits extradition to India.

Rana had sought release from prison till the extradition hearing is finalised, citing COVID-19 re-infection. The next extradition hearing is in February 2021.

He offered that his location could be monitored through an ankle bracelet with GPS and his daughter, pursuing online education, or his mother-in-law could be made custodians to monitor his movement at home.

Rana is wanted by the National Investigation

police following the extradition request from India.

In his second bail plea, Rana invoked the fourth amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Dismissing his plea, U.S. magistrate Jacqueline Chooljian said in an order dated December 10 that Rana continued to pose a "significant risk of flight".

"Notwithstanding its consideration of such information, the court ultimately concluded that even a location monitoring condition combined with the proposed bond/other conditions would not negate the significant risk of flight. The court's view has not changed," the order, accessed by *The Hindu*, said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Agency (NIA) in the 2008 terror attack case that claimed the lives of 166 people.

He was released from prison in June after an Illinois court commuted his jail sentence (scheduled to get over in September 2021) as he tested positive for COVID-19. He was provisionally arrested by the federal

Stopped from going to Delhi, farmers block Jaipur highway

Leaders to hold hunger strikes at various sites today

ASHOK KUMAR
REWARI



View at dawn: More farmers joining the ongoing protest at the Singhu border in Delhi on Saturday morning. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

With the Delhi-Jaipur Highway also now blocked, all highways leading to the national capital from Haryana now have farmers on

dharna seeking a repeal of the three recent farm laws.

Later, Gurman Singh of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Chaduni), at a press conference at the Singhu border, announced that leaders of all

the agitating groups would sit on a day-long hunger strike on Monday wherever they were protesting.

Mr. Singh said some farmer groups had announced their support to the new laws, but they were not associated with them.

"They are hand-in-glove with the government in an attempt to sabotage our

movement. We are against the laws and will continue to protest until these laws are repealed," he said.

Addressing the farmers, Rakesh Tikait of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Tikait) said farmers should stay alert and ensure that no unwanted or wrong elements got involved in the agitation. "If the Central government wants to talk and there's any proposal for talks, we will constitute a committee, which will take a decision on it," he said.

Addressing the demonstrators on the Haryana-Rajasthan border, Ms. Patkar asked the government why minimum support price could not be guaranteed under the law.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 2, 4 & 9

Punjab DIG resigns, backs farmers' stir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Lakhminder Singh Jakhar has tendered his resignation in solidarity with the farmers protesting against the new farm laws.

Mr. Jakhar, 56, tendered his resignation on Saturday. In May, the senior officer was put under suspension over corruption charges. He was reinstated about two months ago.

Mr. Jakhar, who comes from a farmer family, told reporters on Sunday that he owes everything to the farmers and needs to stand behind them in their hour of need.

Fruits of labour



Bearing the load: Tiwa tribal women carrying 'maiphurs' (paddy bags) from their 'jhum' fields in Umsowai village in Karbi Anglong district of Assam on Sunday. Harvested paddy is stored in these baskets for future use. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

AAP accuses BJP leaders of damaging CCTV cameras near Kejriwal's house

Our women councillors were worried about their privacy: BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged that BJP leaders holding a demonstration outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence on Sunday evening damaged CCTV cameras at the spot.

Refuting the allegation, the BJP said its women members had protested against the installation of the cameras to protect their privacy, and added that the CCTVs were newly installed.

AAP tweeted a video of the alleged incident that led to a spat between the two parties on social media.

Delhi BJP leaders along

with councillors from the three municipalities have been sitting outside the CM's residence at Flagstaff Road in Civil Lines for the past one week demanding payment of ₹13,000 crore in "dues" to the municipal corporations.

"We are complaining against the party to the police and also to the Women's Commission," said the BJP.

DCP (North) Anto Alphonse said, "Some new CCTVs were being installed outside the wall of the CM's residence to cover Flagstaff Road. Some of the BJP councillors objected to it. There were some arguments. Now, both sides have agreed and CCTVs are being installed."

Mr. Kumar said that when the women councillors raised questions about their privacy and requested that the cameras not be installed on their side, their objections were not heeded.

"We are complaining against the party to the police and also to the Women's Commission," said the BJP.

DCP (North) Anto Alphonse said, "Some new CCTVs were being installed outside the wall of the CM's residence to cover Flagstaff Road. Some of the BJP councillors objected to it. There were some arguments. Now, both sides have agreed and CCTVs are being installed."

Now, explore Kaziranga on boats and bicycles

Only jumbo, jeep safaris in core habitat



Unique sights: Tourists can take a boat ride on the Brahmaputra to spot river dolphins. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Elephants and jeeps are no longer the only modes of regulated transport to call on the rhino in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, billed as the best-conserved home of the one-horned animal.

The park can now be explored by boats while bicycle tracks are also being finalised. One can go trekking too. But the new activities are beyond the 1,302 sq km Kaziranga's core area of 482 sq km.

"Our priority is conservation with some amount of commercialisation. At the same time, we want domination of the areas added to the tiger reserve and better monitoring by way of utilising the fringe areas for tourists," Kaziranga Field Director P. Sivakumar said.

In November, the park authorities launched a boat safari at Bhomeraguri after the addition of 3,053 hect-

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In the dead of winter, protest site comes alive

Meticulous planning and cohesion have ensured that farmers' protest has remained peaceful despite the war of nerves; agitators continue to gather at borders

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Amid strict foot patrols and discussions on parallels between their current state, the struggle of Sikh Gurus and what revolutionaries from an undivided Punjab of the past endured, the farmers' agitation at the Singhu border gathered more steam on a cold December night here over the weekend.

Thousands, predominantly from Punjab, were understood to have joined overnight. Police estimates put the gathering at around 25,000 on Sunday morning, a spike from approximately 20,000 to 21,000 on Saturday. Saddled on tractors, lining up behind one another for kilometres along a road connecting Narela to National Highway 1, they proudly recounted their journey that took days through fields, dirt and un-metalled roads to reach the site.

Unflinching spirit

As both fog and the temperature descended, the din of sloganeering protesters subsided. Some rearranged the stubble stuffed below the mattresses and others adjust-



Farmers camping at the Singhu border on Sunday; food being prepared to feed thousands of farmers near the protest site. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

ed their turbans before lying down in quilts above carpets on the road.

"We have groups of young men patrolling the perimeter of the site from late evening till dawn. We don't want any undesirable element to enter the area, whether it is criminals or intelligence agencies to provoke or try to bring any kind of shame to the protest," said Zorawar Pal Singh from Amritsar.

As the area got increasingly out-of-bounds for "outsid-

ers" including journalists, Jaswant Singh, a farmer from Gurdaspur, was chatting with companions and preparing for the night.

"Some people are trying to portray this protest as an anti-government one, but it is not. No government is good or bad; it is the laws that it enacts and enforces which make it good or bad. My explanation about what is happening is simple: imagine something as essential as water," he said.

He then struck a powerful analogy. "What if I forced you to drink water when you are not thirsty? Either you will get wet or I, or both of us. It's the same with these laws. We don't need them no matter how much the government thinks we do," he also said.

Discipline, brotherhood
A few metres from police barricades near the toll plaza, Dr. Baljinder Singh, a retired commerce professor



A large pot of food being cooked over an open fire at the protest site. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

from Amritsar's Khalsa College, was sitting on a carpet delineating a makeshift community bed below a single layer of cloth on the road.

From a farming background and among the several speakers who had addressed the gathering earlier in the day, Mr. Singh sought to underline what he said had emerged as the biggest strength of the protest. It's discipline.

"The people here, no matter what the odds, find motivation in the message and lives of the Sikh Gurus and the revolutionaries of Punjab and Haryana. In many ways,

most successful protest gathering of this size in the country. On the other hand, what this protest has also succeeded in achieving so far is conveying the message of brotherhood. After decades, the people of Haryana and Punjab have come together and how," he said.

"The people here, no matter what the odds, find motivation in the message and lives of the Sikh Gurus and the revolutionaries of Punjab and Haryana. In many ways,

the month of December is especially dreary for us. It is during this time that Guru Gobind Singh ji's family was separated with tragic consequences. In the same way, the Gurus and our warriors left their families for battle. Those here have left their families in the countryside for what has so far been a peaceful, battle," he said.

As the fog grows thicker and the mercury dips further, more tractors lugging trolleys with five to seven

passengers each inch closer to the site under the watchful eyes of young men patrolling the perimeter.

Arriving after days on the road, they bring not only supplies but also motivation. "There are thousands of tractor trolleys with thousands of protesters moving to Delhi from several sides. You will see lines after lines of people like me who are willing to undergo any weather and any consequence to get these black laws repealed," said Balwinder Sharma from Bhatinda who arrived late on Saturday night.

By 6 a.m., with no sight of the sun on an icy Sunday morning, the border is abuzz, as farmers surround a Delhi Jal Board water tanker, taking turns to wash their face. Some others bathe from water being drawn from a concrete tub on the other side of the road.

Inside, announcements are being made to increase the size of the *pandal* to accommodate those that have joined overnight, to sweep the roads and clean the carpets as the multiple *langars* begin operating again, amid the melodious kirtans.

Kejriwal to observe a day-long fast in solidarity with protesting farmers

Chief Minister appeals to Central govt. to repeal farm laws

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said he would fast on Monday in solidarity with the protesting farmers across the country. He also hit out at BJP leaders for defaming the farmers by calling them anti-national.

In a press statement, Mr. Kejriwal said: "The farmers have appealed to the people to fast for a day in their support. I will also fast tomorrow [Monday]. I want to appeal to the supporters and volunteers of AAP to do the same."

He appealed to lakhs of supporters who cannot be at the borders with the farmers to observe fast for a day.

Mr. Kejriwal appealed to the Centre to put an end to their ego and accept the demands of the farmers. He said the BJP government had mistaken the farmers' movement to be a small one but



Farmers protesting on National Highway-24 near Ghazipur on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

now, every person in this country understands the intricacies of these laws and wants these to be repealed.

"I could not help but reminisce the days of Anna Hazare ji's movement. Even in those days, they [Congress] called us anti-nationals. The attempts made by Congress to malign our movement in those days, is the same kind of attempts are made by BJP against the farmers' today," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal added that ex-servicemen, ex-Army men, and sportsmen – who have got laurels for the nations – are sitting with the farmers on the borders.

"The governments are formed by the public and not the opposite. The three farm laws should be immediately repealed and the farmers should be given guaranteed MSPs," he added.

At Ambedkar University, the administration said a few

he said.

DU and AUD hold special drive to fill vacant seats

Cut-off list to be notified by December 14

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With Delhi University and Ambedkar University conducting special drives to fill vacant seats, students still have a chance to secure admissions in various merit-based undergraduate courses.

Delhi University said for the special drive, the cut-off list to various merit-based undergraduate courses will be notified by the colleges under it by December 14.

It said the drive is only for applicants belonging to the OBC/EWS/SC/ST/PWD/KM/Sikh minority categories. "The eligible candidates, who meet the requirements notified in the special drive cut-off list are further advised to complete their admission formalities online within the stipulated time, as notified on the university website," the Registrar said.

At Ambedkar University, the administration said a few



Applicants from all categories can apply in AUD's drive.

seats are still vacant some of the undergraduate programmes due to withdrawal/cancellation/transfer and it was carrying out a second special admission drive.

"Interested applicants of all the categories [reserved/unreserved] are hereby informed to refer to the notification at university website regarding the details," AUD said.

It added that the second round is open for fresh applicants and for those who were rejected due to non-submission of the required documents and payment within the stipulated time.

Students can now email their answer sheets: DU

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University on Sunday said students can now submit their Open Book Examination answer sheets through email.

This was introduced as the students were facing problems in submitting the answer sheets on the university portal even after getting extra time for uploading.

The university said such submissions will be reviewed by a committee, which will also check the validity of the reasons for late submission.

The process

"It will be for the student to prove that he/she actually faced a problem in uploading his/her answer sheet on the OBE portal. Screenshots of the failure in uploading the answer sheet need to be taken by the students after making four to five attempts. These need to be attached



The answer sheets will be reviewed by a committee to check validity of reasons for late submissions, says DU.

in the mail along with the answer scripts," the university said.

Whom to mail

The sheets need to be mailed to the Nodal Officer of the College/Department/Faculty/NCWEB Centre.

The student also needs to mention his/her course name, paper code, and roll number in the subject line of the email.

Man nabbed for molestation escapes custody

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man, who was arrested for allegedly molesting his niece, escaped from custody when he was being taken to Tihar jail, the police said on Sunday.

The man committed the crime on Saturday when the victim's parents were out for work. When she shouted for help, a neighbour heard her cries and rushed to help her but the accused managed to flee.

A case was registered under POCSO Act and he was nabbed on the same day. He was then produced at a court in Tihar and upon the direction of court, he was being taken to judicial custody by the police team. He suddenly pushed an ASI and managed to escape. "We have registered a case in this regard at Mayapuri police station," said DCP (Rohini) P.K. Mishra.

Dense fog in city causes low visibility, traffic snarls

Air quality index in 'very poor' category

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Several parts of the city were engulfed in dense fog, causing low visibility, air, rail and road traffic on Sunday.

The Met department has forecast moderate to dense fog for Monday as well after the city received light rain on Saturday under the influence of a western disturbance.

The Met said the presence of moisture in the air led to the build-up of fog that reduced visibility at Safdarjung to 200 meters and Palam to 100 metres.

The air quality was in the "very poor" category with an average 24-hour AQI of 305, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. Experts said the AQI is likely to improve from the

Air quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi 305	Gurugram 239	
Ghaziabad 318	Faridabad 303	
Noida 322	Greater Noida 332	
■ Good 0-50	■ Satisfactory 51-100	■ Moderate 101-200
■ Poor 201-300	■ Very poor 301-400	■ Severe >401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

lower end of "very poor" to the higher end of the "poor category" on December 14 and is likely to marginally deteriorate to the lower end of "very poor" on December 15.

The forecast for December 14 reads: "Mainly clear sky with dense fog in the morning." Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to settle between 21 and 9 degrees Celsius respectively on December 14.

The air quality was in the "very poor" category with an average 24-hour AQI of 305, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. Experts said the AQI is likely to improve from the

HANDLE WITH CARE

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

In the last week of November, an image of a law enforcement officer wielding his baton to an elderly man during the farmers' protest went viral on social media including Twitter. After the image was shared by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Twitter, BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya responded to the tweet with a short clip of the incident in which the law enforcement officer's baton misses the elderly man.

The clip shared by Mr. Malviya said: "Police didn't even touch the farmer." Within days, Twitter invoked its new policy on "misleading information" and tagged Mr. Malviya's tweet as 'manipulated media'.

This move of the San Francisco-based tech company of deciding to interpret certain tweets as misinformation or manipulated has been called into question by some who see it as Twitter moderating its content and hence overarching its role of being just an intermediary.

Moderator's purview

On March 5, 2020 Twitter started labelling tweets after its global survey found that people "wanted it to do something about" misleading altered contents.

Twitter deciding to interpret certain tweets as misinformation has triggered an intense debate on the extent of microblogging site's role

In the U.S., Twitter has been following the practice of tagging and adding fact-checking notices to tweets by U.S. President Donald Trump.

In India, Section 79 of the IT Act shields social media platforms or intermediaries such as Twitter from liability for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by it in certain cases. Section 79 was also read down by the Supreme Court, in its landmark decision in Shreya Singhal vs Union of India case, so that an intermediary will face legal action only if it fails to act on order of a court or from the appropriate government or its agency to remove or disable access to the objectionable content.

Advocate Virag Gupta, a cyber law expert, said: "Twitter is selectively moderating objectionable content from its platform which may debar it from legal protection

of intermediary given under Section 79 of Information Technology Act, 2000."

Trigger point

Mr. Virag also questioned how Twitter was picking and choosing certain tweets as 'manipulated media' when there are millions of objectionable content and bogus users on its platform. "Who is judging this [content] and how? We don't know," Mr. Virag said, referring to the "internal system" used by Twitter to monitor content.

Advocate Apar Gupta, co-founder of the Internet Freedom Foundation, on the other hand said social media platforms have always controlled what they permit on platforms. "This is as per their terms of use and the privacy policy. These mechanisms of take-downs, or now labelling is well within their rights," Mr. Apar added.

He said the liability exemptions under Section 79 were to ensure the intermediaries do not face legal consequences for tweets or

content posted by end users. "This is to ensure they are not under a compulsion to censor [topics] that may cause what is referred to lawyers as a chilling effect. This balance has been explained within Justice Steven's opinion in U.S. Supreme Court's holding on the Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in the case of *ACLU vs Reno* in 1996," he explained.

"A similar form of reasoning has been followed in the interpretation of Indian law by our own Supreme Court in a landmark judgment authored by Justice Nariman in the case of *Shreya Singhal vs Union of India* in 2015," Mr. Apar added.

Complex debate

When asked whether Twitter is risking its status as an intermediary by deciding to moderate the contents that are shared on its platform, Mr. Apar said, "This is an active area of debate."

"It is a complex area of policy debate with arguments for greater oversight by platforms to police

Twitter started labelling tweets after its global survey found that people wanted it to do something about misleading altered contents. ■ REUTERS

content given they are reasoned to be a public venue. It also requires principles of intermediary liability to be integrated with user rights, which come with greater accountability and transparency towards users," he said.

"Here, there is a realisation to move away from a liability-based conversation towards content and providing greater rights to users. Also, to focus on specific regulatory interventions that may impose legal duties and liabilities in cases of harm such as disinformation, which causes social harm. For instance through election interference," Mr. Apar said.

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, DEC. 14	RISE 07:06	SET 17:27
TUESDAY, DEC. 15	RISE 06:30	SET 17:11
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16	RISE 07:07	SET 17:27
THURSDAY, DEC. 17	RISE 07:39	SET 18:08
FRIDAY, DEC. 18	RISE 07:07	SET 17:28
SATURDAY, DEC. 19	RISE 08:42	SET 19:10

Delhi Weather
Delhi City max min
Safdarjung 21 11
Palam 18 12

Delhi Palam Today
22°C Widespread dense fog during morning and cool day with clear sky. Pollution level would remain moderate.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
23°C Dense fog during morning would continue and comfortable day with few clouds. Cool winds likely during day.

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COVID-19 death toll in Delhi crosses 10,000

There are 16,785 active cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With 33 new deaths reported in the Capital due to COVID-19 on Sunday, the cumulative fatalities rose to 10,014 with a case fatality rate of 1.65%, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

The total number of cases stands at 6,07,454 with 1,984 new cases recorded in the past 24 hours, the bulletin said. Also, 2,539 new recoveries took the total number of recoveries to 5,80655.

There are currently 16,785 active cases in the city and 6,388 containment zones.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,07,454	10,014
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
1,984	33

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

On Sunday, 72,335 tests were conducted with a positivity ratio of 2.74%. Of these tests, 35,611 were RT-PCR tests.

Data shows that 9,964 patients are under home isolation and there are 14,361 vacant hospital beds for COVID-19 patients.

Raghav Chadha, 8 other partymen detained

They were on their way to protest outside Amit Shah's residence

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Sunday detained AAP MLA Raghav Chadha and eight others when they were on the way to stage a protest outside the house of Home Minister Amit Shah, said a senior police officer.

AAP MLA Atishi was also detained on her way to meet Lieutenant-Governor Anil



Atishi being detained outside L-G's house. ■ TWITTER

Bajal. Sanjay Bhatia, DCP (Central), said that Mr. Chadha and eight others were detained and taken to Rajender Nagar police station. Later, all of them were released.

Addressing a press conference in the evening, Ms. Atishi and Mr. Chadha said that they were raising demand for a CBI probe into an alleged scam by the BJP-ruled civic bodies to the tune of ₹2,500 crore and were detained on instructions from the Home Minister and the L-G who did not want the

scam to get exposed. "This is the biggest scam in the history of Delhi," Ms. Atishi said.

She also alleged that to divert people's attention from the scam, Home Minister Amit Shah has depated civic body Mayors and BJP Councillors outside the Chief Minister's house.

On Saturday, Delhi Police had rejected AAP's request to hold peaceful protest outside Mr. Shah's house, citing COVID-19 and Section 144.

In an order copy accessed by this newspaper, DCP

(New Delhi) Eish Singh has rejected Mr. Chadha's request. The order reads that in view of the guidelines issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Government of NCT of Delhi, all social and political gathering are prohibited up to December 31 throughout NCT of Delhi.

Mr. Chadha said that the police illegally detained him and others quoting rule 144 and Pandemic Act but had allowed BJP Mayors to protest outside the CM's residence.

Bail denied to doctor held guilty of medical negligence

He operated on a pregnant woman who eventually died

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has denied bail to a doctor who was held guilty of medical negligence related to the death of a 31-year-old pregnant woman. He had performed a surgery when the woman's pregnancy was 19-20 weeks old.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri said it was of the prima facie view that there was a reasonable ground to believe that Suresh Chandra Gupta, the doctor, committed the offence.

Dr. Gupta is facing charges under Section 315 (act done with intent to prevent child being born alive or to cause it to die after birth)

and Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) under the IPC. In his bail plea, Dr. Gupta had argued that he was 70-year-old and had performed the surgery at the request of R.P Memorial Hospital. Dr. Gupta argued that the FIR dates back to 2015, but he was arrested on November 18, 2020.

The public prosecutor opposed the bail application, saying that Dr. Gupta, admittedly, was neither on the hospital panel nor a visiting surgeon. "The petitioner [Dr. Gupta], knowing fully well that he was not a qualified obstetrician and gynaecologist, performed the surgery when there was

no urgency, as the pregnancy was only 19-20 weeks old, which led to the patient's death," the public prosecutor said.

Dr. Gupta made a bald assertion that no doctor should be arrested in a case of medical negligence.

However, in the present case, the investigating officer took an independent opinion from Delhi Medical Council, which conducted the disciplinary proceedings.

The Disciplinary Committee had observed that Dr. Gupta, who is a postgraduate in surgery, transgressed into field of gynaecology by doing a procedure, for which, he is not trained.

HC tells RML Hospital to re-employ 12 sacked workers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has ordered Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here to re-employ 12 multi-tasking contractual staffers, who were sacked from service in July. It noted that during the pandemic, the hospital should have ensured that old employees with experience are given preference over new contractual employees.

The court's order came after the 12 workmen at RML Hospital, employed through a contractor, challenged the termination order issued by the hospital on July 28.

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EDUCATION PLUS

GET THE EDGE

■ ARCHANA SUBRAMANIAN

With the pandemic leading to the rise of e-learning, isolation of people due to the lockdown, and more time spent online, experts find that cyberbullying has become a very serious issue among younger people. Siblings Riddhi and Vasundhara Oswal, who have experienced this first hand, launched a campaign called Stop The B to encourage people to speak out when they see someone being bullied. This is called being an active bystander or one who is aware of a situation that doesn't feel right and doing something about it. This ranges from speaking out against nasty comments on someone's post online or challenging hurtful behaviour, even if the bully is a friend or flagging it to a parent or teacher. The most important thing is to show the bully that his/her behaviour is unacceptable.

Riddhi recalls being mocked and taunted at her previous school. "Some students would say nasty things about my ethnicity and personal beliefs and also isolate me. I got bullied on social media and online group chats. What was saddening was how other classmates who knew of this chose to remain silent." Speaking to her family made her realise that this story needed to be told.

Online support

The absence of a supportive online community that one could turn to for help was one of the main reasons to start this campaign. "It's a forum where you feel supported and even bystanders will be taught to develop empathy towards people being bullied, hopefully encouraging them to speak out more," explains Vasundhara.

Watch out for

- **Flaming:** Online fights that use angry and/or vulgar language.
- **Harassment:** Where rude, insulting messages are sent online repeatedly.
- **Denigration:** Also known as "dissing", it involves posting cruel gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships.
- **Impersonation:** Hacking into an account, posing and posting as that person to defame/embarrass or create problems.
- **Outing & trickery:** Sharing someone's secrets, embarrassing images or information online or even tricking that person to share/expose those things, and then using it against him/her. Usually done sneakily by first presenting oneself as a friend.
- **Exclusion:** Purposely excluding someone from a group online.
- **Cyberstalking:** Sending threats or highly intimidating messages online or engaging in activities that make another scared for his/her safety.

GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO &
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Be an active bystander

Riddhi and Vasundhara Oswal's Stop The B mission helps victims of bullying realise they are not alone

Anti-bullying experts like Dr. Sameer Hinduja, the co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Centre in the U.S., and Dr. Zoe Moody, a leading academic on anti-bullying in Switzerland, have helped Stop The B devise its campaigns. Former Brazilian football star Ronaldinho also shared a video and message in which he spoke about the seriousness of bullying.

"So far, we have had a great response from people who are sharing messages

of support. We recently ran a competition in which people can share stories about what being an 'active bystander' means to them, and received many creative entries from across the globe," adds Riddhi.

To encourage people to share their stories, and look back at when they too might have been unkind, the siblings created a 'make good challenge', in which people can write a note, or post a video reel apologising for a time when they think they might have upset someone or not done more to stop bullying.

What you can do

- Don't retaliate or write a mean comment in response. This will encourage the bully to post again and could make the situation worse. Also, you don't want to stoop to that level.
- Tell them politely but firmly to stop saying hurtful or nasty things.
- Take a photo or a screenshot of the post, as you can share it with an adult, friend, teacher or family member.
- Report the comment. Tell someone you can trust: a friend or a family member. It might also be a good idea to report the comments to a group moderator, or the social media platform if it allows.
- Don't post anything online that you want to keep private. Remember, if anything is embarrassing or overly personal, then it is probably best not to share online.
- Make use of privacy settings. Most social media platforms allow users to control who can read or see their posts. Make these private so only your friends can see them.
- Limit the number of online friends. Social media makes it easy to connect with countless people but keep your online friends only to the people you trust and know in-person.

SAVE THE DATE**MSc Aerospace Engineering**

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The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, invites applications for MSc Environmental Engineering Consulting at an additional entry point in January 2021.

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DURATION: One year, full-time
FEES: £24,950
<https://bit.ly/3732Aza>

OPINION

Make it safe and secure

Use of Blockchain technology can ensure an incorruptible online exam system

■ H. BLANKSON AND C. RAJAN

The inception of COVID-19 has drastically changed the higher education landscape all over the world. Many colleges, universities, and institutes of national importance have already started the online mode of evaluation in the place of pen and paper, as have examination bodies at the central and state level.

Pros and cons

A clear advantage of online examinations is that it is cost-effective and easily scalable to any number of examinees, wherever in the world they may be. This is important for tests like IIT-JEE and NEET, which are taken by aspirants abroad. Plagiarism checking software can be used to see if examinees have copied the answers. In addition, the prevailing social distancing norms can easily be maintained if examinees take the test at their home.

In spite of the demand for online examinations, there have also been protests against using such services. Many eminent educationists are of the view that this model of assessing students or aspirants cannot be fully foolproof. Examinees can easily appoint proxies (impersonators) to take the test. There are also students who pay other bright students to write the exam on their behalf. This can be caught if the examiner inspects the live picture feeds during the exam, combined with 'sound-matching' techniques in which the genuine voice of the examinee (perhaps saying their own name multiple times) is pre-stored in a database, and the sound matched at periodic intervals during the examination.

The picture and voice of the

examinees are both available in several software like MS Teams, Zoom, Google classroom, and so on. These real-time feeds, however, are limited to the picture and voice of the examinee, and not to his/her screen. Examiners have no way to see the examinee's screen (irrespective of whether they are using a laptop or smart phone). Using screen splitting (multiple windows), screen capture, and screen shar-

phones use CDMA, the speed of which depends on the distance of a device from the nearest transmission tower. The most prominent problem is the issue of security of the whole examination process itself. All security issues must be considered to implement a secure online examination system.

Blockchain to the rescue

A Blockchain is an archive that collects, registers and stores the growing list of records using cryptography within a network. It is also a peer-to-peer technology that organises or records time-stamped transactions in such a way that none can modify it without notice by others who are members of the same Blockchain. Each record list, named as block, contains a link to the previous block that is cryptographically hashed, and has a timestamp, and transaction data.

This means that any information recorded in the Blockchain ledger cannot be secretly altered, as the whole Blockchain ledger becomes corrupted and tempered. In addition, Blockchain data are replicated and kept on multiple machines to reduce vulnerability. All transactions must be authenticated and linked to the Blockchain network by miners. The mining process is fuelled by a consensus mechanism within the network. The best and unsurpassed solution for continuous authentication, confidentiality and robustness in any security framework is the Blockchain technology.

Thus impersonations can be reduced, if not annulled, using a combination of online proctoring and Blockchain.

H. Blankson is a research scholar and Dr. C. Rajan is a professor at Vellore Institute of Technology, cvrajan@gmail.com



Any information recorded in the Blockchain ledger cannot be secretly altered, as the whole Blockchain ledger becomes corrupted ...

ing (remote login) techniques, or by snapping a picture, the examinee can easily transmit the questions instantly to proxies through email, Bluetooth or WhatsApp, and submit the answers sent to them as their own.

On the infrastructure side, examinees could face bandwidth constraints if they are located in remote villages or on the outskirts of cities. Availability of devices to connect to the Internet could put some at a disadvantage. For example, smart

ETCETERA**New courses at IIT-M's Digital Skills Academy**

Indian Institute of Technology Madras Digital Skills Academy recently partnered with Infact Pro Trainers (OPC) to launch certified programmes in Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance Sector (BFSI) Training Courses. Details at <https://skillsacademy.iitm.ac.in>.

IIT-Hyderabad launches new programme

International Institute of Information Technology-Hyderabad recently launched an eight-month PG Certificate in Software Engineering for Data Science to be delivered in a blended learning format of live online classes and classroom residencies. For more, visit <https://www.iitih.ac.in/>.

UGC-recognised online degree programmes launched

Manipal University Jaipur (MUI) recently announced the launch of online MBA, MCA, BBA, and BCA degree programmes in compliance with the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulation

Calling all students

While 2020 has been tough on everyone, you have had a particularly rough time with colleges and universities being shut and learning moving online all of a sudden.

But with the New Year almost here, it is time to look ahead. Tell us in not more than 50-75 words what is the one thing that you are looking forward to when it comes to your classes? Email the text along with your name, course, year, college and place and a passport-size photo to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com before December 28. Selected entries will be featured on January 4, 2021.

SCHOLARSHIPS**Raman Research Institute UNO Lab Research Assistantship**

Raman Research Institute invites applications for Raman Research Institute UNO Lab Research Assistantship.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to candidates below 28 years with a postgraduate degree in Physics/Photonics or graduate degree in Electronics/Electrical/ Photonics/Optical Engineering and at least six months' experience in doing experimental projects using lasers as light sources.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Upto ₹10 lakh

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: March 8 b4s.in/edge/JNT4

Piaggio "Shiksha Se Samridhi" Scholarship

Piaggio Vehicles Pvt. Ltd. supports students pursuing ITI/Polytechnic/Diploma courses.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to children/wards of drivers/owners of three-wheelers who have passed Class 10/12 with at least 55% marks. They must be enrolled in an ITI/Polytechnic/Diploma course at a recognised institution in India.

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME: Must not be more than ₹3 lakh.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: 80% of total fee reimbursement or maximum up to ₹20,000 per year

APPLICATION: By email or by post to The Coordinator, Light and Matter Physics Group, Raman Research Institute, C.V. Raman Avenue, Sadashivanagar, Bengaluru

DEADLINE: December 22 b4s.in/EDGE/RRI4

The J.N. Tata Endowment Loan Scholarship

Tata Trusts invites applications from Indian students who wish to pursue their higher studies outside India. The programme also offers 'Gift Scholarship' and 'Travel Grants'.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to Indian students who have graduated or are in the final year of

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Samsung- IIT-Jodhpur partnership**User-friendly scrubs for COVID-19 warriors**

Aditi Bhalekar, a first-year student at Anant National University, recently created a product that can be used by nurses, doctors, and volunteers, as part of an in-house contest to make user-friendly scrubs for the health workers at COVID-19 recovery centres. The design is embedded in the need for comfort, cost-effectiveness, and durability of scrubs and its USP is its easy-to-wear and easy-to-remove feature.

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IIMs and XLRI have no role either in the selection process or in the conduct of the programmes at IRMA

Online PG Programme in Agile

Simplilearn recently announced its partnership with the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass Amherst) to offer a specialised six-month Post Graduate Programme (PGP) in Agile. In addition to over 115 hours of applied training, the program includes interactive peer learning through group projects and discussions coupled with six masterclass sessions by the University of Massachusetts Amherst faculty. For details, visit www.simplilearn.com.

Learn-from-home PG

Jagdish Sheth School of Management has launched an exclusive Learn-From-Home AICTE-approved PGDM programme with six specialisations. It also offers hands-on industry experience through mentor sessions, placement support and professional certifications. The fee is ₹4,00,000 with financing options from ₹8,000 a month. For details visit <https://jagsom.lfh.live/>



Dangerous impasse

Peace on the border is important for all aspects of India's relations with China

Winter has set in Ladakh, and the chill in India's relations with China remains after more than a month since the last round of talks between Corps Commanders to take forward disengagement on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). There is no road map yet to a return to the *status quo* prior to May's transgressions by China, which, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar acknowledged last week, have brought ties to the "most difficult phase" in the last 30 to 40 years. Mr. Jaishankar, speaking to a think-tank, said the relationship had been "profoundly disturbed" this summer, and China had "literally brought tens of thousands of soldiers in full military preparation mode right to the LAC in Ladakh". The Minister's forthrightness has stood as a sharp contrast to the persistent denials from the government this summer about the seriousness of the border situation, which it was forced to confront publicly after the tragic loss of 20 Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley in June. His remarks drew a strong response from China, which yet again blamed India for the crisis, saying "the responsibility totally lies with the Indian side" and that it had strictly abided by border agreements, a claim that does not square with the unprecedented mobilisation of Chinese troops to various points across the LAC since early May. The Ministry of External Affairs then responded, asking China to "match its words with actions".

The sharp exchange last week underlined the perilous state of relations and the long road ahead towards restoring normalcy, which, India has made clear, is predicated on peace on the border. In an interview to this newspaper on December 2, the External Affairs Minister cautioned that full disengagement may not be an immediate prospect, drawing a parallel to the Sumdorong Chu crisis of 1986 that took nine years to resolve. The slow-moving talks on the LAC – both sides are yet to schedule the next round following the eighth meeting between Corps Commanders on November 6 – raise questions about China's willingness to both restore fully the *status quo* and abide by past agreements, which India must insist upon. The government, for its part, should be far more forthcoming than it has been so far on the situation on the LAC. Peace on the border is what every other aspect of the relationship with China has rested on over the past three decades, from trade to growing links in new fields such as investment and education. Transparency, without which the public will not be fully aware about the border situation and the state of the broader relationship with China, should take precedence over optics and political expediency.

Breaking up

While not throttling innovation, regulators must keep the spirit of competition alive

The lawsuits against Facebook by the Federal Trade Commission and the attorneys general of 46 U.S. States, the District of Columbia and the territory of Guam are a significant challenge to the dominant Internet empire that Mark Zuckerberg has built in such a short time. The plaintiffs, working in close coordination, sued Facebook on Wednesday for its anti-competitive conduct, which they said harms users, advertisers, competition, and innovation. The basic charge is that Facebook, in fear of competition, plays by an anti-competitive strategy playbook. It either buys potential competition or, if it cannot, cuts them off from accessing its large platform. Money is no bar in buying off potential competition, as the \$19-billion purchase price of WhatsApp in 2014 shows. The lawsuits highlight Facebook's acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp, which happened when Mr. Zuckerberg saw them as real threats to Facebook's continuing success. Whatever Facebook cannot acquire faces, as a lawsuit puts it, the "wrath of Mark". It may be years before the lawsuits are decided one way or the other. But not even the noisy fallout of the Cambridge Analytica scandal was as much of an existential threat for Facebook as this issue could turn out to be. For, while highlighting its lack of concern for privacy, a taint that Facebook has struggled to shrug off since the Cambridge Analytica scandal did nothing to stop the social network's roaring growth. Facebook, which last year made a revenue of over \$70 billion, right now has a market capitalisation that is just a shade under \$800 billion. These lawsuits could potentially endanger this business success.

The action against Facebook, however, is not to be seen in isolation, and is linked to the growing backlash against what is called 'Big Tech' globally. Europe and the U.S., especially, have moved against these technology companies not just on anti-trust charges but also on cases involving violation of privacy. There seems to be a growing realisation about the disproportionate clout that these technology platforms have in the global scheme of things, which they exploit to further their domination in the industry. And that it is futile for regulators and policymakers to continue with a light-touch approach in the technology industry. In fact, calls for the break-up of technology firms have been put forward by politicians in the U.S. With its immense scale, Facebook has on more than one occasion managed to startle regulators and administrators, not to mention civil society and activists, by its grandiose plans which seemed to threaten the existing world order. The offer for a free limited version of the Internet and plans for a new digital currency are a few examples. Internet monopolies are not a feature of just the developed world. They are everywhere. And it would be useful for governments and regulators to draw the right lessons from this if they want to keep the spirit of competition alive.

The roots of the agricultural crisis run deep

Declining agricultural incomes and flagging state support to agriculture are some of the key structural issues



HIMANSHU

The stand-off between farmers and the government continues even after a few rounds of discussion and more than a fortnight of protest at the Delhi border by the farmers. The latest proposal by the government indicates its willingness to amend the three agriculture-related Acts passed in September. On the contentious issues of registration of private traders, levy of taxes on trade outside the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis, the government has proposed amendments which will empower the States to frame rules on these issues. Similar assurances have been given on access to the judiciary for dispute resolution and continuation of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanism. However, farmer unions have rejected the proposal and continue to demand complete withdrawal of the three Acts along with making MSP a guarantee.

Many protests, one thread

It is likely that the issue may ultimately get resolved and an amicable solution is found to resolve the impasse. However, this will only be a temporary reprieve from the vexatious issue of declining farmer income and the nature of state support to agriculture.

The last four years have seen a series of large protests in most of the States. While a group of farmers from Tamil Nadu camped in Delhi for over 100 days, Maharashtra was witness to the 'Kisan Long March' of farmers on more than one occasion. Similar protests

have erupted in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh. At least five farmers were killed in police firing in Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh three years ago. Clearly, farmers' unrest is not new and has been building up for quite some time. The latest round of protests may have seen spirited protests from farmers from Punjab and Haryana but has found the support of farmers from the other States as well. While they may appear to be fragmented and localised, the issues concerning these instances of unrest have a common thread – of declining agricultural incomes, stagnant wages and withdrawal of state support to agriculture.

The immediate trigger for the current protests is the enactment of the three Acts, on agricultural marketing, contract farming and stocking of agricultural produce, which deregulates the existing Acts on these. The farmers see them as an attempt to dilute the nature of these safeguards provided to them – by providing unfair advantage to the private sector, read corporate sector, vis-à-vis APMC mandis.

The current crisis is entirely a creation of the government at a time when the country was struggling with novel coronavirus-caused lockdowns, supply disruptions, job losses and falling incomes in an economy which was already slowing down even before the pandemic. While the reforms embedded in the three Acts are unlikely to help resolve the structural issues facing Indian agriculture, even their withdrawal is unlikely to change the ground reality which has existed even before the Acts were passed. It is precisely because of this that withdrawal of the three Acts by the government will only offer a temporary truce. Such a step is unlikely to contain farmers' anger and unrest which is



RITU RAJ KONWAR

likely to increase with a slowing economy and falling demand for agricultural commodities.

Changing face of agriculture

The real issue is the lack of remunerative prices for a majority of agricultural commodities, a sharp increase in price variability in recent years, and an unpredictable and arbitrary government policy regime, none of which is likely to change in the near future. It is these which have led to a recurrence of distress in the agricultural sector with regular farmers' protests which have only grown in frequency in recent years.

Part of the problem is the changing nature of agriculture which has seen increased dependence on markets, increasing mechanisation along with increasing monetisation of the agrarian economy. The increased dependence on markets has contributed to increasing variability in output prices. With limited intervention by the government in protecting farmers' income and stabilising prices through MSP-led procurement operations, the variability has increased in frequency as well as the spread of it. Other than rice and wheat – and to some sporadic instances, of pulses – most crops suffer from inadequate intervention from MSP operations.

However, even these procurement operations are unable to stabilise prices with falling demand and a slowing economy. A perfect example of this is wheat which has seen a steady decline in year-on-year inflation based on Wholesale Price Index (WPI) since July and is negative for the last three months of August, September and October despite record procurement by the government. Not only has the procurement operation failed to arrest the decline in prices, the uneven nature of procurement has meant that in many States of eastern India, wheat is sold at 20-40% lower prices compared to MSP.

It is the same in the case of paddy where most States have seen market prices significantly lower than the MSP. The situation is far more worrying for crops such as maize which sold at 40-60% lower than the MSP in most States. Unfortunately, none of this is new. In the last five years, three years have witnessed negative inflation for cereals. While the withdrawal of the Acts is unlikely to ensure price stability, even the demand of making MSP a guarantee for private trade is meaningless if the government is unable to ensure procurement for a majority of the 23 crops for which it announces MSP. Even for crops such as wheat and paddy for which there is procurement, the regional concentration makes it irrelevant for most of the eastern and southern States.

Factors behind vulnerability

While output prices continue to show high variation with frequent spells of low prices, increasing mechanisation and monetisation have led to an increase in cash requirement. Most of these are met by non-institutional sources including middlemen which has contributed to the rising cost of cultivation and increase in loan defaults. The demand for loan waivers is unlikely to subside with rising cost of inputs. Some of these trends have accentuated after 2010-11 when the Nutrient Based

Subsidy (NBS) for fertilizers regime led to an increase in fertilizer prices. But the withdrawal of diesel subsidy and rise in electricity prices also contributed to making agriculture unviable. With agricultural investment declining in the first four years of this government, the result was rising input costs and falling output prices. Not to mention, the shocks such as demonetisation and the lockdown imposed after the pandemic broke out which only increased the uncertainty and vulnerability in the agricultural sector both on input and output prices.

Policy overhaul needed

Even if the current impasse due to the farmers' agitation gets resolved, there is no certainty that the structural factors which have contributed to the farmers' unrest will get resolved. The existing policy framework with excessive focus on inflation management and obsession with fiscal deficit will likely lead to lower support from the government either in price stabilisation or reduction in cost of cultivation through fiscal spending. The agricultural sector needs comprehensive policy overhaul to recognise the new challenges of agriculture which is diversifying and getting integrated with the non-agricultural sector. This not only entails a better understanding of the structural issues but also innovative thinking to protect farmers' livelihood from the uncertainty of these changes. Above all, it requires fiscal support and institutional structures to support the agricultural sector and protect it. In the absence of these, any rhetoric of doubling farmers' income is only wishful thinking.

Himanshu is Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

A sector that needs to be nursed back to health

Nursing education in India suffers poor quality of training, inequitable distribution, and non-standardised practices



VIJAYASHREE YELLAPPA

The year 2020 has been designated as "International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife" (<https://bit.ly/37Yowuj>). Nurses and midwives will be central to achieving universal health coverage in India. India's nursing workforce is about two-thirds of its health workforce. Its ratio of 1.7 nurses per 1,000 population is 43% less than the World Health Organisation norm; it needs 2.4 million nurses to meet the norm.

In addition to the low number of nurses, the sector is dogged by structural challenges that lead to poor quality of training, inequitable distribution, and non-standardised practices. Here are the challenges and the potential solutions to them.

Uneven regulation

Nursing education in India has a wide array of certificate, diploma, and degree programmes for clinical and non-clinical nursing roles. The Indian Nursing Council regulates nursing education through prescription, inspection, examination, and certification. However, the induction requirements vary widely and so does the functioning of regulatory bodies in the States. In addition, 91% of the nursing education institutions are private and weakly regulated. The

quality of training of nurses is diminished by the uneven and weak regulation.

The current nursing education is outdated and fails to cater to the practice needs. The education, including re-training, is not linked to the roles and their career progression in the nursing practice. There are insufficient postgraduate courses to develop skills in specialties, and address critical faculty shortages both in terms of quality and quantity. These factors have led to gaps in skills and competencies, with no clear career trajectory for nurses.

Multiple entry points to the nursing courses and lack of integration of the diploma and degree courses diminish the quality of training. A common entrance exam for entry into practice, and periodic renewal of licence linked with continuing nursing education would significantly streamline and strengthen nursing education. Transparent accreditation, benchmarking, and ranking of nursing institutions too would improve the quality.

Though the number of nursing education institutions has been increasing steadily, there are vast inequities in their distribution. Around 62% of them are situated in southern India.

Further, despite the growth, there is little demand for postgraduate courses. Recognising the need for specialty courses in clinical nursing 12 post graduate diploma courses were rolled out. These courses never did well due to lack of admissions, because the higher education qualification is not re-



cognised by the recruiters. Further, the faculty positions vacant in nursing college and schools are around 86% and 80%, respectively.

Gaps in education, services

Most nurses working in the public and private health sector are diploma holders. There is a lack of job differentiation between diploma, graduate, and postgraduate nurses regarding their pay, parity, and promotion. Consequently, higher qualifications of postgraduate nurses are underutilised, leading to low demand for post-graduate courses. Further, those with advanced degrees seek employment in education institutions or migrate abroad where their qualifications are recognised. This has led to an acute dearth of qualified nurses in the country. Compounding the problem, small private institutions with less than 50 beds recruit candidates without formal nursing education. They are offered courses of three to six months for non-clinical ancillary nursing roles and are paid very little.

The nursing practice remains

largely unregulated in the country. The Indian Nursing Act primarily revolves around nursing education and does not provide any policy guidance about the roles and responsibilities of nurses in various cadres. Nurses in India have no guidelines on the scope of their practice and have no prescribed standards of care. This may endanger patient safety. It is a major reason for the low legitimacy of the nursing practice and the profession. Additionally, the mismatch of the role description and remuneration that befits the role sets the stage for the exploitation of nurses.

The Consumer Protection Act which protects the rights and safety of patients as consumers, holds only the doctor and the hospital liable for medicolegal issues; nurses are out of the purview of the Act. This is contrary to the practices in developed countries where nurses are legally liable for errors in their work.

Basic institutional reforms will be required to address the three issues. First, the governance of nursing education and practice must be clarified and made current. The Indian Nursing Council Act of 1947 must be amended to explicitly state clear norms for service and patient care, fix the nurse to patient ratio, staffing norms and salaries. The jurisdictions of the Indian Nursing Council and the State nursing councils must be explained and coordinated so that they are synergistic.

The exodus of qualified nurses must be contained. Incentives to pursue advanced degrees to match their qualification, clear ca-

reer paths, opportunity for leadership roles, and improvements in the status of nursing as a profession will be key steps to do so. A live registry of nurses, positions, and opportunities should be a top priority to tackle the demand-supply gap in this sector.

Public-private partnership between private nursing schools/colleges and public health facilities is another strategy to enhance nursing education. The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has recently formulated a framework for public-private partnership in medical education that could be referred to develop a model agreement for nursing education (<https://bit.ly/3oHR2XO>). The Government has also announced supporting such projects through a Viability Gap Funding mechanism.

A Bill that could spell hope

The disabling environment prevalent in the system has led to the low status of nurses in the hierarchy of health-care professionals. In fact, nursing has lost the appeal as a career option. The National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill currently under consideration (<https://bit.ly/2W7ZFP9>) should hopefully address some of the issues highlighted. These disruptions are more relevant than ever in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Vijayashree Yellappa is Senior Specialist, Health Systems Transformation Platform (HSTP), New Delhi and Fellow, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog. The views expressed are personal

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.

Farmers' protests

If the groundswell of support for the farmers' cause is anything to go by, the government's propaganda that the ongoing agitation is ill-informed, motivated and instigated does not seem to work. The demand of the farmers for the repeal of the new farm laws finds an echo in the hearts of the people (Page 1, "Veterans to return 25,000 medals", December 13). This is an agitation of the farmers, by the farmers and for the farmers, pure and simple. The central issue arising from the new pieces of legislation is that of

corporatisation of agriculture. This fact cannot be obscured by raising false hopes of a better deal. The Narendra Modi government has a parliamentary majority and popular support. Still, it will do well to show empathy for farmers and repeal the contentious laws.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthandam, Tamil Nadu

farm laws are certain to benefit the farming community, the message has clearly not reached the audience.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

■ The ongoing farmers' protest has only shown up the vacuum of a strong Opposition leader. The ongoing protests would have been a great opportunity to rejuvenate the battered Congress party but it has been caught napping. Moreover, the BJP, as the ruling party, has managed to make gains out of a divided and weakened Opposition. A democracy is not successful unless the Opposition holds the ruling party accountable for its actions.

AZHAGENDRA MADHAN B.P.K.,
Theni, Tamil Nadu

near Bengaluru, is anything but a recognised form of protest. Such wanton destruction and vandalism cannot be justified under any circumstance. Even hardcore labour supporters cannot explain such happenings on the factory's premises. I will see this as among the insufficiencies in decades of labour union movements in India. It is a standing allegation that leaders only exploit the workers, often to serve political and personal vested interests. They have never cared to guide the vulnerable sector. Workers, while asserting their rights, should realise that the existence of the factory is

Blunted edge

Is there a blip being observed in Virat Kohli's career? He seems to be stumbling in crunch moments and failing to guide India home, which, ironically, had always been his strength and an element in his armour which put him above the rest and earned him the tag, 'chase master'. Is he slowing down or is it the additional burden of captaincy?

ASHWIN THOMAS,
Kozhancherry, Pathanamthitta, Kerala



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primarily that of their lives too.

P.R.V. RAJA,
Pandalam, Kerala

Workers, while asserting their rights, should realise that the existence of the factory is

Hazardous ideas for the Himalayas

By planning hydropower projects, India and China are placing the region at great risk



C.P. RAJENDRAN

In an article published on the website of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, China announced that it is planning to build a major hydropower project as a part of its 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), on the Yarlung Zanbo River, in Mêdog County in Tibet. The hydropower generation station is expected to provide 300 billion kWh of electricity annually. The Chinese authorities say the project will help the country realise its goal of reaching a carbon emission peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060.

As speculation about this news began floating around in Mêdog County, not far from Arunachal Pradesh, Indian counterparts were quick to reiterate their plans to dam the Himalayas on this side of the border. India is reportedly considering a 10-GW hydropower project in an eastern State.

Misadventures

In this mad rush of one-upmanship, both countries ignore how unviable such 'super' dams projects are, given that they are being planned in an area that is geologically unstable. It is high time that India and China sat together to deliberate on the consequences of such misadventures in an area where massive earthquakes are bound to take place.

Over the past 20 years, both China and India have been competing with each other to build hydroelectric dams in this ecologically fragile and seismically vulnerable area. There are two hydropower projects in the works in Arunachal Pradesh on the tributaries of the Brahmaputra: the 600 MW Karneng project on the Bichom and Tenga Rivers and the 2,000 MW Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project. On the other side of the border, China has already completed 11 out of 55 projects that are planned for the Tibetan region. In executing these hydroelectric projects at a maddening pace, the two countries overestimate their economic potential and grossly underes-



"China and India have been competing with each other to build hydroelectric dams in an ecologically fragile and seismically vulnerable area." The villagers of Barpak look for their belongings after the Nepal earthquake of 2015. ■ NYT

timate the earthquake vulnerability of the region.

Consider this: High seismic zones coincide with areas of high population concentration in the Himalayan region where landslides and glacial lake outburst floods are common. About 15% of the great earthquakes of the 20th century (with a magnitude of more than 8) occurred in the Himalayan region. The northeast Himalayan bend has experienced several large earthquakes of magnitude 7 and above in the last 100 years, more than the share from other parts of the Himalayas.

The 1950 earthquake just south of the McMahon Line was of 8.6 magnitude. It was the largest continental event ever recorded, and devastated Tibet and Assam. The earthquake killed thousands, and caused extensive landslides, widespread land level changes and gaping fissures. It resulted in water and mud oozing in the Himalayan ranges and the upper Assam valley. This dammed the rivers. Later the dams were breached generating flash floods in the downstream sides, seriously silting the drainage systems. The earthquake was felt over an extensive area comprising parts of India, Tibet, erstwhile East Pakistan and Myanmar. This event gives us grim pointers of what we can expect in the north-

eastern bend of the Himalayas if a similar event was to take place in the background of the fast-developing hydro projects.

To take a more recent example, the 2015 Gorkha earthquake of magnitude 7.8 in central Nepal resulted in huge losses in the hydropower sector. Nepal lost about 20% of its hydropower capacity consequent to the earthquake. About 30 projects with a capacity of 270 MW, mostly located along the steep river valleys, were damaged. The cost of physical damage is calculated to be about \$200 million. The study published in a 2018 paper in *Geophysical Research Letters*, by Wolfgang Schwanghart and others, for example, is quite revelatory on the earthquake-borne damage sustained by hydropower projects in Nepal. The main mechanisms that contributed to the vulnerability of hydropower projects were found to be landslides, which depend on the intensity of seismic ground shaking and slope gradients.

Heavy siltation from giant landslides expected in the project sites and headwater region from future earthquakes will severely reduce the water-holding capacity and life expectancy of such dams. Even without earthquakes, the steep slopes made of soft rocks are bound to slide due to

deforestation and road-building. These activities will get intensified as part of the dam-building initiatives. Desilting of dams is not an economically viable proposition and is technically challenging. From these perspectives, the northeast Himalayan bend with its deep gorges is the most unsuitable locale within the Himalayas for giant dams. Also, we do not know how reservoirs with their water load will alter the existing stresses and strains on the earth's crust in the long term, impacting the frequency of earthquakes and their mechanisms.

Under threat

The Himalayan range is a transnational mountain chain and is the chief driver of the Asian climate. It is a source for numerous Asian river systems and glaciers which are now under the threat of degradation and retreat due to global warming; these river systems provide water for billions of people. This legacy of humanity has now become highly contentious with territorial disputes between two nuclear powers – India and China. The ongoing low-level military confrontations between these two countries have led to demands for further infrastructural development on both sides, including all-weather roads, much to the peril of regional biodiversity and the livelihoods of the indigenous population.

In a recent article in *Nature*, Mahajar K. Pandit, a Himalayan ecologist, says in recent years, the Himalayas have seen the highest rate of deforestation and land use changes. He suggests that the upper Himalayas should be converted into a nature reserve by an international agreement. He also says the possibility of a Himalayan River Commission involving all the headwater and downstream countries needs to be explored.

Rather than engaging in unsustainable dam-building activities, India and China, the major players in the region, would be well advised to disengage from military adventurism and seek ways of transforming this 'roof of the world' into a natural reserve for the sake of humanity. Carbon neutrality should not be at the expense of the environment.

C.P. Rajendran is Adjunct Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Can headlines miss the wood for the trees?

The headlines for news reports must reflect how the die is cast, rather than how the die ought to be cast



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Last week, the Supreme Court of India gave its ruling in two cases: one concerning the inauguration for the Central Vista in New Delhi and the second concerning land acquisition for the Chennai-Salem Expressway in Tamil Nadu. Some readers were uncomfortable with the headlines given by this newspaper in reporting the court's judgments. The first headline was: "SC nod for Central Vista inauguration" (December 8). The second headline was: "SC clears land acquisition for Chennai-Salem NH" (December 9).

In both the cases, the Supreme Court gave conditional clearance. It attached caveats to the rulings. Some readers felt that the headlines failed to capture the court's reservations. They felt that the headlines were pro-government and read as if the court has fully endorsed the decision taken by the executive regarding the two contentious projects.

What to emphasise in a headline

Referring to the headline on the Centra Vista project, Kabir Shrivastava, a Delhi-based advocate and a contributor to *The Hindu*, felt that the newspaper had not spoken truth to power. He said: "The main thrust of the court's ruling was its ire with the government, the rush and finally the stay order on any construction or demolition of existing structures. The Hindu's headline instead portrayed a picture that the court granted an imprimatur to the project, which is incorrect. Even the descriptive line below spoke of the PM's stone laying. Does this not amount to editorialising news?"

If the highest court permits the government to go ahead with the inauguration and if the Prime Minister leads that function, what should the headline of the report be? Should it focus on the Bench's reservations or on its permission to the government to go ahead with the foundation stone-laying ceremony based on the government's assurance that it would keep in abeyance the construction or demolition of buildings and the shifting of trees in the Central Vista area for now?

The headline had to reflect the leeway provided to the executive by the court. The

fact that Prime Minister went ahead with the ceremony on December 10 vindicated the strapline, which Mr. Shrivastava thought emphasised the wrong part of the report. The newspaper did report the reservations expressed by the Bench. The report read: "A Bench, led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, expressed displeasure with the government for 'aggressively' continuing with the construction, demolition and shifting of trees even as questions concerning the legality of the Central Vista project were in court." A newspaper's headline should reflect the binding part of a court's order and not open court observations, however progressive and provocative they may be. The executive goes only by the binding part of the ruling. The advice given by the court, and open court observations, however profound, have little bearing on the decisions of the government.

I agree with Mr. Shrivastava that the newspaper should not become another spokesperson for those in power. In this context, it is important to point out that other arms of Constitution have a checks-and-balances role and they cannot abdicate it in favour of the wishes of the executive. The headlines for news reports must reflect how the die is cast, rather than how the die ought to be cast. The desire for a better outcome can be reflected in the op-ed page headlines.

A significant decision

In the case of the report on the Chennai-Salem Expressway judgment, many environmentalists felt that the headline should have focussed on the court agreeing with the High Court that neither the government nor the National Highways Authority of India had any business altering the mutation entries of specified lands in their favour – that too, even before they had come into possession of these properties. They felt that the apex court's order upholding the High Court's decision to restore the earlier entries in the revenue records is a significant one.

In the case of the Central Vista, the newspaper's opinion in its editorial "Fresh vista" (December 9) spoke of the weakest link in our democracy, healthcare, and how the proposed project may appear to be "grandiose to stricken citizens". The editorial "The road taken" (December 10) on the Chennai-Salem Expressway explained how the court's ruling "may have rendered the project a *fait accompli*".

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Innovations for cleaner air

Monitoring air pollution alone isn't enough; India needs context-specific solutions to tackle the problem

ROZITA SINGH, KRISHNAN S., & SWETHA KOLLURI

Over the past decade, India has made significant progress in monitoring air pollution. There are more than 250 continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations and more than 800 ambient air quality monitoring stations operating across the country. It is owing to these that we are able to understand the magnitude of the challenge of air pollution. There has been a tremendous effort in improving awareness of citizens through campaigns around air pollution and its adverse impact on health and environment. However, while these efforts need to amplify, it is equally important to have systemic changes at the policy and strategy levels.

Welcoming policy interventions Public policy is already responding positively. The budget allocation for air pollution increased substantially in 2020-21 from what it was in 2018-19 to ensure cleaner air in cities having populations above one million. The establishment of the Commission for Air Quality Management with penal provisions against polluters in the NCR and adjoining areas is a welcome move. India has jumped from BSIV to BSVI vehicles. There is an increased focus on e-mobility. Through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, there has been an effort to reduce indoor air pollution in rural areas by increasing LPG coverage. While these measures will have a major impact in the long term, India needs innovations to deliver on the promise of cleaner air in the immediate future.

There are many institutions involved in developing solutions. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute's PUSA Bio Decomposer, which turns crop residue into manure in 15-20 days, could become a cost-effective alternative to tackle stubble burning. UNDP is also promoting startup-led innovations such as a filter-less retrofit device for cutting particulate matter at source in industries and vehicles, and a nature-based solution to amplify air purification through breathing roots technology for improving indoor air quality.

Air pollution in India has numerous sources that are spread across vast geographies, which is a chal-

lenge for environmental regulators with limited capacity and manpower. In such conditions, it is imperative to leverage advanced digital technologies, such as geospatial technology and AI, to upgrade our capacities to identify, monitor, regulate and mitigate air pollution hotspots. For instance, the GeoAI platform for brick kilns, developed by UNDP in partnership with the University of Nottingham, is supporting environment regulators to identify non-compliant brick kilns from space. The platform has already mapped over 37,000 brick manufacturing units across the Indo-Gangetic plains. Given the complexity and magnitude of air pollution, India needs context-specific innovations not only in the technological but also in the economic, social, legal, educational, political and institutional domains. It is important for it to develop a single window online platform for showcasing innovations with the potential to mitigate the challenges of air pollution.

What more should be done? The need of the hour is to provide an enabling ecosystem for innovations to address context-specific air pollution challenges. There needs to be significant government support for enterprises to come up with scalable pollution abatement technologies. Resources need to be allocated to support testing, certifying and scaling of innovative solutions and also to extend support for intellectual property rights protection.

It is equally important to mobilise private sector participation. Businesses and enterprises need to innovate their operations and functioning, building in emission and pollution controls and reducing institutional carbon footprint to the lowest possible levels. The private sector has strong potential to develop commercially viable products to combat air pollution and boost the innovation ecosystem. Also, if one quantifies the impact of interventions that reduce air pollution with healthcare cost, disability-adjusted life years, or economic cost, it could lead to diversification of funding sources for that intervention.

Rozita Singh, Krishnan S. and Swetha Kolluri work with Accelerator Lab, UNDP India



DATA POINT

Paying through the pump

Fuel prices at the pump have not trended the same way as crude prices since 2014. This is because the tax component accruing to both the Centre and the States has significantly risen (from 31% of retail price for petrol in Delhi in 2014 to 63% in December 2020). With the government not passing on the benefits of falling crude prices to the public, Indians have spent on an average 17% of their daily income on fuel, a number matched only by Pakistanis among other nationalities.

By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Naresh Singaravelu & Sumanth Sen

1. A DICHOTOMY |

The graph plots the petrol price in Delhi (₹ in ₹/litre) against the crude price - Indian basket (₹ in \$/bbl)

- I. Despite crude prices falling in 2015-16, petrol prices remained unchanged as the tax component of the price at the pump was raised
- II. When crude prices started to rise again from 2017, petrol prices also increased

III. In 2020, when crude prices fell again, petrol prices at the pump did not remain unchanged as in 2015-16 but increased, because of a surge in taxes. This is reflected in the diverging trend lines for both prices

2. HEAVILY TAXED |

The base price of petrol in Delhi without taxes, duties and commissions was ₹47.12 in May 2014 and reduced to ₹26.71 in December 2020 - a 43% decrease. In the same period, taxes, duties and commissions recorded a 129% increase from ₹24.29 to ₹55.63

Price build up

May 2014 Dec. 2020

Base price 47.12 (66%) 26.71 (32%)

Centre's tax 10.39 (14%) 32.98 (40%)

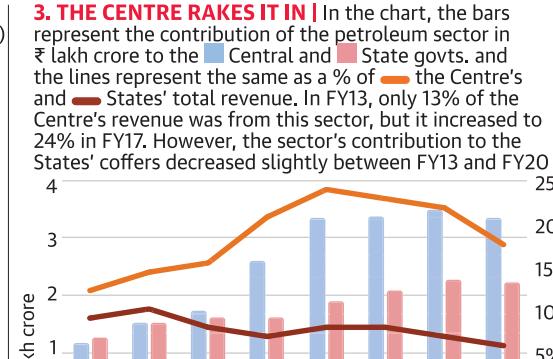
Dealer commission 2 (3%) 3.65 (4%)

State's tax 11.9 (17%) 19 (23%)

Retail price 71.41 (100%) 82.34 (100%)

3. THE CENTRE RAKES IT IN |

In the chart, the bars represent the contribution of the petroleum sector in ₹ lakh crore to the Central and State govts, and the lines represent the same as a % of the Centre's and States' total revenue. In FY13, only 13% of the Centre's revenue was from this sector, but it increased to 24% in FY17. However, the sector's contribution to the States' coffers decreased slightly between FY13 and FY20



4. PAYING A HEAVY PRICE

Source: PPAC, *based on IMF's 2019 GDP per capita figures, PPAC, Bloomberg

Indians (and Pakistanis) spend on an average 17% of their daily income on fuel*. The average for citizens among the rest of the 57 nationalities analysed did not cross 10%

Source: PPAC, *based on IMF's 2019 GDP per capita figures, PPAC, Bloomberg

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 14, 1970

Make lessons lively, says Dr. Rao

A four-day annual meet of children got underway here to-day [New Delhi, Dec. 13] under the auspices of the Central School Organisation. Each of the 129 schools, run by the organisation all over the country for the benefit mainly of transferable Central Government employees, has sent two student representatives for a lively programme of music, dance, drama and literary events and games and sports competitions. The get-together was inaugurated by the Union Education Minister, Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, with an appeal to teachers to make lessons interesting enough rather than a "painful duty" for young students to go through. On the occasion of the fifth foundation day of the organisation, Dr. Rao envisaged that the Central Schools become "a vanguard of new education," and said teachers in these institutions should conduct new educational experiments and "give a lead to other schools in the country." The children cheered the Minister when he announced that each one of them would be given at the end of the meet a book with their own photographs and a few biographical details so that they could correspond with one another and pursue their interests in true pen-friendship style. They presented on the occasion an impressive physical training display and group songs on the theme of national integration.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 14, 1920

International Communications

The International Communications Conference has practically come to a deadlock on the subject of the distribution of cables and may adjourn to enable the representatives to return to consult their Governments. America, England and Italy supported while France and Japan opposed the proposal for joint ownership of German cables instead of their being distributed among five Powers. France opposed with determination the American proposal to divert the Azores cable to Genoa dividing it between United States and Italy. As regards the Halifax Peninsula cable, Britain has already acceded to the desire of United States to restore New York [...] in consideration for the transfer to Britain of one of the American translation cables between England and Canada. The Americans also opposed Britain's alleged desire permanently to control the German cables she is now working. Mr. Davis acting Secretary of State has placed the whole question before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

FROM PAGE ONE

Agitating farmers block Jaipur highway

She said after the rise in prices for fertilizers and seeds, the farmers would now be burdened by increase in power tariff under the proposed law on electricity and completely ruined. "These three laws will also jeopardise food security of the common man," said Ms. Patkar.

All-India Kisan Sabha general-secretary Hannan Mollah said the farmer unions were not left with any choice but to intensify the stir after the government refused to repeal the laws. "The three black laws are anti-farmer and mere amendments won't make them pro-farmer," said Mr. Mollah.

Mr. Yadav said the farmers did not want to block the highway and were headed towards Delhi, but the Haryana Police had stopped

them and forced the blockade. Around 600 police personnel, including a company of Rapid Action Force, were deployed by the Rewari Police to stop the farmers from marching towards Delhi.

The police put multiple layers of barricades and boulders to block both carriageways of the highway when the farmers reached the border in the afternoon leading to long traffic snarls. Vajra, a riot control vehicle, and two vehicles equipped with water cannons and tear gas shot guns each were also part of the squad.

Though the traffic towards Jaipur was allowed an hour later, the traffic headed to Delhi from Jaipur has been diverted by the Rajasthan Police at several points.

(With inputs from Vikas Vasudeva in Chandigarh)

U.S. court rejects bail plea of Tahawwur Rana

His first bail plea was rejected in July. He then moved a motion for his release on August 11, offering to the court six pieces of real property owned by family and friends, having in excess of \$1.5 million in equity, \$18,000 from family members and unjustified affidavits of surety totalling \$140,000 from multiple family members as a condition to grant him bail.

The court also rejected that Rana's mother-in-law Mushraf Jahan could be appointed a co-custodian.

"Second, the Extraditee proposes a new third party custodian – his mother-in-law, Mushraf Jahan – who is willing to serve as a co-third party custodian along with the Extraditee's daughter.....While the Court appreciates the sacrifice that Ms. Jahan has expressed a willingness to make, the Court is not persuaded that she – individually or in combination

with her granddaughter – could ensure the Extraditee's compliance with conditions of release/otherwise adequately fulfil the responsibilities of a third party custodian," the court said.

The court was informed that Jahan, 79, was currently in Pakistan as she was unable to return due to the pandemic.

The Pakistani-Canadian citizen who was arrested in 2009 has challenged the extradition and filed a plea against it in the U.S court on November 25.

He was convicted for providing material support to the LET in 2013.

Unlike another prime accused David Coleman Headey, Rana did not enter into a plea bargain with the U.S. and he was placed under "provisional arrest" after he walked out of prison in June as the jail term that was to end in September 2021 was commuted.

Now, explore Kaziranga on boats and bicycles

Burachapori and the adjoining Laokhwa Wildlife Sanctuary are part of the Kaziranga landscape.

The Laokhwa-Burachapori activities, including camping, have attracted more than 3,000 visitors in a month compared to a solitary tourist during 2009-10.

If boating is the buzzword for the northern fringe of Kaziranga, the focus of eco-tourism promotion in the southern additions is on trekking and cycling.

Two trekking trails – the 5-km Natundanga-Baneswar and the 3-km Chirang, both under Buraphahar range – are being managed

by development societies of the villages concerned. They run home-stays and ethnic food centres too.

A third trail at Silmkhawa bordering Karbi Anglong district is also in the offing, park officials said.

"We have also identified a couple of cycling tracks. One that can be extended to 10 km has a natural rock garden spread over 2 hectares," Mr. Sivakumar said.

The objective of the new activities was to generate as much revenue to take care of the rhino habitat and the communities dependent on the health of the park, he said.

Rare Myristica swamp treefrog found in Thrissur

The arboreal species, endemic to the Western Ghats, was spotted in the Vazhachal forest in 2018

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Myristica swamp treefrog, a rare arboreal species endemic to the Western Ghats that bears the scientific name *Mercurana myristicapalustris*, has been recorded for the first time north of the Shencottah gap in the Vazhachal Reserve Forest in Kerala's Thrissur district.

The call of these frogs was identified during an exploration study by Sujith V. Gopalan, research scholar, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, near the road at Sukthae pocket swamp in the Vazhachal forest division in 2018.

The exploration study lasted two years and the recording has been published in the December issue of *Reptiles & Amphibians*, an international journal dedicated to the studies of am-

phibians and reptiles.

"It was interesting to discover a group of adult male *Mercurana myristicapalustris* frogs calling from low perches in a swamp. Unlike the Myristica swamp treefrog found in the foothills of the Agasthyamalai, these

frogs were found to be active throughout June and early July and has adapted to a non-Myristica swamp predominant with the plant *polystylia fragrans*," says Mr. Gopalan.

The frog was first spotted in 2013 in the Myristica

swamps of Arippa, near the Kulathupuzha Reserve Forest, in the western foothills of Agasthyamalai, in Kollam district. The current species was spotted by Mr. Gopalan 170 km north of Arippa.

Unique trait

These frogs are rare and elusive for the reason that they are arboreal and active only for a few weeks during their breeding season.

During this season, there is a large aggregation of males that descend from the high canopy of the trees. The males vocalise in groups from the low perches in the swamps. They exhibit unique breeding behaviour, says Mr. Gopalan. The breeding season, unlike for other frogs, starts in the pre-monsoon season (May) and ends before the monsoon becomes fully active in June.

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During this season, there is a large aggregation of males that descend from the high canopy of the trees. The males vocalise in groups from the low perches in the swamps. They exhibit unique breeding behaviour, says Mr. Gopalan. The breeding season, unlike for other frogs, starts in the pre-monsoon season (May) and ends before the monsoon becomes fully active in June.

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The frog was first spotted in 2013 in the Myristica

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IN BRIEF



Chidambaram takes a dig at BJP over protests

NEW DELHI
Taking a dig at the Modi government, senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram said that if those agitating at the Singh border are either Khalistani or Maoist, as per the labels distributed by the government, then why is it negotiating with them.

"Ministers have described the protesters against the Farm Laws as Khalistanis; agents of Pakistan and China; Maoists; and, the latest, tukde tukde gang," Mr. Chidambaram tweeted.

Pro-Khalistanis vandalise Gandhiji's statue in U.S.

WASHINGTON
A violent group of Khalistani separatists desecrated Mahatma Gandhi's statue outside the Indian embassy here during a demonstration by Sikh-American youth in support of farmers protesting against the recently enacted agriculture laws. Hundreds of Sikhs from in and around Greater Washington DC area, Maryland and Virginia, along with many from other States on Saturday took out a car rally to the embassy in downtown Washington DC, where they gathered to express solidarity with the farmers. PTI

Deploy Central forces in West Bengal, says BJP

KOLKATA
Citing the death of political activists in West Bengal, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya on Sunday demanded immediate deployment of Central forces in the poll-bound State. His remark comes a day after the murder of a BJP worker in North 24 Parganas, allegedly by Trinamool supporters. Later in the evening, the State BJP claimed that another party worker from Katwa was "murdered by Trinamool goons".

Assam Cabinet nod for closing down madrasas

GUWAHATI
The Assam Cabinet on Sunday approved proposal to close down all government-run madrasas and Sanskrit tons (schools). A Bill in this regard will be tabled during the upcoming winter session of the Assembly, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said. "Existing laws related to madrasas and Sanskrit tons will be repealed. A Bill will be introduced in the next session of the Assembly," Mr. Patowary, who is also the spokesperson of the Assam government, said. The winter session of the Assembly will begin from December 28. PTI

Connectivity, infrastructure key points in Modi-Hasina summit

The two leaders will hold a virtual meeting on December 17

**SUHASINI HAIDAR
KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE**

NEW DELHI
Connectivity projects, including the resurrection of the 12-km Chilahati-Haldibari rail link after 55 years, will be highlighted when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hold a virtual bilateral summit on December 17, officials in Dhaka and Delhi said.

The meeting will also seek to restore the "momentum" in ties, an official said, at the end of a year in which the pandemic and political differences over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) meant that several high-level visits, including Mr. Modi's proposed visit to Dhaka in March, were put off. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Memon said the "major issues", including the water sharing agreement for the Teesta and at least six other rivers, as well as continued reports of killings of its nationals at the border, would also be raised by Ms. Hasina.

"Discussion regarding Teesta water sharing had ended long ago. Only the

Tomar meets Shah as farmers' stir continues

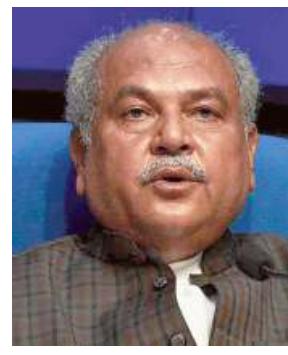
BJP leaders from Punjab were also present at the meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar met Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday amid the farmers' protests against the Centre's three agriculture laws, officials said. Mr. Tomar was accompanied by Som Parkash.

BJP leaders from Punjab were present at the meeting. It was not immediately known what transpired during the discussions.

Mr. Tomar and Mr. Parkash, along with their ministerial colleague Piyush Goyal, had led the government's negotiations with the



Narendra Singh Tomar

protesting farmers.

Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been protesting at the borders of Delhi

demanding the repeal of the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and do away with the *mandi* system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates

JJP should cut ties with BJP, Dushyant should resign: Cong

Haryana Deputy CM indulging in political photo opportunism'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

A day after the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) chief and Haryana Deputy Chief Minister, Dushyant Chautala, met Union Ministers over the farmers' protest, the Congress on Sunday accused him of indulging in political "photo opportunism".

Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, in a statement, said, "Dushyant Chau-

tala should not hide behind the drama of holding talks with BJP leaders and Union Ministers and instead should come forward to withdraw support from the Haryana government and resign from the post of Deputy Chief Minister."

"The BJP-JJP government in Haryana adopted shameful tactics like branding the agitation being sponsored by Khalistanis-China-Pakistan

to defame this agitation. Despite all those things, JJP and Dushyant Chautala are shamefully clinging to power," Mr. Surjewala said.

He said for the success of the farmers' agitation, JJP legislators should part ways with the government. "I call upon JJP and its MLAs to immediately withdraw their support to the BJP led government leaving behind the greed for power."

The JJP should cut ties with the BJP, Dushyant should resign: Cong

In its first three months, the Emergency Credit Line Guaranteed Scheme (ECLGS) Fund had led to sanction of soft term loans of ₹1.86 lakh crore, of which ₹1.32 lakh crore had been disbursed to ₹27.09 lakh borrowers by September 29. Between September 29 and December 4, loans sanctioned under the scheme rose by just ₹19,094 crore to a little over ₹2.05 lakh crore. These sanctions pertain to 80,93,481 borrowers.

Disbursements during this period increased by ₹26,380 crore, with over 13.4 lakh more borrowers benefiting, taking the total amount paid out under the scheme to nearly ₹1.59 lakh crore. The total borrowers receiving funds under the scheme now stand at 40,49,489.

The ECLGS is a key element of the government's stimulus and support measures for firms battered by the lockdown restrictions put in place in March to curb the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides additional working capital finance for 20% of a borrower's outstanding credit as on February 29, 2020. The financing is in the form of a term loan at a concessional rate of interest.

In November, the government had announced the expansion of the scheme to cover even larger firms operating in healthcare and the

26 most-stressed sectors identified by the K.V. Kamath Committee appointed by the central bank. Firms with outstanding loans of ₹50 crore to ₹500 crore from sectors such as construction, real es-

India's evolving diplomacy during COVID-19

The ongoing pandemic has brought out the country's diplomatic best garnering praise from international agencies



The 'Covidisation' of our planet managed to shatter the façade of present world order and unveiled the unsightly political cobwebs. It brought forth the unyielding blame game between the United States, China, and the World Health Organisation and questioned the many incoherent international relations.

India, amidst a pandemic seemingly has managed a diplomatic upper hand under the present government. Indian administration and health department honed a message of regional unity, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who during a virtual summit of SAARC countries pledged 10 million dollars for COVID emergency fund. Of which 13.89 crores have been disbursed to various SAARC countries, for medical supplies etc; notably, Nepal being the biggest beneficiary of the fund followed by Bangladesh.

During the initial phase of the pandemic on March 24th, India

spearheaded an immediate response against the pandemic by announcing the biggest lockdown in the world, owing to its mammoth population of 1.3 billion. This task was aided by intense contact tracing, containment of high-risk zones and rapid response by COVID teams, all which has currently been applauded globally.

Consecutively, beyond these diplomatic engagements, India has lived up to its title of "Pharmacy of the World", having vast historical and deep knowledge in medicine and health.

It has provided pharmaceutical assistance to nearly 85 countries on a grant basis to aid them tide over the pandemic. The Prime Minister's visit to Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India recently paved the way for over 60 foreign envoys to approach leading biotech companies in Hyderabad, which displayed India's "vaccine diplomacy". So far India has supplied medicines to 133 countries in the fight against COVID-19. This move has secured its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council period of 2021-22.

COVID-19 has provided India an opportunity to

address the irritants in its ties with some countries, most notably Iran and Malaysia. Iran recently sought India's assistance to deal with COVID-19 and its PM Hassan Rouhani also reached out to Mr. Modi hoping that India would stand with Iran against the US sanctions.

The COVID-19 crisis presents unique opportunities for India.

Companies are seeking to reappraise their manufacturing operations and the overdependence of global supply chains on China has caused firms to reconsider their business operations.

To benefit from this economic crisis and offer an effective alternative, India will have to reorient its role in South Asia and beyond. Essentially, the restructuring of economic policy and the bridging of the trust deficit will have to go hand-in-hand for India.

India's proactive approach during this crisis will have a long-term impact on how the world views India. Our response may not have been perfect, but it has certainly underscored that when needed, India can certainly rise to the challenge.

As India revives its

economy policymakers will need to recognise that domestic policies have a direct bearing on India's image. The idea of self-reliance or Atmanirbhar Bharat is not about reverting to economic isolationism; its essential aim is to ensure India is a key participant in global supply chains.

Just as Pax-Romana did not disintegrate overnight, similarly the present world order will perhaps not disappear instantly, with the possible emergence of a new variant of globalisation. The time is ripe for an Indian global re-order.



Deepanshu Singh
Top Unacademy Educator

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Scan the code to watch the free live class on India's Evolving Diplomacy post COVID-19. Use code UPSCSE.

Slowdown in loans sanctioned to struggling firms

The ECLGS scheme is a key stimulus for businesses battered by lockdown restrictions due to COVID-19

VIKAS DHOTI
NEW DELHI

There has been some slowdown in loans sanctioned to struggling businesses and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) over the months of October and November under the ₹3 lakh crore emergency credit guarantee scheme announced by the government in May.

In its first three months, the Emergency Credit Line Guaranteed Scheme (ECLGS) Fund had led to sanction of soft term loans of ₹1.86 lakh crore, of which ₹1.32 lakh crore had been disbursed to ₹27.09 lakh borrowers by September 29. Between September 29 and December 4, loans sanctioned under the scheme rose by just ₹19,094 crore to a little over ₹2.05 lakh crore. These sanctions pertain to 80,93,481 borrowers.

Disbursements during this period increased by ₹26,380 crore, with over 13.4 lakh more borrowers benefiting, taking the total amount paid out under the scheme to nearly ₹1.59 lakh crore. The total borrowers receiving funds under the scheme now stand at 40,49,489.

The ECLGS is a key element of the government's stimulus and support measures for firms battered by the lockdown restrictions put in place in March to curb the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides additional working capital finance for 20% of a borrower's outstanding credit as on February 29, 2020. The financing is in the form of a term loan at a concessional rate of interest.

In November, the government had announced the expansion of the scheme to cover even larger firms operating in healthcare and the

Slowing down

Around ₹19,000 crore of fresh loans were sanctioned under the Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme for small businesses in October and November

	As of Dec. 4	Change from Sep. 29
Sanctioned (in ₹ cr.)	2,05,563	19,094
Disbursed (in ₹ cr.)	1,58,626	26,380
No. of borrowers	40,49,489	13,40,462
Loans sanctioned to borrowers	80,93,481	
Total eligible borrowers	1,39,79,948	

45 lakh
the number of units the government expects to resume business activity and safeguard jobs

tate, textiles, power, cement, hotels and tourism, are eligible for support.

Aid to NBFCs

Similarly, the ₹45,000-crore Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 2.0 to enable non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), housing finance companies and micro-finance institutions to undertake fresh lending to MSMEs and individuals recorded a tepid uptake between September 25 and December 4.

Banks had approved purchase of loan portfolios of such entities worth ₹25,505 crore and purchased portfolios worth ₹16,401 crore by September 25.

Transactions being negotiated or awaiting approval at the time were around

₹3,171 crore at the time. As on December 4, the portfolios approved for purchase stood at ₹27,794 crore, rising by just ₹2,289 crore. The portfolios at the negotiation/approval stage had also declined to ₹1,400 crore.

The latest numbers, shared with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a review meeting on the progress of the various elements of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package on December 11, did not include the extent of approved portfolios purchased since the Minister's last review meeting on the issue held on October 1.

The government has now extended the time line for banks to purchase bonds or commercial papers under the scheme till December 31. The government's response to its repeated complaints about foreign firms violating norms "is not at desirable level". In a resolution passed on Sunday, the SJM also expressed concerns about the amendments to the Essential Commodities Act to lift storage quantity restrictions on all farm products for exporters, super markets and large wholesalers.

Calling for amendments to the Foreign Direct Investment norms in multi-brand retail to block what it termed as "cunning deals" to circumvent extant restrictions in the policy, the Manch, an affiliate of the RSS, said the government's response to its repeated complaints about foreign firms violating norms "is not at desirable level". In a resolution passed on Sunday, the SJM also expressed concerns about the amendments to the Essential Commodities Act to lift storage quantity restrictions on all farm products for exporters, super markets and large wholesalers.

Isolate those who prop up terrorism: V-P

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Though fresh snowfall worsened the cold in the Valley, 51.51% of the electorate voted in the sixth phase of the District Development Council polls in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.

"People have once again reaffirmed their faith in the democratic system by actively participating in the process under way to strengthen the same. At least 51.51% turnout was recorded in J&K, which included 68.56% turnout in the Jammu division and 31.55% turnout in the Kashmir division," State Election Commissioner (SEC) K.K. Sharma said.

Scores of booths were under snow in the upper reaches of Bandipora and Kulgam districts, which recorded 47.66% and 37.74% polling, respectively. Ganderbal recorded the highest polling at 58.45% followed by Kupwara at 51.08%, Baramulla 34.56%, Budgam 30.99% and Anantnag 24.06%.

The volatile Pulwama and Shopian in south Kashmir saw lower turnout at 8.16% and 4.6%, respectively. Voters in the Jammu division were seen swarming the booths as early as 7.30 a.m. Mr. Sharma said Poonch district, which witnessed heavy shelling from Pakistan on Saturday, recorded the highest turnout of 76.78%. Rajouri followed with 74.03%, Reasi 74.02%, Udhampur 72.04%, Ramban 71.34%, Jammu 66.32% and Doda 62.93%.

"The lowest turnout in Jammu division was in Kathua district which recorded 60.95%," Mr. Sharma said.

Amid snowfall, 51% voters turn up for polling in J&K

People have reaffirmed their faith in democracy: SEC



IN BRIEF



BJP chief Nadda tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI
BJP president J.P. Nadda on Sunday tweeted he had tested positive for COVID-19 and was under home isolation on the advice of doctors. He asked those who had been in contact with him in the past few days to get checked.

TRP scam: Republic Media Network's CEO arrested

MUMBAI
The Mumbai police arrested Republic Media Network's chief executive officer Vikas Khanchandani on Sunday in connection with the alleged TRP (Television Rating Points) rigging scam. He was arrested from his residence here by the Crime Intelligence Unit, an official said. The police have arrested a total of 13 persons in the case so far.

24X7 RTGS facility to be available from today

MUMBAI
The Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) facility for high-value transactions will become available round-the-clock from 12.30 a.m. on Monday. "RTGS facility becomes operational 24x7 from 12.30 a.m. tonight. Congratulations to the teams of RBI & IFTAS and service partners who made this possible," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das tweeted. It is part of the RBI's plans to push digital payments.

Folk singer booked for flouting COVID-19 rules

MEHSAKA
An FIR has been registered against a popular Gujarati folk singer and 13 others for allegedly flouting COVID-19 norms during a live music show at a marriage function in Mehsana district, a police officer said on Sunday. Eight of the 14 accused have been arrested following the incident that took place on Friday in Visnagar taluka, he said. PTI

Invest in vaccine literacy, say experts

It is key to building public trust, they say

BINDU SHAJAH PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI
With a COVID-19 vaccine seemingly just round the corner in India, vaccine literacy, and not publicity blitz about the emergence of one or more vaccines, is essential to building public trust, say health experts.

This should be supplemented with aggressive testing and tracing strategies to keep a check on the infection numbers and test the efficacy of vaccines.

"Vaccine literacy is an important aspect in vaccine roll-out which often does not get the attention it deserves.

Before a new vaccine is introduced it is absolutely es-



Quick results: A health worker checking a rapid kit to test for COVID-19 in Hyderabad on Sunday. ■ AP

sential to build the confidence of people which is only possible by openness and transparency in sharing critical data," J.V.R. Prasada Rao, former Health Secretary, told *The Hindu*.

He added that it is essential to engage civil society organisations in a dialogue, sharing the data with them and asking them to disseminate information to the people at large.

More sustainable

Explaining that this could be a slower process, Mr. Rao said: "But this will be more sustainable than a publicity blitz about emergence of one or more vaccines."

No compromise on trials'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Clinical scientist Gagandeep Kang said though COVID-19 vaccines were being developed in a short period of time, there had been absolutely no compromise in their clinical testing.

"I think it is very important to understand that there

has been absolutely no compromise. The only thing that we do not have from these trials, that we might have had otherwise, is the duration of safety follow-up. Generally, we follow up on trials for six months or one year, and generally, we do not find anything extra in the six months or one year."

Seconding this, N.K. Ganguly, former Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research, said this could be done in three ways – by maintaining absolute transparency in vaccine trial data results and adverse events, rigorous surveillance through smart testing and tracing strategies as they

form the bedrock for a vaccination campaign and finally by ensuring that the Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) and the regulator are composed of independent persons with significant technical experience who do not have relation with the vaccine company or anyone who can influence.

U.P. not tracking virus cases properly, says HC

Court seeks a list of policemen on job

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Expressing dissatisfaction over the Uttar Pradesh government's efforts in tracking COVID-19 cases, the Allahabad High Court has asked the police administration in four major cities to submit the names of the police personnel they claim to have deployed every 2 km.

"We find that tracking is not being done properly," the court said.

In Lucknow, Gautambudh Nagar, Ghaziabad and Meerut, the number of infected persons should be coming down but this could happen only if proper tracking took place, the court said.

In an order dated December 10, a Division Bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar asked the

police administration in these cities to name the police personnel deployed. The administration submitted that two police personnel were deployed every 2 km of all roads. But the court noted that no names of the police personnel had been provided.

The court said as per the affidavits submitted by the District Magistrate, Lucknow, it appeared that almost 300 odd people were getting infected every day in Lucknow. "Though we appreciate the sincere efforts of the police administration, we find a lot more is needed to be done and it cannot be said things are under control." Efforts should be made for restricting the infection, the judges said, adding that proper policing is required for 100% mask use.

Similar environmental surveillance for the polio virus has played a critical role in the eradication of wild polio virus globally.

In their paper, titled "SARS-CoV-2 detection in sewage samples: standardisation of method and preliminary observations", published recently in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, researchers claimed to have undertaken the study to standardise the

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The detection of the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in sewage samples has raised the possibility of using environmental water surveillance to monitor virus activity in infected areas, researchers have said.

Similar environmental surveillance for the polio virus has played a critical role in the eradication of wild polio virus globally.

In their paper, titled "SARS-CoV-2 detection in sewage samples: standardisation of method and preliminary observations", published recently in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, researchers claimed to have undertaken the study to standardise the

concentration or absence of virus at previously SARS-CoV-2-positive sewage sampling sites may indicate successful implementation of COVID-19 control strategies and it may provide evidence of the presence or absence of SARS-CoV-2-infected populations and confirmation of COVID-19-free zones," the study noted.

The study, conducted by ICMR-National Institute of Virology, (Mumbai unit) and Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, ICMR, Delhi, said the virus was also detected in stool samples of patients, indicating active infection of the gastrointestinal tract.

For the study, sewage samples were collected from six sites in Mumbai.

India's cases per million among lowest in world

30,254 test positive in past 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India reported one of the lowest COVID-19 cases per million population in the world (158) in the past seven days, as per the data released by the Health Ministry on Sunday. This was much lower than many countries in the Western Hemisphere, it noted.

While 30,254 persons tested positive in the past 24 hours, 33,136 new recoveries were registered during the same period. This has led to a net decline of 3,273 cases from the active caseload in a day.

"The recovered cases stand at 93,57,464 currently and the gap between recovered cases and active cases

is steadily increasing and it has crossed 90 lakh (90,00,918). The recovery rate has improved to touch 95% (94.93%)," the Ministry said.

Kerala leads with 5,268 persons recovering from COVID-19, while Maharashtra recorded 3,949 recoveries and Delhi 3,191. Seventy six per cent of the new cases were reported from 10 States/UTs, with Kerala reporting 5,949 infections, Maharashtra (4,259) and West Bengal (1935).

The Ministry said 391 fatalities were reported in the past 24 hours, with 79.28% of them being from Maharashtra (80). Delhi saw 47 deaths, followed by West Bengal (44).

U.P. officials deny woman suffered miscarriage

Moradabad woman back in hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Mr. Gupta told *The Hindu* that the woman had complained of abdominal pain two days ago and was admitted to the District Women's Hospital.

"On December 13 at 11:05 a.m., she was discharged from hospital. [She is] in full normal health. Her pregnancy is intact," Mr. Gupta said. All reports of the woman having a miscarriage "are fake".

Confirming that Ms. Pinki had been readmitted to hospital, Mr. Gupta, however, claimed that she had received treatment and was "normal".

Earlier in the day, Moradabad district probation officer Rajesh Chandra Gupta denied reports in British newspaper *The Telegraph* quoting Ms. Pinki's in-laws as saying that she was forced into a miscarriage.

minor girl and boy was stopped," Girish Chouhan, project officer, Integrated Child Development Project, Nasrullaganj, Sehore district, told *The Hindu*.

Despite the official vigilance, child marriages remain a challenge in Madhya Pradesh.

In the past few days, the local administration managed to stop the marriage of two minor girls in Morena and Ujjain and of a boy in Raisen district.

"Child marriage is still a challenge in the State. Increased economic pressures due to the pandemic has pushed parents to marry off girls early," Lolichen P.J., Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, Madhya Pradesh, said.

BJP ties up with UPPL to form Bodoland council

Nadda congratulates new alliance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The BJP will be part of a three-party alliance that will rule the autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council.

The alliance will be led by the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), whose president Pramod Boro has been named the next chief executive member of the council.

The third entity is the Ganjam Suraksha Party (GSP), headed by Independent Lok Sabha member Naba Kumar Sarnia, a former leader of the extremist United Liberation Front of Assam.

The UPPL won 12 seats, the BJP nine and the GSP

Pandemic, poverty spur child marriages in Madhya Pradesh

Loss of livelihoods has pushed poor families to opt for early marriages

tehsil of Sehore district.

Madhya Pradesh recorded 46 child marriages between November 2019 and March 2020, a figure that jumped to 117 in just three months of the lockdown from April to June, data provided by ChildLine India, an NGO, said.

According to ChildLine India, across India, 5,214 child marriages were reported in the first four months of the lockdown between March and June.

Worried about safety?

Back in Rujankhedi, Ms. Jatav, who was left without sources of livelihood during the prolonged lockdown, is



Under the radar: Despite official vigilance, child marriages remain a challenge in Madhya Pradesh. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

worried about the safety of her daughters and is convinced that marrying her minor daughter would ensure the child's well-being.

The agricultural fields are not safe for teenage girls and women, Ms. Jatav said.

"They [her daughters] can-

not come with me to the fields where I work. We are poor and belong to a lower caste. Tell me what other option I have to protect my daughters," asked a despairing Ms. Jatav.

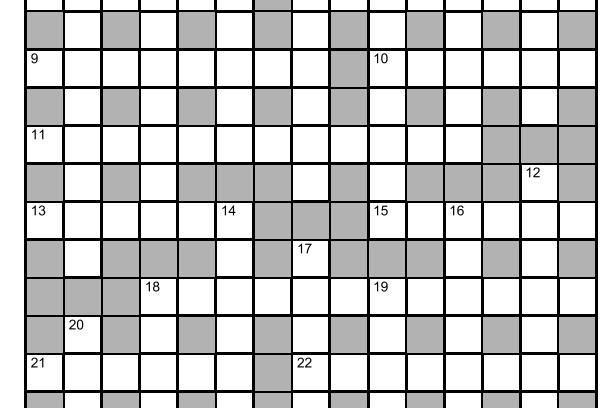
After finding a groom for her eldest daughter, she be-

gan the search for a suitable groom for her youngest daughter. On finding a suitable match, she hurriedly decided to marry both daughters off at the same ceremony. The economics of a joint wedding made sense.

However, the district administration stepped in and stopped the December 9 ceremony.

The marriage of the Jataw girls was not the only child marriage stopped in the Budhni Assembly constituency, represented by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. On December 8, the local administration stopped the marriage of a minor boy in Dabri village of the same constituency.

"Due to our timely intervention, the marriage of a



- ACROSS
- 5 Mollusc's not a water pig (6)
- 7 After battle, got bored, stitching clothes (8)
- 9 Nose pierced by third ring and nose without ring – foolishness (8)
- 10 Ill-tempered taxi driver parked around rear end (6)
- 11 Minds might waver as boring people pray at this vigil (8,4)
- 13 Fight at public transportation place's counter (4-2)

4 Down in *The Hindu Crossword 13117* (13/12/2020, set by Hypatia) went to print with an inadvertent error in the definition. Visit the interactive site to solve the updated puzzle.

CM YK

SUDOKU

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8					2			
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13117

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

A	C	M	S	B	S			
I	D	A	M	A	I	I		
N	O	E	B	T	A			
P	L	F	S	L	O	V	E	N
R	O	T	N	R	E	N		
S	T	R</td						

That-thati (Fresh, crisp)

Language: Konkani

The colloquial word is usually used in the context of a crisp fresh salad or fruit, and sometimes loosely used for someone who looks that way after a good night's rest or a bath. I am a coordinator of an informal group Healthy Food Bank that has farmers and families who buy from them, and I am thankful that through much of the lockdown we had fresh, chemical-free produce throughout. The farmers follow Subhash Palekar's philosophy of natural farming. This year has taught us to think of health holistically, so we are better able to tide through these times.

- Deepa Sirur, 46, from Byndoar, Karnataka; now lives in Pune; yoga trainer

تَتْ-تَتْي

Patti (Immense inner strength of the feminine)

Language: Sindhi

When people ask me how I will manage something, I say, I am 'andar ki patti'. It is a word used for women to talk about their inner strength. Women have to handle things on so many fronts, and it's a word that's apt for the times, considering the attrition rate during the pandemic that has affected even those women who didn't have jobs outside of the home.

- Bhakti Durgani, 43, from Chennai; now lives in Mumbai; homemaker

आनंद

Ananda (Bliss)

Language: Hindi

This small and commonly used word is a powerhouse of forces and energy combined. It is the blissful state that indicates good health of both body and mind. Earlier when I served in the Army in insurgent areas, the ability to respond to situations led me and my battalion to this emotional high. Now I run half marathons, often easy in the first 15 kilometres, tough in the next few, with a sense of bliss at the end. This year has been tough and *ananda* is something we are searching for.

- Jiten Vadehra, 54; now lives in Lucknow; ex-Army Colonel

Kantala and Chaha

(Boredom and Tea)

Language: Marathi

These two words go hand in hand. We call my grandparents and the conversation goes like this: we tell them we are bored, they tell us they are bored; then we say bye. This year has been about finding all possible ways to avoid *kantala*. One of them involves drinking strong ginger tea. My mother offers to make a cup for me every afternoon. I refuse every day, but she asks nonetheless, and it is quite uplifting. This year, I have been speaking more Marathi than ever in my adult life. But there are still words I don't know. For example, if you ask my mother, the word of the year is *las*, meaning vaccine.

- Manali Jamgaokar, 27, from Mumbai; now lives in Vizag, Andhra Pradesh; architect

صحتیاب

Sehatyaab (In good health)

Language: Kashmiri

This is a greeting we begin and end any conversation with. Kashmiri Muslims use this word while the equivalent word used by Kashmiri Pandits is *orzu* (or means good, and *zuv* is health). I developed asthma after shifting to Delhi and four months ago also contracted a mild coronavirus infection. Though I am in the high risk category, thankfully my lungs were not impacted. The word is a blessing, a wish, a hope.

- Aarti Dhar, 52, from Srinagar, now lives in Delhi; public health commentator

پڑی پتھی

Xewali (Night jasmine)

Language: Bodo

The smell of the Xewali reminds me of the coming of winter, because the flower begins blooming in autumn. I am reminded of the sight of the lawn in the morning, the colours of white and orange on the ground. Every six months or so, a handful of leaves of the Xewali plant are put into banana leaf and left on a wood fire until the outer leaf is blackened. The Xewali leaves are then taken out, left to cool and soften, its juice extracted to cleanse the system of worms.

- Padumi Boro, 49, from Tamulpur, Assam; now lives in Guwahati; caregiver

कंटाळा चहा

WORDS OF WISDOM

Books that take you on the route to better health

The Age of Pandemics 1817-1920: How They Shaped India and the World

By Chinmay Tumbe, Harper Collins

Eight months ago when his eight-year-old son asked about pandemics, Chinmay Tumbe got anxious about the far-reaching impact of disease outbreaks. It led him to research earlier pandemic experiences and the devastation caused.

He wanted to establish the relevance of learning from previous demographic disasters in helping tackle contemporary challenges. Which is why he chose to write about cholera, plague and influenza that globally claimed 70 million lives between 1817 and 1920.

He found India was the epicenter of the diseases: the 1918 influenza pandemic claimed more Indian lives than all the battle casualties during World War I. Tumbe tries to uncover the period through memoirs, statistics, maps, and photographs. He chronicles the likely causes and consequences focusing on the resilience of the people in uncertain times.

SOMA BASU, SWETA AKUNDI

Every year, the international media picks a word from a foreign language and talks of its benefit to health. One year it was *hygge*, a sense of comfort and cosiness in Danish; another year it was *cosagach*, a Scottish-Gaelic word with a similar meaning. This year, we turn to India's languages where words have layered meanings and local relevance. We asked people from all walks of life to pick out their words of the year – words that signified physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

Ralmil (Togetherness)

Language: Punjabi

There is something very lyrical about this word. Whether we are fighting COVID-19 now or any other crisis, it is the very essence of togetherness that helps us beat the odds. I am also fascinated by a very close-knit clan called Ralmil. They are the Jats in Punjab... farmers, whose ethos of life and living is unity and togetherness.

- Renu Rangela Taneja, 55, from Delhi; media consultant

रलमिल

ജാഗ്രത

Jaagratha (Caution, alertness)

Language: Malayalam

Earlier my routine included hanging out with friends and going out for dinner with my family. All this stopped early this year. Masks, sanitisers, and gloves became the norm. I think twice even before going to the grocery store. The thought that I should be safe and keep my family safe always runs through my mind. It is almost like a mantra.

- Dane Xan Alex, 29, from Kottayam, Kerala; now lives in Sydney; works as an engineer

ನಾಮರಸ್ಯಂ

Swayam araikey (Choosing oneself or self care)

Language: Kannada

Before the pandemic struck, I used to work in Bengaluru as a speech therapist. My day used to start early with classes for my students and therapy sessions for my patients. I absolutely loved being that busy. I had some health issues (thyroid and back pain) but didn't actively care much about it.

Then a few months ago, I consulted my doctor, and he advised me to change my lifestyle completely. What he said echoed with me: "It's not the thyroid you need to worry about, it's all the other problems that will follow it." So now I focus on my health, which I never got the time to do, before. I have planned out my exercise routine, yoga, daily walks, and I feel amazing.

- Shruthi Padmarshali, 27, from Mangaluru, Karnataka; speech therapist

సంయం అర్థం

With inputs from Sunalini Mathew, Susan Joe Philip, and Srishti B Dutta

Wellness by any other name...

Words in Indian languages we rediscovered in 2020, that we will need in 2021

Samarasyam (Harmony, concord)

Language: Telugu

I am grateful that the pandemic brought my family together but to be honest, I was not used to living with my daughters as fully grown adults. This year, I learnt the importance of accepting that your children can be different in their habits and philosophies. And to live together in peace, we have to understand each other's perspectives on things and accept our differences.

- A Annapurna, 50, Vizag, Andhra Pradesh, now lives in Dehradun; homemaker

Vizhippunarvu (To awaken and become aware)

Language: Tamil

This year has been a rude awakening and realisation on many fronts. Firstly, in understanding our personal responsibility for exercising healthy practices that ensure the safety of both ourselves and those around us. The impact of this pandemic is not only physical, but is also on the mental wellbeing of individuals, families, and society at large, especially for certain communities for whom support structures are weak or non-existent, such as migrant workers and artists.

- Vikram Raghavan, 35, from Chennai; Carnatic musician

50 Desi Super Drinks

By Loveneet Batra, Rupa Publications

Nutritionist Loveneet Batra shows how easy it is to follow a healthy lifestyle with indigenous drinks. She claims these nourishing easy-to-make beverages serve as natural remedies for more than 100 conditions ranging from anaemia, excess weight, chronic fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, headaches and more. Her desi elixirs can also be your energy booster, stress-buster, and hangover cure. Batra's recipes experiment with local and seasonal fruits and vegetables, and the many under-estimated ingredients readily available in our home kitchens. These include coconut jackfruit smoothie, bamboo shoot-lotus stem sherbet, and bitter gourd-petha juice among others.

Hope: Stories for a Healthy Mind

By Pragati Sureka, Scholastic

This conversation starter draws attention to caring for children's mental health.

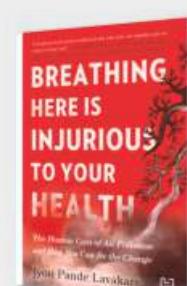
Based on 15 years of experience in clinical psychology, Sureka has written three short stories about children struggling with emotional challenges under the pressures of modern life and how they can be made more aware of it and so, equipped to handle situations better. The book is therapeutic for those looking for positive answers to keep anxiety at bay and help children grow into emotionally strong adults.



Seven and a Half Lessons about the Brain

By Lisa Feldman Barrett, Picador

Neuroscientist and Professor of Psychology at Northeastern University, Boston, Lisa Feldman Barrett presents an intriguing set of informal essays that look at the brain as a network of wires. Learn how that gray blob between your ears predicts everything you do and secretly works in tandem with other people's brains to create everything you experience. The book is full of surprises for casual readers and scientific veterans as some popular myths – such as the idea of a lizard brain or the alleged battle between thoughts and emotions, nature and nurture – are dismissed. Read the book in order to determine your own behaviour.



Breathing Here is Injurious to Your Health: The Human Cost of Air Pollution and How You Can Be The Change

By Jyoti Pande Lavakare, Hachette India

Financial journalist Jyoti Pande turned into a clean air activist when her mother was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer in 2017. The irreparable loss of her mother made Jyoti take note of the hazardous levels of microparticles in the air and compelled her to write a book on its fatal effects. Written as a memoir, the book tracks the prevention of air pollution movement in India, various legislations introduced to combat it, and citizen-led movements that are trying to bring down pollution levels.

WELLNESS ON SHELF



Cheers to turmeric!

Prahna has launched three new products: turmeric powder (₹349), Vanilla and Cardamom Golden Milk, and Almond and Cinnamon Golden Milk Mix (both ₹399). All the products are made with Lakadong turmeric, from Meghalaya that has one of the world's highest curcumin contents. Available at prahnasuperfoods.com

Glow from inside



Fashion and comfort



PUMA has just released Provokoe XT, its latest women's training shoe that features a geometric midsole, a TPU jewel piece in the midfoot and heel. Designed to ensure an all-around secure fit it also provides stability, comfort and grip. Available at all leading PUMA stores and e-commerce portals; ₹6,999

PRADEEP KUMAR

The unknown has always fascinated us. It may be a reason why we find something as ordinary as behind-the-scenes operations of a sporting franchise interesting; it also helps that modern sports documentaries have adopted a fly-on-the-wall filming style that adds to the drama quotient.

Sons of the Soil (SOTS), produced by BBC Studios and currently streaming on Amazon Prime Video, is the latest entrant in this space. SOTS follows the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) team Jaipur Pink Panthers (JPP), owned by actor Abhishek Bachchan, and the team's journey during the 2019 PKL season, a year which saw the Panthers fail in their pursuit of achieving a playoff spot for a shot at the championship. Directed by two-time BAFTA-winning filmmaker, Alex Gale, the five-episode series captures the few highs and several lows of the Panthers. In an e-mail interview, Gale and the series' executive producer, Neha Khurana, shed light on what went into making the gripping docu-series. Edited excerpts:

The Jaipur Pink Panthers' roller coaster season was fertile ground for drama. How was the experience like filming the team?

Alex Gale: The film crew went through the same emotions as the team after a win or a loss, it was hard not to get swept away in those moments – capturing individual character stories within hectic moments was always the biggest challenge.

The team must have started off camera conscious. Did it improve over the course?

AG: We had multiple cameras following the team. However, I tried as much as possible to keep crew size to a minimum in intimate areas such as the dressing room. I wanted to give us the best chance of letting the team react as they would if cameras were not around. At first, many of the team were very shy but over time, they grew in confidence and having cameras around at breakfast, during training, in their hotel room or meetings became something they were comfortably accustomed to.

SOTS seems to mirror *All or Nothing* (Amazon Prime's sports documentary franchise) in spirit. Does the latter's success make it impossible to conceive or film a series in any other style?

Neha Khurana: *All or Nothing* is an extremely popular, honest and successful franchise. But most documentary series on team sports would have a similar narrative structure. What differentiates one from another is the story and culture of the sport, and the country it comes from. SOTS is much more than just following a sports team in a sports league. The journey of Kabaddi from soil to the mat makes it a culturally rich narrative.

The unfiltered commentary in SOTS is certainly a unique aspect. Was there any apprehension at all from the team about airing such intimate, raw thoughts?



As good as it gets

The makers of *Sons of the Soil*, a sports documentary on the Pro Kabaddi League team Jaipur Pink Panthers, discuss how the series' unfiltered commentary helps the content stand out

AG: From the early development stage, I was clear with all stakeholders in the project that I wanted to authentically depict the life of the team, and that means capturing usually intimate thoughts, reactions, and emotions in the moment. When I first met Abhishek [Bachchan], he was very supportive of this approach, per-

haps surprisingly so, and I think his commitment to honest storytelling helps give the series a lot more depth. Whilst there were moments with the team where privacy is a necessity, our crew's relationship with the players grew over the course of the season and they were more and more willing to open up on camera.

How important is humanising the subject/s being filmed in a sports documentary?

AG: Spending time with characters away from their 'work' gives us the opportunity to understand them more and what has shaped them as individuals, it gives the viewers a chance to connect more personally with them. I wanted to find a balance between giving the audience candid insight to the unseen inner workings of a professional team and exploring the personal circumstances that drive the main characters.

Captain, coach and a few players. Was it because their stories seemed more relatable?

AG: Of course, there is no opportunity to cast characters in unscripted documentaries. You get what you are given, as they say. We needed to tell the JPP story from multiple angles within the team and we chose those who would see the team through very different eyes.

The owner, who is keen to support and restore success to his team, a pressurised coach, and a challenged captain. After spending a month filming with players during pre-season, certain individuals and their stories became clearer which helped us chose who to focus on. We were also mindful we wanted to explore the lives of players who hailed from contrasting parts of the country.

Will there be a Season two of SOTS?

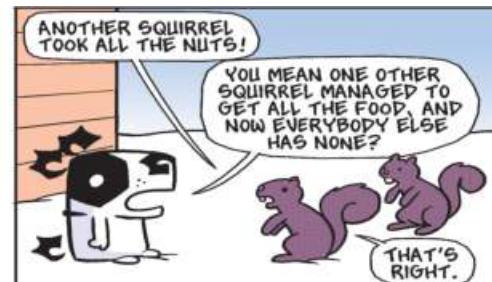
NK: As a maker, I want to continue the journey, and see how they do in the next season but it is still too soon to say.



Ready to rumble (Clockwise from above) Alex Gale, stills from *Sons of the Soil* • AMAZON PRIME VIDEO AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The series dives into the personal lives of the team's

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



In the face of adversity

Sarah Megan Thomas and Radhika Apte chat about what *A Call to Spy* has taught them, and how the world of women spies is untapped

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

"[Virginia, Noor and Vera] are the real hidden figures of the World War Two spy films," says Sarah Megan Thomas over a video call. The actor-screenwriter-producer is talking of her new inspired-by-true-events film *A Call to Spy*. It also stars Radhika Apte as Indian-Muslim Noor, Stana Katic as British spymistress Vera Atkins and Sarah as American Virginia Hall.

A Call to Spy follows these Special Operations Executive agents who aided in the French Resistance against the Nazi regime during World War II. The film is now streaming on Amazon Prime Video, and a video interview with Radhika Apte and Sarah Megan Thomas reveals the humanity of the film, as well as the spirit of perseverance.

Sarah explains, "These are three women who won every award you can imagine; their acts of heroism are indisputable, yet there haven't been films about them before this. Resistance films à la Charlotte Grey are romance, she goes to get the guy. I hope we can look at films with women and show women being complex, diverse, and good at their jobs. This is about the daily grind of courage of ordinary women who said 'this is my duty, I'm going to put my life on the line even though I have a 50-50 chance of survival' and they didn't do it for a man!"

On-boarding producer Lydia Dean Pilcher (*Queen of Katwe*, *A Suitable Boy*) as director was serendipitous for Sarah, who says, "I haven't taken on the hat of 'director' in any of my films, and I actually love to bring on directors because it's a value add, instead of a hand-off, to have that outside eye that challenges you. Lydia, has travelled the world, worked internationally and supports women – that's what this story is."

Radhika, who had read the script before bagging the role of Noor, was immediately pulled in. "No one is telling stories about women in any war, about their stories and contributions. Plus, I knew of Lydia through Mira Nair's films. The most important hook was my character." Radhika had heard of Noor but had not read anything about her. Upon doing research, the actor knew she had to take on the role.

"It was an incredible personality just to be offered: intimidating and exciting."

Playing their



Talking espionage Radhika Apte and Sarah Megan Thomas in a scene from *A Call to Spy* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

respective characters taught Sarah and Radhika a world more of resilience. "The takeaway of this film is, if push came to shove and the world got worse than it is, what would I do to protect the freedom of others?" states Sarah.

Radhika agrees: "I understood the fact that we always had a choice, whether or not your philosophy might clash with what is going on. We can always do something, however little may be in our control."

It is no secret that Virginia Hall faced her own set of difficulties, the main being her leg amputation and resulting wooden prosthesis. How did Sarah address this while also celebrating

Virginia's life as a spy?

"Everyone wanted disability to define her," she responds, "she wanted to be a diplomat and she was rejected, not only because she was a woman but because she was disabled. She wouldn't let that happen; she took that 'no' and said 'forget it, I'm going to change anyway.' I wanted to honour her legacy, the fact she had a wooden leg, the obstacles and pain she had to endure. These prostheses were made for men so they didn't even fit in the 40s, of course. The point is, I didn't want to over-play it."

Sarah had spoken to the late spy's family who said she didn't want anyone to know and look at her in a different way, "So I chose key moments, like in the mountains or the stairs, where you see the limp and where you see her take off her prosthesis. We shot and purposely cut certain scenes with the leg because it became too much. This is a woman who did not let her disability define her, so that's how we wanted to portray her."

At the mention of co-star Stana, Sarah and Radhika start beaming. Ask them about the camaraderie and Sarah exclaims, "You want to know about our bar nights in Budapest! We're spies, we can't talk about that!"

Violence erupts at pro-Trump rallies in U.S.

Four people were stabbed and one shot at as supporters of President and counter-protesters clashed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Four people were stabbed and one shot at as rallygoers backing President Donald Trump's baseless claims of election fraud led to clashes in major U.S. cities on Saturday.

Scuffles broke out in many places between rally-goers and counter-protesters who turned up to criticise the President, who lost the November 3 election to Democrat Joe Biden but is yet to concede.

Washington State Police said in a tweet late on Saturday that a shooting had taken place after clashes near the capitol building in Olympia, and that a suspect had been detained.

In the U.S. capital, DC Fire and EMS Department communications chief Doug Buchanan told AFP that four people had been stabbed and were now hospitalised "with serious injuries." The New York Times reported that 23 had been arrested throughout the day.



Crossing the lines: An armed supporter of Donald Trump marching at a rally in Olympia, Washington, on Saturday. ■ AFP

There was no indication of whether any of the victims had been involved in the protests, on either side of the divide.

The day had begun with a festive atmosphere as thousands of red-hatted protesters filled Washington's streets to support the President, undeterred by the U.S. Supreme Court's rejection on Friday of what may have been his last chance to overturn the results.

Similar events took place in Olympia, Atlanta and St. Paul, Minnesota, as well as in smaller towns in Nebraska, Alabama and elsewhere.

Demonstrators at the DC rally – noticeably smaller than a similar protest last month – told AFP they were steadfast in their support for the embattled President.

"We're not gonna give up," said Luke Wilson, a 60-something protester who had come all the way from

the western State of Idaho. "I believe there is a big injustice being done to the American people," added Dell Quick, a regular at Mr. Trump's political rallies, as he brandished a flag defending gun rights.

Protesters offered no shortage of explanations for the poll results, even though they have been affirmed by State election officials – several of them Republican – and by judges in key States.

Every State has now certified the results, giving Mr. Biden 306 votes in the Electoral College to Mr. Trump's 232. Electors are to formally cast their votes on Monday.

But protesters insisted, as Mr. Trump has repeatedly, that there was widespread fraud in the election.

Some pointed to "foreign interference," others to software that allegedly erased millions of votes for the President – but not those for other Republican candidates on the same ballots.

Susan Bowman, a 62-year-old from Virginia, said, "This

is not a banana republic. We need to fix the election."

Those who addressed the crowd included Michael Flynn, Mr. Trump's former National Security Adviser, who was recently pardoned by the President after admitting that he lied to the FBI over alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election.

'Stolen' election

Dozens of court cases alleging fraud or contesting the result have been decided – virtually all in Mr. Biden's favour, with some judges offering stinging criticism of the lack of evidence.

"Wow! Thousands of people forming in Washington (D.C.) for Stop the Steal," he tweeted on Saturday. "Didn't know about this, but I'll be seeing them!"

Not long afterward, his helicopter lifted off from the White House grounds and passed over the crowd.

Among the protesters, members of the far-right militia group the Proud Boys were clearly visible.

Taliban fighters killed as fighting rocks Kandahar

Afghan forces counter attacks in 5 districts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KANDAHAR

Dozens of Taliban fighters were killed in fierce overnight fighting between Afghan forces and militants who attacked multiple checkpoints in the insurgent bastion of Kandahar, officials said on Sunday.

Taliban militants attacked checkpoints in five districts surrounding the city of Kandahar, which Afghan forces countered with heavy air and ground assaults, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

"The security forces repulsed the attack, killing 51 terrorists and wounding nine," the Ministry said, without offering details of any casualties among government forces.

The fighting lasted for several hours through the night, marked with continuous gun battles and heavy bombardments, an AFP correspondent reported from Kandahar.

When contacted the Taliban did not offer an immediate comment.

The southern province of Kandahar is the birthplace of the hardline Islamist movement, and over the past few days militants have launched attacks in districts on the outskirts of the city of

Kandahar, the provincial capital.

The Taliban launched a similar offensive in the neighbouring province of Helmand in September that sent tens of thousands of residents fleeing.

That attack, which also targeted the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, prompted the U.S. to call in air strikes to defend Afghan forces.

Since a U.S.-Taliban deal in February, the insurgents have not carried out major attacks on key cities but have launched near-daily assaults against Afghan forces in rural areas.

Pause in talks

The surge in violence in recent months comes as the Taliban and Afghan government engage in peace talks.

The negotiations started on September 12 in the Qatari capital of Doha, but on Saturday the two sides announced a pause until January 5.

The insurgents and the government side both tweeted they had exchanged "preliminary lists of agenda items for the inter-Afghan talks and held introductory discussions on the topics" to be covered when the meetings restart.

Vaccine deliveries begin in U.S.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KALAMAZOO

The first trucks carrying a COVID-19 vaccine for widespread use in the U.S. pulled out of a Michigan manufacturing facility Sunday, with the shots that are critical to stopping the nation's coronavirus outbreak beginning in earnest a day later.

Shipments of the Pfizer vaccine will set in motion the biggest vaccination effort in American history at a critical juncture of the pandemic that has killed 1.6 million and sickened 71 million worldwide.

Initially, about 3 million doses were expected to be sent out, and the priority is health care workers and nursing home residents as infections, hospitalisations and deaths soar in the U.S. With numbers likely to get worse over the holidays, the vaccine is offering a bright spot in the fight against the pandemic that's killed nearly 3,00,000 Americans.

Federal officials say the first shipments of Pfizer's vaccine will be staggered, arriving in 145 distribution centres on Monday, with an additional 425 sites getting shipments on Tuesday, and the remaining 66 on Wednesday.

400 students missing after attack on Nigerian school

Gunmen armed with AK-47 rifles stormed the school

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LAGOS

Hundreds of Nigerian students are missing after gunmen attacked a secondary school in the country's northwestern Katsina State, police have confirmed.

The Government Science Secondary School in Kankara was attacked on Friday night by a large group of bandits who shot "with AK-47 rifles," Katsina State police spokesman Gambo Isah said in a statement.

Police engaged the attackers in a gun duel which gave (some of) the students the opportunity to scale the fence of the school and run for safety," Mr. Isah said.

About 400 students are missing, while 200 are accounted for, Mr. Isah said. The school is believed to have more than 600 students.

"The police, Nigerian Army, and Nigerian Air Force are working closely with the school authorities to ascertain the actual number of the missing and/or kidnapped students," said Mr. Isah. "Search parties are working with a view to find or rescue the missing students," he said.



Grim reminder: Names of Chibok girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram on display in Abuja, in this file photo. ■ REUTERS

A resident of the town, Mansur Bello, said that the attackers took some of the students away.

student's statement. The statement did not say if any student has been rescued.

This is the latest attack on a school by gunmen in Nigeria. The most serious incident occurred in April 2014, when members of the Jihadist group Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from their school dormitory in Chibok, in northeastern Borno State. About 100 of the girls are still missing.

The latest attack is believed to have been carried out by one of several groups of bandits active in northwestern Nigeria. The groups are notorious for kidnapping people for ransom.

German envoy summoned after EU raps Iran over Zam

Bloc had slammed the scribe's hanging

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Sunday summoned Germany and France's envoys to protest EU condemnation of the execution of an opposition figure, describing it as an "unacceptable interference" in Tehran's affairs, state media reported.



Ruhollah Zam

which it deemed "an unacceptable interference in Iran's domestic affairs," state news agency IRNA said.

The EU in a statement on Saturday condemned the execution in the "strongest terms" and emphasised its "irrevocable opposition to the use of capital punishment".

The Iranian Foreign Ministry's Europe director in turn told Germany's Ambassador, Hans-Udo Muzel, that Tehran "condemned" the statement,

Germany currently holds the European Union's rotating presidency.

IRNA reported later on Sunday that the Ministry also summoned France's Ambassador after France called the execution "an unacceptable and barbaric act" and a "serious attack on freedom of expression and freedom of the press".

ELSEWHERE



Indonesian cleric held over virus rule breaches

JAKARTA

A firebrand Indonesian Muslim cleric was arrested on Sunday for allegedly breaching coronavirus restrictions after he held a series of sermons with tens of thousands of followers. Rizieq Shihab's arrest came just days after Jakarta police shot dead six followers of his hardline Islamist group in a highway shootout. Mr. Shihab will be detained for 20 days to prevent him from fleeing and destroying evidence, police said. AFP

Slain Afghan Taliban chief purchased life insurance

ISLAMABAD

Slain Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansour had purchased a life insurance policy using a fake identity in Pakistan and paid ₹3 lakh in premium before being killed in a U.S. drone attack, according to a media report on Sunday. Mansour, who was killed along the Pakistan-Iran border on May 21, 2016, assumed the leadership of the Taliban in July 2015, replacing Mullah Mohammad Omar, who died in 2013. PTI

Germany orders partial lockdown

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BERLIN

Germany will go into a partial lockdown from Wednesday with non-essential shops and schools to close, as Europe's biggest economy battles to halt an "exponential growth" in coronavirus infections.

The new curbs will apply until January 10, with companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays, under

the new measures agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel with regional leaders of Germany's 16 States on Sunday. "That would help to implement the principle 'we're staying at home,'" according to the policy paper agreed by Ms. Merkel and State premiers.

Germans are urged to limit their social contacts to another household, with a maximum of five people excluding children under 14 meeting at each time.

The measures had helped to halt growth of infections after the autumn school holidays, but numbers had plateaued at a high rate.

Ms. Merkel had repeatedly pushed for tougher curbs to break the chain of contagion, but implementation of the rules is in the hands of individual States and some were reluctant to impose more curbs. The mood, however, has changed in the last week after Germany recorded new daily death tolls

reaching close to 600 and as the country's disease control agency reported that the infections trend had taken a worrying turn.

China moon probe heads back to Earth

It will become the third country to have retrieved lunar samples after U.S., Russia



Historic journey: A simulated image of the ascender of Chang'e-5 spacecraft blasting off from the moon. ■ AP/CNSA

minutes with the craft on a trajectory towards Earth, Xinhua said, citing a China

National Space Administration statement. A successful landing in

Inner Mongolia would make China only the third country to have retrieved lunar samples after the United States and the Soviet Union. The plan was to collect 2 kg (4.4 lbs) of samples, although it has not been disclosed how much was actually gathered.

The Chang'e-5 was launched on Nov. 24 and a lander vehicle touched down on the moon on Dec. 1. The mission was expected to take around 23 days in total. (Reporting by Tom Daly; Editing by Alex Richardson)

U.K. and EU ditch deadline to pursue Brexit negotiations

After a crisis call, both sides agree to 'go the extra mile'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BRUSSELS

British and European negotiators were sent back to work on Sunday after Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen agreed to abandon their supposed make-or-break deadline.

The pair had said last week they would decide whether an agreement was possible by the end of Sunday, but after a cross-Channel crisis call they agreed to "go the extra mile".

"We had a useful phone call this morning. We discussed the major unresolved topics," Ms. von der Leyen said in a video message, reading out a joint statement agreed with Mr. Johnson.

"Our negotiating teams have been working day and night over recent days."

The EU's Michel Barnier and Britain's David Frost held talks late on Saturday



agreement was far from sure with less than three weeks to go until Britain leaves the EU single market at the end of the year. "I'm afraid we're still very far apart on some key things, but where there's life there's hope," he said.

"The U.K. certainly won't be walking away from the talks. I still think there's a deal to be done if our partners want to do it," he added, four days after he and Ms. von der Leyen had said they would pull the plug on talks on Sunday if no breakthrough was in sight.

Mr. Johnson said Britain "would be as creative as we possibly can".

Without a trade deal, cross-Channel trade will revert to WTO rules, with tariffs driving up prices and generating paperwork for importers, and the failed negotiation could poison relations between London and Brussels for years to come.

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ASK US

K. NITYA KALYANI

Q: I am a PSU bank employee and am covered under my employer's group health insurance policy. I do not have any dependents and I am unmarried. In my personal capacity, I have purchased a top-up policy for ₹10 lakh with a deductible of ₹3 lakh. Will there be any problem during claims processing as the two policies are under different insurers? I have also purchased an LIC term life policy for ₹1 crore. Also please suggest if anything other than this would be helpful for me.

SRINATH INUGANTI

A: You would be able to claim from your employer's group policy and your top-up policy in sequence even if they are provided by different insurance companies and this is not likely to present any problem at the time of claims. However, please ensure that the ₹3 lakh deductible (or threshold, as it is termed) is the same as the sum insured under the basic policy, which is your bank's group policy, so that you have neither an overlap nor a gap in your coverage.

As for further insurance cover, you can increase the sum insured under your basic policy if possible and/or the coverage under your top-up policy, keeping in mind the SA/threshold parity mentioned above.

You can look at specialised health covers covering cancer, heart ailments or listed dreaded diseases or major surgeries. These will be benefit policies that pay a fixed sum on diagnosis of the named health conditions.

Remember that a term life policy does not have any survival benefits. Tailor the sum insured to the plan you have for your nominee/s as you go forward. If you want a maturity claim sum from a life policy, then go in for a suitable policy.

An annuity scheme may be another option you can look for that will protect your financial status over and above any pension scheme your employer may be offering you.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)



Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

There are better debt options available, than low-interest bank fixed deposits



VIDYA BALA

Are you among those bitten by the painful debt mutual fund episodes between late 2018 and 2020? Have you once again reluctantly moved to the comfort that bank fixed deposits (FDs) offer but crib about the low rates? Take comfort from the fact that there are other better, and more sound debt options emerging. Most of them are indeed market-linked, but without the high credit risk or liquidity risk that you may have experienced in the last few years in mutual funds (MFs). Here are five such options:

For income earners

Floating Rate Savings Bonds 2020, issued by RBI, is among the best-guaranteed investment products for the current interest scenario. That it is floating rate means that your interest is not the same over the seven-year tenure.

However, given that we are at a low-interest scenario now and the current rate of 7.15% is pegged at 35 basis points above the NSC rate, you can secure a higher rate with this instrument as rates move up in future. This is an ideal option for those seeking some regular income.

While this instrument is supposed to be made available in SBI and other major banks, you may need to push your banker to offer this to you.

For those a little more adventurous and used to capital markets (and having a demat account), buying treasury bills and gilts (government securities) through the primary auction is now possible even for retail investors. Treasury bills with tenures of 91, 182 and 364 days, and longer tenure gilts are available on primary issue. You can check with your broker whether safety is paramount, these can be great options, provided you understand how prices move in the debt market.

Growth options

In the mutual fund space, while credit and liquidity

risk has painted a bleak picture on the safety of debt funds, the industry has also been coming up with quality products with lower risk.

The Bharat Bond ETF and the Nifty CPSE Bond Plus SDL are examples. The Bharat Bond ETF from the Edelweiss house, which invests in high-quality PSU bonds, is India's first fixed maturity ETF.

It allows you to simply hold the ETF till maturity or sell the ETF in the exchange when you need liquidity.

The Nifty CPSE Bond Plus SDL ETF from Nippon India is also a target maturity debt ETF. Its portfolio, however, will have an equal mix of PSU bonds and State development loans (SDL); the latter typically carries high coupon. What is to be noted in these two products is that they significantly reduce credit risk and liquidity risk but not interest-rate risk.

That means their prices will swing to interest rate changes. Like all other debt instruments, their prices will rally when rates fall and move up when rates increase. So, the key to look for is the 'yield' in these bonds.

Enter when rates rise

If you want to simply buy and hold, it makes sense to enter such bonds when rates move up.

That way, you will be buying at lower prices and lock into higher yields for the rest of the period. This strategy is ideal for those who wish to buy and hold them. Both these products hold potential to generate higher returns than your FDs with higher tax efficiency (long-term capital gain indexation benefit if held for more than three years).

What you should know, though, is that you can have marked-to-market losses in these products during the tenure of your holding. But if you hold them to maturity, your returns will be close to the yield at the time of your entry.

The biggest upside is their liquidity. You can sell them at any time. You will need a demat account to invest in these exchanges.

traded funds. However, these schemes are also available in a fund-of-fund structure for those who don't have, or want, a demat account.

Retirement option

The NPS Tier II account, although not a tax-saving option, provides a great opportunity to build wealth.

Specifically, the corporate bond (C) and government bond (G) are quality options for long-term debt allocation. Their credit risk is minimal, albeit with ups and downs, so the rate cycle will be felt in the value. But this evens out over the long term.

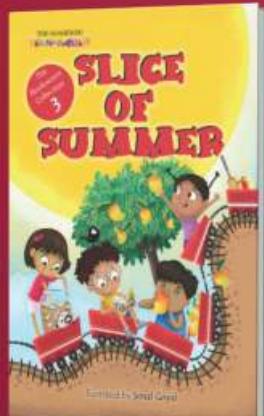
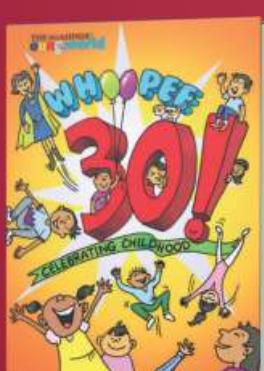
The two most attractive features here are the liquidity (no lock-in like with NPS Tier I) and the low cost (compared with mutual funds). Of course, you cannot have an NPS Tier II account, without opening Tier I. The other limitation is that the taxation of Tier II is still unclear.

All these options are at their early stage of product lifecycle and you will see them evolve and deepen the debt market. For retail investors, they can be good vehicles to ride, without (or almost without) fear of defaults.

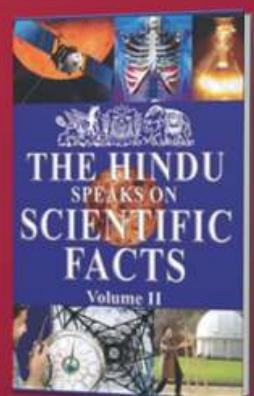
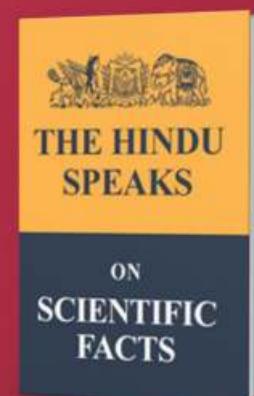
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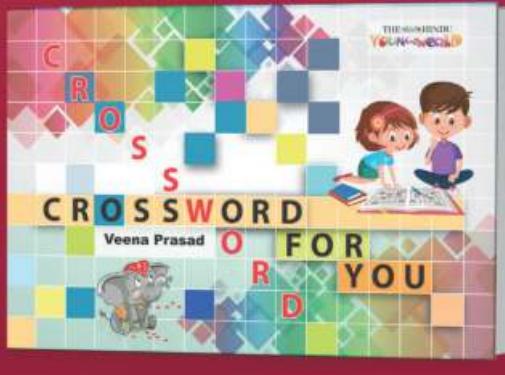
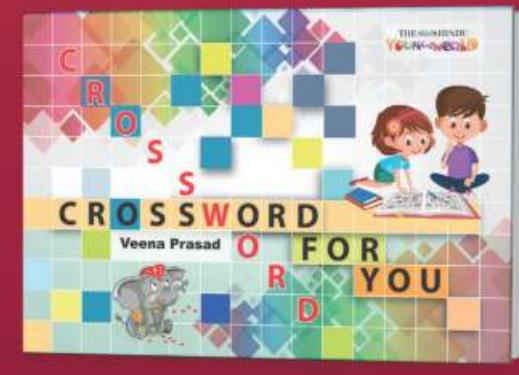
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IN BRIEF



Rossi laid to rest

VICENZA
Paolo Rossi's former teammates from the 1992 World Cup-winning squad served as pallbearers on Saturday at the funeral of the Italian football legend, who died on Wednesday at the age of 64. AFP



Azam out of T20I series with broken thumb

WELLINGTON
Pakistan captain Babar Azam has been ruled out of the T20 series against New Zealand and is in doubt for the first Test after fracturing a thumb on Sunday. AFP

Shibuno clings to lead

LOS ANGELES
Japan's Hinako Shibuno clung to a one-stroke lead over USA's Amy Olson after Saturday's third round of the 75th US Women's Open golf. Shibuno fired a three-over 74 to be four-under 209, while Olson shot 71. AFP



Joshua retains world heavyweight titles

LONDON
Anthony Joshua knocked out Kubrat Pulev in the ninth round at London's Wembley Arena on Saturday to retain his IBF, WBA and WBO world heavyweight titles. Joshua's victory sets up a potential all-British heavyweight unification bout against Tyson Fury in 2021. AFP

Mathana pips Ahamed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Mathana Kumar (Eneos Honda Erula Racing) registered a thrilling win, edging out K.Y. Ahamed, in Race-4 of the Pro-Stock 165cc class in the first round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI National racing championships on Sunday.

The results (provisional, six laps): Pro-Stock 301-400cc (Race-3): 1. Anish Damodar Shetty (Race Concepts) (11m 49.500s); 2. K.Y. Ahamed (TVS Racing) (11:52.301); 3. Deepak Ravikumar (TVS Racing) (11:56.906); **Race-4:** 1. Anish Damodar Shetty (11:49.216); 2. Karthik Mateti (Gusto Racing) (11:50.506); 3. Jagan Kumar (TVS Racing) (11:51.769).

Pro-Stock 165cc (Race-3): 1. Jagan Kumar (TVS Racing) (12:14.321); 2. Rajiv Sethu (Eneos Honda Erula Racing) (12:14.441); 3. S. Mathana Kumar (Eneos Honda Erula Racing) (12:14.779); **Race-4:** 1. Mathana Kumar (12:16.066); 2. K.Y. Ahamed (TVS Racing) (12:17.021); 3. Jagan Kumar (12:17.809).

Novice (Stock 165cc, Race-3): 1. Mohan Babu (Pvt, Chennai) (13:08.111); 2. Ullas Santrupt (RACR Castrol Power Racing) (13:08.479); 3. Allwin Xavier (Rockstar Racing) (13:08.645); **Race-4:** 1. Ullas Santrupt (13:07.914); 2. Allwin Xavier (13:08.051); 3. Nithin S (Sparks Racing) (13:09.919).

TVS One-Make Championship (Open, Race-4): 1. Abhishek Vasudev (Bengaluru) (11:46.358); 2. Anand R (Chennai) (11:48.296); 3. Anup Kumar (Coimbatore) (11:55.832); **Novice (Race-3):** 1. Navneeth Kumar (Puducherry) (13:26.494); 2. Mohd Yusuf (Coimbatore) (13:34.914); 3. Jayant G Prathipati (Hyderabad) (13:36.337); **Race-4:** 1. Navneeth Kumar (13:20.496); 2. Mohan Babu (Chennai) (13:23.784); 3. Prathipati (13:24.213).

Idemitsu Honda India Talent Cup: Open (NSF 250R, Race-2): 1. Sarthak Chavan (Pune) (11:11.204); 2. Kavin Quintal (Chennai) (11:11.309); 3. Varoon Sadasivam (Chennai) (11:18.939); **Novice (CBR 150, Race-2):** 1. Shyam Sundar (Chennai) (13:34.672); 2. Jojo Emmanuel (Chennai) (13:49.319); 3. Rakshit S. Dave (Chennai) (13:49.637).

McDermott, Wildermuth deny Indians

The two forge an unbeaten 165-run partnership for the fifth wicket to help Australia-A draw the match

WARM-UP GAME

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

The Indian team will head into the first day-night Test against Australia with a lot of optimism, having managed to tick most of the boxes before drawing the three-day pink-ball dress rehearsal against Australia-A here on Sunday.

Australia-A gave a better account of itself on an eased out third day track. Despite being reduced to 25 for three, it ended on 305 for four thanks to centuries from Ben McDermott and Jack Wildermuth. Both survived a barrage of bouncers under lights from the Indian pacers.

The talented McDermott (107, 167 balls) and skipper Alex Carey (58, 111b) added 117 in a counter-attacking fourth-wicket partnership.

Rookie Wildermuth (111, 119b) put on 165 with McDermott, but Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja will be happy with multiple options that emerged from the game.

The probable first Test



Digging deep: After Shami bent his back, Wildermuth and McDermott held firm. ■TWITTER/BCCI



SCOREBOARD

Indians – 1st innings: 194.
Australia-A – 1st innings: 108.
Indians – 2nd innings: 386 for four decl.

Australia-A – 2nd innings (target 473): Marcus Harris c Shaw b Shami 5, Joe Burns lbw b Shami 1, Nic Maddinson c Saini b Siraj 14, Ben McDermott (not out) 107, Alex Carey c sub b Vihari 58, Jack Wildermuth (not out) 111; Extras (b-3, w-3, nb-5): 11; Total (for four wkts. in 75 overs): 307.

Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-11, 3-25, 4-142.

Indians bowling: Shami 13-3-58-2, Bumrah 13-7-35-0, Siraj 17-3-54-1, Saini 16-0-87-0, Vihari 7-1-14-1, Mayank 6-0-30-0, Shaw 3-0-26-0.

Match drawn.

Bounce plays a major part in this country. We tend to play every ball because of the bounce... going into the first Test, we are very well-equipped to handle the pace and bounce

HANUMA VIHARI

Season to begin on Jan. 10 with Mushtaq Ali Trophy

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

to be three of the six venues for the league stage.

The *Hindu* understands that the primary reason for the delay in finalising the detailed itinerary is due to two of its senior executives having been diagnosed with COVID-19 earlier this week.

It is learnt that both these BCCI staffers were among a group that travelled to the hometown of a BCCI office-bearer last weekend. The official trip was meant for finalising various impending issues, including the preparation of the annual report to be presented in the AGM on Dec. 24 and the curtailed domestic season.

Since one of the two attended a few meetings at the BCCI headquarters after returning to Mumbai before being diagnosed as an asymptomatic case, the BCCI management advised all those who came in contact with him to be home quarantined, at least till Sunday.

Itinerary soon

A BCCI insider assured that the domestic itinerary will be announced "midweek" as scheduled.

Digvijay triumphs

GURUGRAM: Digvijay Pratap Singh defeated Lakshay Gupta 6-4, 7-5 in the final of the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament at the Pradhan Tennis Academy here on Sunday.

It was the second title in a row for Digvijay who had won the Agra event last week. Interestingly, Digvijay had fought his way from the qualifying event both the times.

The result (final):

Digvijay Pratap Singh bt Lakshay Gupta 6-4, 7-5.

Real shades Madrid derby

Everton trumps Chelsea; drab Manchester draw

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
MADRID

Real Madrid posted a convincing 2-0 home win over Atletico Madrid in the derby on Saturday to end the pace-setters' unbeaten start to the league season. Real Madrid took the lead in the 15th minute when Casemiro headed home from a corner, leaving Atletico behind for the first time in its 11th league game of the season.

Dani Carvajal put Zinedine Zidane's Real side further at ease with a stunning strike in the 63rd minute which came off the post and into the net off keeper Jan Oblak for an own goal.

Chelsea's 17-match unbeaten run came to an end with a 1-0 defeat at Everton, while the Manchester derby between United and City ended goalless in the Premier League on Saturday.



Rising tall: Real Madrid's Casemiro, right, outjumps the Atletico defence to score the opener. ■AFP

Important results: Premier League: Southampton 3 (Adams 34, Armstrong 62, Redmond 83) bt Sheffield United 0; Crystal Palace 1 (Schulpp 81) drew with Tottenham 1 (Kane 23).

Serie A: Cagliari 1 (Sottil 42) lost to Inter Milan 3 (Barella 77, D'Ambrosio 84, Lukaku 90+4).

LaLiga: Real Sociedad 1 (Baranetxe 20) drew with Eibar (Enrich 65).

Saturday: Premier League: Newcastle 2 (Almiron 1, Gayle 82) bt West Brom 1 (Furlong 50); Everton 1 (Sigurdsson 22+pen) b Chelsea 0.

LaLiga: Getafe 0 lost to Sevilla 1 (Exteba 81+og); Huesca 1 (Ontiveros 66) bt Alaves 0; Real Madrid 2 (Casemiro 15, Oblak 63+og) bt Atletico Madrid 0.

Bundesliga: Union Berlin 1 (Proemel 4) drew with Bayern Munich 1 (Lewandowski 67).

Ashwin, Amir strike it rich yet again

NATL. RACING

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

Dark Don Racing's Ashwin Datta and Msport's Amir Sayed signed off with a double win each in the 23rd JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championship at the Kari Motor Speedway on Sunday.

Ashwin won two of the three Formula LGB4 races, while Amir whistled his way to the top in the JK Tyre Novice Cup races.

Ashwin began the day with some disappointing

news. The placings for Saturday's final race that he had won was changed based on protests and official observation. The revised result saw him placed 12th and Sarosh Hataria declared winner.

However, the Chennai youngster won an incident-free first race. He followed it up with another fighting win in the second.

The results (provisional): JKNRC Formula LGB4: Race 1:

1. Ashwin Datta (Dark Don, 28:49.50); 2. Vishnu Prasad (Msport); 3. A. Sandeep Kumar (Dark Don).

Race 2: 1. Amir Sayed (14:54.496); 2. Dhruvin Gajjar; 3. Dhruv Tyagi (Momentum Motorsport).

Rangasamy (Msport); 3. Vishnu Prasad.

Race 3: 1. Raghu Rangasamy (19:45.015); 2. Sarosh Hataria (Ahura Racing); 3. A. Sandeep Kumar (Momentum Motorsports).

Saturday's revised result: 1. Sarosh Hataria (22:14.932); 2. Arya Singh (Dark Don); 3. A. Sandeep Kumar.

JK Tyre Novice Cup: Race 1: 1. Amir Sayed (Msport, 18:24.277); 2. Karthikeyan Chandrasekar (Avalanche Racing); 3. Dhruv Gajjar (DTS Racing).

Race 2: 1. Amir Sayed (14:54.496); 2. Dhruvin Gajjar; 3. Dhruv Tyagi (Momentum Motorsport).

DELHI ROUND-UP

The scores:

D.M. Rider 44 in 18.5 overs (Kartik Dixit 6/13, Aryan Chaudhary 3/16) lost to Darling Frontline Club 46/2 in nine overs (Ashish Sehwari 29 n.o.).

Thumping win for Delhi Colts

Man-of-the-Match Rohit Nain (4/25) and Tushar Tyagi (54) helped Delhi Colts crush Ravi Brothers Club by seven wickets in the B.R. Sharma memorial cricket tournament at the Mohan Meakin ground.

The scores:

Lal Bahadur Shastri Club 153 in 38 overs (Priyansh Arya 27, Shivam Bhandari 26, Abhishek Kumar 3/14) bt Rohtak Road Gymkhana 120 in 36.4 overs (Shresth Yadav 49, Priyansh Arya 3/20).

Kartik scalps six in Darling Frontline Club's facile win

Kartik Dixit (6/13) and Aryan Chaudhary (3/16) restricted D.R. Rider Academy to 44 and paved the way for Darling Frontline Club's eight-wicket victory in the CSM cricket tournament at the CSM ground.

Rohan, Ajay and Gaurav excel

Rohan Rana's 47-ball 72 and

Ajay Gulia's all-round effort (4/34 & 45 not out) along

with Gaurav Sabharwal's half-century set up Ravidra Academy's six-wicket triumph over Younis Academy in the Radhika Cup Open Cricket tournament.

The scores:

Yousaf Academy 220/8 in 40 overs (Yousaf Mansoori 87, Dilshad Ahmad 55, Abhinav Shukla 43, Ajay Gulia 4/34) lost to Udaybhan Academy 223/4 in 34.5 overs (Rohan Rana 73, Gaurav Sabharwal 52, Siddhant Sharma 45, Ajay Gulia 45 n.o., Yousaf Mansoori 3/47).

Madhur and Mayank shine

Madhur Yadav (49) and Mayank Kumar (3/10) enabled M-10 Academy down Turf Academy by five wickets in the Hari Ballabh Sharma memorial (under-14) cricket tournament at the Guru Gobind Singh College ground.

The scores:

Telunkun Club 253/9 in 40 overs (Yugal Saini 99 n.o., Deepak Tyagi 39, Saksham Mateer 29, Abhijeet Singh 3/37) bt Udaybhan Academy 229 in 38.3 overs (Amanpreet Singh 73, Mridul Surroch 38, Aryan Dabas 36, Abhijeet Singh 33, Nishant Thakur 3/37).

Staridar runs to glory in feature

HYDERABAD: R.H. Sequeira-trained Staridar, ridden by Akshay Kumar, claimed the upper division of the Silver Dagger Plate, the chief event of Sun's (Dec. 13) races. The winner is owned by Ms. Viveka Kumar I

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NORTH DELHI				EAST DELHI				WEST DELHI				SOUTH DELHI				CENTRAL DELHI				
PAHWA (Shakti Nagar) 7428896358	MALWA (Narela) 7428896355	UNITY (Shalimar Place) 7428896371	UNITY (Rohini) 7428896373	HEMKUND (Wazirpur) 7428896365	HIMGIRI (Dayanand Vihar) 7428896359	HIMGIRI (Jhilmil Indl. Area) 7428896357	SHUBAN SAI (East Gokulpuri) 7428896359	SUNRISE (Patparganj) 7428896357	SUNRISE (Opp. Mother Dairy Plant) 7428896233	VD (Peepargarhi) 7428896234	SAPPHIRE (Mayapuri Ph-1) 7428896362	SAPPHIRE (Sec. 20 Dwarka) (Mangolpuri) 7428896369	DEEP (Moti Nagar) 7428896360	HANS (Raja Puri Dwarka) 7428896363	FRONTIER (Malviya Nagar) 7428896374	LAMBA (Malviya Nagar) 7428896374	KONCEPT (Okhla) 7428896368	KONCEPT (Kailash Colony Branch) 7428896367	SHUBAN SAI (Mathura Road, MCIE) 7428896361	PAHWA (Karol Bagh) 7428896370
GHAZIBAD	DREAM (Meerut Road) 7428896216	M.R. (Loni Road) 7428896217	M.R. (Indl. Area Branch) 7428896215	SHINE (Silver City Mall) 7428896215	FORTUNE 819400824	MAHADEV (NHPC Chowk) 7428896227	MAHADEV (Bypass road) 7428896230	BOHRA (Neelam Bata Road) 7428895228	TRIUMPH (Near YMCA Chowk) 7428895229	PARASHAR 7428896103	HIMGIRI (Golf Course Road, Sector-53) 7428896108	JMV (Sohna Road) 7428896101	SAFDARJANG (Udyog Vihar-IV) (Sohna Road Branch) 7428896100	SUPERON (Hero Honda Chowk) 9871715801	TRIUMPH (Vazirpur) (Manesar) 7428896109	DEE EMM (Indl. Estate Opp Sector-14) 7428896104	DEE EMM 7428896106	NOIDA 7428896221	GHAZIBAD	
PANWAL (Lal Kuan) 7428896214	DREAM (Meerut Road) 7428896216	M.R. (Loni Road) 7428896217	M.R. (Indl. Area Branch) 7428896215	SHINE (Silver City Mall) 7428896215	FORTUNE 819400824	MAHADEV (NHPC Chowk) 7428896227	MAHADEV (Bypass road) 7428896230	BOHRA (Neelam Bata Road) 7428895228	TRIUMPH (Near YMCA Chowk) 7428895229	PARASHAR 7428896103	HIMGIRI (Golf Course Road, Sector-53) 7428896108	JMV (Sohna Road) 7428896101	SAFDARJANG (Udyog Vihar-IV) (Sohna Road Branch) 7428896100	SUPERON (Hero Honda Chowk) 9871715801	TRIUMPH (Vazirpur) (Manesar) 7428896109	DEE EMM (Indl. Estate Opp Sector-14) 7428896104	DEE EMM 7428896106	NOIDA 7428896221	GHAZIBAD	
MODINAGAR 7428896217	MODINAGAR 7428896215	FARIDABAD	PALWAL														GREATER NOIDA			

*Terms & Conditions apply. Benefits include cash discount, exchange bonus and benefits for government or corporate employees, whichever is applicable. Benefit not applicable on Elite i20 Magna variant. *Offer may vary by variants of respective models. -Applicable on select models and variants. Hyundai is also available in CSD area. GeM, contact us at rahul.malaviya@minitac.gov.in (Delhi) and vekul.singh@minitac.gov.in (NCR). #Offer is at sole discretion of the financier. **3 years/100 000 km or 4 years/50 000 km or 5 years/40 000 Km for GRAND i10 NIOS, i20 and ARIA. Wonder Warranty with option to choose from 3 years/unlimited km or 4 years/60 000 km or 5 years/50 000 km for VERNA, CRETA, ELANTRA and TUCSON. #Lowest average yearly periodic maintenance service cost starts at ₹2,454 (SANTRO Petrol in Delhi for 5 years). Source: Cardetech.com. HMTL reserves the right to withdraw / modify the scheme without prior notice. Visit your nearest Hyundai dealership for more details. Hyundai urges you to follow traffic rules - these are meant to keep you safe on roads.

Lowest cost of maintenance**

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